

## The Science of Sexual Orientation: A Reformed (and Reforming) Perspective

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The author of the “Catechism on Marriage and Sexuality” aims to affirm covenant marriage and the goodness of sexuality within marriage. And so do I. I have written two marriage-supporting books. I have explained the benefits of marriage and the toxicity of pornography in psychology textbooks. And I have been a major donor to the National Marriage Project. In our support of marriage—and in our rooting our lives in Scripture—the Catechism author and I agree.

At a younger age, I further agreed that same-sex activity—even between long-term, faithful partners—was, as the proposed Catechism states, “immoral,” and that Christians were “called to teach, rebuke, correct, and even discipline” those in same-sex relationships. But no more. I now affirm an inclusive marriage-supporting view: *The world would be a happier and healthier place if, for all people, love, sex, and marriage routinely went together*—for the following reasons (explained at [tinyurl.com/MyersRCA](http://tinyurl.com/MyersRCA)): .

1. *Sexual orientation is a natural, enduring disposition.* Multiple lines of research—from prenatal hormonal influences, genetics, and neuroscience—converge in indicating that our sexual orientation is something we do not choose. Considerable evidence also indicates that, especially for men, sexual orientation endures. Telling people otherwise has been the source of much anguish and suicide—and many failed heterosexual marriages. Small wonder that so many of yesterday’s “ex-gay” ministry leaders are now “ex-ex-gays.”
2. *All humans have a “need to belong.”* We are social animals. We—all of us, whether gay or straight—flourish when deeply connected with others in close, enduring, mutually supportive relationships. We were not made to be alone. Covenant partnership is healthy.
3. *“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy.”* Among the Bible’s 31,103 verses, only seven explicitly mention same-sex behaviors (and none of those discuss same-sex covenant partnerships). That leaves scholars to exegete those seven “clobber passages” and to interpret Scripture’s moral wisdom, based also on biblical teachings about marriage and human relationships. A growing Reformed-evangelical perspective argues that the church has misread the Bible, which actually supports a consistent sexual ethic for gay and straight people. A half-dozen recent books (including from within our RCA community—James Brownson’s *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church’s Debate on Same-Sex Relationships*) have persuaded many of us that our former anti-gay views were not honoring biblical moral wisdom about covenant relationships.
4. *In 21<sup>st</sup> century America, an anti-gay posture drives teens and young adults away from the church.* In seeking to explain the dramatic rise in religious “nones,” researchers Robert Putnam and David Campbell report that “intolerance of homosexuality” is “the single strongest factor” in alienating today’s youth and young adults from the church. Two-thirds of Americans now support same-sex marriage (even more among young Americans). Thus, the moderate conservative columnist David Brooks advises the church: “Put aside an effort that has been a communications disaster, reducing a rich, complex and beautiful faith into a public obsession with sex.”

Thus we Reformed folk can appreciate the proposed Catechism’s affirmation of marriage. But we can also, in the spirit of our ever-reforming tradition, appreciate the emerging scientific and biblical understandings of sexual orientation and covenant sexual ethics. . . . and without fueling the damaging public perception that the church is anti-gay and obsessed with sex.