

Submission to the Commission on the Marriage Canon  
Anglican Church of Canada

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Please note that this is my personal submission and does not necessarily reflect the view of my employer or the parishioners of St John the Divine.

**Re. Scripture and marriage:**

The Bible is a library of writings –historical, wisdom, laws for a particular people in a particular place, poetry – but cannot be taken literally. It may be replete with insight into who we are – our story – but it is not a prescriptive recipe for living. What scripture says about marriage is therefore only relevant considered in the context of our own time and through our best ethical and moral understanding – equality and inclusivity being the guiding principles that come to bear here. Whilst ethics and morality are independent of faith, I nevertheless suspect, though I am no Biblical scholar, that these principles can be found in just as strong measure in scripture (especially, perhaps, in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth?) as any injunction against homosexuality or implication of exclusivity in the model for marriage. Those who quote scripture to condemn same-sex relationships, same-sex marriage, or to prescribe a ‘conservative’ model for marriage, are being selective, inconsistent, and even hypocritical. This is enough to destroy those arguments. From a wider standpoint, I think the Church needs to meet, as a minimum, the ethical and moral standards of the greater society—and the great consensus on these issues of equality becomes ever clearer with passing years. This is a case of the Church needing to catch up with the best ethical and moral standards of secular society; to fail to do so would fatally compromise its legitimacy in these areas.

**Re. theological significance of gender difference in marriage**

I really don't see any. Theology ought to be concerned with bigger questions, for instance why we have and whether we need religion, whether there is a God and what God's nature might be, and what relevance all this has to the human condition. Whether gender difference within marriage is an issue has more to do with societal norms than theology.

**Re. questions of civil vs Christian marriage, companionship, children, sexuality, and blessings vs marriage:**

I think, perhaps, that many if not most church goers are unclear on the difference between civil and church marriage. But whatever the church offers it must offer without discrimination. As for companionship, the raising of children, and sexuality, I don't see any difference in their place or importance within same-sex or male-female partnerships.

**Regarding the sacramentality of marriage:**

I would only say that if something is to be considered holy and sacred, it surely seems abusive to then to attempt to withhold it from certain people.

**CONCLUSION**

I would urge the Anglican Church of Canada to as quickly as possible move to make its regulations and procedures around marriage fully inclusive with regard to gender. If it can't, then I would suggest it cease offering marriage altogether.