

## **Submission to the Commission on the Marriage Canon**

Respectfully Submitted by

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## 1. How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?

My understanding of traditional marriage, according to the Bible:

- consists of one man and one or more women and concubines
- women are the property of their father until married, and then become the property of their husband
- if a woman is not a virgin at the time of marriage she shall be stoned
- a rapist must marry his victim
- if a man dies childless, his brother must marry the widow
- inter-faith marriages are forbidden
- divorce is forbidden

## 2. How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?

When the original scriptures were written, it was assumed that all people were heterosexual. Same-sex acts were common but the concept of homosexuality as an orientation was unknown until about a hundred and forty years ago. The word *homosexual* first appeared in print in German in 1869, and then in English in 1889. Certainly homosexuality existed, just as electricity and magnetism existed, but they were not understood. On that basis alone, we know that the authors of the Bible could not have written knowledgeably about homosexuality or about homosexual people.

Wherever same-sex acts are mentioned in scripture it is:

- with regard to ritualistic traditions which were intended to increase the small population of the Hebrews (example: not spilling a man's seed on the ground)
- among the purity codes for the priests (Levitical Law)
- with regard to temple prostitution (idol worship) which was prevalent among the pagan people who surrounded the Hebrews
- to do with rape, power and violence as in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

If the Bible writers believed that all same-sex acts were committed by heterosexuals then they would assume that all same-sex acts were a choice, acted out for one of the reasons stated above, and as such would be considered *unnatural* and *lustful*. We would consider them *unnatural* and *lustful* today.

We now know that it is *unnatural* for homosexuals to commit opposite-sex acts, therefore it is *unnatural* for a homosexual to be in a sexual relationship with a heterosexual. It is not fair to either person when orientation prevents an all-embracing, all-encompassing love. The two will be unequally yoked.

### 3. Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?

Yes, absolutely!

When I was married nearly 50 years ago, I had no faith but I did go to church, so the banns were read and that resulted in my marriage being legalized by the province. There has always been a crossover between church and state on this issue.

As a person without a faith, the religious aspect of my marriage held no significance for me at the time, although I was married in a church. What was important to me was the legality of the marriage, and it was the "traditional thing to do". I wanted a big wedding with all the trappings, just as many people do today.

I believe that many people get "Married" in a church now, not because it has anything to do with a religious experience, but because there has not been a good alternative. The term "Civil Union" has not been part of our everyday vocabulary, and currently it does not carry the same recognition or respect as the term "Marriage".

Now, as a person of faith, "Marriage" in the church is of utmost importance to me, and prior to same-sex marriage becoming legal I suggested that we make the distinction for both homosexual AND heterosexual couples. Instead of "Marriage" we should require ALL partnerships, that wish to be recognized as such, to be performed as "Civil Unions" by the state/province, NOT by ministers/priests/rabbis! At this time, it would be possible to have all the trappings of the ceremony without the religious component, if the couple wishes. The "Civil Union" could be followed by a religious service, "Marriage" if they wish on another day.

"Civil Unions" would be for the legalities, including all the benefits, which now accompany "current traditional marriage". "Marriage" or "Holy Union" would then be intentionally for the religious aspect for those who wish it, both gay and straight.

Those who choose not to have a religious service should not have their relationship any less valued than any other legal union by society.

This clearly separates church and state and would eliminate much of the controversy of how children will be regarded as they grow up. It would give ALL the legal benefits and respect of a committed relationship to ALL people regardless of gender, but it would allow all churches the option of "Marriage" within their own belief system.

### 4. The marriage canon describes "the purposes of marriage" as mutual fellowship, support, and comfort; the procreation (if it may be) and nurture of children; and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfillment in a community of faithful love. What is the theological significance of:

- companionship in marriage?
- bearing and raising children?
- the relationship between marriage and sexuality?

My brother got married last year at the age of 76. They are not planning on having children. Obviously the purposes of marriage are not requirements, but the blessings of the union. I see no difference in these blessings if the union is between same or opposite sex couples.

Sexuality between same sex partners may have the "yuck factor" for heterosexuals, but there are many homosexuals who experience the "yuck factor" when contemplating the sex act between heterosexuals. And when it comes down to it, there really isn't anything that homosexual couples do that many heterosexuals also do.

## 5. What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship?

I'm not sure I understand this question but it seems to me that it's all about semantics and societal acceptance, as I mentioned above regarding the difference between marriage and civil unions.

## 6. How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?

While I was baptized, confirmed, married and attended an Anglican church until recently, my faith was born and grew in the Salvation Army where they do not observe sacraments. (For their reasoning please see <http://www.waterbeachsalvationarmy.org.uk/what-to-know-more/why-does-the-salvation-army-not-baptise-or-hold-communion/> ), so I'm sure my view of this question will not be that held by mainstream Anglicans.

I believe that marriage, as God intended, should involve a monogamous commitment between two people who love each other, to care for each other in all circumstances. I was taught a wonderful concept of God being at the top of a triangle and with each individual at the bottom, one at the left corner and one at the right, and as they grow toward God, they also grow closer to each other.

I understand that paperwork is a necessity of our culture, but to me, the marriage ceremony is that outward display of a couple making a public pronouncement of their intentions.

The whole issue of a religious officiant being present to bless the couple and to preside over the proceedings is practical, but not essential. The couple is making their commitment to God and to each other, and I don't believe that anyone else needs to have a part in it, except as a courtesy and an honour to the special people in the lives of the couple.

To summarize,

"Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so . . ." unless you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer, in which case you are told that Jesus loves everyone EXCEPT me.

I believe that the original scriptures were God-inspired and contain the truths that God would have us know. I believe that subsequent translations were not necessarily God-inspired, (see my ebook "Gay & Christian? YES! It IS Possible!" at <https://christiangays.com/articles/gay&christian.shtml> ), and had to deal with a multitude of issues causing possible misinterpretations or misunderstandings.

Translations may have been written with the best of intentions by God-fearing people who did their very best to convey God's message as they understood it, with their current knowledge of the original languages, customs, traditions and culture of bible times, BUT with their own biases based on their understanding of what they THOUGHT the original scriptures said.

*"Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ." ~ Eph 6:5*

This is from the New Testament. There is no dismissing it as Old Testament and therefore no longer relevant under New Testament grace. Clearly God supports slavery. So why do we not support slavery today? Because we understand that those verses were written in a certain time period to a certain people.

We have a fuller understanding of scripture with regard to slavery, and now we also have a fuller understanding of orientation. We MUST put things into perspective!

Jesus' love was INCLUSIVE! Jesus' friends were the marginalized of society - the despised tax collectors, the uneducated, the prostitutes, and the lepers. Doesn't it just make sense that he would choose us (gays) for his close friends if he were here today!

This concludes my submission in response to your questions. I would now like to ask for your consideration of our transgender/transsexual family.

Their situation is separate from questions about orientation. Sometimes there is overlap, sometimes not but certainly it is something that needs discussion.

- Is gender dysphoria a type of birth defect, and therefore, should we use therapy, hormones and/or surgery to correct it?
- Are we going to make a sheep-and-goats division among trans couples? Do those that mirror heterosexual couples, perceiving and cherishing each other as the opposite sex, get special preference and ability to marry, while the "gay" trans couples are denied a religious marriage?
- If a spouse in a traditional heterosexual marriage alters their name and exterior presentation, is the marriage still religiously valid?

More and more people are identifying as trans. Are they to continue to be rejected by the church as we gays have been rejected? There are too many suicides of our youth whose families have rejected them, based on what they have been taught by the church. They are dying inside from the rejection, and too often they end their lives because of it. IT MUST STOP NOW!

I was born lesbian. I choose to love Jesus with all my heart and soul, and no matter what the church says, no matter how uncomfortable you make me feel, you cannot take my faith from me, although you (the church) have succeeded in alienating many. My relationship is with God, and while I would love to have a church family, as long as "love the sinner but hate the sin" reigns as a sufficient response to me, I will be regarded as "less than" and second-class. I am created in God's image and God does not make mistakes. I deserve more from God's people!

*"It is never legitimate to use the words of Scripture to promote a loveless agenda."  
~ The Right Rev. Dr. Peter Short, 38<sup>th</sup> Moderator of the United Church of Canada*

*"God loved the world so much, that Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, was freely given, that WHOSOEVER believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." ~ John 3:16*

**Please Note:** While I have been attending Christ Church Oshawa until recently, the people I have met there have been very accepting of my orientation, but until the Anglican Church, as a whole, accepts me, I will never feel like I belong.