

## A REQUEST TO PLEASE PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

Dr. John Mayer

I know that you have gathered to develop a strategy associated with your opposition to the proposed changes to the legal definition of marriage that would allow for same-sex marriages. I, in turn, take the other position, supporting the idea, and indeed, performing such marriages as a chaplain of the Unitarian Congregation of St. Catharines, duly licensed by the Province of Ontario.

I realize that your position represents the historic stance of the Church, which has always deemed homosexuality as “unnatural” and a “sin”. Of course, there is Biblical support for that view, though the rejection of same sex marriage does not follow from it.

Let me propose that same-sex marriage is quite consistent with Christian theology, and even Christian Scripture, notwithstanding that the issue is one for the present. One can reasonably state that no one chooses to be homosexual, for one’s sexual orientation, like one’s physical height or intellectual ability, is one of the many gifts that God bestows upon us. Of course one can behave immorally with homosexual tendencies, just as one can with heterosexual ones; but one’s original orientation is not in itself sinful.

St. Paul has stated that “it is better to marry than to burn”. This is just as true for homosexuals as for heterosexuals. Further, Scriptures invite us not to judge, lest we be judged, and to love one another even as we love ourselves. Now it simply is not the case that if we tolerate homosexual marriages that that would somehow have a negative impact on traditional marriages. We know that living in a faithful and intimate relationship with one other person is a healthy and rewarding lifestyle. Surely being married to someone whom we love and who loves us should be countenanced, and given the respect and recognition of society at large. That is the present issue. Same sex people have indeed for many years lived together, but their union was spurned, scoffed at and rejected by society at large, and often even by the immediate families of the participants. This way of dealing with same-sex orientation is part of the very same resentment of difference that constitutes racial prejudice, ethnic intolerance, the acceptance of the status of slavery for some fellow humans, the denial of voting rights to the “other” gender, etc.

The history of Christianity is replete with examples of the Church approving of apartheid, rejecting interracial marriages, supporting anti-semitism in Germany and Eastern Europe, burning heretics, killing “witches” and condemning homosexuality. Many Christians today are embarrassed by and ashamed of the historic stance of the Church on these issues. And we would claim that the step you are about to take, though historically consistent, is consistent only with this morally shameful and distinctly counter-Christian attitude which disgraces Church history.

We claim that choosing a faithful and intimate personal commitment is as sound for same-sex people as it is for heterosexuals. Such a choice should be respected and

accepted by a mature and moral society. While there was a time that reproductive sexuality was important for the survival of the species, today the fact is that the world is overpopulated, and non-reproductive sexuality is as socially valuable as reproductive sexuality. Of course we are not arguing that one should replace the other; just that this difference between orientations has no threatening implication for the human race, since both will continue to remain with us in any case.

Thus we plead that while you have a right to your own opinions, please do not assume that you speak for Christianity. Your voice is that of some Christians; perhaps a majority today. There was a time when a majority supported criminalizing miscegenation (inter-racial marriages); and when many churchmen condemned the anti-slavery movement in the United States, or the suffragettes. Please reflect on the fact that you do not have a right to push your views on others, whose conscience and faith confirm the importance of the recognition of the rights of homosexual individuals and couples. We believe that the Church's role is to recognize the tendency to intolerance and disrespect in the population at large, and to teach us to strive to overcome such attitudes as we deepen our commitment to the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Liberal Christianity (not just Unitarian-Universalists, but many church leaders of other denominations)

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Note: A meeting was held at the Four Points Sheraton recently with over 100 Christian leaders and church members in attendance. Professor Mayer with quiet determination distributed and shared with those willing to be open.