

## The Marriage Commission Submission

### September 30, 2014

- **1.** How do you interpret what scripture says about marriage?  
*As the Bible interprets itself on the topic. It is rather clear by the time Revelation ends!*
- **2.** How do you understand the theological significance of gender difference in marriage?  
*It is basic to the Biblical definition of marriage.*
- **3.** Is there a distinction between civil marriage and Christian marriage?  
*Yes. Contractual as opposed to Covenantal.*
- **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:
  - A. companionship in marriage?  
*Reflecting intimacy and fellowship with Christ. Dying to self!*
  - B. bearing and raising children?  
*Reflecting the life giving fruitfulness of Divine love. Deepening dying to self!*
  - C. the relationship between marriage and sexuality?  
*Reflecting the holiness and context of intimacy. The consummation of new life in Christ!*
- **5.** What is the difference between marriage and the blessing of a relationship?  
*A lot. More in the body of this piece.*
- **6.** How do you understand the sacramentality of marriage?  
*Ordained by God, reflecting the commitment, love, difference and calling of Christ and the Church*

#### **Preamble:**

Dear Marriage Commission members and readers:

The issue of Same Sex Marriage (SSM), like Same Sex Blessing (SSB), has proved difficult to discuss without hurt and offence being taken by those with a high personal stake in the topic and most everyone has a high personal stake in this discussion. People of Christian faith on all sides of this topic and indeed the Kingdom of God on earth, have much good or harm to experience as this matter unfolds. In what I am about to say, my goal is to speak the truth in love, to honour the dignity of all people, especially those with whom I disagree, and to honour Christ, the Author of Marriage.

I hope by the end of this piece, to have answered more completely the above questions in ways that are helpful, but I will break down this piece, not according to the above questions but as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Learn from recent church history: SSM will hurt the Church of Christ.
3. Has most of the damage already been done? No, because SSM and SSB are different issues.
4. Is this a “justice” issue? Not essentially, and certainly not as it is framed presently.
5. Speaking of being pushed around, we feel like we are being bullied and pushed around.
6. What about the Anglican Church in the North?

7. The work and dilemma of the Marriage Commission.
8. The Role of our Bishops.
9. P.S.

### **1. Introduction:**

I write to this commission because of what is at stake. The God ordained reality and definition of Marriage is so central to the relationship Christ has with us, His Bride, the Church, and hence is so foundational to life in God's Kingdom.

Those forces (Ephesians 6) that are against God's Kingdom on earth, and His Church, have always targeted marriage to weaken and destroy life as God intended it. This attack remains.

I have received what the whole teaching of the Bible and the Apostolic Church defines marriage to be: the union of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others, for life. SSM does not reflect this reality and so I think that the Marriage Commission should avoid recommending to CoGS, that a motion in favour of SSM, be advanced at General Synod 2016.

### **2. Learn from recent Church History:**

SSM will hurt the Church. A brief review of what happened world wide and in Canada on the matter of SSB will shed light on what will happen if SSM is allowed.

In my own Diocese of Toronto, a 2 year local option experiment in certain designated parishes to offer SSB, was authorized by the Diocesan Bishop, Archbishop Colin Johnson. This experiment resulted in 4 to 10 couples coming for blessing in 2 years, the Archbishop said. Compare those numbers of people to the backlash the experiment created in the diocese! At least 7 parishes were split and experienced tremendous division, loss and heartbreak. 6 congregations in the new Anglican Network in Canada started up within the borders of our ACoC Toronto Diocese, led in part by 4 Toronto priests who left the Diocese and ACoC over SSB to join the Network and joined by over 200 of their Anglican parishioners from the Diocese of Toronto. Several other priests took early retirement. None of this parish devastation was formally, thoroughly and publically evaluated. If SSM were to be authorized in the Anglican Church of Canada, (ACoC), who would ever really know the whole picture about the real extent of division, harm, and loss such a measure would create. We have heard of some of the other truly severe difficulties in other dioceses from SSB resulting in much loss and division. and the Anglican Communion worldwide is deeply divided over the root issues that flower as SSB and SSM. As well, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, at our 2013 joint General Synod, told us openly that in the 2 years since they have allowed SSM, their finances have dropped by 25% and at least 30 parishes in one province alone left their denomination over SSM. SSM will hurt the Church!

### **3. Has most of the division and damage been done already by SSB?**

No, because SSM is very different from and much more divisive than SSB. SSB was an innovation but marriage is a deeply long standing biblically rooted sacrament engrained in our people. If you have ever tried to change anything in the church, you will know about human resistance. Now tie that change to the clear biblical teaching on marriage, to centuries of apostolic teaching, sacraments and tradition and you get a recipe for disaster.

We were told that SSB was entirely different than SSM and experimenting with SSB would not lead to SSM! They indeed are different, but where are we now? Looking at SSM!

SSB was generally framed as a non-theological (????) but pastoral accommodation in the 10 or more Dioceses in Canada that offer it.

SSM however is an intensely theological, sacramental and canonical issue in our church, needing clear, dedicated and substantial attention, not just a “customer survey” approach. How will the 4 amendments to the motion at General Synod (GS) 2013 be truly and fully honoured by the Marriage Commission (MC) and the Council of General Synod (CoGS), let alone by the delegates to GS 2016. Do we realize the extent of the depth of the issue and the crisis this issue will create? Who in the church, if any, but a General Council of the worldwide church has the human authority to change the definition of marriage? Certainly not the culture or government or any one church province!

Consequently, far from SSB causing all those who were inclined to protest by leaving, to leave, there are a host of well grounded, theological, biblical and largely loyal members of the ACoC who know just how different SSM is from SSB, who have thus far stayed in the ACoC and continued to offer themselves and their finances in worship, fellowship and ministry, who will not countenance the official authorization of this misguided change. And what of the favour, blessing, covering and protection of Almighty God? Nothing can separate us from His love, but we can remove ourselves from His protection through willful disobedience. SSM would much more deeply hurt the church than SSB already has.

#### **4. Is this a “Justice” issue?**

For those who say that we must do the “right thing”, no matter what the cost, the question remains, “Is this the right thing to do?”

SSM has been framed as a justice issue by many, which has had the effect of convincing or silencing all but the most passionate and confident folks who uphold “one man – one woman” marriage.

But of course, it is not really a justice issue! If it was, we would be hearing from those Anglicans who frame SSM as a justice issue, an equal outcry for Bisexual (polyamorous) “Marriage” rights as well. Where does that road end? But we do not hear that outcry, because, at its essence, SSM in the church is not a justice issue. It is an authority issue! SSM triggers authority issues! The authority of God; (by what authority do you define marriage in the church?). The authority of scripture and Apostolic teaching and interpretation of the scripture! The authority of biblical holiness and righteousness to define us! A clear and solid case has always existed for the Apostolic faith upholding “one man and one woman” marriage throughout the centuries. There has never been a clear, solid, theological, biblical case for SSM and any theological commission that has tried to arrive at one has never reached their destination!. Hence, this issue has been pushed forward in the church largely on other grounds that seemed to have more chance of being effective. Since when does the Church of the Living God take its mandate from the government of the culture it seeks to influence? We do honour those who govern and hopefully mature Christians will serve in government, but we bow to Jesus, not “Caesar” and certainly not to self!

#### **5. Speaking of being pushed around!**

There was a genuine grace at GS 2010 in Halifax. Divisive motions on SSB were avoided; our Anglican brothers and sisters in the indigenous and northern churches were honoured in this way, as any formal move toward SSB was understood generally to be theologically, an affront to these members of the ACoC. Fast forward to GS 2013 in Ottawa. While advances in the Indigenous Church were celebrated, the SSM issue, even more of a disconnected issue with the northern churches, was pushed forward by the troubled discussion and vote there on the issue.

And speaking of pushing, a May 5th to 8th, 2011 Gallup Poll in the USA, found that of those polled on the question, "Guess what percentage of Americans are gay or lesbian.", 88% guessed inaccurately high, by a factor of 3 or more (300%) and 52% of those polled guessed too high by a factor of 12 or more or 1200%. This means that over half of those polled have formed the inaccurate perception that the percentage of gays and lesbians in the USA was 20% or higher when it is actually only 1.6%. ( 1.6% is the number of gays and

lesbians in the USA in 2013 according to a reliable report done by the USA National Centre for Health Statistics entitled National Health Statistics Report #77, July 15th, 2014. This report comments on the 2013 National Health Interview Survey which interviewed 35,547 adults in the USA, age 18 or over.) Someone has been pushing public perception on this "reality" a lot, always keeping gays and lesbians front and centre in entertainment and the media! Now one USA study by the PEW Research Centre, published this September, found that support for Same Sex Marriage was down by 5%. Perhaps more of the public are starting to push back at the manipulation going on.

#### **6. What about our Anglican Church in the North:**

These churches are among the most biblically orthodox members of our ACoC, and presently the most in need of financial support from the ACoC churches in southern Canada. SSM clearly hurt the Evangelical Lutherans in Canada financially and SSM will hurt the ACoC as well, if implemented. Who in the ACoC will be most hurt by diminishing funds? Our indigenous and northern churches of course! If SSM is promoted, what will be the real message that we send to the Council of the North? The relentless push, push, push continues none-the-less! If funds for the Council of the North continue to diminish, what options are they going to have to face if SSM is authorized?

#### **7. The work and dilemma of the Marriage Commission:**

By their own admission, not one of the 8 members of the commission receiving these submissions is in favour of upholding "one man and one woman" marriage as the ONLY and unchanged definition of marriage in the church. Yet we have seen from the over 100 submissions to date that a significant majority of individual submissions are not in favour of SSM, but uphold the present marriage canon of the church. How will the MC respond to these submissions with which they disagree? If their job is to advise CoGS re a SSM motion for GS 2016 while the majority of the submissions don't want SSM, foreseeing more harm, error, loss and division, I hope that the MC and CoGS have the freedom to suggest that their work can not be completed for 2016, and that either more work or a different approach be undertaken or that stopping the push for SSM altogether, be recommended.

#### **8. The role of the Bishops:**

You are our authorized leaders under Jesus and the Holy Spirit, and you are called to protect the whole flock from harm within and without. Please, step in and step up to avoid errors that will greatly and unnecessarily hurt Christ's Church, before, during, and after GS 2016.

We need you, for the sake of the whole flock, to protect Christ's bride in the ACoC.

"The love of Christ constrains us!"

Under His grace and always in need of the same,  
In Him,  
Jim Seagram

#### **9. P.S. I would like to recommend to the MC and readers of the submissions, these 5 books:**

1. **"The Homosexuality Debate"**, Editor: Catherine Sider Hamilton: ABC Publishing
2. **"Divorcing Marriage"**, Editors: D. Cere & D. Farrow; McGill-Queens University Press
3. **"In Spirit and In Truth"**, Editors: C. Sider Hamilton, P. Robinson & G. Sumner; Regent College Publishing
4. **"Same Sex Marriage"**, Roseanne Kydd; Published by Essence Publishing
5. **"Are Gay Rights Right?"**, Roger J. Magnuson; Published by Multnomah Press