

Peace on Earth
Good Will to All

November 24, 2011

Open Letter to the Salvation Army

To whom it may concern,

The Salvation Army, a Christian organization, states that intimate homosexual acts are forbidden:

Scripture forbids sexual intimacy between members of the same sex. The Salvation Army believes, therefore, that Christians whose sexual orientation is primarily or exclusively same-sex are called upon to embrace celibacy as a way of life. There is no scriptural support for same-sex unions as equal to, or as an alternative to, heterosexual marriage.¹

The Salvation Army also states:

The Salvation Army believes that God's will for the expression of sexual intimacy is revealed in the Bible, and that living fully in accordance with biblical standards calls for chastity outside of heterosexual marriage...²

Such Bible-based beliefs about same-sex relationships are archaic, amoral, demeaning, errant, insufferable, repulsive, and unsubstantiated. These base views oil the slippery slope of exclusion, hatred, bigotry, suffering, bullying, gay-bashing,³ and, eventually, murder.⁴ It is long past time to change.

¹Salvation Army US Website, November 24, 2011.

²Salvation Army Canadian Website, November 24, 2011.

³http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homophobic_violence#Motivations

⁴http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Significant_acts_of_violence_against_LGBT_people

Arguments in defense of Christianity’s views, written by a Christian in response to the previous paragraph, read as follows:

1. **Inclusion.** Christians promote their inclusiveness by mentioning that all non-procreative sex is a *sin*, not just the sex acts performed by lesbians, gays, bisexuals, or transgendered individuals.
2. **Superiority.** Christians think that homosexuals should be allowed civil unions, but not marriage, and that heterosexuals are not superior to homosexuals.
3. **Acceptance.** Christians preach love and acceptance; they emphasize that homosexuals are accepted for who they are, as long as they refrain from sin.

Let us examine these statements, starting with acceptance.

On Acceptance. The word *acceptance* is defined as follows:

- i. A person’s agreement to experience a situation, to follow a process or condition (often a negative or uncomfortable situation) without attempting to change it, protest, or exit.⁵
- ii. The act of accepting; a receiving of something offered, with approbation, satisfaction, or acquiescence.⁶

By calling upon same-sex Christians to “embrace celibacy,” the Salvation Army has *attempted to change* the behaviour of homosexuals. Informally, accepting something means to do so *without attempting to change it*. The Salvation Army Christians, therefore, do not preach acceptance; they preach *conditional acceptance*, which is much different.

On Superiority. The word *equal* is defined as follows:

- i. The same in all respects.⁷
- ii. Like or alike in quantity, degree, value; of the same rank, ability, or merit.⁸

The Salvation Army maintains that there is no scriptural support for same-sex unions as equal to heterosexual marriage. If no same-sex unions are “equal to” heterosexual marriage, then same-sex unions and heterosexual marriages are somehow *unequal*—they differ in value, ability, or merit. Had the Salvation Army simply stated that same-sex unions are not supported by scripture, there could be no argument. Using the word *equal* suggests relative values. The Salvation Army Christians imply that heterosexual marriage is more valuable than homosexual unions, which is a judgement from superiority.

⁵<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acceptance>

⁶<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/acceptance>

⁷<http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/equal>

⁸<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/equal>

On Inclusion. In their presentation, *Marriage and the Recognition of Same-Sex Unions*, the Salvation Army defines marriage as having the following characteristics:⁹

- ★ Covenanting of one man and one woman, thus intrinsically heterosexual.
- ★ A voluntary union of faithfulness, mutual affection, respect, and support.
- ★ Socially indispensable environment for nurturing children.
- ★ A benefit to both partners and to society as a whole.
- ★ Respect and understanding of the sexes is passed on to succeeding generations.
- ★ Mutual comfort, where sexual intimacy may be expressed within a secure and trusting environment.

Excepting the first, the Salvation Army correctly anticipated that people will assert that these characteristics also apply to same-sex couples. In the same presentation, the Salvation Army claims it “does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation in the delivery of its services.” Yet challenging the legitimacy of same-sex marriage because same-sex couples cannot procreate like heterosexuals do is, at its core, sexual discrimination.¹⁰ While Christians promote their inclusiveness, the Salvation Army Christians advocate discrimination, which is exclusionary.

It is disdainfully ironic that the Salvation Army’s religious agenda regarding same-sex marriage and homosexual acts abets condemnation, superiority, and exclusivity.

⁹Salvation Army Canadian Website, November 24, 2011.

¹⁰The Salvation Army maintains there are important theological, philosophical, historical, social, legal, cultural, and anthropological reasons to keep marriage a heterosexual union. No supporting evidence is given, only conjecture.