

## Marriage Equality Book Reviews

### **Book Title & Author: *Same Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis* by Marvin M. Ellison**

*Same Sex Marriage? A Christian Ethical Analysis* by Marvin M. Ellison is a challenging, thought-provoking, occasionally frustrating, but valuable read. The author, a gay Christian ethicist, focuses his writing on a quest for justice and a "taking to task" for faith communities, who, Ellison believes, "have, by and large, not contributed in a positive way to furthering the conversation or resolving the conflict" surrounding same-gender marriage. Perhaps the central tenet of the work is Ellison's idea that the marriage debate has been missing a progressive ethical analysis that is also deeply religious. This progressive religious perspective "places justice making at the heart of (in my case, Christian) spirituality and views marriage, sexuality, and family through a justice lens, asking how to set wrongs right and establish a fairer distribution of power, authority, and goods within diverse communities." Two questions are central to this quest for a new ethic: "What would it mean to decenter marriage and not grant it privileged status?" and "What would it mean to decenter heterosexuality and not grant it privileged status?" These questions and others are explored through the seven chapters of this book, beginning with a reflection on the history of marriage as an institution and how it has undergone historical and cultural change. Chapter two introduces the concept of a "justice lens" through which Ellison thinks this debate should be viewed.

The heart of the book, however, lies in chapters three through five, which address, in turn, how marriage traditionalists, marriage advocates, and marriage critics each define the debate and frame their arguments. Chapter six looks at the contested Christian teaching on the issue and asks how the Christian tradition might make a better contribution to the pursuit of justice for GLBT and other individuals. This book is not an easy read, and certainly doesn't leave one with a "warm fuzzy" at its conclusion. It will leave the reader intrigued, perplexed, provoked, and affirmed all at the same time, but ultimately better informed for having faced the challenge.