

**Chair of Christian Thought: The Lebel Lectures on Christian Ethics,**

**St. Matthew's United Church, Calgary**

**“Open Orthodoxy and Same-Sex Marriage: Where Should Christians Stand?”**

**By Ian Markham**

Freud and St. Augustine of Hippo have lots in common. They both recognize the significance of the sexual realm in human life. Freud is famous for the way in which he found overwhelming ‘evidence about the significant part that sexual factors play in the neuroses.’<sup>1</sup> Augustine in *The Confessions* talks of ‘sensual folly assumed domination over me, and I gave myself totally to it in acts allowed by shameful but under your laws illicit.’<sup>2</sup> He admits he enjoyed satisfying his lust: he writes, ‘when I prayed you for chastity and said: “Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet.” I was afraid you might hear my prayer quickly, and that you might too rapidly heal me of the disease of lust which I preferred to satisfy rather than suppress.’<sup>3</sup> For Augustine, the sexual is so central to human identity that disordered desires in this realm permeates every other aspect of our lives. And in a strange way, Freud would concur. For Freud, the inappropriate recognition of our sexual desires will result in physical and mental illness. Although the political expression of their thought would differ, they share the view that sexuality is unavoidably significant.

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1961), p.220. In Freud’s *Studies in Hysteria*, the ‘sexual instinct’ is described as the most ‘powerful source of lasting increases in excitation (and, as such, of the neuroses).’ (as quoted in Jones, p.225).

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Henry Chadwick, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998), p.26

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145

The struggle of Europe and North America to form a view about the range of lifestyle options, which are entitled to public recognition, witnesses to the significance of sex in our culture. In a world where global warming threatens to overwhelm us and half the world's population is trying to cope on less than two dollars a day, it might seem odd that our views on sexuality matter so much.<sup>4</sup> Yet it clearly does. All the mainline churches are deeply divided on this issue. The worldwide Anglican Communion is in turmoil because of the election to the episcopacy of an openly gay man in New Hampshire in 2003. Tempting though it is to 'trivialize' the sexual, we need to recognize that Augustine and Freud had a point. Indeed one key assumption I am making in this lecture is that the sexual realm is enormously important. In terms of ethical depth, a person appropriately disciplined in his or her sexual life is likely to be appropriately balanced in other areas of their life. Conversely, a person undisciplined in this area is likely to have problems in other areas of their life. Although global warming and poverty deserve to have a greater priority in our discourse and concerns, it is important not to underestimate the importance of the sexual in our ethical reflection.

Building on this assumption, the argument of this paper is this. The majority of trends around the sexual in modern western society are disturbing. Divorce and adultery are increasingly commonplace. The internet is a resource for unhealthy sexual addictions. Marriages are finding it difficult to survive the challenges of urban life and mobility. One counter balance, however, is the 'gay marriage' debate. This movement for monogamy amongst gay and lesbian couples is a welcome antidote to the disturbing

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<sup>4</sup> For the poverty statistic see <http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp#fact1> (accessed Jan 18 2007)

trends. Whereas polyamory continues to undermine monogamy, gay marriage is bringing a mechanism that can support monogamy amongst the homosexual community.

Therefore orthodox Christians should be supporting this development. I will conclude my lecture by suggesting that such Christians should own and affirm the designation advocates of 'open orthodoxy'.

### **Contemporary Culture and Sex**

I want to start our discussion about contemporary culture and sex by revisiting the work of the British ethicist V. A. Demant, who wrote in the 1960s. He observed how difficult the traditional moral life is in a mobile urban culture. Demant believed that virtue is best supported in small, rural communities. With the edifice of modernity, we create a situation where virtue is extremely difficult. If you had to summarize Demant in a slogan, then 'go green for virtue' would be a good one.

Demant makes this argument in his *Christian Sex Ethics*, where he identifies three main reasons for the sexual obsession of the twentieth century. The first is that

'people are unknowingly driven to venereal experience, and hope for a great sense of fulfillment in it, as a refuge from or compensation for a sense of deprivation elsewhere. The crudest form of this is just a resort to sexual activity as a kind of narcotic. . . And sex is an even more cogent relief from the pain of individuality and its problems. It is commonplace that sexual desires arise not from natural passion for union with one of the opposite sex, but from a demand to escape from anxiety, however, temporarily. Economic anxieties, worries about esteem and

status, intolerable personal relations, hating one's work or despising it, general feelings of failure or cowardice – all this sort of anxiety can be momentarily shed in the sexual embrace.'<sup>5</sup>

For Demant, it is so exhausting living in our highly competitive, individualist culture that we seek solace in sexual promiscuity.

The second reason is that our culture has made the demands of marriage difficult to sustain. Demant writes, 'I pointed out that in marriage one is dethroned from a position of superiority and has to live together with husband and wife as equals – all defenses and disguises are down; all masks are stripped off. To anyone with a painful feeling of inner poverty in himself or herself this is a great trial. And when men are given little significance in monotonous work, are easily replaceable and have no sense of responsible citizenship or powers of skill, then they expect tributes to their significance beyond what they earn as a human being. Not getting it in the family, as indeed they should not, sexual irregularity is a great temptation.'<sup>6</sup> In a culture where a woodcarver would create a beautiful chair that woodcarver has the self-esteem to cope with the demands of marital intimacy; however, in a culture, where you are on a factory line, self-esteem has been eroded by the work making marital intimacy much harder.

The third reason sums up the first two. Demant writes:

'Sexual adventure outside the bonds of marriage is sought after, mostly quite unconsciously, as a counterweight to the rackets of modern life. . . . There is no

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<sup>5</sup> V. A. Demant, *Christian Sex Ethics*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1963), p.116

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p.

home for the soul. However much egoism and emulation enter into sexual adventure, sexual intercourse does penetrate to the biological and pre-conscious level, and even when least enriched by personal affection, it provides moments of intimacy and tenderness.<sup>7</sup>

Demant's view is that urban, mechanical, atomized society with a predominantly intellectual culture, without robust communities and without much contact with nature, starves the emotional life elsewhere. Therefore, argues Demant, too much emotional capital is locked up in the love and marriage relationship which finds it hard to bear the weight. This pressure has led to the situation where people continue to get married but find it difficult to remain faithful and committed.

Combine our cultural obsession with ample opportunity then we have a lethal mix. Demant makes this point repeatedly.<sup>8</sup> The city is a major resource for sexual infidelity. No one can really govern a city. All forms of human life exist in the city. Unlike the small town, where everyone knows everyone, and nothing 'goes on' without the whole town knowing, the city is completely anonymous. The size of the city means that there is always someone ready to satisfy a need. If one is sufficiently careful, then one can do anything without detection in the city.

Opportunity is also assisted by mobility. If you live in one place, work in another, and are required to travel, then there are ample opportunities to have a liaison with a work colleague or connect for an evening with a stranger you meet in the bar.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.120

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Demant's *Religion and the Decline of Capitalism*.

I start with Demant because he is one of the few commentators who locates the challenge of fidelity very firmly in the challenge of living in the modern world. Even if both the city and modernity bring many advantages, one can still concede that they make monogamy difficult.<sup>9</sup> And the statistics provides ample evidence for this.

In terms of living arrangements for couples in the United States, only 49% of women in 2005 are living with a spouse at home (53% of men).<sup>10</sup> Back in 1995, 43% of marriages end in divorce or separation within the first fifteen years and this trend has continued.<sup>11</sup> Relationships outside a marriage are harder to determine. Inevitably, such data is shrouded in secrecy. However, in 2002, the best estimates showed that 45-55% of married women and 50-60% of married men have, at some time, had a relationship outside marriage.<sup>12</sup>

Demant could not have seen the additional help provided by the internet. Hours can be spent in a chat room or looking at pornography in the privacy of one's home. Specialists are now talking about the 'cyber-infidelity', which is an 'infidelity that consists of taking energy of any sort (thoughts, feelings and behaviors) outside of the committed relationship in such a way that it damages interactions between the couple and negatively

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<sup>9</sup> Also I would want to take issue with Demant's nostalgia for pre-modern forms of work. On the type of work within modernity, Demant is preoccupied with the factory. Fortunately, there are plenty of forms of employment in modernity, which do cultivate self-esteem.

<sup>10</sup> Statistics are for the United States and are taken from the Census Bureau. This statistic is taken from the *New York Times* January 16 2007/

<sup>11</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Taken from [www.divorcereform.org](http://www.divorcereform.org) (accessed January 15 2007)

<sup>12</sup> See Joan D. Atwood and Limor Schwartz MA, 'Cyber-Sex' in *Journal of Couple & Relationship Therapy*, 1 (3): 37-56

impacts the intimacy in the relationship.’<sup>13</sup> Much like the ‘regular affair’, the participants in a cyber-affair offer each other ‘unconditional support and comfort.’<sup>14</sup> In addition, ‘this electronic bond can offer the fantasy of the excitement, romance and passion that may be missing in the current relationship.’<sup>15</sup> As with the traditional infidelity, the affair starts with ‘flirting’ (which is often no more than cyber-space chatting), moves to ‘cyber-sex’ (frequenting the sex chat rooms and engaging in ‘sexually explicit cyber talk’<sup>16</sup>) and then allowing it to develop into an affair, which is defined as ‘when one partner shares an emotional connection with one participating cyber-friend on the Internet.’<sup>17</sup>

The Internet provides all the temptations of the city. It is a vast, global community. One can meet everyone and anyone from the security of your home. Google can introduce you to someone who shares your particular fantasy. It is not surprising that the Internet has proved to be the pedophile’s paradise. With a low risk of being discovered (although fortunately not as low as some child predators would like), one can move from website to website accumulating information on a whole variety of ways of being sexual beings.

In many ways, the Polyamory movement makes more sense of our historic moment than the campaign for gay marriage.<sup>18</sup> With mobility and the emergence of urban life, humans have more opportunities than ever before to explore options. One aspect of this is the growing number of people who simply ‘fall in love’ with others outside a committed

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.38

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.39

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.39

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.41

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.42

<sup>18</sup> I have taken this discussion from my book *Do Morals Matter* (Oxford: Blackwell 2007)

monogamous relationship. For most individuals, this is an affair, but for some this evolves into something more. It could be argued that for the bisexual wife, the loving female companion need not be a threat to the relationship with her husband. There is growing evidence that the affair is evolving into a committed relationship. And this committed relationship is being tolerated by the spouse. And so a polyamorous relationship comes into being.

The Churches are beginning to have to face the issue. The Unitarian Universalists are leading the way. This growing US denomination has taken consistently progressive positions on key social issues. So a society has formed – the Unitarian Universalists for Polyamorous Awareness (UUPA). At the 41<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalists Association, held in 2002, the UUPA succeeded in becoming affiliate member of the Association. The UUPA explains polyamory in the following way:

*Polyamory* is the potential for loving more than one person within a given period of time. Here we'll define "love" as a serious, intimate, romantic, stable, affectionate bond which a person has with another person or group of people. *Responsible non-monogamy* is another way of saying polyamory, and it is used to distinguish polyamory from "cheating."

Polyamory is a general term covering a wide variety of relationship styles, including group marriage (polyfidelity), open marriage, expanded family, intimate network, and some kinds of intentional community.

Polyamory is a relationship choice available to people of any sexual orientation. Sometimes language familiar to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people is used to describe aspects of living as a polyamorous person (such as "coming out" as polyamorous). However, there are polyamorous people of all sexual orientations, just as there are monogamous people of all sexual orientations.<sup>19</sup>

As with all such campaigns, there is a social justice dimension. When it comes to placing children, the US courts have been inclined to view with suspicion households where there



are ‘irregular’ relationships amongst the adults. So the ‘poly’ welcoming individual wants the law to recognize the legitimacy of this lifestyle choice. This evolving movement has learned much from the gay and lesbian campaign. When the UUPA offers some practical tips for poly welcoming individuals, the website explains that one should:

Say “partner or partners” instead of “couple.”  
 Support multiple-person commitment ceremonies.  
 Ask a poly person about his or her life. Ask about the person’s partner(s) as a way of affirming the importance of those relationships.  
 Speak up if someone reveals an irrational fear of polyamory. Be aware of subtle and institutional forms of discrimination against polyamorous people.  
 If polyamory brings up strong negative emotions for you, gently explore those feelings by talking with someone you trust.<sup>20</sup>

The cultural pressures on monogamy are considerable. To argue that we should offer our sexual being in the context of a committed relationship sounds positively quaint. So as we start to reflect theologically on same-sex marriage, perhaps the place to begin is around the whole issue of monogamy in general.

### **Thinking theologically about Same-Sex Marriage**

There are two main arguments for marriage in the Christian tradition. The first is the Roman Catholic argument from Natural Law. Grounded in Aristotle and expressed most fully in the writings of Thomas Aquinas, this starts with the simple observation that children are born of parents. Leaving aside the dramatic technological developments that create new and different options, the traditional mechanism of procreation is one man and one woman in the act of sexual intimacy. Given that children, hopefully, outlive their parents, the birth of a child is an obligation that extends for a lifetime. So the basic God

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<sup>19</sup> Taken from the website for the UUPA at <http://www.uupa.org/Understanding.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

intended unit is the family: one man and one woman in a monogamous relationship for life. Or as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it: ‘The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life.’<sup>21</sup> A monogamous committed relationship is the best framework for the rearing of children.

The second argument is Biblical and grounded in the creation story. When it comes to the family, the Bible is an odd text. Many different forms of family are recognized in the text, from polygamy to concubines. And as Deirdre Good has shown the ‘family values’ of Jesus are very surprising.<sup>22</sup> Historically, the two texts that most Christians have made central to the marriage debate are Mark 10 (Jesus and divorce) and Genesis 1-3. In Mark 10, Jesus goes back to the creation ordinances. When asked whether divorce, as permitted in the Torah, is appropriate, he goes back to that which God originally intended.

But Jesus said to them, ‘Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup>But from the beginning of creation, “God made them male and female.” <sup>7</sup>“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.” (Mark 10:5-8)

From Luther onwards, this has been interpreted as Jesus citing the creation ordinance that required one man to marry one woman for their lifetime. And from the Genesis story, one learns that God created male and female to be companions together (Genesis 2:18).

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<sup>21</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Mahwah, N.J., Paulist Press 1994), paragraph 2207, p.533

<sup>22</sup> See Deirdre Good, *Jesus’ Family Values*, (Church Publishing 2006)

Now traditionally, these two texts have been interpreted as the basis for heterosexual monogamy (i.e. marriage). So we come to the issue of ‘same-sex’ marriage. For many Christians, the natural law argument for heterosexual marriage coupled with the small cluster of passages in the Bible that seem disapproving of homosexuality have settled the question. So for the Roman Catholic Catechism, homosexual acts ‘are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved’.<sup>23</sup>

Plenty of others have analyzed the Biblical texts at length. So, in brief, the challenge for the Christian is to think through the attitude of the Biblical witness to ‘orientation’. In much the same way as the Bible does not explicitly address ‘stem-cell research’ or ‘nuclear deterrent’, so the Bible does not explicitly address our growing awareness that there are significant numbers of people who do choose their sexuality but find themselves living with a certain attraction. It is very difficult to move from the extraordinary story of Sodom, involving attempted gang rape of men and the offer of virgin daughters as a substitute, to a prohibition of a stable gay loving relationship (see Genesis 19). In the Holiness code of Leviticus, we find the prohibition of homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13) sitting alongside the death penalty for adultery and for ‘reviling’ your mother and father (Leviticus 20:9-10), let alone the requirement that we do not wear a garment with ‘two kinds of yarn’ (Leviticus 19:19). Consistency would require the Christian who takes one verse from the Holiness Code to take them all (or at least explain why some are binding and others are not.) But my sense is that this text is a call for moral

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<sup>23</sup> *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 2357, p.566

distinctiveness from those around us, which is after all the overall purpose of the holiness code; the fundamental settled orientation of a gay and lesbian person is not an issue here. Paul includes homosexuals in the ‘vice lists’ that occur in several passages of the New Testament, of which the most important is Romans 1. But as with the Jesus propensity to go for dramatic exaggeration (after all most of us look at others with lust in our eyes, but hardly anyone is blind),<sup>24</sup> so Paul denounces experimental homosexual acts by heterosexuals (after all these are men who ‘exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural’)<sup>25</sup> along with those who are ‘rebellious towards parents’ who ‘deserve to die’.<sup>26</sup> As Richard Burridge has argued these vice lists cannot be the last word on the Christian attitude to rebellious children or homosexuality.<sup>27</sup>

If the texts that convey disapproval of homosexuality are not a decisive Biblical account of sexual orientation, then what about the teaching around creation ordinances in Mark and Genesis? It is interesting to see how a fixed account of marriage has been deduced from Mark 10 rather than the more fluid picture of marriage one might learn from the reply Jesus gives to the Sadducees about the problem of endless remarriages at the resurrection. Jesus says, ‘For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.’ (Matthew 22:30) For Jesus, the institution of marriage is a provision intended in this world: it is a temporary institution. Unlike Muslims, Christians do not believe we are married for eternity. And we already recognize that there are countless legitimate marriages, which do not have children: the

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<sup>24</sup> See Matthew 5:29

<sup>25</sup> Romans 1:26

<sup>26</sup> Romans 1:30-32

<sup>27</sup> See Richard Burridge’s forthcoming book.

infertile couple, the elderly couple, and, increasingly, those who do not have children out of choice. And there are those very special marriages, which adopt children. The couple creates a family for the child.

Most Christians would want to affirm totally the legitimacy of these families. It is disturbing to read Gilbert Meilander's argument that adopted children in families are less legitimate than biological children. Of course, all that Meilander is doing is taking the Natural Law argument extremely seriously and arriving at the logical conclusion that not only is homosexuality problematic but adopted children are as well. Herein is a clue. If the Christian family is flexible enough to incorporate adoption, then perhaps it can be sufficiently flexible to incorporate the gay couple.

Surely the point of a Christian marriage is that two people can create a foundation from which one can provide mutual support and comfort in an ever-changing and often very volatile world. Living in society is difficult to cope with: redundancy might occur at work or a natural disaster might destroy one's home. Although nothing is immune from the transitory nature of being (and of course even one's companion will finally die), there are aspects of one's life which should be more settled than others. The institution of marriage should be a rock on which lives can be lived. As we cope with illness, job insecurity, and anxiety about events in the world, we find at the center of our lives a relationship which provides love through the uncertainty. The point of the narrative in Genesis 2 is that as Adam named all the animals in quest for companion, none of the animals are suitable. It is the contrast between animals and humans which is emphasized.

Much as we might like to imagine that the dog or the cat can be a sufficient companion, the point of the Genesis story is that ideally the companion should be human. It is not the gender difference which is central to the story but the necessity that the companion be another human rather than an animal.

The argument for monogamy is that it is the binding commitment of two people that can create the bond sufficiently strong to endure the vicissitudes of life. It is also the setting for sexual intimacy. Augustine and Freud have a point: the sexual realm is complex, powerful, and often dark. Placing sexual intimacy in a setting of trust is the best way of both affirming its significance and satisfying the human sexual need. Open marriages do not work. Polygamy and polyamory have complex power relationships at work within the group, which are almost bound to result in jealousy and insecurity. The point of a marriage is that one should feel 'secure'; to be aware that one is in semi-competition with others for affection and attention is bound to lead to insecurity.

The challenge for the Christian witness at this moment is to witness to the importance of monogamy, while being appropriately pastorally sensitive. There are marriages which are disasters from the moment they start; there are abusive marriages; and marriages being destroyed by some addiction. It is right and proper that people escape from the marriage that becomes a damaging prison. And it is also right that the Church makes clear that individuals who find themselves divorced need to know that the grace of God is available for a clean start. But to those individuals who are in adulterous affairs<sup>28</sup> or are

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<sup>28</sup> I do acknowledge that there are times when the friendship outside the marriage is partly a result of the marriage relationship being damaging.

tempted by polyamory, the Church needs to be clear. The fruits of the marriage depend on attention to that marriage. Living through the moods and various forms of mid-life crisis, while remaining faithful, is an important part of a marriage.

The paradox of modern living is that we need a monogamous relationship even more. Demant is right to document the ways in which monogamy is difficult in the modern world. But the very fact that many of us are mobile and that families are now dispersed around a country and the world makes the need for a center that can provide some form of security even more imperative. The challenge of coping with the demands of modernity requires the committed certainty of a marriage.

The Church is right then to witness to marriage as the appropriate setting for sexual intimacy. We already affirm and celebrate the relationships of the elderly couple – perhaps a widower and widow – and those with special needs and those whose cross includes the pain of infertility. We are right to affirm and celebrate such marriages. And the time has now come when the same spirit should be extended to the committed gay or lesbian couple. If marriage is a good thing, then let us have even more of it.

The Church really should have no problem with the accommodation of same-sex relationships within the marriage institution. Indeed one could argue that perhaps it is more surprising that there is so much demand for monogamous marriage. There are plenty of gay and lesbian thinkers who are strongly opposed to the campaign for same-sex marriage. For Elizabeth Stuart, the Roman Catholic lesbian theologian, marriage has

historically served the interests of patriarchy. Instead of emulating heterosexual institutions, she invites the gay community to witness to the alternative. Gay and lesbian people, she argues, have a clearer sense that friendship can blur with sexual desire and are comfortable with the emergence of sexual friendships. She believes that heterosexuals should learn about the connections between love, friendship, and sexual intimacy from the homosexual lifestyle.<sup>29</sup>

The Church needs to be clear. For a whole host of reasons, a committed loving relationship between two people is to be commended as part of God's design and intention for creation. The closeness and commitment provide the stability that can help us cope with the demands of modern living. When we make our marriage vows, we commit to making a particular person a priority. Within a marriage, each person matters more than anything else. Yet the marriage is not supposed to form a wall. By providing that secure center, it should facilitate service in the community. Supporting others who are in need is one of the duties of a married couple.

This affirmation of monogamous marriage is not intended to denigrate the state of singleness. For some singleness is a preference: for others is a trial. The natural state for all people is community. And the single person can bring a special gift to community that those in a committed monogamous relationship cannot. Singleness means a greater flexibility and independence that marriage curtails. Not everyone should get married and those who are single can make a special contribution.

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<sup>29</sup> See Elizabeth Stuart, *Just Good Friends*, (???)



### **An open and orthodoxy**

There is no mention of homosexuality in our Gospels or in the Creeds. Our position on this question should not be the defining credential for orthodoxy or a basis for schism. It is undoubtedly a second order issue. Whereas the concept of God as triune is central to Christian identity, the variety of relationships that the institution of marriage can accommodate is not. Those who have made this central to the identity of Christianity have completely misunderstood the tradition of Christianity.

Orthodoxy involves two affirmations: first, recognition that the Eternal Word was present in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. For Christians, we know what God is like by looking at that life. It is the life of Jesus of Nazareth which is the Christian equivalent of the Qur'an. And in understanding that mystery, the Church determined rightly that we need to understand God as a Trinity (there are three aspects within the life of God). The second affirmation is the recognition that the process of the tradition is dynamic, changing, and engaging. If one studies the great theologians of the Christian tradition, then one finds a remarkable dynamic process at work. Augustine of Hippo starts his faith journey by learning from the neoplatonists (followers of that non-Christian who lived many years before Christ called Plato). His faith understanding is a remarkable synthesis of the best of non-Christian thought combined with the discoveries made in Christ. St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century does the same work. He is trained as an Augustinian Platonist, yet translated Aristotle and read and engaged with Muslims and Jews. Granted Aquinas is able to combine this hospitality and generosity to Muslims with a vicious

critique of the Qur'an and the Prophet. Yet the process of the tradition is clear: we are called to think afresh within each generation and listen with care to what the Spirit is saying.

Orthodoxy is not a matter of taking the prejudices of the past and imposing them on the present. Orthodoxy is a matter of listening to the revelation of God disclosed in Christ and prayerfully thinking through the implications of our faith for the present. We do so in conversation with the best of non-Christian thought. And from modern science, we learn about orientation. We learn that some people, often at considerable personal distress and pain, have an attraction to persons of the same sex. The orthodox Christian should affirm these insights and accommodate these insights into our ethics of sexuality.

Orthodoxy is not a matter of accommodating every fashion and trend. We cannot and should not affirm every sexual relationship between consenting adults. We should challenge the movement for polyamory. And therefore put positively, we should witness to the importance of monogamy. And orthodox Christians should welcome the gays and lesbians to the institution. The time has come for the gift of monogamy to be shared.

The Christian tradition is generous, hospitable and open. As we struggle with this issue, we should return to the process within our tradition and create for our moment the appropriate understanding of how God expects us to be. Open orthodoxy wants to challenge the extremes. Against John Shelby Spong, justice issues do not require a repudiation of our tradition. And against Peter Akinola, the Christian tradition does not

teach that homosexuality is the key issue for communion. Instead, this lecture is an exercise in engaging with the tradition, seeking to be true to that tradition, and therefore demonstrating that the key issue for Christians is that we continue to witness to importance of monogamy. In that respect, the campaign for same-sex marriage and civil unions is a campaign that orthodox Christians should support. It is in fact a counter-cultural movement that is challenging many of the more disturbing trends in our society. Instead of opposing the movement, the Church should be standing side by side with those supporters of marriage. While the heterosexuals are indulging in infidelity (both cyber and real), we find an important witness to monogamy from our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters. As gays and lesbians ask to be let into the institution, those of us who are already on the inside should reflect and pray on the privilege of marriage and take our duties within the marriage much more seriously.

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