

6.10 Gay Marriage

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This essay was originally written as a chapter in a book, about 2008. I revised it a bit around 2014. It never appeared in print, not even self-published.

This essay explains what the state should do about marriage, in particular if the state should recognize gay marriage equally with straight marriage. Briefly, the state should have nothing to do with marriage in the religious sense. The state should recognize only civil unions for any people, gay or straight. The state should recognize unions between consenting adults, including gay and straight. If the state insists on recognizing any marriage, then it should recognize gay marriage equally with straight marriage. This chapter is not about any morality, the morality of any marriage, of homosexuality, heterosexuality, or any sexuality. This chapter is about what the state should do. Some readers might think I am dodging the issue, so I give a lot of explanation.

I do not like the term “gay” for gender orientation but I go along with current public usage. I use the term “gay-ness” to refer to attitude and to sexual (gender) orientation. I use the terms for men and women. I know of no accepted term like “gay” for transsexuals and trans-gendered people. Current usage often extends “gay” to them. They too should not be restricted by the state, so the argument here applies to them although they are not explicitly mentioned. I use the term “homosexual” mostly as an adjective to describe acts between two people that most people consider to be of the same sex (not necessarily the same gender). All this is confusing because our understanding is incomplete and biased, even among gay people of all kinds.

The State, General Order, General Morality, and Behavior You Don’t Like.

This section was added in 2014. I found that I had to include the points in any argument about morality and the state such as gay marriage. The same ideas are found in other essays.

A modern plural democratic state is not about the morality of any particular group. The state has to keep general order and it has to enforce general morality. I do not define general order or general morality. When trying to implement general order and general morality, it is best to err on the side of keeping the state small while keeping as many rights and as much choice as we can. The less the state has to do with morality, the better. The state should never enforce the morals of any particular group if the morality of the group does not coincide with general morality. If the morality of a subgroup does coincide with general morality, then, when the state enforces morality, it enforces general morality and not the morality of any particular subgroup. When the state enforces the death penalty, it does so as part of general morality, and not because the death penalty is a tenet in the morality of some Christians or Muslims.

This view about general morality and general order is true regardless of where the state originally got its charter and morals. Modern plural democracy did originate among Western European Christians but that origin does not mean the state should continue only as a Western Christian state following the morality of a particular group of Christians. After the state began among Western Christians, it grew into something

else with its own rationale. Part of the rationale for a plural democracy is enforcing general order and general morality. Part of the rationale is enforcing only the minimum of general order and morality. Part of the rationale is not interfering with persons, rights, and choices unless needed.

Gay (homosexual) acts and gay marriage do not harm consenting adults, general order, or general morality. They are not a threat. Thus the state has no interest in banning gay marriage. The state may allow gay marriage with little fear.

For the state to prevent acts and choices without strong reason is to undermine an important rationale for the state, and to undermine general order and general morality. The state should let people act and choose as long as their acts and choices do not clearly undermine general order and general morality. To allow freedom of acts and choices helps general order and general morality. So the state should allow gay unions because to ban gay unions undermines persons, rights, and choices and because to allow gay unions protects the right of persons to choose and act.

You have to accept the general order and general morality of the state in which you live as long as the state is properly minimal. So you have to accept decisions to recognize gay unions. You don't have to like the situation but you do have to live with it. Your group can live by a stricter morality than what is minimally needed for general order and general morality and what prevails in the state. You can, and should, let everybody else live by the minimum needed for general order, general morality, persons, rights, and free choice.

If you absolute cannot accept gay unions, then you should leave a state that is run along lines of general order, general morality, and minimal interference in persons, rights, and choices.

More Core Points.

If we keep our heads, the situation is clearer than what we see in the media. These points apply whether gay-ness is a free choice or if people are just "born like that".

There is no reason the state should oppress gay people as in the past. The state should not support gay people more than the state supports straight people. As with straight people, the state should support gay people when other people attack them for being gay. State support in this case is the same as protecting children or longshoremen. Permitting gay marriage or unions is the kind of support that straight people get when the state allows them to marry; it is not excessive support. Denying gay unions or marriage when the state allows straight marriage and unions is a kind of oppression. To allow gay marriage or unions is to remove oppression; it is not to grant excessive support; it is not the endorsement of "the gay lifestyle"; it is not more support than straight people in general receive. To allow gay marriage or unions is to remove an oppression that the state should remove.

"Jumping on the gay bandwagon" and politicians supporting gay people is annoying but does not detract from the idea that permitting gay unions or marriage is reasonable support and is not excessive support. Ignore both pro-gay and anti-gay "acting out". Think through these issues without dwelling on glamour, glitz, and politics.

Gay people rarely hurt anybody because gay people are gay. Gay people add to the sum total of human happiness when they enjoy themselves as humans and when they fall in love, just as do straight people. There is no point suppressing an activity that does little harm and sometimes does much good. There is no point in using the power of the state to control activities that do little harm and do some people much good.

There is no good case that gay-ness is immoral. As with straight sex, gay sex is morally neutral in general. I do not believe homosexuality is immoral in general. Some gay acts might be immoral just as some straight acts are immoral; but that fact is not at issue here. It is not up to defenders of gay-ness to prove that it is morally neutral. It is up to people who condemn gay-ness to prove that it is both immoral and harmful.

If you find the ideas of gay-ness and gay sex “creepy”, I do understand, but I don’t agree with you, and creepiness alone does not make something immoral. I find much straight life creepy such as most reality shows on TV, how people dress, bad taste, and public displays of affection; but that does not mean it all is immoral. I have to see morality apart from creepiness. I certainly don’t want to use the power of the state to control everything that I find creepy.

Even if gay-ness is mildly immoral, it is not immoral enough that the state should get involved. People who condemn gay-ness as immoral bear the burden to prove it is so immoral that the state should get involved. The state allows many kinds of immorality because it is not worthwhile for the state to commit its power to controlling all kinds of immorality. The state does not control all kinds of stealing or lying. The state should only commit to controlling some kinds of immorality, those that threaten general order or general morality. Even if gay activity is immoral, gay activity is not an immorality with which the state needs to bother. The state has better things to do.

In terms familiar to traditional theists and some Hindus: Assume gay-ness is immoral. Even so, people who condemn gay-ness as so immoral that the state should suppress gay-ness and ban gay marriage need to show: (1) All gay-ness is immoral to God. (2) Gay-ness is a kind of immorality that God is much concerned with. (3) Gay-ness is a kind of immorality that God is more concerned with than with other kinds of anti-Biblical morality that opponents of gay marriage do not use the state to suppress. (4) God is so concerned with gay-ness as immorality that he will collectively punish the United States if the United States does not suppress gay-ness and if it does allow gay civil unions (marriage). I doubt that opponents of gay marriage can prove any of these points.

I do not take the issues in order below. Briefly here:

(1) The Hebrews before Jesus strongly disliked some kinds of gay acts, and likely were uneasy with most gay activity, but condemned only some acts. Not all gay-ness was very immoral to God.

(2) and (3) It is hard to say if God is particularly concerned with gay-ness. God is much more concerned with moral issues other than gay-ness. God did not waste the energy of his prophets on gay-ness. He used them more effectively on other issues. Follow God in this respect.

(3) and (4) Even if God was particularly vexed with gay-ness, it was not an immorality that God would do

much about. In particular, God would not punish the United States collectively if the United States did not actively suppress gay activity or even if the United States is legally neutral toward gay-ness and gay activity.

God will not collectively punish the United States for tolerating gay people and allowing gay marriage or gay unions. Even for die-hard traditional religionists, this is the point they should care most about if they want the state to suppress gay people. It is not up to people who do not want the state to suppress gays to prove God will not punish the nation for tolerating gays. It is up to people who think God intensely dislikes gay-ness to prove God will punish the United States nation for tolerating gay-ness.

God does not punish a nation for all badness; God does not punish a nation for allowing drunkenness, lying, heterosexual fornication, or cheating on taxes. God does not punish America for allowing other religions and atheism, that is, idolatry, the worst sin in the Bible. God does not punish the United States for violating the Sabbath, a sin which many Christians commit. So it is unlikely God will punish the whole United States for tolerating gays.

There is no case in general for using state power to control gay people, and a good case for the state not being involved at all. There is not even a good case on the basis of traditional religious belief for using state power to control gay people.

Ideally, the state should have nothing to do with any marriage. The state should establish civil unions, especially when children are involved. Gay and straight people both should have equal access to civil unions and both should be covered equally by the rules of civil unions.

If the state does have to get involved in marriage, and the state accepts straight marriage, then the state should accept gay marriage as well.

Rather than go after gay people, traditional religious people should think of better ways to spend their zeal and to be good decent citizens.

In More Depth.

The state should not serve as the instrument of any moral tenet except when the moral tenet is needed to preserve general order and general morality. The state should not serve the morality of any particular religious, ethnic, or gender group. When the state gets involved in one moral dispute, it gets involved in other disputes, gets too involved, and acts as the partisan for one group. It is better to make the mistake of too little involvement than too much. I think a lot of people are horrible but I do not want the state to be the instrument of carrying out my private judgment. For example, I think that promoting a bad political position is immoral but I do not want the state to act as my instrument in punishing every silly person with a bad political opinion.

Marriage of any kind is no business of the modern state. The state gains nothing from recognizing marriage in general or any particular kind of marriage. The state should stop recognizing marriage in general or any kind of marriage. Instead, the state should use voluntary registration of adults as partners, now called "civil unions".

In the past, various states have recognized various marriage patterns because it was in the interests of the state to do so. Jewish, Roman, and European states all recognized their versions of marriage based on their needs. The state recognized polygamy when useful to the state. The recognition that the present American state gives to monogamous "straight" marriage is a holdover from the past, molded somewhat to fit present state needs. Just because states in the past recognized marriage to suit their needs then does not mean recognizing marriage suits needs now, recognizing marriage suits needs better than registering civil unions, or we should recognize marriage even if recognizing it does suit some state needs. For the state now to expand its idea of unions or marriage to include gay people is not a radical change in policy or in how states deal with marriage and unions.

The state needs to keep track of who is responsible for children. The state needs to keep track of some personal relations, such as for purposes of inheritance, insurance, liability, pensions, and medical care. A common human relation is coupling, and the state can recognize a coupling relation for the purpose of taking care of children and other needs. Recognizing coupling relations does not amount to recognizing marriage. Couples are also called "partners".

Mutually consenting adults may declare as a partner whoever they wish for whatever reasons they wish. The declaration should not be unilateral or against the will of anybody. It should be mutual. The state can recognize a mutual declaration between consenting adults.

If people wish to get married, they can go to a religious institution. The institution would decide who was eligible or not eligible. The policy of the religious institution would be no business of the state. Getting married in a religious institution would not necessarily lead the state to label two people a "couple" or as "partners". The people would have to register separately with the state.

Ordinarily if a person got married, he-she would register the marital partner as his-her legal partner too. Even though a person ordinarily registers his-her marital partner as his-her legal partner, the two events are logically and legally separate. One does not entail the other.

A person could marry one person but recognize another as his-her partner. That situation would be odd, likely manipulative, probably callous, and maybe immoral; but it would not be the business of the state. The state would be concerned only with the legal registration.

Two registered people would have legal obligations to each other, such as for support. I do not know if the legal obligations would be symmetrical but likely so. Two married people who were not registered also would not have legal obligations. Anybody who got married in a religious institution but did not also register with the state would accept a certain risk.

The state should recognize partner registration (civil unions) in foreign countries and should recognize marriages in foreign countries as equivalent to partner registration here, especially if foreign countries do not have partner registration. The state should encourage people who were married in foreign countries, but did not register in a civil union there, to register when they arrive in the United States.

If the United States had modest universal health care and modest universal retirement, many of these issues would be practically irrelevant. A person would not have to get married to obtain support, and being married would not necessarily confer any better support than not being married. A person would not have to register in a union to obtain support, and registering in a union would not necessarily confer any better support than being registered. Universal health care and retirement would make registration a much clearer and more egalitarian relation than current marriage. People would register because they wished to, not because they had to. Modest universal health care and retirement would lessen a lot of other social problems. Our current programs of “Obamacare”, Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, and Social Security do not work well enough. I am not asking for more, I am asking for better.

Biblical Point of View.

Traditional Jewish culture, and original Christian culture, clearly disliked male homosexuality (sexual acts between men), especially male transvestite homosexuals (men who dressed as women and had sex with other men). It is not clear what Jewish culture felt about male transvestites who were not homosexual – most transvestites are not also homosexual. I guess Jewish culture around the time of Jesus would have disliked non-homosexual male transvestites but would not have condemned them. We cannot avoid seeing that Jewish culture disliked male homosexuality; but also we can find voices of general tolerance in the Bible, voices that could extend tolerance to transvestites and homosexuals. It is not clear what traditional Jewish culture and early Christian culture thought of female homosexuals and transvestites, but likely they disapproved. The Bible appears more concerned with regulating particular acts than with sexual orientation apart from acts. Contrary to popular opinion, Biblical texts on gay-ness are sparse, are not conclusively against it, and are not harsh in recommended punishment except for one text that calls for death for men who have sex wherein at least one partner acts (dresses) like a woman. I do not cite and interpret any texts here.

The Tanakh (“Old Testament”) called for death for many “crimes” that we “let slide” nowadays, such as not giving burnt offerings, improper offerings, disrespecting parents, working on the Sabbath, collecting interest, and adultery by women. The Tanakh was more concerned with some acts more than others even when it called for the death penalty for both kinds of acts. As did priests thousands of years ago, we select acts from the Tanakh that we want to abhor. We pick the acts we abhor to use as tools in disputes with other groups and as tools to get the state to be our agent of power.

The Bible did not single out gay behavior as one of the acts that we have to worry much about. Likely Jewish culture did not worry about the problem nearly as much as do modern Christian anti-gay activists. The Tanakh, and Jewish culture, were strongly offended by some acts more than others, and punished more severely people who broke those rules than people who broke other rules. Many Christians, Jews, and Muslims work on the Sabbath, make employees work, or work at a business firm that is open on the Sabbath even if they do not work on the Sabbath themselves. Many Christians, Jews, and Muslims still collect interest not only from other groups but from their own people as well. Many Christians, Jews, and Muslims work for banks that collect interest without regard to group. The Tanakh condemns all these acts more harshly than homosexuality. If we were consistent with all Biblical texts, then many upright standard Christians, Jews, and Muslims, those who typically loudly oppose homosexuality, should be stoned to death right now in front of their own congregations. We need a theory of what texts to be strict

about and what texts to let slide, a theory that is not based on self-interest, self-righteous zeal, and the “culture wars”. We just don’t have this.

Jesus’ view, the view of early Christians, and the view of traditional Jewish culture, were not necessarily all the same. We cannot know for sure what Jesus thought of gay people. Likely, he would not have approved of some acts, as when a man acted like a woman, but Jesus would not have condemned harshly either. I do not know if he would allow homosexual acts in which people did not behave like the other gender. Remember, Jesus was celibate.

Jesus thought the world would soon change drastically, and people would not have the usual marital and sexual relations. Many early Christians became celibate while waiting for the Kingdom. Some early Christians became celibate because they disapproved of sex in general, contrary to Jewish culture and the views of Jesus. Jesus likely would have told gay people to suppress their acts until the Kingdom of God arrived, and then God would sort it out. He might have allowed gay people consensual sex if no man acted like a woman. I do not know what Jesus would have told transvestites who were not also homosexual (simple cross dressers). What God would allow, nobody now knows for sure.

The term “eunuch” could mean a castrated man or a gay man, and Jesus said that eunuchs should be allowed into the Kingdom of God. Until it became apparent that the Kingdom of God would not soon arrive, that saying about eunuchs is what early Christians told homosexuals, implying that homosexuals could enter the Kingdom as long as they were not promiscuous and as long as men did not act like women.

After it was apparent the Kingdom of God was not imminent, statements in early Christian literature against gay men seem to have gotten harsher. I do not know if there is a link, or why. Then, the text about eunuchs was not interpreted to include homosexuals. As far as I can tell, after that, Christians did not distinguish between homosexuals who did not act like the “wrong” gender, homosexuals who did, and transvestites who were not also homosexual. Nobody knows what Jesus would have said if he knew the Kingdom of God would not arrive soon. I think he would allow consensual non-hurtful sexuality that was done discretely, such as homosexuality among consenting adults; but my opinion might reflect my liberal bias.

Jesus was nearly a pacifist. Very few Christians are anywhere nearly as pacifist as Jesus. In the United States, Christians are among the groups that most glorify violence. Just as most Christians do not agree with Jesus on violence, we do not have to agree fully with Jesus on homosexuality. If Jesus followed Jewish tradition to look down on all men who participated in sex acts as if they were women, we can disagree with Jesus. If Jesus disallowed any homosexual conduct regardless of what role the actors took, we can disagree with Jesus. If Jesus allowed homosexual acts if the men did not act like women, but Jesus was silent otherwise, (did not pronounce against acts in which men acted as women) then we can agree with him in allowing that much. If Jesus still did not allow men to act like women in sex, or women to act like men in sex, then we still have to disagree with that part. We can allow all consensual acts wherein nobody is hurt even if to do so contradicts Jesus. We just have to be honest about where we stand, and why. We have to be honest if we disagree with Jesus but want to go ahead with our opinion anyway, and why.

It is easy to use the Bible to argue incompatible positions:

(1) All homosexual feelings and all homosexual acts are immoral and so should be totally suppressed. In the strong form of this argument, homosexual people should be killed.

(2) Homosexual acts between men are sometimes permissible as long as neither man acts or dresses as a woman. Perhaps homosexual acts between women are sometimes permissible as long as neither of the women acts like a man, although the texts on women are sparse and unclear.

(3) Regardless of the writings of early Christians, the spirit of Jesus' teachings would have us accept gay people and allow them to be themselves, to be gay, including cross dressing and other "gender blurring", as long as they do not hurt anybody. Since they are not likely to hurt anybody, no special provision for gay people is needed.

(4) Gay people cannot change how they feel but they should suppress acting gay even if gay acts do not hurt consenting adults. Gay People should not have homosexual sex and they should not dress as the "wrong" gender. I think this is the position of the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, and of some other major Christian churches.

None of these four arguments can prevail on the basis of Biblical texts alone, on the basis of "proof texts". So we have to decide for ourselves using other criteria as well. I do not like making people suppress behavior that does not hurt anybody else, and I do not find gay acts immoral, so I opt for (3) even without being sure Jesus would go along. Jesus will not condemn me to hell if I disagree with him on this. There is a lot worse immorality to be worried about.

Accepting gay people freely without requiring them to give up gay-ness might stretch original Christian ideals of acceptance. Yet other changes that we do not think about now were probably bigger stretches in their time, such as Christian soldiers or Christian politicians. To early Christians, the modern Christian warrior might seem more immoral than the gay man worshipping quietly in the back pew, and the modern Christian pro-religion politician might seem a lot more disruptive to Church order and general social order.

Regardless of how I feel or anybody feels, the real question is what the modern state should do about it. On that, see above.

Current Culture Fighting.

The fuss over gay-ness and over gay marriage is a lot more fuss than the issue deserves. The easy and obvious thing to do is treat gay people like anybody else, as much as possible, and most people know so. The fuss is not really about whether gay people are real humans like everybody else or conservatives are real humans like everybody else. The fuss is not about abstract issues such as big government or small government, consenting adults as a moral principle or as a political principle, the role of religious texts in morality and government, the spirit of Jesus' teachings versus the letter of early Christian writings, or the spirit of Jesus' teachings versus the letter of the Old Testament (Tanakh). The fuss is not about preserving the idealized nuclear family against moral erosion. The fuss is not about diversity. The fuss is not even about any morality.

The fuss is really about the “culture wars” and about power; but to explain would require a book. Our society has split into two groups, locked in combat. The groups are not content to let the large majority of decent people carry on with their lives but seem intent on winning. They use issues as ploys to sort people into sides. Even if they care a bit about the issues, the content is less important than using the issues for litmus tests. Both deniers of gay freedom and advocates of gay freedom are too often foot soldiers and cannon fodder in the culture-and-power wars. Problems over gayness are a ruse to let people fight for power behind the scenes. Many of us are disgusted and we do not want to be pawns in somebody else’s war. We have a way out, if we want it, through refusing to let either side use the state as a moral agent. Get the state out of marriage. Adopt civil unions. To keep the culture warriors from using the state as a moral agent, we do not let anybody use the state as a moral agent; we minimize the role of the state as anybody’s moral agent. Just say “No” to the culture wars. This way out not only settles the issue but also reinforces the proper role of the state in general.

Marriage.

Originally Jews and Christians did not marry in a temple or church, and marriage was not a sacrament. I am not sure when it became a sacrament for everybody, rather than only nobility, but, as far as I can tell, only about five hundred years ago. How marriage became a sacrament that takes place in religious setting is a separate story.

Whether any church (including a Jewish congregation, Muslim mosque, etc.) will marry gay people is up to the church. If one church will not marry a gay couple, the couple can always join another church. If a gay couple insists on getting married but will not join a church that allows them to get married, then too bad for them. The same is true for straight people. On the whole, I would rather see gay people get married, pretty much like straight people. From what I have seen, they love each other about as much as straights, intend to care for each other about as much, and make about the same mistakes; so there is no big reason for most churches not to let them marry.

I do have one reservation, and this reservation will bring down PC ire, so I better preface it with a story. A black panther is actually a variation of a regular leopard. It has spots too but its fur is so dark that you cannot see the spots unless you look closely. A black panther is a natural kind in itself, but we should see a black panther in terms of the regular leopard; we should not see a regular leopard in terms of a black panther; and we should not see a black panther wholly apart from a regular leopard. I have a blood condition that is like a mild version of sickle cell anemia. To understand my blood condition, it is best to see my blood as a variation of common normal blood. My particular blood is useful in its own right in some settings such as to fight malaria but my blood would be a puzzle if we did not know first how normal blood works. Some things in nature really are prior, and really do form the basic mold for later things, even if later things have an identity in their own right and are interesting in their own right.

In the same way, we can see most gay sex and gay emotional relations as based on straight sex and straight emotional relations. The basic mold is heterosexual sex and emotional relations. The basic pattern is male and female, but also allowing recurring natural variants. This does not mean that only heterosexual love and sex is moral and that everything else is necessarily immoral. This does not mean gay sex is deviant, perverted, degenerate, not a thing in itself, or necessarily immoral, any more than a

black panther is. It does not mean a gay man is really a woman or a gay woman is really a man. It does not mean there are really only two sexes (genders), and we have to see everything narrowly in terms of our stereotypes of two sexes. It means gay sex and gay relations are naturally recurring variants on an underlying pattern, naturally recurring variants with status, identity, and persistence of their own – natural kinds. Gay sex and gay relations are a natural type that is a variation on another natural type. The real situation is more complex and interesting than any stereotypes, including the stereotypes gay people have of themselves. Gay people are what they are, like black panthers. Gay people likely are a variant that necessarily recurs in the normal operation of human sexuality. They are like the green eyes or hazel eyes that occur in a mixed population of blue eyes and brown eyes. They are like the pink roses that are normal in maintaining red roses and white roses, and that we could not eliminate. They are like the various shades of skin color that naturally recur in a temperate land where both light skin and dark skin are useful in their own ways yet neither pure color can stand on its own. Thus they are as much a part of normal sexuality as stereotypical men and women. As with any naturally recurring variant, they have been part of the normal genetic relations that lead to the recurrence of all variants. They had their place in our evolutionary past that we now do not see clearly because we are removed from our origins and because our minds are clouded by ulterior motives. Kurt Vonnegut understood this idea in his novels when his alien heroes saw half-a-dozen genders among humans, several of which were necessary for reproduction, including gay men.

One problem with recognizing gay marriage is that to do so de-stresses the importance of straight marriage. This is part of the conservative objection. Even though gay people are a recurring variant with an identity of their own, straight people are still the common and underlying pattern – like normal blood is to my blood. Straight people are still the usual way to make children; straight people are still needed as “breeders”. In fact, many gay relations are modeled after modern straight liberal middle class “sensitive” stereotypes. Many gay families are modeled after idealized relations of modern middle class liberal “sensitive” straight families, perhaps mostly obviously among lesbians with children; see “The Kids are Alright” and/or follow on TV any gay celebrity couple that adopts children. Straight sex life and emotional life are difficult. Gay sex life and emotional life are not easy. But gay people do not have to work across genders. Straight life is basic and hard. Even when we recognize gay marriage, there ought to be some way to additionally recognize the basic-ness, special role, and difficulty of straight marriage.

I cannot see any way to give straight marriage a special status without also making everything else third class, including gay marriage and unions. It is better to accept gay marriage, and so to risk under appreciating straight marriage, than to doom gay people to third-class life so as to extol idealized straight marriage. By the year 2015, most straight people feel this way. They do not feel their marriage is much threatened or devalued by gay marriage. I do not have a good solution to this problem.

Many gay people are sensitive to this issue, probably more so than straight people are sensitive to how gay people feel. I doubt most gay people want to impose their will just for the sake of imposing their will (except when they fight in the culture wars). They want to be treated like full human beings, and they are sorry they cannot give straight people due recognition too because they know what it feels like not to get due recognition. If any gay people could have come up with a good solution that gives full proper due to all kinds of people and marriage, they would have done so by now. In the meantime, allow gay people to

register as partners like straight people, allow gay marriage too if we insist the state has to be involved, and allow gay marriage in your church if that makes sense in your religious variant.