



THE ARCHBISHOP'S COMMISSION ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

7

SEVEN ARGUMENTS
FOR and AGAINST
THE DEVELOPING of PASTORAL GUIDELINES
for
CIVIL UNIONS
(THE INCLUSION of the LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY)
in
The Anglican Church of SOUTHERN AFRICA

A Pamphlet written by R.B.V HESS, Chair of the Commission
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INTRODUCTION

It is my good hope that the arguments presented in this pamphlet will go to the heart of the matter which I believe boils down to a simple “yes” or “no”, as we prepare for the Provincial Synod 2019.

Of course, we all accept and understand that the question of Human Sexuality and Sexual Orientation, is a complex one, and deserves the utmost attention to study, research, reflection and conversation by everyone, from experts in the field, such as scientists, ethicists and theologians.

However I believe that we reached a point on the journey, – just as we did with the debate on the remarriage of divorcees, and the Ordination of Women, we came to a point when the Church had to make up her mind, to change her mind.

I believe we have reached that point on this journey where the Church should say “Yes” to two, of three, Pastoral Questions which has crystalized the debate for me. The Question are: “Should the following Pastoral Ministry be allowed to take place in our church?”

(1) ... **Pray a** Prayer of Thanksgiving for the union celebrated by a Same Sex Couple?

YES or NO

(2) ... **Bless** the Civil Union of a Same Sex Couple in the Church?

YES or NO

(3) ... **Officiate** at the ceremony for a Same Sex Couple?

YES or NO

It is my good hope, and my conviction that we should say an unequivocal “Yes” to questions (1) and (2).

For me personally it should also be a “Yes” for question (3), but I am willing to recognize that that may be a “step too far” at this stage for A.C.S.A to take.

Please examine the **Arguments For and Against** that are listed in this pamphlet and draw your own conclusion.

ARGUMENTS for the INCLUSION of the LGBTIQ+ Community and the acceptance of the CIVIL UNION between a GAY COUPLE

(1) CONVICTION of CONSCIENCE

The Church has recognized down the ages of her existence, the primacy of human conscience, and advocates the respect of an informed conscience. For example, a cleric who in conscience cannot officiate or promulgate the marriage of a divorced couple is allowed to do so.

Why then, can we not allow conscience to guide us in our search for Pastoral Guidelines to LGBTIQ+ community, which will lead to inclusion, rather than exclusion.

Let us therefore respect each others conscience and say “YES”.

(2) THE WITNESS OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

The Bible has throughout the Church’s History been a primary source, of seeking a theological and moral basis for our decision making. However, we are agreed as Anglicans that Scripture needs to be tested by Reason, Tradition and Experience. The Bible needs to be read in context, and recognized as the Church’s Book pointing to the Christ, who is the Living Word made Flesh.

Scripture is actually silent on the question of a faithful monogamous, life-long union between Same Sex persons. It simply was not on the Agenda at that time, or seemingly not necessary to address in the canon of scripture.

The Texts used to demonstrate that homosexuality is against the will of God need to be read in context. It can be argued that these verses condemn immorality and promiscuity, and applies to both heterosexuals, and homosexuals.

Alongside the verses used by those against same sex unions, the following texts should be placed and the question should be asked:

If you read certain passages literally in Scripture, how then do you deal with those Bible verses that nobody reads literally any longer? “For example:

- Deut. 22:22 The punishment for adultery was the stoning to death of the Man and the Woman.
- Leviticus 18:19,29 Having intercourse during menstruation could lead to Excommunication.

- Deut. 22:5 Women were explicitly forbidden to wear men’s clothing.
- Deut. 22:11 To wear clothing of two different kinds of fabric was totally Forbidden.
- Deut. 23:19 It was wrong to lend money at interest.
- 1 Cor. 14:34-35 Forbid women to speak in the congregation.
- 1 Tim. 2:11-12 Women should keep quiet and have no authority over Men.

(3) THE TESTIMONY of INDIVIDUALS and MEDICAL SCIENCE

We have such a rich deposit of testimony and story from faithful men and women down the ages, who have found love in a same sex relationship, and demonstrate the qualities of fidelity and charity that we have come to associate with heterosexuals. We are now more informed that the same holds true for same sex couples.

Let us respect the Testimony of individuals and the support of Medical Science and say “Yes”.

(4) DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATION by the STATE and POLITICAL JUSTICE

It was the promulgation by the State, in South Africa, to legalise Civil Unions that sharpened the need, for the Church to focus on establishing Pastoral Guidelines. It is to be recognised that several countries belonging to A.C.S.A have not passed such legislation, and homosexuality is considered to be a crime. This therefore remains a challenge for the Church in these countries to develop a strong prophetic voice to bring about change.

The Church needs to respond and interpret the political, economic and social context in which it finds itself. The Church remains prophetic and should not capitulate to bad laws made by the state (e.g. Apartheid) but this legislation is a gift to the LGBTIQ Community.

Let us respect the Rule of Law and Justice Making in Society and say “Yes”.

(5) THE NATURE OF GOD and the DOCTRINE of CREATION

Our images of God develops. We do not keep our childhood images of God as we grow in spirituality and maturity. God is no longer “angry Uncle George” or punitive “Judge in the Sky”.

God is a Being in of Love. We are created in Love and for Love.

God is neither male nor female as Paul echoes in Galatians.

*“In Christ there is no Jew or Gentile
Slave or Free
Male or Female”*

In Christ we are a new creation.

(6) **THE DEVELOPMENT of DOCTRINE and CANON LAW**

Doctrine and Canon Law are not static and immutable.

Doctrine has developed over time, and we are called to be theologically vigilant and open to the movement of the Spirit.

To cite again the Two classical examples

- (i) The Remarriage of Divorcees in Church
- (ii) The Ordination of Women to the Priesthood and Episcopate

Both these in their time, were seen as insurmountable challenges.

Today for most of us in the Anglican Church it would be inconceivable to refuse, marriage to a divorced person, and to bar women from Ordination.

(7) **THE CHURCH HAS ‘CHANGED HER MIND’**

This point has already been alluded to, but I believe it has to be stated as boldly and plainly as this: *Church History shows clearly that it is possible and necessary for the Church to have a change of mind.*

ARGUMENTS against INCLUSION of the LGBTIQ+ Community and the acceptance of the CIVIL UNION between a GAY COUPLE

(1) CONVICTION of CONSCIENCE

“It goes against my Christian conscience”

Yes, we know persons from the LGBTIQ+ community and we love them, but conscience does not allow me to condone civil union of a same sex couple.

Nobody is stopping gay people from loving each other, or staying in relationships but that does not mean they can marry.

Let us respect the conviction of Conscience and say “No”.

(2) THE WITNESS of SCRIPTURE and TRADITION

Religious objection to same sex unions are based on biblical texts. The following are the ones often quoted:

- The Creation Narratives of Gen. 1-3
- The Narrative of Sodom Gen. 19:1-26 and Judges 19
- The Holiness Code of Leviticus 18:22
- Paul and The New Testament Romans 1:26-27

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

1 Timothy 1:10

- These Texts are crystal clear and the Bible therefore literally condemns homosexuality as a sin.

Let us respect the conviction of Witness of Scripture and Tradition and say “No”.

(3) THE TESTIMONY of INDIVIDUALS and MEDICAL SCIENCE

Being a homosexual or a lesbian is a condition that can be healed through prayer.

There are testimonials of men and women who openly declare that they have been healed of their deviant sexual orientation.

Let us respect the testimony of individuals, and Medical Science and say “No”.

(4) DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATION of the STATE and POLICIAL JUSTICE

This is simply bad legislation, and should be disregarded as violating the divine plan of Almighty God.

(5) THE NATURE of GOD and the DOCTRINE of CREATION

Marriage was established by God in Paradise for our first parents, Adam and Eve.

Masculine imagery is central to our understanding of God. Civil Unions are seen as a deviant action which undermines our fundamental understanding of God.

(6) THE DEVELOPMENT of DOCTRINE and CANON LAW

God’s Law is immutable and infallible.

The commandments are clear, and have to be followed.

The Bible is the Word of God for us today and has to be obeyed and cannot be contradicted.

(7) THE CHURCH HAS CHANGED HER MIND

In the 1960’s society was pressurised to accept all kinds of immoral sexual relationships between men and women.

Today we are seeing a new sexual revolution where society is being asked to accept sodomy and same-sex marriage.

If homo-sexual marriage is universally accepted, what logical arguments can be used to stop the next steps of incest, paedophilia, bestiality and other forums of unnatural behaviour?

The Church therefore must not change her mind, to all for the total inclusivity of the LGBTIQ+ community and their practises.