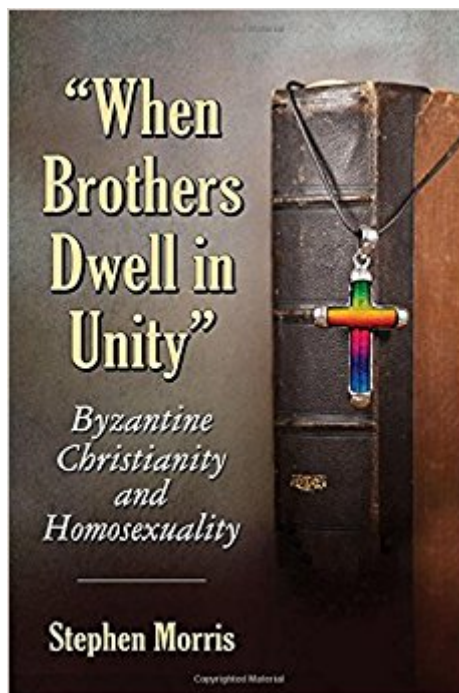




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When Brothers Dwell In Unity: Byzantine Christianity And Homosexuality



Synopsis

Bankers? They were to be forbidden communion, socially shunned, denied church funerals, and not commemorated during prayers for the dead. Men and women— who committed fornication or adultery? They were forbidden communion for years. Men and women who remarried after divorce or widowhood? They were to be forbidden communion for years and then only allowed communion on a few holy days and even then only after weeks of sexual abstinence. Men who had sex with other men? They were to be denied communion for either 7 or— 80 days. Penances traditionally attached to heterosexual sins—including remarriage after divorce or widowhood—have always been much more severe than those for a variety of homosexual acts or relationships. Just as Byzantine churches have found ways to accommodate sequential marriages and other behavior once stridently condemned, this book argues, it is possible for Byzantine Christianity to make pastoral accommodations for gay relationships and same-sex marriage. What most disturbed monastic leaders was adolescent males being accepted as novices; adult men were considered unable to control their sexual desires for these "beautiful boys." John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople (397-407), virulently denounced homosexuality, but was virtually the only Byzantine cleric to do so and may have only done so because of unresolved guilt following probable sexual abuse as a student.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Original and significant... [Morris argues] that the Orthodox Church can recognize the adelphopoiesis rite known from Byzantine times as a recognition of same-sex civil marriage and

supports [his] argument convincingly throughout the book by drawing on the parallel of ecclesiastical recognition for second and third marriages, with historical antecedents that reach back to the 9th century." --Claudia Rapp, Professor of Byzantine Studies (University of Vienna); author of *Brother-Making in Late Antiquity: Monks, Laymen and Christian Ritual* (Oxford, 2016)"... an exceptionally well-written, organized and presented theological treatise for both academic and non-specialist general readers with an interest in Christian theology, with respect to the LGBT community. ... is very highly recommended for both community and academic library Christian Studies reference collections. It should be noted for personal reading lists [as well]...." --Midwest Book Review (March, 2016)"[Morris]... powerfully supports his plea that the interrupted liberalization of the Eastern Orthodox church be allowed to resume...Â Â [and] continue to develop along the lines that it was pursuing before the empire ended." --The Medieval Review (February, 2017)"Daring in its scholarly advocacy, Stephen Morris's 'When Brothers Dwell in Unity' challenges us to reimagine, most creatively, some of the very fundamentals of Christian identity, namely orthodoxy and sexual orientation(s), and most importantly, heÂ Â reminds us that the relationship between these two concepts need not be colored in hues of intolerance." -- Chris DeWet, Associate professor of New Testament and Early Christian Studies (University of South Africa)"This brave and intelligent book.... requires not only the linguistic and philological skills to access and interpret the primary sources, but also understanding of recent theory and method in the history of sexuality and a willingness to acknowledge the complexity of earlier cultures in this area. Morris exhibits all these scholarly virtues.... [the book] should engage the attention of historians of Christianity and of sexuality as well as Orthodox theologians and ethicists." -- David Brakke in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, July 2017"I found the book refreshing and courageous. It puts the status of homosexuality within the Byzantine tradition carefully in context. A sound piece of historical writing. Once I started reading, I couldn't put it down. Morris engages the topic with objectivity, courage and grace. Fearless in dealing with sensitive subjects, its pastoral conclusions are insightful and helpful for discussion of the subject within all Christian churches, not just Orthodox Christianity." --Wendy Mayer, Australian Catholic University"Advocacy, autobiography, and scholarship combine in this a fascinating study of homoeroticism in the Byzantine and Orthodox worlds. Morris also sheds welcome further light on the adelphopoiesis or "brother-making" same-sex unions in premodern Europe." --Mathew Kuefler, author of *The Manly Eunuch: Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity*

Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Justice Anton Scalia's position on same sex-marriage was never in

question when he doubted that any society prior to the 20th century ever permitted marriage between men. The Chief Justice agreed. "Every definition prior to a dozen years ago defined marriage as a unity between a man and a woman," said Roberts. Both Justices were wrong! Morris, a former priest of the Orthodox Church who served as the Orthodox chaplain at Columbia University, unearths a trove of canonical, legal, homiletic, and liturgical evidence to solidly back his contention that, far from forbidding man-to-man relationships, Byzantine Christianity even had rites akin to marriage to sanctify them. "Many Orthodox Christians assume and assert that homosexuality is liturgically forbidden," says Morris, who was forced to resign from active parish ministry when he came out twenty years ago. "They will be very surprised to find out, as I did, the actual historical practices of the Church."

I consider it quite a feat to have finished this book - but it is an important one and I am very glad I did. It is very dense. Morris is not writing to a lay audience but to church leaders who have studied theology and church history in depth - who may, one hopes, eventually pay attention and address his points in good faith.

I am neither an academic or religious, but as a gay man, I was surprised and happy to learn that there is a precedent for a same sex marriage service in the orthodox church. This book clearly lays out the context of how same sex practices were viewed (and tolerated) in Byzantium, through thorough historical research. The author, who was an Orthodox priest and a homosexual, shares his intimate knowledge of the church and liturgy as well as his own experiences as a gay man committed to the precepts of the Orthodox church. Religious institutions change notoriously slowly, but this book gives one the hope that there may very well come a day when same sex unions will be fully sanctified. It's an inspiring read not only for religious scholars, but for anyone who is struggling to integrate their religious beliefs and their sexuality-- or for anyone who believes that whoever we fall in love with, that commitment should be honored and welcomed by all.

I am extremely impressed with the thoughtful writing and thorough research presented in this book. As someone who is fairly new to religion I have been very skeptical in my reading; many books fail to provide clear references and I do not want to be led by opinion. The way the book is structured, with in-text citations and extensive referencing allowing me to feel confident in the factual basis of the writing. The author very wisely separates his own reflections for the reader so that we also have

the opportunity view this material from his unique perspective. It is interesting to read this work in context of our current political climate and given the authors life experiences as noted in the introduction. I highly recommend this book.

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