

THE SEXUALITY OF JESUS

The Sexuality of Jesus
in Christian Teaching
in dialogue with
History, Science,
Political Correctness
and Secular Myth



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1. INTRODUCTION – MARTYRED FOR UPHOLDING CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Sir Thomas More (b 1478), was an English lawyer, lay theologian and humanist, and parliamentarian who became secretary and personal adviser to King Henry VIII, was elected to knighthood and Speaker of the House of Commons, and in 1529 was made Lord Chancellor, the first lay person to hold the position. Though initially non-committal, More fell out with the 'political correctness' of King Henry's purposes about King Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon, and the subsequent separation of the English Church from Roman Catholicism which resulted. Deprived of King Henry's favour because of his lack of political correctness about divorce and Church supremacy, More resigned as Chancellor in 1532. His lack of political correctness was perceived as so continuous a threat to King Henry's problem of marriage, heirs and divorce and Church supremacy that King Henry instigated laws demanding consent be given to such 'royal political correctness' on pain of treason. Sir Thomas More was executed by beheading on Tower Hill on 6 July 1535, a martyr for upholding Christian marriage. (1)

Many Christians today find themselves yoked with Sir Thomas More. As the political correctness of secular constitutional states replaces that of the divine right of kings, their church denominations slide out of two thousand years of Christian marriage teaching into conformity with secular political correctness about sexual relationships.

The obvious needs restating – the Biblical and Apostolic defines what is Christian. For two thousand years, the sexuality of Jesus himself was celibate, and faithful heterosexual monogamous union before God and in law was Christian marriage. This “The Sexuality of Jesus” is written exploring whether there is any real change other than conformity to secular political correctness, subtle and/or pressure enforcing, to which Christian marriage teaching should be accommodated.

Equally obvious is that human sexuality is practiced in great variety from senior primary children to retirement homes. Numerous categorisations of sexual behaviour into social or anti-social, normal or abnormal, have been attempted. None have been accepted universally or definitively because varying psychological, philosophical or religious assumptions ensure little compatibility in opinion. Biblical sources acknowledge the full range of sexual behaviour, with full awareness that the range of sexual behaviours by peoples among whom inspired leaders or authors lived were often given religious or philosophical motivation. The Biblical sources regard only some sexual practices as divinely approved, honourable, holy, and life and society positive. Most other sexual behaviour is regarded as sinful, though some are seen as personal hygiene and psychological development behaviour normally resulting from the human sex drive. The sources show dynamic development in understanding which sexual behaviour remained divinely approved. Such development from Old Testament sources to Jesus and New Testament sources flowed conversely to the political correctness of that time. The demand that development of sexuality teaching should conform to the widening liberal promiscuity of twenty first century secular political correctness needs Sir Thomas More type scrutiny.

Notes:

1. Bolt, R. 1960. *A Man for All Seasons*. Dunan M & Roberts J. 1964. *Larousse Encyclopedia of Modern History*. p24 London: Paul Hamlyn. Knight, K. 2009. *St. Thomas More*. Catholic Encyclopedia Wikipedia 2011. *Thomas More*. More, T. 1516, 1961. *Utopia*. London: Penguin.

2. THE SEXUALITY OF JESUS

Jesus Christ was celibate.

2.1 The Celibacy of Jesus Christ.

The New Testament historical documents are upheld as most accurate for the history of Jesus of Nazareth, with over 5300 manuscripts/fragments of the Greek New Testament (many with early dating validity thus accuracy), over 8000 Latin, over 1000 other versions, backed by numerous letters of Apostolic and Church fathers. They present Jesus as not just unmarried, but morally upright in being celibate in the manner of certain Old Testament prophets Elijah (1 Kings 17.1 - 2 Kings 2.12) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 16.2), and in some similarity to the celibate expectation of the Qumran messianic community contemporary with John the Baptist, who appears to have shared celibacy with Jesus. (1)

Jesus' teaching on celibacy is recorded as of a new earnestness in comparison to prophetic and Hebrew celibacy before him (discussed below).

Non-biblical Jewish and Roman historical evidence, and Talmudic evidence concurs in not finding Jesus sexually immoral. How much easier it would have been for Sadducee or Pharisee to remove Jesus' cause should he have been adulterous or homosexual (as some allege), or taught in support of these. Yet Jesus' trial and execution were for 'blasphemous non-standard' theology, not immorality. Jesus is written up in Jewish sources of opposition to Christianity as a false prophet or blasphemer, but not sexually immoral. Sexual slander is written of Mary, Jesus' mother, but not Jesus. Jewish historian Josephus notes that both Jesus and John the Baptist were considered conduct righteous by the average Jew. (2)

Pseudo-gospels by Ebionites, Gnostics and other post-apostolic sects who wrote to 'fix' the apostles' mistakes – were also written without negative claim about Jesus' celibate morality. These are of lesser evidence weight. Only one gnostic document, the "Gospel of Philip" recovered with the Nag Hammadi Gnostic Gospels, and recently highlighted by the the novel The Da Vinci Code makes claim that Jesus 'used to kiss Mary Magdalene on the lips'. The adulterous common-law wife claim it makes can be easily weighed as imaginative and false. The gnostic gospels originated a century later than Jesus in about 140 AD, already with heavy reliance on John's gospel and with manuscript fragment p52 of John's gospel dated at 125 AD, and without any Talmudic or other historical evidence supporting the Gnostic manuscript, its claim remains no more than fiction. (3)

There is no manuscript document claim that Jesus was homosexual.

2.2 The Conservative Maturity of Jesus' Teaching on Sexuality

Jesus' teaching on sexuality is a major reversal of the modern developmental trend from primitive to higher, which when applied to sexuality relationships is used to show conservatism as more primitive and repressing, and liberal sexuality as higher by implication, thus upholding liberal sexuality as more enlightened.

2.2.1 **Positive Sexuality - Heterosexual Monogamous Faithful Union:**

Mark 10.2-9,10-12, with Matthew 19.3-10, 10-12; John 2.1-11:

Jesus' teaching on sexuality was a radical new start in sexual relationships in world history, not a new dawn of liberalism or promiscuity, but the dawn of a new level of integrity and maturity in sexual relationships, in particular man towards wife. In Mark 10.4, Jesus is tested by the Pharisees on Deut 24.1, and Jesus' response indicates that he knew of the reality of superficial and hard-hearted serial marriage and divorce in particular of males in oppression of women. Jesus upholds far deeper relationship principle than the superficial example he was being tested on. **"In view of this Jesus holds firmly to Scripture. He contends that there never has been any other way than that one woman was created for one man. The existence of the two sexes was ordained by God... Marriage is based upon the plain fact of creation in all its simplicity: God created two sexes."** Schweizer, E. (Mark) p204. For Jesus, the balanced relationship for practice of human fertility for the procreation of children is marriage. In Mark's gospel, after giving his teaching on marriage and divorce upholding integrity in marriage, Jesus then adds his rightly famous teaching on children, the next generation: *"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."* (Mark 10.13-16)

Until Jesus, most sexuality teaching sought casuistic approach, which had deteriorated into practice dictated not by the intrinsic value of each partner, but by patriarchal power projected abusively into relationships. Demosthenes of Athens typified Hellenistic-Roman approach: **"The *hetaerae* we have for our pleasure, the concubines for the daily care of our bodies, and our wives so that we can have legitimate children and a true guardian of the house."** As notorious is Rabbinic legalism that made men incapable of adultery against their wives (women committed adultery); it used Hillel liberalism of even burnt food as grounds for writing the letter of divorce; it used Rabbi Judah ben Elai's **"One must utter three doxologies every day: Praise God that he did not create me a heathen! Praise God that he did not create me a woman! Praise God that he did not create me an illiterate person!"**; it used the infamous old prayer: **"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, ... who hast not made me a woman."** This is typical global pattern of all non-Jesus cultural religiosity worldwide, either the woman is a legal minor or even less. (4)

Jesus refused all this. He radically upheld heterosexual monogamous faithful union as the full measure of integrity in sexual relationships as God had created and ordained. By presenting divorce for both male and female as sinful and adulterous, by presenting sexuality which violates heterosexual monogamous faithful union as adulterous, Jesus returned the male to proper husband practice and re-elevated the woman to the equal and complementary 'helpmeet' of creation. Any Hebrew or Gentile sexual practices outside such marriage, caused by the kind of male power plays above, or in polygamy, concubinage, prostitution or other immorality, are sinful sexual practices that require repentance (Mark 7.20-23). The Jesus of the gospels frees women into mature adult discipleship, and males into maturity of husband practice, Jesus did not retain legal minor femininity.