

*Special thanks to the folks at White Crane for including this info in their daily email. Here, you'll not only discover, as I did, that gay marriage has been performed for centuries, but also get some ideas on how the ceremonies went. Pretty cool stuff!!!*

# The History of Gay Marriage

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For White Crane's issue on Marriage see:

<http://www.whitecranejournal.com/issueContents.asp?Issue=61>

## Two Versions of the Adelphopoiia Rite

In 1994 John Boswell published a book—Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe (New York: Villard, 1994) which claimed, essentially, that the adelphopoiia rite known to have been used in Orthodox and Greek rite Catholic Churches constituted, in usage at least, a form of ecclesiastical blessing for homosexual unions. To say the least this claim has been highly contested. Boswell was not able to show that any high church body gave approval to such a use of the rite, but was able to show, as most critics allow, that the rite was both fairly widespread [he had about 70 manuscripts], and that it probably was used by some same-sex couples to give some outward sign to their relationship. There are contrary indications about the entire ceremony. The late 18th century Orthodox law text known as the Pedalion or Rudder does indicate that the ceremony was [ab]used in this way. From a much earlier date, St. Theodore of Studium in his Reform Rules seems to relate the ceremony to marriage. On the other hand, the Life of St. Mary the Younger, which is quite willing to use strong marital imagery about male-male relationships, describes [ch. 2] the development of one such relationship, between Mary's brother and a drungarius, in which the couple agree that the bonds of kinship need to be added to their bond of love—and so the drungarius marries Mary. [I should note that I had made this observation, in an unpublished paper, some time ago. Alice Mary Talbot of Dumbarton Oaks strongly doubted that interpretation, but it is supported in the forthcoming translation and commentary on the Life by Angeliki aiou, also of Dumbarton Oaks.

As well as Boswell, numerous people were interested in this rite.

Presented here [1.] are Boswell's translation of one of the various manuscripts he has, and [2.] a version from Jacob Goar's version of the rite, printed in the 17th century, translated by an independent scholar Nicholas Zymaris. Zymaris, who speaks both Greek and some Albanian, has made a number of verbal presentations, and Internet postings, in which he describes having witness such ceremonies in modern Albanian usage and which clearly indicate same sex unions.

## Office for Same-Sex Union

[Akolouthia eis adelphopoesin] from John Boswell, Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe, (New York: Villard, 1994)

- i. The priest shall place the holy Gospel on the Gospel stand and they that are to be joined together place their right hands on it, holding lighted candles in their left hands.

Then shall the priest cense them and say the following:

- ii. In peace we beseech Thee, O Lord.

For heavenly peace, we beseech Thee, O Lord.

For the peace of the entire world, we beseech Thee, O Lord.

For this holy place, we beseech Thee, O Lord.

That these thy servants, N. and N., be sanctified with thy spiritual benediction, we beseech Thee, O Lord.

That their love [agape] abide without offense or scandal all the days of their lives, we beseech Thee, O Lord.

That they be granted all things needed for salvation and godly enjoyment of life everlasting, we beseech Thee, O Lord.

That the Lord God grant unto them unashamed faithfulness [pistis] and sincere love [agape anhypokritos], we beseech Thee, O Lord....

Have mercy on us, O God.

"Lord, have mercy" shall be said three times.

- iii. The priest shall say:

Forasmuch as Thou, O Lord and Ruler, art merciful and loving, who didst establish humankind after thine image and likeness, who didst deem it meet that thy holy apostles Philip and Bartholomew be united, bound one unto the other not by nature but by faith and the spirit.

As Thou didst find thy holy martyrs Serge and Bacchus worthy to be united together [adelphoi genesthai], bless also these thy servants, N. and N., joined together not by the bond of nature but by faith and in the mode of the spirit [ou desmoumenous desmi physeis alla pisteis kai pneumatikos tropi], granting unto them peace [eirene] and love [agape] and oneness of mind. Cleanse from their hearts every stain and impurity and vouchsafe unto them to love one other [to agapan allelous] without hatred and without scandal all the days of their lives, with the aid of the Mother of God and all thy saints, forasmuch as all glory is thine.

iv. Another Prayer for Same-Sex Union

O Lord Our God, who didst grant unto us all those things necessary for salvation and didst bid us to love one another and to forgive each other our failings, bless and consecrate, kind Lord and lover of good, these thy servants who love each other with a love of the spirit [tous pneumatike agape heautous agapesantas] and have come into this thy holy church to be blessed and consecrated. Grant unto them unashamed fidelity [pistis] and sincere love [agape anhypokritos], and as Thou didst vouchsafe unto thy holy disciples and apostles thy peace and love, bestow them also on these, O Christ our God, affording to them all those things needed for salvation and life eternal. For Thou art the light and the truth and thine is the glory.

v. Then shall they kiss the holy Gospel and the priest and one another, and conclude.

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## Another Version of a Union Rite

By Nicholas Zymaris [independent Orthodox scholar]

### INTRODUCTION [by Zymaris]

This service is a rite of the Eastern Orthodox Church dating from very early times and assuming its present form between the fourth and ninth centuries AD. This service is translated from the Euchologion of Jacobus Goar, which was printed in 1647 and revised in 1730. A facsimile of the 1730 edition, published in Graz, Austria, in 1960, is the edition available in many theological libraries. With the rising influence of western ideas in recent centuries, this rite ceased to be practiced widely and was largely forgotten or ignored except in isolated areas, most notably Albania and other areas in the Balkans, where it flourished throughout the nineteenth century and up to at least 1935. Both men and women were united with this rite or similar ones.

This rite is called "spiritual" because the relationship between spiritual brothers is not one of blood-relation but of the Holy Spirit, and also to distinguish the rite from blood-brotherhood, which the Church opposed. In the service, the saint-martyrs Sergius and Bacchus are invoked, who were united in spiritual brotherhood "not bound by the law of nature but by the example of faith in the Holy Spirit". These saints were tortured and martyred late in the third century AD. when they refused to worship the emperor's idols. In their biography by Simeon Metaphrastes (available in J.P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca, vol. 115, pp. 1005-1032) they are described as sweet companions and lovers to each other."

"This rite is incorporated into the Divine Liturgy. It begins with the usual blessing and prayers of a Liturgy. During the Great Synapte, petitions for the couple to be united in spiritual brotherhood are added to the usual petitions. After the First Antiphon, two special prayers are said for the couple, after which they kiss the Gospel Book and each other. After the priest sings a hymn, the Liturgy continues at "Have mercy on us, O God." Accounts of the use of this rite (such as Nacke, \_Jahrbuch fuer sexuelle Zwischenstufen\_ 9 (1908), 328) confirm that the spiritual brothers receive Holy Communion together,

thereby forming the sacramental bond in this union. However, Goar mentions in a footnote that in some manuscripts, the couple is only blessed with holy water."

### "UNION RITE" TEXT

PRIEST: Blessed is the kingdom of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3 times).

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

All-Holy Trinity, have mercy on us.

Lord forgive our sins.

Master, pardon our transgressions.

Holy One, visit and heal our infirmities for your name's sake.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

(After this, the priest says the Troparion.)

Save, O Lord, your servants, and bless your inheritance. (And the two who are about to be joined together in brotherly unity place their hands on the holy Gospel book, which has been prepared and placed on the table. And they hold in their hands lighted candles.)

(And the priest says the following, so that it is heard from above:

Save, O Lord, your servants. Followed by the Troparion of the day)

Glory to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Holy Apostles, intercede with the merciful God to grant our souls forgiveness of sins. Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Through the intercessions, O Lord, of all the saints and of the Theotokos, grant us your peace and have mercy upon us, only merciful One.

## THE GREAT SYNAPTE.

The responses of "Lord, have mercy" are understood.)

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace that is from above, and for the salvation of our souls, let us pray to the Lord.

For the peace of the entire world, the welfare of the holy churches of God, and the union of all of them, let us pray to the Lord.

For this holy house, and for those who enter it with faith, reverence, and fear of God, let us pray to the Lord.

For our Archbishop, the honorable priesthood, the deacons in Christ, and all of the clergy and laity, let us pray to the Lord. For the servants of God who have approached to be blessed by Him, and for their love (agapē) in God, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be given full knowledge of the apostolic unity, let us pray to the Lord. That they may be granted a faith unashamed, a love unfeigned, let us pray to the Lord.

That they may be deemed worthy to glory in the honorable Cross, let us pray to the Lord. That both they and we may be delivered from all affliction, wrath, and distress, let us pray to the Lord.

Help us, save us, have mercy on us and keep us, O God, by your grace.

PEOPLE: Amen.

PRIEST: Having called to remembrance our all-holy, immaculate, most blessed, glorious Lady Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary, with all the Saints, let us commend ourselves and one another, and all our life unto Christ our God.

PEOPLE: To You, O Lord.

PRIEST (quietly): O Lord our God, whose might is beyond compare, whose glory is incomprehensible, whose mercy is infinite, and whose love toward mankind is ineffable; in Your tender compassion look down upon us Yourself, O Master, and upon this holy house, and grant us and those who pray with us Your rich mercies and compassion.

PRIEST (aloud): For to You are due all glory, honor, and worship; to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

PEOPLE: Amen.

PRIEST: Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord our God, who has granted us all things for salvation, and who has commanded us to love one another and to forgive each others' transgressions; now You Yourself, Master and Lover of mankind, to

these Your servants who have loved each other with spiritual love, and who approach Your holy temple to be blessed by You, grant to them a faith unashamed, a love unfeigned. And as You gave Your holy disciples Your own peace, also grant these all the petitions for salvation, and eternal life. For You are a merciful and loving God, and to You we ascribe glory, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray to the Lord. Lord our God, the omnipotent, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, who made man according to Your image and likeness, who was well-disposed to Your holy martyrs Sergius and Bacchus becoming brothers, not bound by the law of nature but by the example of faith of the Holy Spirit; Master, do send down Your Holy Spirit upon Your servants who have approached this temple to be blessed. Grant them a faith unashamed, a love unfeigned, and that they may be without hatred and scandal all the days of their lives. Through the prayers of Your immaculate Mother and of all the Saints. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages.

(And with the table made ready in the middle of the church, they place the holy Gospel upon it. And they kiss the Holy Gospel, and each other.)

THEN THE PRIEST SINGS: By the union of love the apostles join in the praying to the Master of all; themselves committed to Christ, they extended their beautiful feet, announcing the good news of peace to everyone.

PRIEST: Have mercy on us, O God.

(And continues the Liturgy.)

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