



HOMOSEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE EQUALITY

Historical Considerations, Scientific Opinion, Society Readiness, Anglican Church of Canada's Marriage Commission, and the Opinions of Clergy in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

Abstract

The church was not always hostile towards homosexuals and same-sex marriage. The experiences we gain in the society in which we live influence our decision making as we reflect upon scripture, reason and tradition within the Anglican Church. The Anglican Church of Canada may be about to undergo radical change in its Marriage Canon and the majority of clergy in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador appear to be ready to accept the change.

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Introduction

A discussion of homosexuality and same-sex marriage within the universal church would be a daunting task to undertake, beyond the scope of this dissertation. Even a discussion of the topic within the Anglican Communion would require extensive research that could result in volumes. The intent of the dissertation is to more fully appreciate the position of clergy in the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador towards marriage equality; however, it is impossible to divorce the discussion of the local Anglican clergy from events within the national Anglican Church, the wider Anglican Communion and the experience of gay and lesbian Christians throughout the centuries. A survey to ascertain the opinions of clergy within the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador was conducted in the fall of 2018.

Within the Anglican Church of Canada, a couple who have made the vows outlined in the marriage ceremony, sign the marriage register which states that they...

hereby declare that we intend to enter into marriage which we acknowledge to be a union in faithful love, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for better or for worse, until we are separated by death.¹

This union may currently be entered into by opposite-sex couples only in the majority of Canadian Anglican Dioceses. The 2016 Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada voted to accept a motion to allow for marriage equality within the church. As this change would be a change in doctrine,

¹ https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Marriage_Canon_REPORT_15Sept22.pdf 25. (accessed November 17, 2018).

the motion, as per the church's constitution, must be accepted in a subsequent Synod. The resolution is to come to the floor again in the July 2019 Synod.

In the worldwide Anglican Communion, there has been and continues to be considerable discussion regarding marriage equality and sexuality in general. The movement for acceptance of marriage equality has *not* been endorsed by the majority of churches within the communion and in fact the suggestion of extending marriage equality has led to much division and schism, resulting in the rise of splinter groups such as the Anglican Network and the shunning of some member churches in the communion by more conservative churches.

In Western nations such as Canada, Great Britain, and the United States marriage equality has been enshrined into law by the civil authority; however, no faith communities have been compelled to comply with civil legislation as the right of religious bodies to deny marriage equality has been enshrined into law. The Anglican Church of Canada has wrestled with the issue of marriage equality for some years, especially during the 2013 and 2016 General Synods. No matter what the outcome of the upcoming vote in the Canadian Anglican Church, the issue will prove to be divisive, leaving some to feel that they have been abandoned by their faith community. Undoubtedly, some will disassociate from the church.

A decision by the Canadian Church to endorse marriage equality will likely lead to the isolation of the Canadian Church within the Anglican Communion and may negatively impact ecumenical relations with some denominations, most notably the Roman Catholic Church. Endorsement of marriage equality may lead to further schism in the Canadian Church, especially in Aboriginal Dioceses where the church leadership has been most vocal in its opposition. A

decision against marriage equality by the National Synod will impact individual Anglicans and Dioceses, resulting in some Diocesan Synods being called to decide if the Diocese will endorse local provisions for marriage equality despite a negative decision reached in the National Synod. A local option currently exists in some Canadian Dioceses such as New Westminster. Bishop Geoffrey Peddle of the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador has announced plans for a Synod to be held on September 28th, 2019 to decide upon the issue of marriage equality within the Diocese.

The topic of marriage equality is one which prompts much debate and controversy. Some within the church cannot even begin to enter into debate, for to them the topic itself is malevolent, while others see it as but an ongoing progression of God's loving acts of salvation. Many people in secular Western societies view faith communities as being backward and no longer relevant, often using the refusal of faith communities to accept marriage equality as evidence to support their belief.

Chapter 1: Historical Overview of the Church's Traditional Position on Homosexuality and Same-sex Committed Relationships

Upon pondering the current position of the vast majority of churches, one might ask what the historical stance of the church has been regarding homosexuality, marriage in general and marriage of homosexual couples in particular. A lens into the past may provide one with insights that could inform and assist the current church in the struggle to come to terms with homosexuality and same-sex marriage. This dissertation begins with the historical record and acknowledges reliance upon the research of one particular scholar, namely John Boswell, who set out to show that marriage of homosexual couples was widely practiced in the early Christian society and in the church itself for a substantial period. Boswell offers considerable evidence to substantiate his position. Though his evidence may be rebuffed by critics, Boswell indeed presented a well-documented argument.

“Only a naïve and ill-informed optimism assumes that any word or expression in one language can be accurately rendered in another.”² So begins Boswell in his text *Same Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*. Language conveys meaning, but most important words spoken in one language cannot always capture their intended meaning in another. Inuktitut has fifty-two words to describe the referent of the single English word “snow”.³ Our single word “snow” can hardly convey meaning to a traditional Inuit hunter. Words within a language may not always convey the same meaning from one generation to another, for language and meaning are altered over time.

² John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe* (New York: Vintage Books, A Division of Random House, Inc., 1994), 3.

³ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/inuktitut-words-for-snow-and-ice> (accessed September 12, 2018).

An obvious example is the word “awful”, which today, when used as an adjective, means something bad or unpleasant, but in the past, it was used to describe something full of wonder and beyond our ability to comprehend, as in God’s awful throne. The English lexicon is wrought with words that convey a multiplicity of meanings, for example, the word “love”. We may say that it is desirable to love one’s sibling, but to be “in love” with that sibling would be considered unacceptable. An amusing story that can illustrate the complexity and misunderstanding that may arise with words follows. A teacher told of a boy, who despite all her attempts to explain the concept of “carrying” in arithmetic, was about to give up in frustration, when another child sitting beside him told him to “lug it”, thus enabling the other child to grasp the meaning immediately.

The task of coming to an accurate understanding of same-sex ceremonies performed in another language centuries ago is daunting. This is what Boswell sets out to discover in his research as he attempts to demonstrate that in the ancient church there were celebrations to acknowledge same-gendered couples comparable to heterosexual marriage. His comprehension of many ancient languages enabled him to determine the intended meaning behind words used in ancient ceremonies.

The reader of an ancient text must attempt to immerse himself into the context of the time in which the text was written in order to come to an awareness of the original meaning intended. Regarding the word “marriage”, Boswell says,

It is nearly impossible to formulate in a precise and generally acceptable way what is meant by “marriage,” – i.e., to say that this or that premodern arrangement is equivalent to modern marriage.⁴

Modern marriage in the West is focused on the idea that two people meet, fall in love and then marry. There is ambivalence about a precise definition of modern marriage, for within a modern marriage “even the two parties involved in a long-standing relationship often disagree...”⁵ Formerly in the West and still in many parts of today’s world, marriage was more of a contractual arrangement. Today in the West it is possible to describe marriage as a...

permanent and exclusive union between two people, which would produce legitimate children if they chose to have children, and which creates mutual rights and responsibilities, legal, economic, and moral, although these vary by couple and jurisdiction.⁶

Boswell explains that this would fit most understandings of marriage in the ancient world; however, the initial basis of the forming of the relationship rarely involved the emotion of love, but instead was concerned with the acquisition and distribution of property.⁷ Feelings of affection were more often reserved for a concubine who would, in fact, be recognized by the community, but would not hold property or inheritance rights, and would hold an inferior status to that of a wife.⁸

⁴ John Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*, 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 - 31.

An understanding of the words “brother” and “brotherhood” in both ancient and modern societies is of relevance when exploring the possibility of ancient same-sex marriages. In Boswell’s opinion, a same-sex couple pledging a commitment to each other in what today would be analogous to marriage were often within ancient ceremonies referred to as brothers. Boswell concludes in his research that this did not imply adoption, for the individuals involved were most often of equal status and were close in age, and furthermore within the church, all Christians were to be regarded as belonging to a brotherhood.⁹

Within languages, words or phrases may be used to convey a meaning that would be lost in translation. Boswell uses the English example “to sleep with” to illustrate how intended meaning would be lost with a direct translation. Certainly, the intent of what is meant by the aforementioned phrase “to sleep with” would not be conveyed with a direct translation into another language. This may also happen in reverse, as when the intended meaning is obscured when translating from another language into English. Boswell explains that a direct translation into English from the Greek, Latin or Slavic of an ancient Christian ceremony in which two males “become brothers” or “make brotherhood” does not mean they become blood brothers, siblings or related by adoption.¹⁰ The meaning in English of ‘brotherhood’ conveys a relationship of fraternity and is non-sexual. Boswell explains, it “... seems inescapably clear the meaning of the nouns to contemporaries were ‘lover’, and ‘form an erotic union’ respectively,” hence the direct

⁹ Ibid., 60 – 70.

¹⁰ Ibid., 19 & 193 - 195.

translation in English is inaccurate, as it does not convey the original meaning that is sexual rather than fraternal.¹¹

Those who argue against marriage equality often put forward the belief that the purpose of marriage has remained unchanged since God first ordained it. The notion that the purpose of marriage has been unaltered is erroneous. Boswell explains that the notion of romantic love as being the impetus for marriage is a relatively new phenomenon that has arisen in Western societies. Marriage throughout much of Western history has been more about preserving or increasing the wealth of families, ensuring offspring, or to form and secure alliances between families, tribes, and nations.¹² The idea of two people meeting, falling in love, and then deciding for themselves that they would unite in marriage arose in Western societies and is still far from being adopted by many cultures in which families still decide and arrange marriages, all without the input of the couple to be wed.

Ancient Western societies often practiced a more laissez-faire approach to relationships, albeit one in which men played a dominant and powerful role with women having little if any say in the matter. Boswell describes four types of heterosexual couples in the ancient Mediterranean basin: (1) use, (2) concubinage, (3) marriage and (4) romance.¹³

The first form, that of “use”, would involve a male who would merely use female servants or slaves for sexual gratification. In such a relationship, the woman had no rights or legal recourse. Boswell notes that a sterile wife might lend a female slave to her husband to ensure

¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹² Ibid., 28 - 52.

¹³ Ibid., 29.

progeny.¹⁴ The story of Sarah giving her servant Hagar to Abraham to father a child would be familiar to both Christians and Jews. The second type of heterosexual relationship, that of concubinage, was acceptable and legal in ancient cultures. The concubine held certain privileges and rights, but had a lower status than that of a wife. Solomon was recorded as having three hundred concubines. Concubinage was practiced within the ancient church, as even St. Augustine was known to have had a concubine for fifteen years.¹⁵ Marriage, the third type of heterosexual relation, was afforded to those women of highest social standing and wealth, but might be polygamous. The fourth type of relationship that existed in antiquity was that of romance. In such a relationship the partners might not be married to each other, and in fact each could be married to other persons.¹⁶ Such relationships existed because the two individuals were attracted to each other and were not formed as a result of economic or social status considerations.

In the ancient West, it was possible for men who possessed wealth and power to be involved in all four types of relationships at one time. Still, in reality, the ancient norm for the majority of relationships was two partners in a heterosexual relationship. Such relationships were the norm for the lower classes and were...

informal and presumably undertaken chiefly for reasons of social attachment, sexual fulfillment, a desire for offspring, or economic support but relatively late in European history such unions were rarely recognized by law or accorded much public significance.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 31 & 110.

¹⁶ Ibid., 39 - 40.

¹⁷ Ibid., 35.

Based upon the historical record, the argument that marriage itself has been a stable institution throughout history does not hold weight. It is evident that within the West the notion of marriage as a legal institution between two persons formed as a result of mutual emotion and sexual attraction and affection is a modern concept.

Boswell's research uncovered that same-sex marriage or its equivalent was common and generally accepted in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁸ In the period between 400 B.C.E and 400 C.E., same-sex relationships were more or less equivalent to heterosexual unions. Homosexual relationships in the Greco-Roman world were "more fluid and less legalistic" compared to heterosexual relationships as they did not have the division of property among descendants to consider.¹⁹ The need to secure property within the family was paramount; thus heterosexual marriage contracts were more carefully recorded and preserved.

Boswell provides evidence from classical Greek literature and myths that during the zenith of Greek culture, homosexual relationships were often considered to be superior to those of heterosexuals. Homosexuality was common, as evidenced in "fiction, poetry, graffiti and so forth".²⁰ Warriors who had same-sex military partners were highly regarded, as it was believed that homosexual soldiers would strive all the more in battle in order to protect their lover.²¹ Certainly, until recently, this notion ran contrary to the opinion of modern Western military leaders who believed that homosexual persons posed a security risk and would threaten the morale of the majority of combatants.²² Just before, and to a greater degree since Boswell's

¹⁸ Ibid., 53 - 107.

¹⁹ Ibid., 54.

²⁰ Ibid., 55.

²¹ Ibid., 61 - 63.

²² Ibid.

death in 1994, many Western nations no longer consider homosexuality as a barrier to active military service. Allowing homosexuals and lesbians to enter the military does not of course automatically mean that such persons do not suffer from discrimination due to their sexual orientation. Noteworthy though is a study of the impact of homosexuals and lesbians in the Canadian Armed Forces which indicated that performance, unit cohesion, or discipline has not declined as a result of inclusion.²³

Boswell explained that the Greeks held an understanding of sexual orientation as innate.²⁴ Such an acknowledgment demonstrates that the ancient Greeks held an understanding of sexual orientation that even surpasses conservative religious groups that adhere to the belief that homosexuality is not innate but rather a life choice. Contrary to popular belief, homosexual relations in ancient Greece were not always between an older male and a much younger youth. Some Greek myths demonstrated that the love interest of male homosexuals could be between those of similar age and status, as in the account of Achilles and Patroclus.²⁵

The Romans afforded homosexual couples a degree of tolerance as well. Some noteworthy Romans, including Hadrian and Antinous, were known to be lovers and Hadrian's homosexuality did not impede the Roman belief that he stood out as amongst the greatest military leaders and emperors, nor did it impede Antinous from being elevated to the status of a God.²⁶ Boswell noted that high ranking Roman males, before heterosexual marriage, often had

²³ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexual_orientation_and_gender_identity_in_military_service (accessed Sept. 12, 2018)

²⁴ Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*, 58 & 59.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 64 - 65.

male slave lovers referred to as “concupinus”.²⁷ Roman heterosexual marriage contracts often gave as a condition of marriage that the husband would not have “concubines of either gender in the house”.²⁸ The inclusion of such a stipulation would lead one to believe that homosexual relations were common in the Roman empire. Boswell states that...

there were also many same-sex couples in the Roman world who lived together permanently, forming unions neither more nor less exclusive than those of the heterosexual couples around them.²⁹

Same-sex lovers in Greece were referred to as lover and beloved, whereas in Rome, the term brother was used to denote same-sex partners who had no actual biological relationship.³⁰ Boswell states that the use of the word brother to describe a homosexual partner indicates that within the relationship there was no subordination or dependency and that the partners were comparable in status.³¹ Boswell concurs with other historians that homosexual relationships in ancient Europe were indeed “...varied and flexible, probably not very different from their heterosexual counterparts” at the time.³²

Boswell surmises from his research that homosexual relationships were considered to be the ideal in the classical period and that the ancients “... generally entertained higher expectations of the fidelity and permanence of homosexual passions than of heterosexual feelings”, and this he feels is contrary to the expectations of modern society.³³ Boswell remarks

²⁷ Ibid., 55.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 65.

³⁰ Ibid., 67.

³¹ Ibid., 69 - 70.

³² Ibid., 71.

³³ Ibid., 74.

that there is evidence that marriage between same-sex individuals did occur in Rome, as he quotes Martial...

The bearded Callistratus married the rugged Afer under the same law by which a woman takes a husband. Torches were carried before him, a bridal veil covered his face, nor was the hymn to you, O god of marriage omitted. A dowry was even agreed upon. Does this not, Rome, seem enough? Do you expect him also to bear a child?³⁴

Boswell notes that on at least two occasions Nero married other males and that by the end of the first century same-sex marriage was common. This was alluded to in a quote of the Roman, Juvenal, who when speaking about a marriage that he was invited to attend, stated that it was, “Nothing special, a friend was marrying another man and a small group is attending” .³⁵

There were references to lesbian marriages during the classical period. The first-century writer, Lucian, in his “Dialogues of the Courtesans”, describes a lesbian relationship in which two women were married.³⁶ Boswell contends that marriage between same-sex individuals during the Roman Empire period demonstrated a departure from the notion of marriage as a contract to procure property and protect inheritance, towards emergence of love as being the impetus for marriage.³⁷

With the eventual emergence of Christianity as the dominant religion in the Roman world, one might expect that same-sex marriage quickly ended. Boswell, however, provides extensive documentation that indicates that such marriages not only occurred in the West during the early Christian period, but were sometimes held within a church. Homosexual persons and their

³⁴ Ibid., 80.

³⁵ Ibid., 80 - 81.

³⁶ Ibid., 82 and www.sacred-texts.com/cla/luc/motc/index.htm (accessed Sept. 15, 2018)

³⁷ Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions*, 83.

relationships were in some cases acknowledged and celebrated, as in the homosexual relationship of the Roman soldiers and saints, Serge and Bacchus, who were martyred for their refusal to deny Christ.³⁸

Until the twelfth century, the church's involvement in any wedding was an appendage to the public acknowledgment of marriage, and there was much diversity in ceremony throughout the Christian world.³⁹ In the fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the church declared marriage to be a sacrament, whereas before then it was more concerned with the blessing of the bride, while marriage ceremonies were often outside the church and were more pagan in origin.⁴⁰ Boswell notes that the church in the East was more involved with marriage largely due to its "more active role in political matters".⁴¹ Boswell affirmed that the notion of marriage for love only began to emerge in the twelfth century and before then it was assumed that love would eventually follow marriage.⁴² Early Greek liturgical offices contained four sacramental ceremonies: "one for heterosexual betrothal, two separate ceremonies for heterosexual marriage and a comparable prayer for uniting two men."⁴³ Boswell states that the earliest records of these ceremonies are from the eighth century, but they were of more ancient origin and were widely used in the Christian world with regional development.⁴⁴ Boswell noted that the second Greek heterosexual

³⁸ Ibid., 147 - 158

³⁹ Ibid., 162.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 164 - 166 & 178.

⁴¹ Ibid., 167.

⁴² Ibid., 164 - 177.

⁴³ Ibid., 178 - 179.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 179.

ceremony and the homosexual ceremony are similar in wording, “suggesting mutual influence or parallel development”.⁴⁵

Given what has already been adduced about veneration of same-sex pairs (especially military saints) in the early church, and a corresponding ambivalence about heterosexual matrimony, it is hardly surprising that there should have been a Christian ceremony solemnizing same-sex unions.⁴⁶

Of note, the prayers in the same-sex union ceremony recalled same-sex couples such as Saints Serge and Bacchus, thus affirming that the relationship had precedence and was acceptable and valid.⁴⁷ Boswell’s ten years of research uncovered seven other same-sex union ceremonies from the twelfth century, including seventeen surviving copies of one such ceremony, from the period, indicating that it was widely used.⁴⁸ Copies of homosexual marriage ceremonies from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries survive today with some incorporating elaborate celebration with...

the burning of candles, the placing of the two parties’ hands on the Gospel, the joining of their right hands, the binding of their hands (or covering their heads) with the priest’s stole, an introductory litany, crowning, the Lord’s prayer, communion, a kiss and sometimes the circling around the altar.⁴⁹

Boswell found no evidence that the ceremonies for same-sex couples involved the exchange of rings, which was not a universal practice even amongst heterosexual couples until at least the thirteenth century.⁵⁰ Boswell notes that homosexual marriage ceremonies did not

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 181 - 182.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 183.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 184 - 185.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 215.

entail the signing of a nuptial agreement and concludes this was because there was no concern for inheritance rights, dowry or verbal expression of consent and may have reflected an attitude that the partners were of equal status when compared to that of heterosexual couples, with the latter possibly involving coercion.⁵¹ In that marriage in and before the medieval period was primarily concerned with the acquisition of property and maintaining inheritance, with the emotional and sexual aspects taking the second stage, homosexual unions may have been seen to be less threatening to the attainment and preservation of wealth.

Indeed, an elaborate ceremony involving two persons of the same gender reflects how the union was seen at the time as being valid and sacred, whereas today many Christians consider same-sex marriage as a complete departure from Christian belief and practice and any sexual act between persons of the same sex to be vile and sinful. Boswell explains that in the medieval mind all sex, even sex between heterosexuals, was inherently sinful.⁵² Marriage then and now, whether between heterosexual or homosexual persons, involves much more than erotism, as two individuals share their entire lives through the years in a relationship recognized by the wider community.

Boswell argues and gives evidence to verify that these ceremonies were not Christianized forms of blood brotherhood, a commemoration of a friendship, or fraternal adoption; for nothing in the ceremonies speak of the aforementioned, and the parallel nature of the ceremonies with those of heterosexual marriages suggest otherwise.⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid., 217.

⁵² Ibid., 188 - 189.

⁵³ Ibid., 193 - 198.

The apparent prevalence of same-sex unions in premodern Europe should not lead one to the erroneous conclusion that such unions were universally accepted. There were locations and periods in which such unions were forbidden, and homosexuals themselves suffered persecution, and some homosexual acts were severely punished. Boswell points out that many Christians would not understand the sexual relationship of same-sex couples such as the sainted couple, Serge and Bacchus, whereas those who were homosexual might see the significance of the relationship of the saints.⁵⁴ Boswell wrote that eventually through legal codes...

some lawmakers were interested in imposing through legislation a narrower and more ascetic sexual morality than had hitherto prevailed in the region, or were simply hostile to same-gender sexuality of any sort.⁵⁵

Boswell noted that,

It is significant that all versions of the code include what appears to be a mechanism for divorce in cases of same-sex unions, suggesting that the practice was widespread, persistent, and tolerated in spite of efforts to eliminate it.⁵⁶

Same-sex unions and relationships were “commonplace” and legal in early Byzantine.⁵⁷ In the ninth century, Basil I, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty who rose from poverty to become the emperor, was known to have had at least two same-sex union ceremonies besides being sexually involved with other men in his lifetime.⁵⁸ Today one might use the euphemism, he “slept his way to the top”.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 218 - 219.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 226.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 229.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 231 - 240.

Boswell concludes that the ceremonies between homosexuals in the ninth century were “parallel to heterosexual marriage”, in that such unions acknowledged the consensual personal relationship between two individuals, had an impact upon the family, were recognized by society and were “respected by descendants”.⁵⁹

Boswell wrote that not until the thirteenth century was there “sustained and effective opposition of those who engaged in homosexual behaviour” and that Western Europe’s opposition and eradication efforts were uncommon in the Byzantine East until 1306 when it was decreed that same-sex unions should be prohibited, “for they are not recognized by the church”.⁶⁰ Those in holy orders (monks) were expected to remain faithful to their chastity vows and refrain from all sex, while “Penalties for lesbian acts, though very rare, appear to have been aimed entirely at nuns, and were surprisingly mild...”.⁶¹ Although most records that describe same-sex relationships were male, there are poems dating from the twelfth century in which pairs of nuns apparently were in permanent sexual relationships.⁶² Boswell provides some examples of what he argues to be contracts of marriage between homosexuals in religious orders, refuting from the context of such documents what some researchers interpret to be business contracts, as the documents consistently speak of living together which he believed would be inconsistent with a normal business transaction.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid., 240 & 246.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 243, 248 - 249.

⁶¹ Ibid., 241 - 242 & 244.

⁶² Ibid., 259.

⁶³ Ibid., 250 - 261.

Intolerance and unacceptance of same-sex unions and homosexuality increased considerably in Western Europe during the fourteenth century and continued unabated certainly into the twentieth century with brief reprisals in parts of Europe in the nineteenth century.

Interestingly Boswell observed that after the emergence of Dante's "Inferno", in which those who engage in homosexual acts were assigned to purgatory, there was a sharp rise in homophobia, persecution, and execution of homosexuals in Western Christendom.⁶⁴ The wave of persecution, although present, was not as pronounced in the Eastern Churches at the time.⁶⁵

As mentioned, open hostility towards homosexuality has mostly been the rule in various Christian denominations from the medieval period up to the present day, with notable exceptions beginning in the latter half of the past century in some areas of the Western world. An examination of Boswell's work might soften attitudes within some denominations but might enforce some negative opinions of fundamentalist Christians who may hold a less than favorable view of the church as it grew in influence and power from the fourth century onwards. Some fundamentalists might use the prevalence of same-sex marriage in the church and society before the thirteenth century as further ammunition in their hostility towards Roman Catholicism and Orthodox traditions.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 262 - 263.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 263.

Chapter 2: The Opinion of Science

An argument often used to deny homosexuals civil rights has been that homosexuality is not natural. Paul's words as recorded in Romans 1: 26 -27 are often quoted by those who oppose fundamental human rights for homosexuals.

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. *(See page 27 and 28 for a discussion of this text.)*

Some would not deny homosexuals basic human rights as they see this as the prerogative of the state. However, they may use the same scriptural passage to argue against the right of homosexuals to marry in the church. Many conclude that if St. Paul said it was unnatural, then it must be so. There are those who would be fine with the state permitting civil unions, however, object to the use of the term marriage to describe long term relationships between two homosexuals. Within the church, some are sympathetic to the plight of homosexual Christian couples and would be comfortable with allowing the church to bless civil unions but are opposed to the notion of the marriage of same-sex couples within or outside the church. They are of the opinion that historically marriage has been understood to be a union between two persons of the opposite sex. As previously discussed, this notion cannot be supported by an examination of the historical record.

Knowledge regarding what is natural in sexual orientation has undergone considerable change due to research into sexuality during the twentieth century. The research of Drs. Alfred Kinsey, Wardell Pomeroy, and Clyde Martin was mostly responsible for the shifting of attitudes towards sexual orientation in the sciences, particularly the medical sciences, during the latter half of the twentieth century. Their research showed that there exists within humanity a wide range of sexual expression in that people “did not fit into exclusive heterosexual or homosexual categories”.⁶⁶ The majority are heterosexual in orientation, while a minority may be exclusively homosexual, but there also exists a great deal of variation in attraction and practice in between. From the publication of Kinsey’s et al. research onwards, the understanding of what is normal sexual behaviour was scrutinized by health care professionals, so that by December 1973 the American Psychiatric Association no longer classified homosexuality as a mental illness.⁶⁷ Individuals who were disturbed by their sexual orientation were to be considered as having a “Sexual Orientation Disturbance”.⁶⁸ At that time the American Psychiatric Association “adopted a resolution deploring discrimination against homosexuals in the fields of housing, employment and licensing”; however, it was to take some years before legislation was enacted in various countries to guarantee homosexual persons these most basic of human rights. Still today many countries actively persecute homosexual persons and criminalize homosexual behaviour. A CNN article dated November 5th, 2018 reported that members of Tanzania’s LGBT community fear

⁶⁶ <https://kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/kinsey-scale.php> (accessed Nov. 19, 2018).

⁶⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/12/16/archives/psychiatrists-in-a-shift-declare-homosexuality-no-mental-illness.html> (accessed Nov. 19, 2018).

⁶⁸ Ibid.

for their lives, living in hiding in their homes and even fleeing the country after threats from a powerful politician to round up gay Tanzanians.⁶⁹

The current scientific opinion is that homosexuality is a natural phenomenon and sexual orientation cannot be consciously chosen or nurtured in a child; thus, for homosexuals, sexual attraction towards the opposite sex is, in fact, unnatural, while attraction towards persons of the same sex is normal for those individuals.

⁶⁹ <https://www.google.com/amp/s/amp.cnn.com/cnn/2018/11/05/africa/tanzania-crackdown-on-gays-intl/index.html> (accessed Nov. 15, 2018).

Chapter 3: Social Change, Scripture and Contemporary Views of Homosexuality and Marriage Equality in the Anglican Church.

Section 1: The Church, Scripture, Culture, and Society

The church does not exist in isolation, for it abides within the broader culture. Conflict often arises between the church and culture, with the church often portrayed as being out of step with the contemporary views of the society in which it exists. Within the church some factions appreciate and keep in step with societal change; nevertheless, there are also factions that resist change and cling to more traditional and sometimes extreme views, Westborough Baptists being amongst the most intolerant and extreme. Unfortunately, the latter often get the highest media coverage due to their extreme views, and thus all churches are tarred with the same brush. It ought to be acknowledged that some acceptance of societal practice is not in keeping with Christian values, an example being the alleged complicity of some church leaders in support of, or merely turning a blind eye to, the plight of Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe between 1939 and 1945. Christian Scripture has been used to condemn much evil in the world, but unfortunately, it has also been used to justify practices such as slavery, thereby hampering and delaying positive societal change.

Christian denominations that hold negative views towards homosexuality and homosexuals often cite scripture to justify their views. For many Christians, scriptural texts that cast a negative light on homosexuality and homosexuals are seldom interpreted by taking into account the context in which the scripture was written. They cannot accept the idea that God may continue to inspire humanity with new knowledge and understanding in many matters and

particularly in matters concerning sexuality. For them, what is written in the pages of the Bible has absolute authority for all time. Others will accept some or even significant deviation from scripture, holding the view that the context in which texts were written ought to be taken into account in arriving at an inspired interpretation for their own time. An example that illustrated divergence in Christian thought is Darwin's theory of evolution. Some denominations do not see evolution as being incompatible with the creation accounts, while others adhere strictly to the Genesis accounts despite the evidence to support evolution. Rigid adherence to scripture, and in particular some obscure passages of scripture, may, in fact, be dangerous. There are Christian sects in the United States that practice the handling of poisonous snakes, hardly a safe practice, but it may unwisely be justified by a rigid interpretation of a particular passage in Mark's Gospel.⁷⁰

The view that scripture contains all truth and ought to be followed to the letter of course ultimately leads to conflict, as there are inconsistencies that cannot be defended or substantiated. Certainly, the words of the psalmist, "Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!" are inconsistent with the words of Jesus when He says, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", or when He says, "Let the little children come to me and do not stop them..."

Within the Anglican Church, some use scripture to justify condemnation of same-sex relationships. As recently as November of 2018, Bishop William Love of the Diocese of Albany, New York, stated that the devil is "deceiving the leadership of the church into creating ways for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters to embrace their sexual desires rather than to repent

⁷⁰ <https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/religion/2018/09/02/life-inside-documentary-snake-handling-church-cody-coots/1116357002/> (accessed Nov. 19, 2018). Mark 16: 17 – 18 (NRSV).

and seek God's healing grace".⁷¹ In a directive, he sets out to condemn and forbid marriage equality within his Diocese despite plans within the Episcopal Church to establish guidelines for marriage equality within the Church.⁷² Many Canadian Anglicans would agree with Bishop Love's position. To them, to permit marriage equality within the church is bowing to secularist cultural pressure. Undoubtedly many who hold such a rigid belief about marriage equality would fail to see the injustice towards a minority in their application of scripture. If some American Christians can justify the imprisonment and separation of children from their parents because the families are illegal immigrants there would be little chance that they would sanction marriage equality. If these same Christians were to tabulate the Old Testament admonitions against the consumption of pork and shelled fish or the wearing of clothing made out of two materials, they would find that such passages far outnumber apparent negative scriptures regarding homosexuality. They might find that they have frequently violated the dietary and clothing commandments, probably on a daily basis. Some would justify such violations of the Mosaic Law based upon Peter's vision of a sheet coming down from heaven filled with the "unclean" which he was instructed to eat. Peter was told that what God had declared clean was fit for consumption. Of course, the passage not only refers to food but also the "unclean" Gentile, Cornelius, whom Peter was about to meet and baptize. The Mosaic Law was not applicable to Christians as it was replaced with a new covenant through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In essence, commandments could be dismissed in light of new revelation. If one can accept that God continues to reveal to humankind new knowledge and understanding about His creation, might it be possible that more

⁷¹ <https://www.apnews.com/7d473c3f4cd44778bb56faa7117d1021> (accessed Nov. 15, 2018).

⁷² Ibid.

enlightened knowledge regarding sexuality could dispel the belief that homosexuality stems from the evil that exists within homosexual persons? In one encounter in a church meeting to discuss homosexuality, a participant did acknowledge that the writer was not evil, but that my homosexuality was due to my upbringing in an environment of sexual abuse. This was news to me and, I might add, made me very angry in that she alluded to my parents as having abused me sexually, for which she had no evidence, nor for that matter do I. She also applied Paul's words in Romans 1:18-32, often used by those who condemn homosexuals and to deny them equality under the law, let alone marriage equality in the church. Opinions can change, for I am witness to those in my own parish who at one time did not accept me, but who now acknowledge and value my presence and input into the life of the church.

Scriptures that refer to homosexuality are believed by many theologians to be most often taken out of context. The condemnation of Sodom and Gomorrah may be seen in the light of inhospitality demonstrated towards the two strangers, whom the men of Sodom intended to violently gang rape, and not necessarily homosexual orientation per se. Christians may discount some Old Testament passages concerning dietary laws in light of the gospel; however, New Testament passages that have been used to condemn homosexuals pose greater difficulty in dismissing. Adam Phillips, a pastor in Portland Oregon, wrote concerning the six Biblical passages that are frequently used to condemn homosexuals. Of particular note is Phillips' discussion of Romans 1, a passage frequently used to denounce homosexuality. Phillips offers significant insight into the context in which Paul writes his letter to the Roman Christians. Phillips explains that the Roman passage is "... about gross misuse of power, Roman elitist overindulgence, and

misguided over-sexualized spirituality”.⁷³ Phillips interprets the passage in light of the historical context in which it was written. He believes that St. Paul, in this passage, is referring to the Roman Emperor Gaius Caligula who ruled in the period just before the writing of Paul’s letter. Phillips quotes another Christian writer, Neil Elliott, as follows...

First of all, Gaius is closely linked to the practice of idolatry. The Roman writer Suetonius reports how Gaius “set up a special temple to his own godhead, with priests and with victims of the choicest kind.” Another Roman writer, Dio Cassius, comments negatively on how Gaius was the only emperor to claim to be divine and to be the recipient of worship during his own lifetime. Gaius also tried at one point to erect a statue of himself in the Temple in Jerusalem; he was dissuaded only by a delegation from Herod Agrippa. Hence the link between Gaius and idolatry would have been well-known indeed, particularly in Jewish circles. But Gaius also serves as “Exhibit A” for out-of-control lust. Suetonius reports how Gaius “lived in perpetual incest with all his sisters, and at a large banquet he placed each of them in turn below him, while his wife reclined above.” He records gruesome examples of Gaius’s arbitrary violence, vindictiveness, and cruelty. Later, Suetonius chronicles Gaius’s sexual liaisons with the wives of dinner guests, raping them in an adjoining room and then returning to the banquet to comment on their performance. Various same-sex sexual encounters between Gaius and other men are similarly recounted. Finally, a military officer whom he had sexually humiliated joined a conspiracy to murder him, which they did less than four years into his reign. Suetonius records that Gaius was stabbed through the genitals when he was murdered. One wonders whether we can hear an echo of this gruesome story in Paul’s comments in Romans 1: 27: “Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own person the due penalty for their error.” Gaius Caligula graphically illustrates the reality of which Paul speaks in Romans 1: the movement from idolatry to insatiable lust to every form of depravity, and the violent murderous reprisal that such behavior engenders.⁷⁴

In light of the period in which Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, it is not surprising that he wrote such condemnation in his letter, but he was likely alluding to the Roman elite and Gaius Caligula in particular. Paul’s Roman readers would have undoubtedly been aware of the

⁷³ July 16, 2016 Adam Nicholas Phillips https://www.huffingtonpost.com/adam-nicholas-phillips/the-bible-does-not-condemn-homosexuality_b_7807342.html (accessed Nov. 22, 2018).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

references Paul was making to Gaius Caligula in the passage, without ever having to name him outrightly. It might be argued that homosexuals have paid for the crimes of Caligula for two millennia because of an incorrect interpretation of this one passage.

For many Christians, the saving acts of God did not end in the first century. God continues to reveal His purposes to us through time. We have come to understand that the enslavement of a race was unjust and abhorrent even though slavery was accepted in Biblical times. We see that the centuries of animosity Christians held towards Jews, often based upon New Testament passages, could culminate in the Shoah. We have come to appreciate that patriarchy is unjust, though the Bible itself is permeated with passages that justify the subjugation of women.

Section 2: The Big Picture

An in-depth reflection of the overarching theme of scripture and secular history emphasizes God's loving acts of salvation, be it from slavery in Egypt, restoration from Babylon, the emancipation of a race and gender, or the gift of grace through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To our disservice, we may not see the forest for the trees; in other words, we miss the big picture or overall Biblical theme of God's mercy, love and salvation if we concentrate on the minute and often inconsequential details. There are over 2000 Biblical references to the injustice of poverty, yet but a few that, when interpreted outside the context in which they were written, appear to condemn homosexuality; yet much emphasis is given to those few scriptures

in an attempt to deny homosexuals fundamental human rights or the right to marry the person they love.⁷⁵

The Anglican Church does not interpret scripture with the view that what is written in the Bible is the literal word of God, nor does it discard scripture in favour of contemporary thought, knowledge, and understanding; instead it recognizes that scripture has authority and it ought to be interpreted in light of contemporary knowledge and understanding.⁷⁶ Many Anglicans hold the view that we ought to abandon “outdated and oppressive ideas” and “select and act upon the best of Christian tradition, such as Jesus’ teaching on love”.⁷⁷

Section 3: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience

In discussing the relationship between scripture, tradition, and reason, the Commission on the Marriage Canon (*hereafter referred to as the Marriage Commission*) noted that within Anglicanism these are “three equal and mutually substitutable voices in discerning God’s direction for the church”.⁷⁸

...tradition is the voice of the church as it has heard and embodied the call of God through scripture in different historical and cultural situations. Reason faithfully uses the gifts the church has been given in the contemporary world, including scientific research, of hearing the call of God through scripture in every present historical and cultural context. Conversely, there is no faithful reading of scripture apart from reason and tradition.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ https://www.anglican.ca/wp/-content/uploads/Marriage_Canon_REPORT_15Sept.pdf 20 -21. (accessed Oct.30,2018).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

The above quote offers hope to lesbian and gay Anglicans who seek marriage equality in the church, for it speaks of the interpretation of scripture in light of reason. Humankind has been endowed with reason, and therefore God expects us to use our reason in making decisions that promote justice and love which is an overall Biblical theme. The traditions of the church are much more than the rituals as found in the liturgy, for we have a tradition of seeking justice and correcting wrongs that have been committed, unfortunately, committed often in the name of Christ. Such a commitment to the tradition of justice and correcting wrongs has led us to pursue “truth and reconciliation” with Indigenous Canadians.

It is evident that one ought to also take into account the experience of the faithful. Experience has been viewed by some Anglicans as ranking in place with scripture, reason, and tradition; thus, making it a fourth voice within Anglicanism. In Acts 10, the Apostle Peter recognized that the Roman centurion Cornelius and his Gentile household had experienced the witness of the Holy Spirit and therefore that they could not be denied baptism and inclusion into the church. By way of analogy, it could be said that faithful gays and lesbians who have experienced the witness of the Holy Spirit ought to be afforded all the sacraments of the church, including marriage. Many gay and lesbian Anglicans have devoted time, talent and resources towards the furthering of God’s Kingdom, but they cannot fully participate in the life of the church if their relationships cannot be recognized in a church marriage. The church has experienced many benefits as a result of the witness of these gay and lesbian members while implying that they do not make the grade. Many Anglicans believe that this contribution ought to be welcomed and acknowledged by allowing gays and lesbians to participate fully in the life of the church. Full participation in the life of the church would allow for marriage equality and the

celebration of families headed by same-sex partners. Together scripture, tradition, reason and experience bear witness of God's acceptance of all persons; so, like Peter, the church may come to "... truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him".⁸⁰

Societal changes that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have immensely impacted the Anglican Church worldwide. Interpretation of scripture, the relevance of tradition and application of reason within the church is impacted by the society in which the church finds itself. As the church is worldwide, the various branches of the church would undoubtedly have diverse opinions and practices based upon their understanding of scripture, tradition, and reason within their societal context. In addition to scripture, reason, and tradition, the life experiences of individual gay and lesbian Anglicans, and their supporters also need to be acknowledged and considered.

Section 4: Gay Liberation, AIDS and Human Rights

Following on the heels of the various liberation movements of the 1960s came the gay liberation movement. The civil disturbance at Stonewall in June of 1969 ushered in a turning point for LGBT persons who had hitherto suffered harassment at the hands of the police authorities, legislative powers, and society. The enormity of the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and 1990s highlighted for Western society the vast numbers of gay men who had hitherto lived hidden lives. The general population could, at last, see that gay men were their friends, relatives,

⁸⁰ Acts 10: 34 -35 (NRSV).

co-workers or the neighbours living down the street. Concurrently lesbian and gay Anglicans began to “ask their churches to treat them with respect and dignity”.⁸¹

Increasing awareness for civil rights in Canada and more liberal attitudes towards sex in general may have influenced then Justice Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in December of 1967 to say, “There’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation”. Trudeau’s Bill C-195, when passed into law in 1969 in the Canadian House of Commons, decriminalized homosexual acts between two consenting adults.⁸² Just two years prior to Trudeau’s statement, Canadian Everett Klippert was labeled a dangerous sex offender by the Supreme Court of Canada and sent to prison for an indefinite period upon his admission that he was homosexual and had sex with other men.⁸³ Such unjust imprisonment serves to remind Canadians of the archaic attitudes and prejudicial laws that existed against homosexuals just a generation ago.

In 1977 Quebec included the phrase “sexual orientation” into its Human Rights Code and by 2001 most Canadian Provinces had followed suit.⁸⁴ Changes in legislation were gradual. The majority of these changes came about as a result of individuals or couples who were willing to challenge governments as they felt they were denied rights in immigration, spousal benefits, employment, employment protection, housing, pension benefits, and recognition of same-sex marriage. For a more thorough appreciation of the evolution of homosexual rights in Canada, consult <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.cbc.ca/amp/1.1147516> .

⁸¹ Paul Gibson, *Discerning the Word: The Bible and Homosexuality in Anglican Debate* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 2000), 12.

⁸² <https://www.cbc.ca/archives> (accessed October 14, 2018).

⁸³ <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.cbc.ca/amp/1.1147516> (accessed October 14, 2018).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* (accessed October 15, 2018).

These individuals or couples, often at significant personal risk, were willing to go public and challenge governments through the courts. They fought for protections and benefits afforded to heterosexual individuals and couples. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, when applied to concerns addressed by homosexuals, demonstrated that they were being denied benefits and rights due to discriminatory federal and / or provincial legislation.⁸⁵ Changes in legislation occurred gradually across Canada with such change being most often directed by the courts. In December 2004, Newfoundland and Labrador became the seventh province to allow same-sex marriage, when Provincial Court Justice Derek Greene ruled in favour of a lesbian couple seeking marriage.⁸⁶ As a witness to the court case, the writer is well aware that the only group that applied for and received intervener status to oppose the legislative changes was a fundamentalist church. The two women seeking marriage identified as Christian (Anglican), but no pastoral care of any sort was sought after or offered by their church although the case was widely publicized in the media at that time.

Changes in Canadian law occurred mainly through the court's application of the Canadian "Charter of Rights and Freedoms". Provincial and federal laws that violated the charter had to change in order to comply with the charter. The writer, who had been meeting with Newfoundland MHAs before the same-sex marriage debate, had on some occasions been

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Personal knowledge – the writer was present throughout the court case.

informed by sympathetic MHAs that changes to secure rights for homosexual and bisexual persons moved slowly to avoid strong opposition from religious groups. It could be argued that politicians let the courts shoulder the blame, for to have acted otherwise might have been political suicide in some jurisdictions where fundamentalist religious views held considerable influence. Within the homosexual community itself, fears were expressed to the writer regarding employment and even physical violence directed towards them due to their sexual orientation. Gay Pride events such as the annual St. John's Gay Pride Parade of the 1980s and 1990s, were attended by fewer than one hundred persons. In recent years thousands have participated in the parade. The writer is aware of two homicides in St. John's Newfoundland that were likely motivated by homophobia during the 1970s and 1980s.

Gradual societal changes might appear less difficult to accept as opposed to an abrupt shift. Homophobia was evident in society, and undoubtedly many churchgoers held attitudes comparable to the wider society. On one occasion, the writer, when asked to participate in a church discussion of same-sex marriage, was forcefully pushed at the meeting by a church member, while another gay man who feared assault asked the writer to walk him to his car. That man, who had grown up in that church, reported that he was emotionally hurt by the attitudes and behaviour displayed by church members and stated he would never return. Homosexual Christians ask to be treated with respect and dignity within their denominations.

Section 5: The Tribe, The Town, The Secular City

Paul Gibson, a Canadian Anglican theologian, notes that societal changes have impacted church communities, proving not only to be divisive between Christian denominations, but also within denominations, between those who take a conservative approach to scripture and those who do not.⁸⁷ Different opinions arise from how scripture is interpreted.

The Anglican Church of Canada, in more urban areas, has in some cases introduced changes into their respective Dioceses that have upset not only many Canadian Anglicans but also the Anglican Communion worldwide. These changes include the ordination of sexually active homosexuals, the blessing of same-sex civil marriages in some Dioceses and in others the performance of same-sex marriages. Further development involved the election and subsequent consecration of Kevin Robertson, a partnered gay clergyman, as Bishop of the Diocese of York-Scarborough.⁸⁸ Gibson, using ideas advanced by the Baptist Theologian Harvey Cox, has attempted to explain the reason why there is such conflict within the Anglican Communion.⁸⁹ Gibson, like Cox, views society as evolving through a series of changes over time. People initially found support in the tribe. Tribes developed a world view in which their values and traditions offered security and protection from a hostile world; to protect them from real or perceived threats, tribes developed myths, stories, ritual, dance, and taboo.⁹⁰ That which was different or foreign was feared and fought against in an attempt to maintain or restore homeostasis. The

⁸⁷ Gibson, *Discerning the Word*, 12.

⁸⁸ <http://www.torontoangican.ca/about-the-diocese/area-bishops/york-scarborough/> (accessed November 21, 2018).

⁸⁹ Gibson, *Discerning the Word*, 20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

tribe should not be regarded as primitive for it exists within the context where it is “knowledge, experience, and wisdom” which help it develop a social order that is beneficial to its members.⁹¹

Following the theory advanced by Cox, Gibson contends that the next stage in societal development was the town.⁹² The town came into existence when tribes had to band together in order to cope with natural disasters or common hostile threats.⁹³ In the town...

the private gods of the tribe are replaced by overarching civic deities, barter is replaced by coinage, the custom of the elders is replaced by the lawbook of the magistrate, the memory of the storyteller is replaced by writing, the insight of myth is replaced by systems of belief supported by rational argument.⁹⁴

The town allowed knowledge to increase and enabled greater independence and individuality.⁹⁵ It was the town that eventually enabled the enlightenment to blossom and flourish. The enlightenment was seen as a period in which scientific advancements would move humankind towards ever-increasing knowledge and human progress.

The next stage in the evolution of society was the secular city. The secular city, as seen by Gibson, is in reality defined by “...a culture through which people understand their world, whether they live in a physical metropolis or in relative isolation”.⁹⁶ In the secular city, there are no absolutes, and diverse understandings of reality may exist side by side. The advancements of the enlightenment, the progeny of the town, are often questioned. In the enlightenment, science was understood to have the right answers or at least the ability to uncover the answers in the

⁹¹ Ibid., 32.

⁹² Ibid., 21.

⁹³ Ibid.,

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 21 - 22.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 22.

pursuit of truth - whereas, in secularism, science is questioned and challenged. An example of such questioning would be the widespread fear of the vaccination of children, despite research evidence to the contrary.

The vast differences of opinion towards homosexuals and same-sex marriage within the Anglican Communion can be, in Gibson's opinion, attributed to the cultural reality or context in which each province of the communion finds itself - that is, the tribe, the town or the secular city. The culture of "first world" is by and large that of the secular. It is a culture that questions absolute ideas and beliefs as it moves away from the world of the town and tribe. Within those parts of the Western world that are secular, Christian fundamentalism is questioned and is acknowledged to be just part of a mosaic of belief systems. Gibson concurs with the argument of Cox that the church must be willing to change to keep in step with the cultural context, as he says, "For if we really do believe that Christianity has an abiding message, then it will have an abiding message that makes sense even in the secular culture in which we live."⁹⁷

The position taken towards homosexuality by the various factions at the 1998 Lambeth Conference reflect the reality of the world in which the individual factions belonged, be it the tribe, town or secular city. Despite having no legal authority, the Lambeth Conferences do carry weight in moral and spiritual authority, particularly regarding social issues. Some conference participants expressed views of homosexuality which were analogous to the structured and rigid views of the tribe in which homosexuality is perceived as a taboo subject and a threat to the church. Some Lambeth Conference Bishops would not even enter into a discussion of the subject,

⁹⁷ Ibid., 26.

rejected the idea of meeting with homosexuals, or saw it as a “white man’s disease” spreading into their countries.⁹⁸ Other Bishops reflected the attitudes of the “town”, in that they appealed to the law, that is, to the written word as prescribed in Biblical texts.⁹⁹ The result of the 1998 Lambeth Conference was a resolution that expressed the view...

that homosexuals may be good Christians but their sexual practice, if any, is incompatible with Scripture and their committed relationships should be therefore not legitimized and those so related should not be ordained.¹⁰⁰

Those Lambeth Conference participants who could be identified with the secular city were open to radical change in the position of the church towards sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. To those participants, Christian homosexuals living in committed same-sex relationships should not be denied marriage, ordination or leadership roles within the church.

The diversity which had long been celebrated within the Anglican Communion was being challenged and threats to tear apart the communion over the homosexual issue exist to the present day. In 2008 two hundred and six Diocesan Bishops and eight Suffragan Bishops refused the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury to attend the Lambeth Conference as a result of...

the Archbishop of Canterbury’s decision to invite the American, Canadian and Central American Bishops who consecrated the Bishop of New Hampshire, the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ibid., 21-22.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 37.

¹⁰¹ <http://www.anglican.ink/article/lambeth-conference-cancelled> (accessed October 2018).

The proposed 2018 Lambeth Conference was canceled by Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby due to “internal dissention” within the communion.¹⁰² According to the *Irish Times* the dissension was “due to ongoing division over the gay clergy issue”.¹⁰³

Those provinces within the Anglican Communion that exist within societies of the tribe or town are more influenced by tradition and the scripture. Tradition defines what is acceptable and forbidden within the tribe, for it informs as to what has been considered taboo and a threat to tribal homeostasis. The stories of the Bible have been appropriated into the mythical heritage of tribal societies.¹⁰⁴ In the society of the town, the written word as found in scripture must be obeyed in order to maintain stability. Gibson notes that in the society of the town of the Reformation, scripture replaced Canon Law and the traditions of Roman Catholicism.¹⁰⁵ Tradition and scripture within the Anglican Communion could be referred to as partners in a dance, albeit, a dance they also have to share with reason and experience.

In the secular city Gibson argues that scripture does not give definitive answers that must be considered acceptable for all time. It seems to be reasonable for those living in a world of the secular city, that scripture is examined in the context in which it was written. Gibson gives examples of inconsistencies found in scripture that demonstrate a change in Israelite societal context from the tribe to the town. In the tribe, those outside Israel had to be utterly destroyed. In Joshua, the inhabitants of Canaan are portrayed as obstacles to the fulfillment of Yahweh’s

¹⁰² Ibid. (accessed October 20, 2018).

¹⁰³ <http://www.google.com/amp/s/www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/lambeth-conference-2018-cancelled-in-ongoing-gay-clergy-issue-1.1947133%fmode=amp> (accessed October 20, 2018).

¹⁰⁴ Gibson, 68 - 69.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

promise that Israel is to inhabit the land. The inhabitants of Canaan were to be eliminated. In Joshua, we read...

For it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts so that they would come against Israel in battle, in order that they might be utterly destroyed, and might receive no mercy, but be exterminated, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.¹⁰⁶

In some Old Testament texts, the marriage of an Israelite to a foreigner is strictly forbidden. Such an attitude towards the foreigner is inconsistent with the attitude portrayed towards the Moabite Ruth who married an Israelite and was the grandmother of King David, thus demonstrating a change in societal attitudes as it moved from the society of the tribe to that of the town.

Micah's words below demonstrate a change in the understanding of how the followers of Yahweh should act. Yahweh is more concerned with justice as opposed to the ritual sacrifice of the temple carried out to placate Him and win His favour. Movement from the tribal society to the society of the town is thus demonstrated.

With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Joshua 11: 20 (NRSV).

¹⁰⁷ Micah 6: 6 - 8 (NRSV).

Gibson argues that the Bible itself is symbolic in much the same way that Anglicans understand the Eucharist to be symbolic. Early in Anglican history, the belief in transubstantiation was abandoned.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but are repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.¹⁰⁸

Our ordinary human experience sees the elements of Holy Communion as ordinary bread and wine, yet they serve as symbols of the body, and blood of Christ in our worship. Gibson compares scripture to the Eucharist. The scriptures record the historical experiences of people living out their lives in their own time. Like the Eucharist, they may provide...

Vision, insight, challenge, comfort, hope, conviction, joy, renewal – everything we mean by the word faith. But it is, first of all, a collection of writings put down on vellum or parchment of papyrus by people.¹⁰⁹

To elevate scripture beyond a historical account is a movement towards idolatry.¹¹⁰ To Gibson the “very untidiness of this collection of writings witnesses to its human dimension”¹¹¹ whereas the overall Biblical theme conveys a message of...

liberation of the oppressed, empowerment of the alienated, the gift of community, judgement for those who practice idolatry and exploitation, exile, return, forgiveness, wholeness, the transforming power of self-giving, hope.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ The Book of Common Prayer, The Thirty-nine Articles.

¹⁰⁹ Gibson, 65.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 64.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 65.

¹¹² Ibid. 67.

In short, the Bible stories present a common theme of salvation.¹¹³ As the Eucharist is symbolic of the sacrifice of Jesus, so also to say that the Bible is the word of God is itself a symbolic statement.¹¹⁴ The stories of the Bible point to salvation offered by God, but they remain stories in much the same way that the bread and wine of the Eucharist point to the saving action of Jesus Christ, but as stated in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the elements remain bread and wine.

To claim that the Bible is the word of God in some absolute sense that demands the reconciliation of every apparent contradiction, as well as rigid obedience to every enforceable commandment, is to apply the error of transubstantiation to the scriptures.¹¹⁵

Section 6: Jesus' apparent stance regarding Scripture, Tradition, and Reason

Jesus himself appeared to have violated the traditions and scriptures as recorded in numerous New Testament stories. He asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water. She was surprised by the request of water from a Jewish man, for the Jews “do not share things in common with Samaritans”.¹¹⁶ Of course, for a Jewish male to engage in conversation with an unfamiliar woman was socially unacceptable at the time. Later in the story, we read that his disciples were astonished when they discovered him “...speaking to a woman...”¹¹⁷ In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus was non-compliant with Jewish tradition, but more importantly, he demonstrated a movement away from a narrow, rigid interpretation of scripture and tradition towards one of an inclusive and loving God.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 67 - 68.

¹¹⁵ Gibson, *Discerning the Word*, 68.

¹¹⁶ John 4:9 (NRSV).

¹¹⁷ John 4:22 (NRSV).

Scripture gave commands concerning Sabbath observance and ritual washing, but Jesus fails to comply on occasion.¹¹⁸ His opponents were quick to find fault with him for healing on the Sabbath and occasionally scolded him when his disciples did not wash their hands before eating.¹¹⁹ His parable of the *Good Samaritan* illustrated that the despised Samaritan was more righteous than the priest and Levite who would not defile themselves to assist the injured traveler.¹²⁰ The absolute authority of scripture and the comfort offered by tradition was being challenged. The only absolute was the call to love God and one's fellow man.¹²¹

Jesus himself demonstrated how his followers were to interpret scripture in order to make decisions. It is evident that Jesus is appealing to the intellect of his listeners in the aforementioned examples. He was calling on them to use their reason when deciding upon a course of action. Dignity, respect, justice and the welfare of individuals were to take precedence over strict adherence to the scriptural commandment.¹²²

When asked by a scribe what was the greatest commandment, he responded with...

The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.¹²³

Deciding how to act was to be based upon how the action would impact an individual or individuals. If strict interpretation would negatively impact a person, then the wellbeing of the

¹¹⁸ Matthew 12: 1 -14, Matthew 15: 1 – 14, Mark 2: 23 -38, Mark 3: 1 – 6, & Mark 7: 5 – 8 (NRSV).

¹¹⁹ Ibid., John 5:1-18, & Luke 11:37-38 (NRSV).

¹²⁰ Luke 10:25-37 (NRSV).

¹²¹ Matthew 22: 35 -40, Mark 12 28 -34,

¹²² Luke 11: 41 – 42 (NRSV).

¹²³ Mark 12: 28-34 (NRSV).

person took precedence. If picking grain or healing on the Sabbath would satisfy a human need, then the Sabbath law was ineffectual in the context of human hunger or suffering.

Civil laws in the Christian world have historically been influenced by our Judeo-Christian law as found in scripture. Laws were created that would execute and / or imprison homosexuals, or in more recent times deny them basic human rights. When measured against the standard provided by Jesus it can be easily argued that society and the church have both often acted contrary to the way Jesus would expect his followers to behave. Certainly, to execute, imprison or deny rights to individuals due to sexual orientation are not actions that demonstrate love towards one's neighbour, but instead are actions that lay a heavy, unjust yoke upon individuals. When Jesus was presented with conflict between choosing strict adherence to the law and the "wholeness of people", he chose the latter. Today's Anglican Church has largely moved beyond rigid interpretation of scripture and strict observance of tradition, as it uses reason to ascertain its position on any number of issues such as divorce, contraception, ordination of women and sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. Gibson witnesses that...

The church, which is a living community engaged in active dialogue, tends to judge the relative importance of individual sections of the Bible by their relationship to the thematic whole. How does any particular passage of Scripture relate to the great sweep of grace that runs from liberation of an enslaved people, through their discovery of God's holiness and justice and the vision of a realm of kindness and peace, into Jesus' proclamation and embodiment of God's commonwealth of forgiveness?¹²⁴

Tradition, scripture, reason and experience share in a dance together. Each play a role in helping the church arrive at just decisions in areas of conflict. We might simply ask, "What would Jesus do?" A cliché possibly, but essentially what Christians are called to do.

¹²⁴ Gibson, *Discerning the Word*, 71.

Chapter 4: Controversy within the Anglican Communion

The thirty-nine provinces of the Anglican Communion have been rife with controversy over the issue of sexuality and in particular homosexuality for a number of years. The 2004 Windsor Report was commissioned in response to the planned consecration of Canon Gene Robinson to the office of a Bishop and the blessing of same-sex unions in the Diocese of New Westminster, British Columbia.

The decision by the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) to give consent to the election of Bishop Gene Robinson to the Diocese of New Hampshire, the authorizing by a Diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada of a public Rite of Blessing for same-sex unions and the involvement in other provinces by Bishops without the consent or approval of the incumbent Bishop to perform episcopal functions have uncovered major divisions throughout the Anglican Communion. There has been talk of crisis, schism and realignment. Voices and declarations have portrayed a Communion in crisis.¹²⁵

Canon Robinson, a priest in the Episcopal Church, was eventually consecrated as Bishop in the Diocese of New Hampshire in March of 2004.¹²⁶ The response by a number of Primates of the Anglican Communion in reaction to events in the American and Canadian Churches made it clear that...

These actions threaten the unity of our own Communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ's Church, our mission and witness, and our relations with other faiths, in a world already confused in areas of sexuality, morality and theology, and polarize Christian opinion. As Primates of our Communion seeking to exercise the "enhanced responsibility" entrusted to us by successive Lambeth Conferences, we re-affirm our common understanding of the centrality and authority of Scripture in determining the basis of our faith. Whilst we acknowledge a legitimate diversity of interpretation that arises in the Church, this diversity does not mean that some of us take the authority of Scripture more lightly than others. Nevertheless, each province needs to be aware of the possible effects of its interpretation of Scripture on the life of other

¹²⁵ <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf> (accessed Nov. 25, 2018).

¹²⁶ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Robinson (accessed Nov. 25, 2018).

provinces in the Communion. We commit ourselves afresh to mutual respect whilst seeking from the Lord a correct discernment of how God's Word speaks to us in our contemporary world.¹²⁷

The actions of the Diocese of New Westminster and the Episcopal Church did no doubt lead to a rift within the communion, as those within the Canadian and American Churches, who were seen as being instrumental in causing the controversy, were virtually shunned.

In an earlier section of the dissertation a reference was made to a number of scriptures, particularly Romans 1. A description of the historical Roman period when the text was written provided a more accurate understanding of the context. One cannot honestly compare the time in which Gaius Caligula and Saint Paul lived to that of a same-sex couple living in a long-term monogenous relationship in present day North America. The Primates make their displeasure further clear when they stated...

Whilst we recognize the juridical autonomy of each province in our Communion, the mutual interdependence of the provinces means that none has authority unilaterally to substitute an alternative teaching as if it were the teaching of the entire Anglican Communion.¹²⁸

The statement comes close to implying that the Diocese of New Westminster and the Episcopal Church in the United States were imposing their teaching upon the entire Anglican Communion.

Of interest is a reference back to a statement made in the Lambeth conference of 1998 which states...

We commend the report of that Conference in its entirety to all members of the Anglican Communion, valuing especially its emphasis on the need "to listen to the experience of

¹²⁷ <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf> (accessed Nov. 25, 2018).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

homosexual persons, and ... to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ".¹²⁹

It would be interesting to poll lesbian and gay Anglicans to determine if they feel assured that they are full members of the Body of Christ. To use a cliché, "Actions speak louder than words." Using the assumption that marriage is a sacrament within the Anglican Church, it seems evident that to deny a portion of its members the full sacraments of the church would contradict the statement that they are full members of the body of Christ.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 5: The Marriage Canon of the Anglican Church of Canada

The Marriage Canon of the Anglican Church of Canada is a document which outlines who can marry and under what conditions a marriage may be performed. The Canon includes the location where a marriage may occur and impediments which would forbid a marriage from proceeding.¹³⁰ The responsibilities of the couple to be married, the officiant, the family, and the laity are addressed in the canon. Legal requirements are listed and conditions that may be used to invalidate a marriage are discussed.¹³¹ The Canon's preface provides a comprehensive overview, although it does not refer to the gender of the persons entering into marriage. Other sections of the preface refer to gender as being male and female, or the words husband and wife are used, thereby indicating that the couple is heterosexual.

The Anglican Church of Canada affirms, according to our Lord's teaching as found in Holy Scripture and expressed in the Form of Solemnization of Matrimony in the Book of Common Prayer, that marriage is a lifelong union in faithful love, and that marriage vows are a commitment to this union, for better or for worse, to the exclusion of all others on either side. This union is established by God's grace when two duly qualified persons enter into a covenant of marriage in which they declare their intention of fulfilling its purposes and exchange vows to be faithful to one another until they are separated by death. The purposes of marriage are mutual fellowship, support, and comfort, and the procreation (if it may be) and nurture of children, and the creation of a relationship in which sexuality may serve personal fulfilment in a community of faithful love. This covenant is made in the sight of God and in the presence of witnesses and of an authorized minister.¹³²

¹³⁰ https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/221_canon_XXI.pdf 111. (accessed October 29,2018).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 107.

If the Marriage Canon were to be amended to allow for same-sex couples to enter into marriage, references to the gender of the couple would have to reflect the change. The use of gender-neutral words such as partner(s) or couple could be utilized.

Canon XXI indicates that only those qualified under the civil authority can enter into a church marriage. Throughout Canada same-sex individuals are deemed qualified to marry if they meet the legal requirements under the jurisdiction. Therefore there would be no civil impediment for marriage equality in the church as long as the couple is duly qualified.

Chapter 6: The Marriage Commission and Marriage Equality in The Anglican Church of Canada

This chapter will examine the document entitled “This Holy Estate”, produced by the Marriage Commission established in 2103 by the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada. The Commission was given the task to develop a motion to restructure the marriage canon so as to permit marriage equality with the inclusion of a conscience clause that would allow Dioceses, parishes, Bishops, and clergy to opt out of performing same-sex marriage.¹³³

Section 1: Seeds Planted

As far back as 2004, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada affirmed “the integrity and sanctity of committed same-sex relationships” and today close to fifty percent of Canadian Anglican Dioceses permit the blessing of same-sex relationships.¹³⁴ *Blessing* of same-sex *civil* marriages does *not* entail the exchange of vows that would occur within a heterosexual marriage. The Commission reflected upon the Biblical understanding of marriage as a covenant.

A covenant differs from a contract in that it involves not just specific concrete obligations, but the commitment of one’s whole self to the relationship regardless of the other person’s failures to keep their covenanted vow.¹³⁵

Marriage within the church is essentially a form of Christian discipleship.¹³⁶

¹³³ https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Marriage_Canon_REPORT_15Sept22pdf 1. (accessed Oct. 29, 2018).

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 26. (accessed Nov. 10, 2018).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37. (accessed Jan. 8, 2019).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37 & 27. (accessed Nov. 10, 2018).

Section 2: Christian Marriage

Church marriage, besides being a covenanted form of Christian discipleship, fulfills three purposes: (1) companionship and support, (2) sexual fulfillment, and (3) procreation.¹³⁷ Persons in committed same-sex relations can fulfill the first two purposes. With regards to the third purpose, that of procreation, it has not been seen as an impediment to church marriage with heterosexual couples who cannot or choose not to have children. Adoption may be an option for barren heterosexual couples, and the civil law allows for same-sex couples to adopt. The writers of “This Holy Estate” conclude that the purposes of marriage for homosexual couples are analogous to those of heterosexual couples and therefore no impediment to the purposes of marriage exists for homosexual couples.¹³⁸ Marriage within the church allows for the blessing of a couple “in all aspects of their relationship” and serves as a reflection of “the loving union of Christ and the church”.¹³⁹ In essence, same-sex marriage can reflect the love of Christ for the church in the same way as heterosexual marriage, for it is not the sexual act that reflects Christ’s love, but rather the mutual love, support and tender care made possible in marriage.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39 - 45.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 45 & 46.

Section 3: The Resolution

Those engaged with the commissioned task of writing a resolution for the 2016 General Synod noted the difficulty of their task in developing a resolution that would express the similarities, but also the uniqueness of same and opposite-sex marriages. Using an analogy, they compared the grafting of Gentile converts into Israel as a typology for heterosexual and homosexual marriage. Parallels exist in both cases in that both included (1) a history of exclusion of one group, (2) both are now seen as evidence of the expanse of God’s grace, (3) the grafting in of the hitherto excluded group may be seen as “contrary to nature”, (4) the prompting of the Holy Spirit is necessary and evident in both, (5) both share in receiving God’s grace, (6) the admission of the new group does not alter the original group, and (7) both have different traditions.¹⁴⁰

The resolution may be viewed at:

<http://jointassembly.ca/delegates/acc/cc/resolutions/c003/>

Section 4: Submissions

The Marriage Commission called for submissions that were to be received over five months with each being posted on the national church’s website in order to maintain process transparency. Submissions came from individual Anglicans, Dioceses, parishes, theological colleges, seminaries, the Indigenous Anglican Community, full communion partners, ecumenical partners, and specialized experts.¹⁴¹ In total, nearly 250 submissions were received within the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 53 – 54.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2.

allotted time frame. Space does not permit a review of all submissions; however, those having particular significance are reviewed as follows, with no implication of priority.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, a full communion partner, which permits clergy “according to the dictates of their conscience” to preside at or bless same-sex marriages, reassured the Anglican Church that it would respect the decision of the Anglican General Synod regardless of the outcome.¹⁴² The United Church of Canada, which permits same-sex marriage, also confirmed their support no matter what decision the Anglican General Synod should reach.¹⁴³ The Roman Catholic Church expressed deep concerns regarding ecumenical progress made between the two churches if the Anglican Church were to permit same-sex marriage.¹⁴⁴ Concerns expressed included the impact upon the understanding of “the enduring meaning or value of the distinction between male and female and of procreation as one of the ends of marriage”, sources of authority from scripture, theological reflection, impact upon the Anglican Communion and the potential to “weaken the foundations upon which we have sought to build towards fuller ecclesial communion”.¹⁴⁵

The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order acknowledged the diversity of opinion regarding marriage equality within the Anglican Communion but expressed concern that a decision by the Canadian Church “would cause great distress for the Communion as a whole” and urged the church not to proceed beyond its current policy of “local option”.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Ibid., 5.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 7 - 8.

Indigenous Anglican Bishops acknowledged that there exist diverse opinions within the Indigenous community regarding homosexual relationships and that there is historical evidence that within the Aboriginal culture, homosexual members were accepted, but stated that there is little evidence that homosexual relationships were considered “similar to marriage”. The imposition of Western cultural values upon indigenous communities was noted to be unacceptable, but the Bishops indicated that they would “promise to continue in a spirit of reconciliation and conversation”.¹⁴⁷

Input from “Integrity Canada”, a group consisting of gay and lesbian Anglicans that has advocated on behalf of gays and lesbians in the church since 1975 and sought marriage equality within the church, was sought after and received. Integrity Canada noted that the purposes of marriage as outlined in Canon XXI are also applicable to same-sex couples, and that it would support a conscience clause for clergy who do not wish to preside at same-sex marriages, within revisions to the Canon, as clergy historically had the right to refuse to marry any couple.¹⁴⁸

The Marriage Commission did receive a submission from Queen’s College School of Theology, written by Dr. David Bell, professor emeritus of the Religious Studies, Memorial University and Dean of Theological Studies at Queen’s College. In his submission, Bell reviewed the various scriptures and hostile views of church fathers that have been used to condemn homosexuality. He did not demonstrate, as did Boswell, that there were periods during church history when attitudes towards homosexuality were relaxed enough to allow same-sex marriage in some jurisdictions. Bell emphasized the groundbreaking 1979 Gloucester Report of the Church of

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

England that drew the conclusion “that a free loving, and respectful relationship between two persons of the same sex may, therefore, be just as ethical and just as holy as such a relationship between a man and a woman”.¹⁴⁹ Bell stated that from the Gloucester Report four conclusions might be drawn, namely:

- (1) Homosexuality is at least genetic, unalterable and natural; thus, it is wrong to discriminate against homosexuals.
- (2) As homosexuality is inherent and not immoral, then there is no reason why homosexuals and homosexuals in a committed relationship cannot be ordained.
- (3) If a practicing homosexual can be ordained to the office of a deacon and the priesthood, there should be no impediment to being consecrated a Bishop.
- (4) If sexual fulfillment and companionship and procreation within marriage is optional, though desirable in a heterosexual relationship of marriage, then there should be no reason for the church to deny marriage equality to same-sex couples.¹⁵⁰

The Gloucester Report was well ahead of its time; however, the conclusions that Bell drew from the report still have not been implemented in most of the Anglican Communion.

Dr. Bell, in his summary regarding same-sex blessings and same-sex marriage, states that “...a number of points may be adduced which tend in their favour”.¹⁵¹ A summary of these points are:

- (1) Christians may use reason to interpret scripture and tradition.

¹⁴⁹ David Bell <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/8-25-2014-Queens-College.pdf>, 12. (accessed Nov. 26, 2018).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 17.

- (2) The interpretation of scripture is the prerogative of the community of the church guided by the Holy Spirit; not the person, Bishop, parish or Diocese.
- (3) Early church theologians to the Reformation are human and subject to and influenced by the era in which lived and thus are fallible.
- (4) Today the primary purpose of marriages is not the procreation of children; thus greater emphasis has been placed on the other two purposes, being mutual love and sexual pleasure.
- (5) Homosexual orientation is now understood to be innate, meaning it is not a choice for the individual but natural for some people.
- (6) A conclusion drawn from “The Gloucester Report” is that as homosexuality is innate, it ought not to be considered to be sinful and a homosexual, in order to be fulfilled in life, may find that fulfillment in a same-sex relationship.
- (7) The acceptance of marriage equality within the Anglican Church of Canada will impact ecumenism. Such a step may help other churches in their journey.¹⁵²

The sympathetic stance of Queen’s College concerning marriage equality is not shared by Rev. Dr. George Sumner of Wycliffe College, Toronto. Sumner recommended that the Marriage Commission review the theology commission of the Episcopal Church U.S.A., in which both sides of the argument were presented. Dr. Sumner, in reference to the Episcopal Commission, states that “it demonstrates that we are hardly ready to move toward revision of such a fundamental issue in theological anthropology at such a controverted moment”.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Ibid., 18 & 19.

¹⁵³ <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/10-17-2014-Wycliffe-College.pdf> (accessed Nov. 25, 2008).

Section 5: The Solemn Declaration

The Anglican Church of Canada has held to its commitment to remain faithful to its roots as outlined in the Solemn Declaration of 1893. The Solemn Declaration enshrines a commitment to the relationship between the Canadian Anglican Church and the Church of England and consequentially the Anglican Communion. The Commission on Marriage sought an opinion as to whether a change to Canon XXI, to permit marriage equality, would “contravene the Solemn Declaration” and to this end, it called for advice from noted theologians.¹⁵⁴

The Rev. Dr. Stephen Andrews, Bishop of Algoma, stated

...it would be my position that a canonical change that would permit the marriage of same-sex individuals contravenes the Solemn Declaration in a fundamental doctrinal matter that is discordant with the teaching of both the Prayer Book and our Lord.¹⁵⁵

The Venerable Alan Perry LL.M. gave a much different opinion and offered substantial evidence to illustrate that significant changes have been introduced into the Anglican Church of Canada that would have been impossible if the Solemn Declaration had been “a sacrosanct primordial law, which is also unamendable, whose purpose and effect is to prohibit certain kinds of actions or developments in the Anglican Church of Canada.”¹⁵⁶ Perry explains that the language of the Solemn Declaration is not prescriptive but rather “declaratory, hortatory, and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/9-23-2014-Stephen-Andrews-Solemn-Declaration.pdf> (accessed Nov. 25, 2018).

¹⁵⁶ <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/7-18-2014-Alan-Perry-Solemn-Declaration.pdf> 1. (accessed Nov. 25, 2018).

aspirational”.¹⁵⁷ The Solemn Declaration intended to allow the Canadian Church to function independently thereby enabling it “to take responsibility for its mission and the development of a growing church in a growing colony”.¹⁵⁸ Without the events of 1893, the Canadian Church would remain “governed by all the same laws as the Church of England”.¹⁵⁹ He explains that if it had not been the intent to have an independent Canadian Church, then there would have been no need to have such a declaration.¹⁶⁰ As stated, Perry notes that there were some changes in the Canadian Church that were controversial, but were introduced independently regardless of the Solemn Declaration. These changes include the publishing of the 1918 and 1962 editions of the *Book of Common Prayer*, both of which included alterations in the marriage liturgy which implied a change in “the nature and purpose of marriage”.¹⁶¹ *The Book of Alternative Services* introduced changes to the liturgy and the understanding of marriage, “making procreation an optional purpose of marriage” and thus “implying a positive understanding of sexuality”.¹⁶² Of note, a significant change in the Nicæan Creed in *The Book of Alternative Services* omits that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. This creedal statement is not an insignificant change in that it was a source of considerable disagreement between the Eastern and Western Churches, becoming a significant item that led to the great schism in 1054.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Other controversial changes in the Canadian Church, including the acceptance and remarriage of divorced persons, reductions in the number of “prohibited degrees of affinity”, the provision to permit unconfirmed individuals to receive the Eucharist, and female ordination, were all permitted within the Anglican Church of Canada prior to acceptance in the Church of England and some other areas of the Anglican Communion.¹⁶³

Despite the aforementioned changes that could be interpreted as violations of scripture and / or tradition, and thereby contravening the Solemn Declaration, none were communion breaking. One might ask why marriage equality has been so vehemently opposed when other changes, though highly controversial, have not caused such hostility, fear, and threats of division. Does blatant homophobia enter into the picture, or is it as previously discussed due to some communion churches existing in tribal or town societies as opposed to the society of the secular city? Possibly a combination of both? One might also add that the role of patriarchy in society may play a significant role in the denial of marriage equality.

The Solemn Declaration provides for continuity with the past, but in reality, the Canadian Anglican Church governs itself through its Synods. The Commission arrived at the understanding that a change in the Marriage Canon would not violate the spirit or intent of the Solemn Declaration of 1893.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 5, 12 - 15.

Section 6: What we share with the Early Church - Controversy

Many in the church despairingly sound the collapse of the church due to changes that have occurred in the twentieth century and see the provision of marriage equality as the final blow that will bring about the collapse of the church.

From the earliest days of the church there has been change. The understanding of the Sabbath was challenged by Jesus in clear violation of the scriptures and traditions held during his earthly ministry. The New Testament bears witness to the struggle of the church to come to terms with Gentile converts, male circumcision, and Mosaic dietary laws. These changes caused conflict in the early church, but with time they have come to be seen as insignificant. Eventually, at some future period, the controversy surrounding marriage equality may also come to seem insignificant to Christians.

Chapter 7: Discussion of the Marriage Equality Survey of the Clergy in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

The researcher wished to ascertain the attitudes regarding marriage equality of active, honorary, and retired clergy in the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador. The responses and opinions expressed in the survey represent a snapshot of a three-week time frame in the fall of 2018, recognizing that opinions are subject to change over time as additional information becomes available. The survey was conducted a few weeks before the holding of a Diocesan Synod for Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador and less than a year before a General Synod (July 2019) for the Anglican Church of Canada. In the July 2019 Synod, a second vote is to occur on the resolution to change the Marriage Canon to permit Marriage Equality incorporating a Conscience Clause in the Anglican Church of Canada. The survey may be seen in the separate appendix.

Of note, the writer has at times been questioned by some Anglicans and non-Anglicans as to why such a vast majority (66.6%) in each of the three houses (laity, clergy, and Bishops) must be achieved in no less than two consecutive Synods. A section of the Summary of the Marriage Commission best explains the reason.

Since the marriage canon is considered a matter of doctrine a change to this canon will require approval by two successive General Synods. Therefore, if it passes at General Synod 2016 it will need to come back to General Synod 2019 before being enacted. In order to pass this canon will require a two-thirds majority in each Order (laity, clergy and Bishops) on both occasions. In between the two Synods it is referred to Diocesan and Provincial Synods for consideration. It is a decision that the church will have to reach, not

by arguments alone, but by prayerful discernment of the movement of the Spirit in our midst.¹⁶⁴

The 66.6% is referred to as a super majority and would indicate a clear message that a change in doctrine reflects the desires of the church as the General Synod members were moved by the promptings of the Holy Spirit to change a doctrine of the church.

The Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador was made aware of the topic of the dissertation and permission to conduct a survey that would ascertain the attitudes of Diocesan clergy regarding marriage equality was granted. The Bishop indicated that he would be interested in the results. The preamble to the survey informed the survey subjects that the survey results would eventually be shared with Bishop Geoffrey Peddle and subsequently posted on the Queen's College Website. It was Dr. Richard Singleton, Provost of Queen's College, who suggested that the results could be posted on Queen's College Website. I agreed that the results might be of interest to clergy and laity at the local and possibly the provincial level and therefore ought to be subsequently posted after the final paper had been submitted.

In order to guarantee the confidentiality of, and amity between the researcher and subjects, it was decided by the researcher that a third party should be selected to distribute and collect survey responses electronically. Consideration as to the selection of the third party was made taking into account the potential interest the chosen individual or organization would have in the results. The third party would have to be seen as interested but neutral by the respondents. Having the Diocese function as the third party was seen as an impediment, as

¹⁶⁴ <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/Summary-of-Marriage-Commission-Report-final2.pdf> (accessed Nov. 25, 2018).

respondents might feel obliged or possibly intimidated to respond in a particular manner in that the Diocese is the employer. Queen's College was selected as the organization to distribute the survey and receive the responses. The college would have an interest in the results, had access to electronic contact information of the survey subjects, had survey software for electronic distribution, and hopefully would be seen as having an academic interest in the topic and results but an inability to influence employment status. Even though safeguards were put in place to protect confidentiality, some respondents might have had apprehension in responding to Diocesan Administration.

Several meetings were held with the Queen's College Provost to discuss the proposal's electronic distribution and collection of results. The researcher is very thankful for the interest that Dr. Singleton expressed in the project and most importantly for the suggestions he made regarding questions that might pose an ethical dilemma for the college, as well as suggestions as to how to resolve such difficulties. Dr. Singleton did discuss the survey with Dr. Darryl Pullman of Memorial University Faculty of Medicine, and it was subsequently determined that the survey could be carried out without going through the "Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research" (MUN) after some editing to remove specific questions that might remotely make it possible to identify some respondents.

The survey consisted of nine questions and an opportunity to include written comments on the topic of marriage equality. Three of the nine questions were demographic. Queen's College has an account with "Survey Monkey", therefore this was the software chosen for the electronic survey. Clerical staff of Queen's College typed, electronically distributed the survey, and received the responses electronically. Respondents had three weeks to reply, and weekly

reminders were forwarded up to the closing date. The survey was developed in a manner that made it impossible for the respondents to be identified by the clerical person receiving responses. Results were tabulated using the “Survey Monkey” software.

The survey was sent to one hundred and thirty clergy of which seventy-three replied. This is considered an excellent response. The survey results are comprehensibly indicated through pie charts and response percentages for each question. Twenty-two written comments were made.

An examination of the results indicates that for Diocesan clergy the majority (73.97%) would vote for marriage equality if they were to attend the General Synod in July 2019, while 10.96% are currently undecided and 15.07% would vote no.

After the vote at the July 2019 General Synod of the Anglican Church, a Diocesan Synod will be held in September 2019 to determine whether the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador will sanction marriage equality within the Diocese. The respondents to the survey were asked if they would support the acceptance of marriage equality in their Diocese if the National Synod voted yes to extend marriage equality incorporating a conscience clause. A clear majority (80.82%) responded in the affirmative and 9.59% responded with no or currently undecided. The respondents to the survey were asked if they would support the acceptance of marriage equality in their Diocese if the National Synod voted no to extend marriage equality. Those that responded in the affirmative and the negative were equal (33.99%), while over one quarter (26.03 %) were undecided. This might indicate that there may be an overall unwillingness to go against an adverse decision in the national church. The high percentage of undecided might

swing either way at the Diocesan level, which could possibly be influenced by the margin at which a negative vote might occur at the July General Synod, especially if two houses are in clear acceptance of the resolution and one house has a vote close to the 66.6% required for acceptance. The survey, unfortunately, did not broach questions that might indicate different levels of response; for example, if the National Synod had a super majority of laity and clergy who supported marriage equality and the vote in House of Bishops did not meet the required 66.6%, how might the local clergy vote in a Diocesan Synod. Such a question might improve the yes response by promoting the undecided to side with laity and clergy. Of course, failure of the three houses to reach the 66.6% required acceptance vote would possibly influence the undecided clergy to vote negatively at a Diocesan Synod.

The conscience clause would enable clergy who do not believe that same-sex marriage ought to be performed in a Christian setting to opt out of performing such marriages. A survey question asking whether, if marriage equality is sanctioned in both the National and Local Synods, the respondent would use the conscience clause to opt out of performing same-sex marriages, indicated that 70.42% would not use the conscience clause, 21.13% indicated they would, and 8.45% were currently undecided.

The fifth survey question asked, “Are you aware of any same-sex couples in the area where you live and / or minister?”¹⁶⁵ To this question, 71.23% responded in the affirmative, 21.92% responded no and 6.85% were uncertain. A question that may have been useful but was

¹⁶⁵ Note there was a typo in the survey as the word “where” was omitted from the question.

not asked, could ask whether knowing a same-sex couple made them feel more inclined to accept or reject marriage equality.

The sixth survey question asked respondents if they believed homosexuality is unnatural and sinful (4.11%), homosexuality is innate and therefore normal for some people (84.93%), or uncertain (10.96%). Clearly the majority of respondents were informed about the current understanding of homosexuality in science and medicine.

The final three questions were demographic. Responses to question number seven indicated that of respondents, 28.77% were rural, 64.38% were urban, and 6.85% preferred not to say. It was unfortunate that in the electronic tabulation of results by "Survey Monkey", the breakdown of each of the nine questions as to rural and urban responses had not been sought after. This was an oversight of the researcher. Question number eight asked whether the respondent is male (65.75%) or female (32.88%), while 1.37% preferred not to say. A breakdown of each of the nine questions as to gender might indicate significant response differences according to gender. This was not sought after in result tabulation, again an oversight by the researcher. The survey results showed that 45.21% were employed as a priest or deacon, 35.62% were honorary assistants (non-stipend) as a priest or deacon, and 19.18% were fully retired, that is, not active in any ministerial capacity. Again, another oversight by the researcher was the tabulation of responses by employment status. Failure to seek break down of the three demographic questions in the tabulation of each question resulted in a missed opportunity to gain possible further information that could be useful in determining such needs as further education and /or discussion for specific groups on a particular aspect of homosexuality and / or marriage equality.

The respondents were given the opportunity to express their opinions in a comment section. Twenty-two of the seventy-three respondents availed of the opportunity to voice their sentiments. The comments can be viewed in the survey.

Conclusion

Throughout history, humanity has been seeking to understand the divine will. Christianity witnesses to the belief that God, through Jesus Christ, has reached out to humanity because each person is important to God and has been created to exist in relationship with the Divine Creator. When reflecting upon scripture, tradition and reason, it appears that our understanding of the relationship we have with God, and with each other, has been influenced over millennia depending upon the society in which we live, be it the society of the tribe, society of the town, or society of the secular city.

It seems that throughout history we have been engaged with a struggle to understand and acknowledge that God continues to reveal new truths to us in our own time. We perpetually seem to look to the past to find God's answers to our present dilemmas. The past, as recorded in our scripture and traditions can undoubtedly provide us with insight, but we need to acknowledge, as well, that God has gifted us with reason. The gifts of scripture, tradition, and reason, along with our own experience and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, can provide us with answers to current issues such as marriage equality. Dr. David Bell quoted Orthodox Bishop Kallistos, who in reference to the Anglican Church's current struggle with marriage equality stated, "It might be that the Anglican Communion is being guided by the Holy Spirit to lead the members of other Christian Churches into new paths, for Christ did not tell us that nothing should ever be done for the first time".¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/8-25-2014-Queens-College.pdf> (accessed Nov. 30, 2018).

Indeed, we are moving along a new path, one which it seems the majority of the clergy in the Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador are willing to walk. It is not an easily accessible path, but then again Jesus did not set an example for us to follow that is easy, but preferably one that is fraught with many obstacles along the way. May He provide us with the courage and strength to struggle onwards even despite obstacles, stumbles, and setbacks that we encounter along the way.

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Appendix: The Marriage Equality Survey