

CONCERNS ABOUT *THIS HOLY ESTATE*

by Jacob P. Ellens
parishioner of the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, Napanee, Ontario
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METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

There are several matters concerning the methodology or assumptions underlying the drafting of *This Holy Estate (THE)* which raise questions about the reliability of the final report on which Synod based its initial decision in 2016 to judge that couples of the same sex could legitimately be joined in Holy Matrimony.

1. Resolution to Synod

The wording chosen to put the matter before Synod reads:

“Resolved that:

1. This General Synod declare that Canon XXI (On Marriage in the Church) applies to all persons who are duly qualified by civil law to enter into marriage.” (*THE*, p.59)

We ought to be startled that Synod has chosen to recommend that we redefine Canon XXI to apply to “all persons who are duly qualified by civil law to enter into marriage.” In other words, the Anglican Church is content to depend on a secular state (in its parliament and law courts) to decide who is eligible to enter into a sacramental union ordained by God. It is not implausible to imagine a time when the Canadian state will allow openly polyamorous relations. Will the Anglican Church then follow civil law? But there is no need to imagine future hypothetical changes in marriage. It already is the case in the Anglican Church that most clergy and lay people expect the Church to be more restrictive than the State in declining to marry a couple in which only one member is a Christian while the other is an outspoken atheist, or in which one or both wish to practise an “open marriage.” How could the Anglican Church maintain its spiritual identity if it allowed a secular state, which does not acknowledge God or his laws, to define membership in a Christian marriage?

2. Membership of the Commission on the Marriage Canon

The membership of the commission “consisted of those who, in the view of the officers of the General Synod, demonstrated a capacity to hear and understand the theological diversity represented in the Anglican Church of Canada.” (Biblical Interpretation ... Talking Points For Consultations in The Diocese of Ontario, p.1) Although it is the case that the commissioners referred to, and quoted from, those who hold traditional views of marriage, these traditional views are largely relegated to the footnotes. The entire document is written in one voice, of those who are committed to, or leaning to, same-sex marriage. (Imagine if in this spring’s Ontario election campaign, Kathleen Wynne had ordered that only Liberal candidates could run for office; NDP and Progressive Conservative views would be presented only by Liberal candidates who had satisfied her of their “capacity to hear and understand the [political] diversity represented in” Ontario.) Such an election would be dismissed as void; why should an ecclesiastical commission founded on only one set of views be seen as having any weight?

3. Terms of Reference

The terms of reference given to the commission by General Synod included that the commissioners

were mandated to develop “a biblical and theological rationale for this change in teaching on the nature of Christian marriage.” (*THE* Appendix C: Terms of reference, p.62)

The commissioners have carried out their mandate to write a coherent rationale for same-sex marriage, but it is in their success in satisfying their human masters that they have failed God’s commands. The recurring theme throughout the Scriptures, when it comes to God’s word, is that God speaks and calls on us to listen, to obey, and to live by his Word. The first five books of the Bible (the Torah) see the refrain repeated chapter by chapter: God spoke (or commanded Moses to speak on his behalf) and his people are called to listen and to obey his words. Jesus, when duelling with Satan and resisting his temptations at the beginning of his ministry, challenged Satan by quoting God’s words from Deuteronomy. Jesus answered Satan’s temptations to make bread out of stone: “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God..’” (Matthew 4:4, NRSV, and hereafter)

In authentic Christian theology, it is God (and God’s Word) who always have the final authority over the reader. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews captures this incisively: “Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) The approach of the commissioners is that since the Anglican Church had earlier agreed (2004) that committed same-sex unions have “integrity and sanctity,” there is no need carefully to weigh those biblical passages that call such relationships into question.

The commissioners’ approach is unacceptable. Whenever we study the Scriptures, especially when the Church is seeking to develop a theology of something as fundamental as Christian marriage, our only acceptable posture is to bow communally before God’s Word. Whenever we do so, we must be prepared to change our minds (to be converted through the power of the Holy Spirit) in discerning the sharp edges of God’s Word. What the commissioners have done instead, is to fit (or force) biblical teaching into their preconceived framework. The Church believed at the outset, before a word had been written of the report, that the Bible allows for same-sex unions. The danger for the Anglican Church is that its conclusion is a human construction, a piece of ideology, not faithful theology.

A related methodological matter is found in the starting point given by the commissioners at the outset of their theologizing:

4. The Starting Point

we take three matters as given: first, the authority of Scripture for the church as interpreted in the Anglican tradition; second, the understanding of marriage as articulated within the canons, the *Book of Common Prayer* and other authorized liturgies of the Anglican Church of Canada; third, the Anglican Church of Canada’s synodical affirmation of “the integrity and sanctity of adult, committed, same-sex relationships. (*THE*, p.20)

The commissioners make a grand claim here. They insist that they are committed to all three Anglican foundations: Scripture, Anglican tradition, and the synodical commitment to the sanctity

of same-sex unions. If there are significant differences and tensions between the first two and the last, as we believe there are, we should not be surprised that the commission set out to attempt a large-scale exercise of reinterpretation to neuter the Scriptures and the classical Christian tradition so that both could be seen as allowing the same-sex marriage that the Anglican Church is determined to ratify. We shall see in the next section that such exegesis of Scripture is precisely what the commission has presented to the Anglican Church.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

1. Genesis Creation Accounts

The commissioners proceed to deconstruct, or re-interpret, the meaning and purpose of the creation accounts in the first two chapters of Genesis. Of interest are the questions and the comments posed by the commissioners. Throughout, they sow doubt on the understanding of these stories that are described in the ancient texts and that have been understood, from the beginning, by the Old Testament Hebrews and the Christian Church as teaching that God designed Adam and Eve and the institution of Marriage to be the permanent sexually-based union of a man and a woman (“one flesh”) to rule together as God’s vice-regents over his creation and to procreate and nourish the children with whom He would bless their physical union.

The commissioners treat the two creation accounts as though they were mysteriously separate and disconnected from each other, rather than complementary accounts of the same story, as traditionally understood by the Church. It is striking in the commissioners’ discussion of the first creation account, in which God calls on humans to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis: 1:28), that they claim that in this passage, “sexuality and procreation are implied as a means of fulfilling this commission,” but “there is no explicit reference to marriage (nor to family) as a necessary agent for procreation.”(*THE*, p.31)

First Creation Account

Let us read the pertinent parts of the first creation account:

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the

cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”(Genesis 1:20-28)

It seems odd for the commissioners to suggest that “sexuality and procreation are implied” in this account. Only implied? Actually, the biblical language throughout concerns being fruitful and multiplying, generating and reproducing. To the teeming fish and the swarming birds, God commands that they “be fruitful and multiply ...”(Genesis 1:22) Then came humans, whom God created “in his image” and goes on to say that “male and female he created them.”(Genesis 1:27) God’s command to male and female humankind was that they “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion” over everything living on the earth.(Genesis 1:28) It is noteworthy that after God’s punishment of humans for their rampant sin and disobedience to Him, that following the Flood, Noah’s surviving family is again commanded by God: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.”(Genesis 9:1)

Second Creation Account

In the second creation account the commissioners see “the question of marriage [as] more relevant.” (*THE*, p.31)

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.”

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. (Genesis 2:18-24)

What the Scriptures recount here is that God has designed and instituted marriage. The institution of marriage is divine, not human. This is one of the reasons the BCP refers to it as Holy Matrimony, “instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency,” with the purposes and constraints set by God. (BCP 1959, p.564)

The commissioners observe that this is “the first mention of marriage in the Bible” (*THE*, p.32), and they do well to observe that in this account we see the first Scriptural record of a “covenant between God and humanity.” (*THE*, p.31)

Unfortunately, the writers fail to note that throughout it is God who is the creator and the main actor. The commissioners believe the “climax of the drama” to be Adam’s bone-of-my-bones speech. In fact, it is not Adam, but God, who is the lead actor: the creator. It is God who judges that “It is not good that the man should be alone.” It is God who causes Adam to fall asleep so he can make a wife from Adam’s rib, suited to him as a perfect complement to his maleness. It is only when Adam sees whom God has made to be his helper that he breaks out in a joyful doxology, recognising in his wife the marvel of God’s design of sexual difference and complementarity. This is Adam’s response to God’s speaking his Word in creation.

They rightly see verses 23 and 24 (“Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.’ Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh”) as important, but then proceed to obscure their plain meaning by imposing on them concepts (largely feminist and sociological), foreign to the Scriptures. First, they find it “interesting” because the verse “makes no explicit reference to procreation as part of the intent of marriage.”(*THE*, p. 32) Apart from the fact, raised earlier, that the Church has always read the two creation accounts together, the first providing ample references to procreation, how can these scholars obscure the fact that a man and a woman becoming “one flesh” is about sexual intercourse and the procreation that results from it? It is safe to say that since lay people began to read the Bible for themselves in the sixteenth century, even young people, although deprived of elaborate sex education, grasped that these words – one flesh – meant sexual intercourse. It is sad that seasoned scholars today find this all so confusing.

To further their agenda to make sexual complementarity seem inessential to marriage, the commissioners argue that it was not so that the man and woman could procreate that God created woman, but for “companionship” to alleviate “the aloneness” of Adam. (*THE*, p.32) The story told in Genesis 2 (built on the first chapter) is extraordinary, but it also is quite clear. God made humans male and female. Adam, who was created first, was lonely, and God satisfied his loneliness, not by another man, nor even by walking and talking with God in the Garden, but by making woman, a companion suited to him, whose companionship would be fully expressed in sexual union. That sexual union was not incidental to marriage; it was foundational.

The commissioners claim to find another confusion in the verse: “Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24) Using feminist theology they point out that normally in ancient Israel, it was the woman who left her family for marriage, not a man. They question whether this verse was actually applied in ancient Jewish marriage and suggest that “the voice in the text is that of the narrator (rather than God)” and that it need not be taken as prescriptive, that is, as a command from God. (*THE*, p.32)

It is becoming clear, as we read the commissioners’ report, that the writers have the goal of

separating marriage from procreation and from the biblically-based complementarity of a man and woman joined sexually as “one flesh.” Their agenda is seen in their treatment of Jesus’ reply to the Pharisees about whether it is legitimate, as Moses allowed, to divorce. The Scriptural passage is of great importance:

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” (Mark 10:2-9)

It is noteworthy that the commissioners do not acknowledge that Jesus, does in fact, recognise that what God has ordained “from the beginning of creation” *is prescriptive*. Jesus quotes from Genesis that “God made them male and female” (v6) and that in marrying, “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’... Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”(v7-9) The commissioners rightly note that the Pharisees were trying to entrap Jesus, but they simply make the unsupported assertion that “Jesus is therefore not stating a timeless doctrine of marriage, but rather giving a pastoral (and political) response to a particular set of practices.”(*THE*, p.33) Jesus’ disciples would have recognised that Jesus was doing what he had told them: he had not come to abrogate God’s Law, but to fulfill it. (Matthew 5:17-18) This entailed going back to “the beginning of creation,” to remind them of God’s original intent for marriage. It would be hard to state a more “timeless doctrine of marriage”(*THE*, p.33) than Jesus made at this point.

This is a case in which the commissioners are so intent on setting out a rationale for same-sex marriage that they bend themselves into grotesque shapes to have the Scriptures say what they wish them to say. It does not concern the writers that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, confirmed God’s original teaching that marriage is the permanent union of a man and woman becoming “one flesh.” As the rest of their document shows, they feel very comfortable acting as gods who make their own definition of marriage and do so by reinterpreting biblical writers in ways never contemplated by the biblical authors themselves.

2. Romans 1 and Natural Law

A second Scriptural passage that always has been understood to condemn same-sex relationships is found in the writing of St. Paul in Romans chapter 1. The commissioners take on natural law arguments that reject same-sex relations as “a perversion of natural law or creation order.”(*THE*, p.34) The authors’ contention about this passage is three-fold. First, that Paul’s depiction of same-sex intercourse as “unnatural” should not be confused with “gut-level revulsion” to same-sex practices—a fair point. Second, for Paul ‘contrary to nature’ is not necessarily a synonym for sinful, and they show that elsewhere, Paul uses the same Greek term in a way that has no connotation of sin; and third, that Paul’s concern in this passage “is not sexuality, but self-righteousness.”(*THE*, p.35)

It is necessary to reread what Paul wrote in chapter 1 of Romans:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they are without excuse; for though they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done. They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters,[a] insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious toward parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. They know God's decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but even applaud others who practice them. (Romans 1:18-32)

A fair reading of the text shows how irrelevant it is for the commissioners to argue, as they do, that describing same-sex intercourse as “unnatural” does not necessarily mean sinful. This is a point that has no relation to the text. St. Paul talks of both women and men exchanging “natural intercourse for unnatural” and refers to these acts as signs of “degrading passions.” Further, he condemns men for “committ[ing] shameless acts with men and receiv[ing] in their own persons the due penalty for their error.” (Romans 1:26-27) An honest reading of Paul's argument illustrates why it is that the Christian Church has always understood that homosexual acts are sinful, that is, contrary to God's Law and to the sexual order He has laid down for his people. The commissioners' reading of this text more closely resembles special pleading for an agenda than faithful exegesis of Holy Scripture.

The third point made by the commissioners is probably the weightiest one. They conclude that “Paul's concern in the passage is not sexuality, but self-righteousness.” They rightly argue that the *main point* of this passage is not judgement on same-sex practices. It is more accurate to argue, however, that Paul's main concern is idolatry. In verses 18 to 23, Paul speaks in ways reminiscent of Psalm 19 of the glory of God as the Creator of all, whose power, wisdom, and glory can be seen

everywhere in the things he has created. Paul then grieves that humans closed their eyes to God's majesty and laws, and they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools; and they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles. (Romans 1:22-23)

Sinful men and women make idols out of their own imagination and serve creatures rather than God, our Creator. This is the idolatry we repent of when, in the words of the BCP, we ask forgiveness for following "the devices and desires of our own hearts."

It is in the context of warnings of idolatry that the rest of the passage follows. Paul lists some twenty sins as illustrations of humans living without honouring or acknowledging God and his laws. Paul *begins with same-sex sins*: "for this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another." (Romans 1:26-27) The sins Paul lists include such things as gossiping, envy and jealousy.

The commissioners rightly remind conservative Christians that if they are blind to their own sins, but only point an accusing finger at those engaging in same-sex practices, they err in self-righteousness.

However, the commissioners also err. An honest reading of the text should lead them to acknowledge that while Paul's main point in this passage is not sexuality, he certainly does condemn same-sex relations in this passage and he makes this sin the first of the twenty that he warns against.

The Anglican Church is in great need of a full and honest listening to the Scriptures; we need to live, as Christ reminded us, by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, not by our own devices or agendas.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE BY ANALOGY

The heart of *THE*, from pages 36 to 57, is an attempt to provide a biblical rationale for same-sex marriage. The authors assert that what they consider the essentials in heterosexual marriage – companionship, support, and faithful love – can also be found in same-sex relationships. They see in the biblical theological tradition, "two clusters of meaning One is grounded in the biblical creation accounts, a tradition that celebrates heterosexual love both as God's gift of companionship and the means of human procreation. The other represents a "broadening of marriage" as an exclusive covenant of Christian love, grounded in biblical redemption [which they see grounded in a text such as Ephesians 5: 32]." (*THE*, p.47) The latter they see as equally applicable to same-sex couples as to male-female couples.

The commissioners have taken up the question (and made it their argument) that "same-sex couples may be adopted into an existing institution of marriage, enriching and expanding its

meaning”(THE, p.53) It is their thesis that: “A theological analogy to this process of adoption is that of the inclusion of the Gentiles within the original covenant with Israel.”(THE, p.53)

They see “significant structural parallels between the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Old Testament Covenant and the “full inclusion of gays and lesbians in the church.”(THE, p.53) The authors assert that “in both cases there is a long history in which it was believed that a particular grace was given only to one group of people to the exclusion of others” and in both cases there is a recognition that God’ grace is broader than we had assumed, and that those who had been excluded are now being invited in”(THE, pp.53-54)

Before we agree that inclusion of same-sex couples in marriage is analogous to the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s covenant with the children of Abraham, we need to read what the Scriptures tell us about Gentile inclusion. The first Scriptural promise of inclusion of the Gentiles, is given at the very instance God made his covenant with Abraham to make his descendants God’s chosen people, adding, and “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”(Genesis 12:3) When God restated his promise to Abraham at the time of demanding the sacrifice of Isaac, God again promised to make Abraham a great nation and again added that by him “all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves.”(Genesis 22:18)

The Psalms are full of references to the claims of God over all the nations (the Gentiles) and enjoin the peoples to shout and clap their hands to acclaim God: “Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy...God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.”(Psalm 47:1,8-9) The prophets foretold that the Gentiles would, in the culmination of history, be joined to the Israelites to be God’s people. The prophet Zechariah foretold: “Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and shall be my people”(Zechariah 2:11) Zechariah added later: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”(Zechariah 8:23)

The New Testament shows how God kept his promise to include the Gentiles into the covenant he first made with the Patriarch Abraham. At the very beginning of the account of Jesus’ birth, Simeon pronounced that this baby would be a light to the Gentiles (Luke 2). Jesus, in his earthly ministry, explored frequently the theme that God was calling the Gentiles at the time that Jewish leaders appeared deaf to the Messiah’s claims. One such poignant example is Jesus’ encounter in Capernaum with the Roman centurion who asked Jesus just to speak one word to heal his servant. The Gospel recounts that:

When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.(Matthew 8:10-12)

The book of Acts records, what to so many Jews seemed astounding, that the Messiah had indeed

come for the Gentiles as for the Jews. God gave Peter a particular vision that it was God's intention at this time in history to break away from the clean and unclean distinction that God had decreed through Moses, separating Jews and Gentiles. So Peter was given the vision of the sheet coming down from heaven of clean and unclean animals mixed indiscriminately together with the voice calling to Peter, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." (Acts 10:13) When Peter had gone to the house of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, he preached the Gospel of the coming of the Saviour to his Gentile household, which believed the message:

Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.... While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.... (Acts 10:34-35;44-48)

Is the analogy linking the inclusion of same-sex couples into sacramental marriage with the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's covenant with Israel valid? While the entire Bible points to the inclusion of Gentiles into salvation through the promised Messiah, the same Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, never speaks of homosexual relations other than to condemn them as contrary to God's Law. The commissioners' hope to provide a biblical rationale for the marriage of same-sex couples falls apart; their plan is more wishful thinking than analogy.

THE NEGLECT OF GOD'S LAWS IN THIS HOLY ESTATE

The primary reason that the authors of *THE* fail to provide a reliable Scriptural rationale for same-sex marriage, is two-fold: a. they fail to recognise how integrally the New Testament is rooted in the story of the Old Testament; and b. they disregard the unchanging nature of God's Moral Law, including God's directives concerning marriage.

The strongest illustration of the way *THE* severs the New Testament from the Old Testament, is its sleight-of-hand in claiming "a broadening of marriage as an exclusive covenant of Christian love, grounded in biblical redemption" (*THE*, p.47), as though the marriage Paul speaks of in Ephesians 5:32 were distinct from God's original design of marriage between a man and woman, based on becoming one flesh. The commissioners claim to be "broadening" marriage; instead they change it to become something fundamentally unlike the original. No one could be as surprised at the trick of language used by the commissioners, as St. Paul himself, who in his introduction to Ephesians 5, warns against immorality (vs. 1-20), which we know he recognised to include homosexual practices.

It is not the case that proponents of the traditional teaching about marriage need to rest their opposition to same-sex marriage on one of six bullet texts (*Talking Points*, p.3). Rather, traditional Anglicans call on the Anglican Church to listen seriously to what God's Law actually says about marriage. In the first instance, that law is not a negative prohibition against illicit same-sex relations, but the positive ordinance of marriage we already have discussed, as set out in the

Genesis creation account(s), reaffirmed by our Lord Jesus, and taught for two millennia by the Christian Church.

The strongest statement of God's Law prohibiting same-sex relations is found not in one verse, but in two chapters of Leviticus, chapters 18 and 20, and rearticulated in several New Testament passages. These chapters, like the rest of the book, are explications of the Ten Commandments. Chapters 18 and 20 deal with sexuality. Tucked between them is chapter 19, which sets out stipulations to provide for the poor and sojourner, to refrain from stealing, not to profane the Name of God, to respect the aged, to use just weights and measurements and, in summary, to love God and our neighbour as ourselves, all directives on how we continue to be called to live in obedience to God. If the Anglican Church disdains the authority of Leviticus 18 and 20 on sexuality, on what grounds does it accept the authority of chapter 19 on social justice?

The material on sexual morality is prefaced by a strong introduction informing the Israelites (and us) that the various laws have in common an injunction that God's people are to live a life of holy consecration to God, in which God's people are to live *contra mundum*, separate from, and contrary to, the spirit of the age. The opening paragraph of chapter 18 is God's word to Moses:

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: I am the Lord your God. You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the Lord your God. You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 18:1-5)

God, speaking through Moses in chapter 18, highlighted five sins that had been rife among both the Egyptians and the Canaanites, as being especially heinous: incest, adultery, sacrificing children to Molech (an Ammonite fertility god), homosexual practices, and bestiality. God's word is clear. The Israelites (and we) are to keep God's "statutes and ordinances" and by doing so we "shall live." (Leviticus 18:5) The fundamental ordinance in Leviticus 18 is God's ordinance of marriage, instituted from the beginning as the intimate union of a man and a woman. For that reason, the prohibition of homosexual relations is simple and without exception: "*You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination*" (Leviticus 18:22). In Leviticus 20 the prohibitions against homosexual practices as well as incest, adultery, and bestiality are repeated. In each instance these crimes are punished with the death penalty to cleanse the nation of Israel from a pollution that undermined the holy ordinance of marriage designed by God "at the beginning."

It is bewildering that our Synod in 2016 so casually disregarded God's Law about marriage. Synod apparently felt that God's teaching about marriage consisted of archaic verses about sexual purity of little but antiquarian interest today. We need to read again the importance God attaches to the judgement he brings on those who disregard his Moral Law. God spoke most clearly that the sins of incest, adultery, child sacrifice, homosexual practices, and bestiality were, in particular, those that He was punishing:

Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for by all these practices the nations I am casting out before you have defiled themselves. Thus the land became defiled; and I

punished it for its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. But you shall keep my statutes and my ordinances and commit none of these abominations, ... otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nation that was before you. For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people. So keep my charge not to commit any of these abominations that were done before you, and not to defile yourselves by them: I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 18:24-30)

Anglicans need to heed God's warning that his people must obey his laws and may not take their bearings from the consensus of their culture, neither from the Egyptians and Canaanites, nor from Canada's Parliament and public opinion. God's declaration is that He used the Israelites to expel the Canaanites as punishment for defiling the land with their sexual sins. It is clear that the sexual sins listed in Leviticus are of such weight that sinning against them played a central role in God's story of redemption.

It should be very clear that God's prohibitions against the sexual sins of the Canaanites are emphatic and that they have never been abrogated. The Christian Church early on rejected as heretical the teachings of Marcion (85-160 AD), that Christianity has nothing to do with Judaism and that the God proclaimed by the Law and Prophets is a lower being than the Father of Jesus Christ. The Anglican confessions also agree with the Church catholic that "the Old Testament is not contrary to the New Testament" and that no Christian is free from obedience to the Moral Law.¹

The New Testament writings are of one piece with the Moral Law given in the Old Testament. Our Lord, himself, declared: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished..." (Matthew 5:17-18). Paul spoke similarly at his trial before Felix, saying that: "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets" (Acts 24:14).

The continuity between the sexual laws articulated in Leviticus, and the obedience to them enjoined in the New Testament Church, is seen clearly in Paul's dealings with the Church in Corinth, where he was horrified to learn that the Corinthian Christians had failed to censure a church member living in an incestuous relationship. Paul wrote:

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?...now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or robber. Do not even eat with such a one. For what have I to do with

¹ "Article VII, "Of the Old Testament," *Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer* (Cambridge, 1959) p. 701.

judging those outside? Is it not those who are inside that you are to judge? God will judge those outside. “Drive out the wicked person from among you.”(I Corinthians 5:1-2;11-13)

Paul was not instituting a new practice or law among Christians. His horror at the Corinthian acceptance of a fellow Christian living in an incestuous relationship was the horror God expressed to Moses in Leviticus 18:8, and the penalty was similar. Paul charged: “Drive out the wicked person from among you.” His precedent was the Mosaic Law: “For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people.”(Leviticus 18:29)

One of the striking things about Synod’s response to Paul’s teaching is that instead of listening to, and wrestling with, what Paul wrote about sexuality, the Synod devoted its energy to trying to debunk what Paul wrote. Synod tied itself into theological knots arguing that Paul really did not mean to say what he appears to say and what he has been understood to say for two millennia. Let me end with this analysis of Paul’s condemnation of all homosexual acts, by the late Louis Crompton, a gay man and pioneer in queer studies, in his authoritative book, *Homosexuality and Civilization*:

Some interpreters, seeking to mitigate Paul’s harshness, have read the passage [in Romans 1] as condemning not homosexuals generally but only heterosexual men and women who experimented with homosexuality. According to this interpretation, Paul’s words are not directed at ‘bona fide’ homosexuals in committed relationships. But such a reading, however well-intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical. Nowhere does Paul or any other Jewish writer of this period imply the least acceptance of same-sex relations under any circumstances. The idea that homosexuals might be redeemed by mutual devotion would have been wholly foreign to Paul or any Jew or early Christian.²

Sadly, it is precisely on such an unhistorical reading of homosexual relations in Antiquity that the Synod in 2016 based its acceptance of same-sex marriage. Our own bishop in the Diocese of Ontario, attempting to persuade parishioners in his diocese to accede to the synodical judgement, concluded his Bishop’s Letter to us stating that we ought to accept homosexual marriage as a new normal, on the grounds that such homosexual unions are monogamous.³ Why does our bishop think that monogamy sanctifies such relationships? Presumably, because God in the Creation and in his Law instituted marriage from the beginning to be monogamous, as set out first in Genesis and rearticulated by Jesus, the Apostles, and the early Church. But the same Law declares homosexual acts to be “an abomination.” Synod’s reasoning is incoherent on logical grounds as well as being unscriptural.

In his great book, *Against Heresies*, the Church Father Irenaeus (c.130-202) described Marcion as the “only one who has dared openly to mutilate the Scriptures” for physically removing

² Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilization* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), p 114.

³ Letter of the Anglican Bishop of Ontario to the churches in the Diocese of Ontario, 15 July 2016.

passages of Paul's letters that spoke of God the Father as the Father of Jesus Christ.⁴ Contemporary Anglican exegetes of Scripture are more genteel. They mildly assert that for "some people same-sex attraction is the most 'natural' thing." (*THE*, p.35) It is assumed that the conclusions of evolutionary psychology should carry more weight than the teachings of the Scriptures.

It must be noted that when the Church makes moral decisions that give more weight to contemporary social science than to the Scriptures there will be repercussions that will go well beyond our decision on whether same-sex couples may be given a Christian marriage. One example, outside of same-sex attraction, will suffice. Jesus warned that if a man lusts after a woman, he has committed adultery with her in his heart (Matthew 5:28). According to evolutionary biology and psychology, it is entirely normal for a man to lust. The Anglican Church is well along the way of losing the ability to have anything distinctively biblical to say about contemporary moral issues because it has compromised its respect for the authority of Scripture.

We need to think about that when, at the next worship service we attend, the reader of the Old Testament lesson or of the Epistle, concludes with: "the word of the Lord," and we respond, by reflex, with: "Thanks be to God!" What are we claiming about the authority of Scripture?

⁴ James R. Payton, Jr., *Irenaeus on the Christian Faith: A Condensation of Against Heresies* (Eugene, OR, 2011), p. 39.