

Reverend and Esteemed Members of the Commission on the Marriage Canon, greetings:

Thank you for inviting responses to the issues with which you are engaged. Thank you, as well, for proposing a set of appropriate questions, to which I gladly respond.

THE SECOND LAW OF THE GOSPEL: Let us keep in mind the specific question we are attempting to answer: Shall the Anglican Church of Canada embrace and bless same-sex couples with sacramental marriage? We are not deciding whether or not “homosexuality” or certain specific sex acts may be sinful, whether we approve or disapprove of same-sex couples or life-styles different from our own, whether or not a same-sex relationship may properly be called a “marriage.” All of these issues are interesting and relevant, but our issue is rather more focused: the appropriate administration of the sacrament of matrimony. Even if homosexual behaviors be considered to be sinful, the “state of grace” (or lack thereof) of people asking to be sacramentally married poses no impediment: We sacramentally re-marry divorced persons, although Jesus specifically forbade divorce. We sacramentally marry opposite-sex couples who have been “living together,” although some people consider that relationship to be fornication. We sacramentally marry people who are known to be guilty of pride, gluttony, and other sins, even murder. When we marry sinful couples, we are not making a public statement of approval of their sinfulness. We are, rather, acting on behalf of Christ who welcomes sinners to forgiveness, to his table, and to the loving embrace of our Father in heaven. Let us, therefore, not refuse to greet with sacramental grace those whom Christ receives with compassion and tender mercy. “...and the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

• HOW DO YOU INTERPRET WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS ABOUT MARRIAGE?

The response depends on *which* scriptures are being read. Ancient Hebrew had neither a verb for “to marry” nor a noun for “marriage.” The 25 occurrences of “marry” and “marriage” as translated in the KJV are renderings of 10 different Hebrew words. The Hebrew word in use is typically either some form of *ba’a* which denotes “ownership” or *laqach* which means “take.” In the patriarchal culture of the Middle East, including the Old Testament, both then and now, the understanding of marriage was considerably different from our own. *Men* (no word for “husband”) *take* and *own* their *women* (no word for “wife”).

In the Hebrew patriarchy, polygyny (one man, more than one woman) was more typical than monogamy (one man and one woman), at least among the famous ones we know whose stories are told. Only Isaac and Rebekah were monogamous, and, presumably, the handsome Joseph who married the high-born Egyptian, Asenath.¹ All the others—Abraham, Jacob, Joseph; the “Judges” and Kings and other heroes—were polygynous: Those “men” “took” more than one “woman,” and their take included female slaves and servants (concubines) who also became the mothers of their children.

Other than the love affair Isaac and Rebekah, the human relationship in the Hebrew scriptures that most resembles idealized “Christian marriage” was the love between David and Jonathan. These two young men entered a covenant (*berith*) of love and mutual commitment: *berith* is the word that describes the relationship between Yahweh (a husband) and Israel (his wife). When Jonathan and David united their “living-breathing persons” (*nephesh*), each to the other, Jonathan loved David as his own “living-breathing person” (body and soul). Jonathan took off his robe and gave it to David, as he also did his body armor, his bow, his sword, and his belt (1 Sam 18:1, 4). David, likewise, loved Jonathan as he loved his own life (1 Sam 20:17). Later, when Jonathan was killed in battle, David lamented over his “brother,” saying: “...Greatly were you beloved to me! Your love to me was wonderful, surpassing the love of women” (2 Sam 1:26).

Scripture does not specifically reveal whether David and Jonathan had a sexual relationship; it does, however, portray two souls knit together “until death did them part.” Jonathan endowed David with his worldly goods, each was emotionally tender towards the other, and each was subject to the other. The description of the same-sex relationship of Jonathan and David is the kind of caring affection that most people say they want in their marital relationship with their life-partner.² Since this same-sex covenant (*berith*) of love and mutuality best defines what a “marriage” might be, perhaps we need to be asking partners in any kind of marriage to ponder the marital ethics of this biblical, same-sex couple.

¹ Marriage among upper-crust Egyptians during the period of the Israelite Patriarchs tended to be more monogamous than was the case among the pre-Exodus Israelites. Beginning with the 13th Dynasty (1756-1630 B.C.E.), polygyny became more common in Egypt. The marriage contract between Joseph and Potiphera, “priest of On” and the father of Asenath, may well have included a monogamy clause. After ca. 1880 B.C.E., when Joseph accepted Asenath, given to him by the Pharaoh himself, Joseph, as the saying goes, “married up.”

² The other relationship described in the Hebrew Bible that seems to have been as affectionate as that of Jonathan and David was the love affair between Solomon and his “Beloved” in the *Song of Songs*, but the Shulamite was Solomon’s “lover,” not his “wife.”

In the New Testament, marriage customs and the culture of gender had begun to change. Jesus—in reference to the union of Adam and Eve—commanded husbands not to divorce their wives, thereby cracking through patriarchal notions of male dominance and ownership of women. St. Paul astonished his readers by asserting that “in Christ” there is no longer Jew or gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, kosher or unkosher, slave or free, no “male and female.” Theologically, “in Christ” where “all of us are one,” a new ideal of human relationship had been revealed. This ideal was reformulated if not by Paul himself then by the “School of St. Paul” as a near-egalitarian starting point: “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ... in whom there is no partiality” (Eph 5:21). Although the balance of that passage more or less perpetuates a tamed form of patriarchy (the man is said to be the “head” (origin, in command) of the “obedient” woman, as Christ is the “head” of the church), both Jesus and Paul proclaimed in principle the end of the Law’s harsh judgments and subservience to human traditions.

In this fallen world, differences still mattered: St. Paul required women at Corinth to keep silent in church (a point with which we do not agree); and he sent the run-away slave, Onesimus, back to his master, Philemon (a further point with which we do not agree). Culture changes slowly, and the church changes sometimes even more slowly: Hundreds of years would pass in which now secular culture, now the church, would pull ahead in the human struggle to become humane. Revolutions, reformations, and enlightenments would be required to bring us to repentance of our hierarchical social norms, the divine right of kings, persecution of heretics, violence against prisoners, chattel slavery, the subjection of women, and other forms inhumane repression.

The Anglican Communion, never “the first by whom the new is tried, nor yet the last the lay the old aside,” has nevertheless come consistently to affirm humane social norms. The English Church (Council of London, 1102) was among the first to condemn the slave trade. Some Anglican churches are still uncomfortable with female priests, but other Anglican Churches have moved slowly to accommodate the important Modern novelty of “liberated women” (to the great benefit of the Church, let it be said). Only recently—and by a narrow vote—the English Church has approved female bishops.

And now we come to the issue of same-sex relationships. Some Anglican Churches have already approved as priests and bishops some who live in openly same-sex

relationships.³ But is this not the triumph of culture over conscience, of worldliness over revelation? Is not “homosexuality” sinful?

In the New Testament, St. Paul, in time-honoured Jewish fashion, deplores sexual activity among the gentiles between males and males, and females and females (Rom 1:18–32—the most “sexual” passage in the NT). In this context, Paul was writing a rhetorical diatribe,⁴ a literary form in which one imagined speaker attacks another as in a debate: The Jew who is speaking is damning the gentiles, and cites the “Holiness Code” (Lev 11–21) in the Law of Moses to the effect that “people who do such things deserve to die” (see Lev 18:22; 20:13).

The argument in both Testaments against “homosexuality”⁵ as well as prostitution, is essentially the same: Israelites (God’s people) are not to be like the Egyptians, the Canaanites, or the Greeks for many reasons, including their sexual behaviors; the gentile nations engaged in sexual practices as a part of idolatrous religious worship, making use of cult prostitutes, both male and female.⁶ The curious argument in Rom 1:23–28, by which S. Paul’s Jewish debater connects idolatry and same-sex behaviors needs to be understood according to the historical logic of the Old Testament background: In ancient Israel, and in Paul’s time in the Greco-Roman world, same-sex behaviors and prostitution as part of idol worship were, like eating meat sacrificed to idols, inappropriate for Christians because of the theological association with false

³ The Anglican Church of Uganda broke communion with other Anglican Churches 2003 over the issue of same-sex marriage. Recently, an American Evangelical stampeded the Ugandan legislature to pass hostile anti-Gay laws. To its credit, the Ugandan Church exerted a mitigating effect on the legal process and caused the proposed death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality” to be cancelled. This half-measure, however, was not enough. The high court of Uganda has now ruled the entire law to be contrary to individual human rights. While we are sympathetic with Uganda’s struggle against HIV/AIDS, we would reason that heterosexual prostitution is at least as much the cause of the spread of disease in Uganda as is homosexuality. Laws against sexual behavior of any kind have not historically been effective. Ratification of same-sex marriage would have the effect of lessening the spread of disease, not increasing it, and it would help to stanch the flood of anti-Gay violence. The Canadian Church need not think that approving same-sex sacramental marriage would be a violation of the conscience of a “weaker brother”—we are not enticing anyone either to enter a same-sex union or to act against their conscience. We are enticing everyone to act in grace with understanding. In advocating sacramental same-sex marriage, and in opposing the use of the Law to condemn same-sex marriage, we occupy the moral high ground: St. Paul withstood St. Peter in regard to Law-keeping and disregard for “the unkosher other” (gentiles). Let us with equal regard for our members who live in same-sex relationships likewise defend them against “Judaizers,” those who would impose the constraints of the *Torah* on those who are free in Christ of the Law’s demands, all 613 of them.

⁴ In their zeal to be gender-inclusive, the translators of *The New Revised Standard Version* rendered *o anthrope* (Rom 2:1) as “whoever you are,” instead of the literal and obvious “o Man” (KJV), and thereby they obscured the literary form of Paul’s diatribe.

⁵ The words “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” were coined first in 1868; they do not translate any word in canonical scripture.

⁶ See 1 Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; 1 Cor 6:9, 15–20.

gods: Our bodies are “members” of Christ’s body, temples of the Holy Spirit, and therefore not to be sacramentally joined to pagan deities.

In any event, Paul concludes the diatribe in *Romans* by transcending the legal points through reference to faith in the good news about Christ. Both the Law-minded critic of Greek culture as well as all other sinners, whether Jew or gentile, Gay or Straight, are under the power of sin until God in Christ Jesus sets them free from the Law that condemns us to death, freed by grace and “the law of the Spirit of life.” The moral transcendence of the Law that Paul labored to explain at the beginning of *Romans* he neatly and with finality summarized towards the end of his epistle, echoing Christ and reformulating the Second Law of the Gospel: “Anyone who loves another has fulfilled the Law.” All the commandments—adultery, even murder, theft, coveting, “...and any other commandment” (so why not also the command in the Holiness Code not to treat a brother in the Covenant “like a woman”?) “are summed up in this word: ‘Love your neighbour as you love yourself.... Love is a fulfilling of the Law” (Rom 13:8–10).

Our question, then, is what effect does the grace of sacramental marriage have in the lives of same-sex partners who love one another as Christ has loved each of them? In what way does sacramental grace perfect the human love of same-sex partners in the sacrament of matrimony? Extending St. Paul’s argument, if the same-sex love of couples offered to idols can have a deathly effect, then why would the same-sex love of couples offered by faith in Christ to God not have a sacramental effect that mirrors the “mystery” of Christ and the church?

In matters of sexuality, as in similar concerns, the world is learning compassion. Having progressed from pre-Israelite pagan religious sexuality (of the Egyptians, the Canaanites, the Greeks and Romans), then to Hebrew patriarchal sexual identity as defined by a covenant relationship, albeit in terms of male dominance, where are we now? On that foundation, we entered the near-egalitarian ethic of the New Testament: “There is no longer... male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Now, after centuries of Church law reinforced by anti-sexual Neo-Platonic moral philosophy, we are in a post-Enlightenment era, ready to take the next step. Increasingly guided by the Second Law of the Gospel in our sexual ethics, we have also learned to demand facts and information, including accurate biological and physiological understanding of sexuality. Women are now allowed to understand how their bodies function. Men, the source of male gender in their offspring, can no longer blame the women for lack of a male heir. Pregnancy is no longer a hit-and-miss event or considered to be an “act of God.” Sexuality itself is valued as much for its human

wholesomeness as for its procreative result. We are now must answer in a way that makes sense to us in our time a moral question that no one had asked during the era when scripture was being written: “What about same-sex marriage sacramentally blessed by God?”

• HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER DIFFERENCE IN MARRIAGE?

The writers of the books of the New Testament—with the exception of Luke—were all ethnically Jewish; their identity as Christians was a result of their conversion as adults to faith in Jesus Christ. They therefore brought a Jewish theological-cultural perspective with them, and to whatever extent they were also culturally informed by the Hellenistic world view, they were also Greco-Roman in their perceptions. In theological discourse, including the discourse on marriage, the challenge for gentile Christians has often led to an impasse of perspective regarding which things are quintessentially Christian and which things were temporally cultural.

Specifically with reference to sex and marriage: (a) The dominion of the husband over the wife (like Christ over the church), and the obedience owed by a wife to her husband (like the church to Christ) as stated in Eph 5, seems to be a marital analogy drawn from classic Hebrew patriarchal thinking. In the same passage, slaves are counseled to obey their masters. We have abolished slavery; we are abolishing the dominion of men over women.

(b) Paul in 1 Cor 14 insists upon the “silence” of women in church at Corinth, telling them to “ask their husbands at home.” (c) And in 1 Cor 11, in an even more detailed way, Paul brings into play more different kinds of arguments—theological, angelological, moral, cultural, cosmetic—than he uses anywhere else on any other single topic, to prove that a woman, in subjection to her “head” (both her “source” and her “authority”), her husband, should pray with her own head covered.

And yet, right in the midst of this Jewish patriarchal (Middle Eastern) harangue, Paul remembered his gospel principle of near-equality of men and women: “And yet, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man nor is man independent of woman.” We have long-since abandoned these cultural commonplaces—veils at church, male dominance, the imposed silence of women—and their potential for multiple abuses. And yet, we continue to agree with the abiding principle of Eph 5:32 that marriage is a sacrament (*mysterion*) because the mutual fidelity, mutual love, and mutual respect of a good marriage teaches us about grace and gratitude in the relation of Christ to the

church, and of the church to Christ. This mutuality of grace can apply as much to same-sex marriages as to heterosexual marriages: The issue is one of how the partners conduct their relationship, not of their gender.

Women's liberation is as much a liberation of men from stultifying cultural norms as it is of women. In a heterosexual marriage, if the wife is better than the husband at keeping records and money management, why should not the woman assume that role which has been traditionally ascribed to the man? If the husband is better in the kitchen than his wife, why should not the man be the family cook? Why should both parents not shoulder child-rearing responsibilities equally? In our time, "gender difference in marriage" has come to have very little "theological significance" at all, except that both genders are now, more than ever, free to say: "We are sacramentally one in Christ Jesus."

• IS THERE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN CIVIL MARRIAGE AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE?

In the debate over same-sex marriage, some people are unwilling to allow the use of the word "marriage" in any way other than to apply to "one man and one woman."⁷ This kind of linguistic fundamentalism is, however, contrary to the way the English language works. English is a wide-open language that welcomes new words from other languages and revels in new uses of old words. Salt and pepper have been *married* on the spice shelf for centuries. Blake wrote of the *marriage* of Heaven and Hell. Anyone can be *married* in any way they want to be, to anyone they want, and it will qualify as "marriage" so long as they enjoy a *marriage* of minds. For us in the English-speaking world, the Bard himself has spoken definitively in *Sonnet 116*, as follows:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
Oh, no, it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his ending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

⁷ The U.S. Congress's "Defense of Marriage Act" (1996), defining "marriage" as being only between "one man and one woman," was found to be unConstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court (*United States v. Windsor*, 2013).

But bears it out even to the edge of Doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Who are we, under any rubric, to tell any *true minds* who *love one another* that they ought not to be *married*?

For people who desire *marriage* with each other, a civil *union* is not enough. And for people who desire *Christian* marriage, a *civil* marriage is not enough. Civil marriage, by definition, is not an appeal to the Almighty for grace and blessing, but is, rather, a contractual agreement according the laws of civil society. Our issue, then, is not whether persons of the same sex ought to have the legal or civil or human right to marry: That is now a given in civilized societies, and increasingly acknowledged in the laws of many countries. The issue before us, rather, is one of sacramental theology.

According to the *Anglican Catechism*, “Holy Matrimony is Christian marriage, in which the woman and man enter into a life-long union, make their vows before God and the Church, and receive the grace and blessing of God to help them fulfill their vows.”

A fine statement, though it need not be restricted to “woman and man.” Sacramental grace and the charismas of the Holy Spirit may be Church-mediated, but they are God-given. Why would we deny to any believer any grace of God that could make them more faithful and more grateful to the Lord? The essential meaning of “holy matrimony” and “Christian marriage” will not be changed when we improve the wording to read “the persons” instead of “woman and man.” Reference either to gender or number is irrelevant: Abraham and his women, Jacob (Israel) and his women, and David and Jonathan all received the grace and blessing of God. “In Christ, in whom there is no respect of persons, there is *no male and female*.”

• 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.

The Marriage Canon will require no change when we accord the grace of sacramental marriage to same-sex couples. The parenthetical phrase: “...procreation (if it may be)...” already takes into account the possible absence of offspring in a marriage, and thereby renders irrelevant the common objection to same-sex marriage that no

children can thereby be procreated. A same-sex marriage will be a sacramental marriage in which procreation of children “may not be,” but it will be no less a marriage for that reason.

Paul’s Jewish interlocutor in the religious diatribe (discussed above) added a further, non-Hebrew argument that sex between man and man, or woman and woman, is “contrary to nature” (*para physin*) (Rom 1:26–27). This argument is neither an Old-Testament argument nor Paul’s own argument: Hebrew has a word neither for “nature” nor for “unnatural.” The argument from “nature,” beginning with Plato,⁸ meant that sexual activity should be engaged in exclusively for the purpose of procreation, and all other sexual acts would be “contrary to nature” and contemptible as mere hedonism.⁹ Paul, on the other hand, consistent with his near-egalitarianism of the sexes, allowed married couples the comfort of one another’s bodies, although Paul himself was interested neither in marriage nor children (1 Cor 7:1–7). Plato’s “puritanism” of sexuality, however, was transmitted as a viral, Neo-Platonic disrespect for human created sexuality to Philo the Jew of Alexandria, to Paul’s Jewish contemporaries, and thereby into the thought of leading moralists of the Ancient Church: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and Augustine, among others who deplored sexuality for for the sake of pleasure and, indeed, for any purposes other than procreation. Unfortunately, their negative legacy passed into the sexual assumptions of the Western Church and European culture of which we are the direct heirs.¹⁰

The argument in the Old Testament, free of Greek notions of “nature,” had been classically patriarchal—from the male perspective: An male Israelite, according to the Holiness Code, ought not to have sex with a brother Israelite because that would be to treat his fellow in the covenant—perish the thought!—“like a woman.” The Ancient Israelites had not yet conceived of polymorphous sexuality, and did not understand the implications of the phrase “consenting adults.” Apart, perhaps, from David and Jonathan, nowhere in either the Hebrew or the Christian Bible does the idea appear that two people of the same sex might actually love one another and desire to express their love sexually. There are no proof-texts in scripture either for or against same-sex marriage. In addressing the moral question of loving, committed, responsible same-sex marriage, we are required to exercise our ethical faculty over concerns that no biblical writer contemplated.

⁸ Plato, *The Special Laws* 3:37-38.

⁹ Plato, *The Laws* 636B-C, 81B-E.

¹⁰ See Roy Bowen Ward, “Why Unnatural? The Tradition behind Romans 1:26-27,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90/3 (1997): 263-284.

Viewed in terms of “the nurture of children”—to cite the canon further—the ethical effect of same-sex marriage is statistically suggestive of a happy result (see below).

WHAT IS THE THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF...

- COMPANIONSHIP IN MARRIAGE

In the first creation account, the male and the female were created at the same time, like the animals, male and female, two by two—a naturalistic account (Gen 1:26–28).

In the second creation account, the male was created first, the woman second: “It is not good that the man should be alone,” so the Lord God “made him a helper to be his partner.” The woman was created “bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh,” and brought to the man; “and they were both naked but they were not ashamed”—a more mythical account (Gen 2:18–25).¹¹

In both accounts, the man and the woman “became one flesh” in their act of sexual love. The humans needed one another to be whole, and their sexual communion was the means of their coming together. Procreation of children, however, was not the stated means of their becoming “one flesh.” St. Paul made this clear in 1 Cor 6:16. Let us not, nevertheless, focus over-much on the specifically sexual aspect. Sacramental marriage includes sexuality, but the “sacrament” (“mystery”) of Christ and the church is a spiritual one, not a sexual one. Likewise, without denying the sexual component, let us focus on the spirituality of sacramental marriage, as a common life lived by two persons “in love” and “in grace” with one another, and in the love of God, in the Spirit, and in Christ.

¹¹ The second Biblical creation account bears a remarkable similarity to the creation account rendered by Aristophanes in Plato’s *Symposium*. The divine Zeus physically divides the bodies of primeval humans such that they thereafter are lonely for their other half and seek to be reunited both for comfort and procreation: “...so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of the human being.” In Aristophanes’s version, the humans may be reunited as same-sex couples or as opposite-sex couples. This option is not in view in the Biblical version of this story. The Biblical author has domesticated the primeval myth with less humor but also—despite patriarchal elements—with a marginally greater sense of equality between the man and woman, each of which needs the other. Same-sex marriage as a solution to human loneliness had not dawned on the patriarchal thinkers who wrote the Bible, though the Greeks were well aware.

Sex is good and useful and a joy in marriage, but it is not essential to a good marriage. In being asked to extend the blessings of sacramental marriage to same-sex couples, we are not being asked either to approve or disapprove of specific styles of sexual behavior. Rather, we are being asked to expand the borders of the Kingdom of Heaven “on earth as it is in heaven.” We are being asked to wrap the arms of saving grace around fellow sinners so that they may, like us, feel welcomed by the Church and rejoice in the freedom of the gospel to come hand-in-hand with the person they love before the Throne of Grace to receive God’s blessing. We are being asked to take the next forward step beyond nature, philosophy, the Law, custom, and tradition, in the expansion of sacramental ethics.

- BEARING AND RAISING CHILDREN

Plato’s definition of marriage as requiring the procreation of children for its perfection is too narrow. Some men are impotent; some women are barren, but such persons are no less married merely because they cannot produce babies. Some couples agree (for various reasons) not to have children, but we do not question the validity of their marriage.

Our natural, sexual nature precedes our life in grace. Children may be born to people who are not married at all. We are animal creations designed to produce offspring by way of sexual procreation. Sacramental marriage is nature perfected by grace; marriage without a sacramental blessing, however, is no less marriage and no less pleasing to God, whether blessed by children or not.

Same-sex marriages become further blessed when couples adopt children. God is especially pleased when someone adopts one of his orphans. The contrast between the adoption rate by same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples becomes in itself a moral argument in favour of same-sex marriage: In Canada, the overall adoption rate by all kinds of couples is roughly 2.5%, whereas 19.7% of same-sex couples of couples are nurturing children (some, their own children born in a previous opposite-sex relationship, some through surrogacy, some through adoption).¹²

¹² According to Marcel Boudreau, Consulting-Analyst, Advisory Services, Eastern Region, Statistics Canada, the General Social Survey does not ask the question that would distinguish between biological and adopted children in families. Therefore, no statistics are kept on the adoption rate by same-sex couples (email correspondence with the author). In the USA, 4.4% of opposite-sex couples have adopted children, whereas 21.20% of same-sex couples have adopted children, and the trend for same-sex couples to adopt continues upward.

In 2011, according to the most recent statistics available for Canada, there were 64,575 same-sex couples. Of these, 9.4% were nurturing children. 19.7% of the same-sex couples nurturing children were male couples; 80.3% of the same-sex couples nurturing children were female couples.¹³ One significant reason for the higher rate of female same-sex couples nurturing children is that divorced moms brought their children with them from the former opposite-sex marriage to the new same-sex family in which they now live, and it is probably true that motherly instincts incline women, more than men, to want to nurture children.¹⁴

Since same-sex couples cannot procreate children (except by artificial means, such as surrogate pregnancy), the natural human desire to have and raise children results in a higher rate of adoption among same-sex couples than among other-sex couples. Plato and St. Paul's legalist interlocutor failed to ponder the naturalness of same-sex couples when it comes to adopting children. God loves orphans, and he loves people who love orphans.

- THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARRIAGE AND SEXUALITY

No *necessary* relationship exists between marriage *per se* and sexuality. Some people who are not married have sex; some people who are married do not have sex. The charge is false that same-sex marriage would be “unnatural” because sex between partners of the same gender cannot lead to conception (see the adoption statistics mentioned above). By that argument, it would be “unnatural” for naturally barren couples or women during the so-called “safe” (less fertile) days of their menstrual cycle or post-menopausal women to have sex.

¹³ Statistics Canada, *2011 Census of Population*.

¹⁴ According to Lifelong Adoptions, Inc. (Newport Beach, CA), in the USA in the year 2000, about 65,000 children were living with same-sex parents; in the year 2012, about 110,000 children were living with same-sex parents, which shows the upward trend of adoption by same-sex parents, a trend that parallels the Canadian reality. In 2012, there were 94,627 acknowledged same-sex couples in the USA. Presumably, Canada with only 1/9 the population of the USA, has roughly 70% of the rate of same-sex couples of its more populous neighbour to the south because Canada's nation-wide same-sex marriage law is more generous, and has been in place longer than the American State-by-State approach allows. As American laws become more tolerant, more same-sex couples will be acknowledged, and more orphans will be adopted by same-sex couples. In the USA, 72.8% same-sex couples are nurturing their own biological children, and 21.20% are nurturing adopted and step-children, whereas only 4.4% of married opposite-sex couples, and 5.20% of unmarried opposite-sex couples dare nurturing children. Of the same-sex couples nurturing children, 16.5% are female couples, and 3.4% are male couples. Likewise in Canada, female same-sex couples are nurturing children at roughly five times the rate of male same-sex couples. [Statistics of this nature are neither so precise nor so final as they seem; many factors to be considered require us to realize that such scientific analyses are nonetheless impressionistic.]

We “Moderns” who rather too generously congratulate ourselves on having discovered “the joy of sex,”¹⁵ find all such arguments to be both wrong and silly. The sexual appetite, like the appetite for food, sleep, the natural environment, and some others, is good and wholesome in and of itself, conducive to joy in living, and facilitates interpersonal communication. The pleasure of sex is healthful in that it relaxes us from our ever-present stresses: “More sex, less stress.” Human sexuality, one of the Creator’s best inventions, is among the choicest gifts for which we ought daily to praise and thank the Lord!¹⁶

If St. Paul’s legal-minded critic of Greek culture not only judged idolatrous Greek sexual behavior to be bad theology but also found distasteful specific sex acts between persons of the same gender, calling them “unnatural” and “shameless,” then this aesthetic judgment, too, is unfounded. We misread scripture if we find there a singling out of specific sex-acts for disapproval. The Hebrew judgment against gentile sexuality was more cultural (“We are not like them”) and theological (“They worship idols by way of temple prostitutes”) than it was a matter of sexual aesthetics.

If you, “o Man,” find thoughts about specific same-sex sex-acts distasteful or are offended by “screaming queens” showing off in-your-face as part of a Gay Pride parade or any of a number of other possible negative aesthetic reactions, then that is as it may be; however, your sexual aesthetics is a matter different from what we are discussing. We are discussing whether two people dearly in love with one another, who happen to be of like gender, may be sacramentally blessed by the Church in holy matrimony. Does the Lord love and receive them “just as they are?” (And, by the way, are not any number of blatant in-your-face expressions of heterosexuality rife within our culture equally aesthetically distasteful?)

¹⁵ Part of overcoming the sexual repression that we have inherited from Roman law and our Puritan forbears, and of healing the alienation between ourselves and those who are sexually “other,” is the recovery of the awareness of the sexual freedom of the Anglo-Saxons and ancient Celts. Worthy of mention is also the exquisite view of sexuality expressed in the biblical *Song of Songs*, said to have been written by Solomon, a king of Israel with 700 wives and 300 concubines, who nevertheless was romantically enraptured with the Shulamite, his latest heart-throb in the *Song*. Thanks alike to the rabbis and the medieval theologians, the literal-historical meaning of *Canticles* has been obscured by centuries of allegorization.

¹⁶ In so saying, no intention to disparage the charisma of celibacy is intended. Marriage and non-marriage (celibacy) alike can—and ought to be—received as “gifts” (*charismata*) of God (1 Cor 7:7). The balance of historic opinion, nonetheless, requires to be righted: More theologians have written longer dissertations in favour of celibacy than in praise of the sexual life. As a result, married people in the Church are said to have taken the lower path, as if marriage did not present equivalent challenges, although different from celibacy.

For people in love, whether they be same-sex or opposite-sex lovers, the expression and communication of their love in terms of specific sex acts seem entirely natural to them and altogether appropriate—the opposite of “shameful” and “unnatural.” Specific sex acts usual among same-sex couples are no less a part of the sexual repertoire of heterosexual lovers. Any sexual play between consenting adults, according to the mutual pleasure and sense of appropriateness of the individuals involved, is acceptable. Some percent of the human family is naturally homosexual.¹⁷ Increasing awareness of this fact by exclusively “straight” and formerly intolerant persons, combined with the “familiarity effect” (personal acquaintance with homosexual individuals and same-sex couples), is a well documented cause of greater tolerance in these matters.

In the patriarchal perspective of the authors of scripture, the mutual sexuality of “consenting adults” was only marginally in the picture. Isaac and Rebekah may have understood it, and Jonathan and David, but scripture (apart from the *Song of Songs*) is largely silent on the subject of sexuality *per se*. Scripture does not peep into people’s bedrooms, and neither should the Church. Objection to same-sex marriage on the grounds that specific acts of same-sex behavior are “unnatural” and “shameful” perversions of sex, is a statement of prejudicial bias, possibly homophobic fear regarding one’s own latent sexual complexity, and perhaps an indication of limited experience and a lack of sexual imagination on the part of the critic.¹⁸ None of this is relevant to a discussion of sacramental marriage.

¹⁷ The problem for some people with sex of all kinds is that it is *too natural*. Animals do sex, so that people desiring to be “spiritual” take Gnostic offense in their rejection of our God-created animal-sexual natures. Wild animals in nature of many species behave sexually across the full spectrum of sexual potential: heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual. See Bruce Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999). Estimates of the percent of humans who are homosexual range widely from 3 percent to 19 percent. Because homosexuals are a marginalized minority, many are hesitant to identify themselves according to their actual sexual nature and nurture. See Ellen Samuels, *Fantasies of Identification: Disability, Gender, Race* (New York University Press, 2014). Decisions regarding the Church’s sacramental theology of marriage should be made on the basis of the gospel, not on the basis of ever-fluctuating notions of the nature and nurture of sexuality.

¹⁸ The attempt of Bible translators to find reference to specific kinds of homosexual behavior in the words *malakos* and *arsenokoitai* in 1 Cor 6:9 is dubious at best and has resulted in a scramble of misleading over-translations. The primary meaning of *malakos* is “soft.” A negative moral application of the word may mean nothing more than someone who lacks moral backbone (see Liddell & Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. [Oxford, 1940]: 1076-1077). St. Paul seems to have been the first writer to use the word *arsenokoitai*, and writers of Greek after Paul used it very little. A likely vernacular translation might be “Gigolo”—a man expert in feats of the bedroom, whether with male or female partners (see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980]:341. Christian moral theologians ought to continue to counsel against irresponsible sexual behaviors of all kinds. The discussion of sacramental same-sex marriage is a topic different from the discussion of irresponsible sexual behaviors.

▪ WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MARRIAGE AND THE BLESSING OF A RELATIONSHIP?

The wording of this question is ambiguous to my eye: Did you mean (a) the blessing that comes from close personal relationship or (b) a blessing (not sacramental marriage) that might be pronounced on a marriage-like relationship? If the former, enough has already been said; if the latter, why would we want to diminish our sacramental theology by inventing a quasi-sacramental approach to “second-class” marriages, but calling them by a different name? I fear that I have been slow to understand this question.

▪ HOW DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE SACRAMENTALITY OF MARRIAGE?

Christian marriage, although it is not “a gospel sacrament” in the same sense as baptism and the eucharist, can be a divine means of reception of the grace of God. A sacramental transaction between God and humans is “grace added to nature.” The grace and blessing of God ought not to be denied to any persons making their vows before God and in the presence of the Church. The sacraments are for everyone. We do not make some rules for some people, and other rules for other people: We are all one in Christ Jesus. Saints and sinners alike, the fully formed and beginners, anyone seeking the blessing of God and the Church ought to be greeted sacramentally at their wedding.

In blessing sacramentally same-sex marriages, we are blessing persons, not specific sexual acts. *How* couples make love in private is irrelevant to our good will towards them and our desire to help them live their life together with God’s blessing. We are blessing persons who say that they love one another and want to be united before God and the Church in a committed relationship of mutual caring and comfort under the grace of God and within the community of the faithful who daily thank God for the charismas of God’s grace.¹⁹

¹⁹ Coincidentally, in blessing sacramentally same-sex marriages we shall be blessing the entire LGBT community in their distress. “Gay-bashing” is widespread among Canadians and around the world. People who are sexually atypical are a misunderstood and despised minority group who are often physically assaulted and deprived of human and civil rights. By affirming sacramental grace for same-sex married people, we shall be lending our protection to many undefended persons. Failure fully to embrace same-sex married people could prove analogous to the historic Church’s failure through the centuries to protect the Jews: Anti-Jewish theology eventually turned into anti-Semitism, and that failure contributed directly to the rolling Holocaust of the Jews that culminated beyond telling in the 1940s. By refusing to take the part of same-sex couples, we would seem to side with those who believe that “they who do such things deserve to die.” When we, the Church, fail to take our stand with the persecuted and the despised, those who are crucified outside the city’s walls, we fail of our essential purpose as the Church because we fail to take up the cross and follow him who was despised and crucified.

Respectfully submitted

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