

Ticking the Roman Catholic box on the census form when you no longer are Catholic by belief tells the state that you support the Church, which crucially means the State may formulate policies and laws that reflect the teachings of said Church. For example, a country could be reluctant to legalise gay marriage if it looks at the census results and sees that most have declared themselves Roman Catholic. The objective behind all the works of the Church is to bring people to believe in Catholic doctrine. To tick the Roman Catholic box is to sanction public and official Church doctrine. That is why I, for one, will be ticking the 'No Religion' box on April 10".

Matt's response: "My religion belongs to me, please don't ask me to sacrifice it for political reasons."

In the first place, Matt you have already done that yourself. LGBT rights is very political. It is politics that gives those rights. The Church only gives the right to be gay but not the right to practice homosexuality.

I think many LGBT who are into homophobic religion realise it has a brainwashing effect. They think the best way to deal with the homophobia is not to condemn God or Jesus for the Bible for it but to pretend they are pro-gay. They think they can take advantage of a Christian's conditioned mind to make them accept gays. Such a tactic is an insult to gay rights.

Anyway my advice was addressed to those LGBT who are lapsed and or unbelieving Catholics who may not have realised that they are no longer true members of the Church. It was not addressed to you. I did not ask anybody to give up their faith for political reasons. You complain that I did. Sorry to have offended you Matt, but as LGBT rights is so important I would be almost proud if I had asked. LGBT people have a high suicide rate thanks to the misery religious influence inflicts on them through society. Not being Catholic kills nobody - being Catholic when you are gay can.

Thanks for admitting that you don't consider the political reasons regarding LGBT welfare and rights - serious enough for separating from the Church. Or if you know the faith is wrong you have separated from it anyway and you just need to make it official.

Matt, you would order people to call themselves Catholic even if the legitimate authorities of the Church said they were not. A Catholic University that teaches that homosexuality is not a sin and a grave sin at that will be declared to be Catholic no longer by the Church. Don't you see that you are treating the Church like a political party you are a member of and whose policies you do not agree with? You are therefore being political by claiming to be a member of the Church and acting as such. You are helping a political body that opposes LGBT sexual rights. You are an enabler. If you joined an organisation that did only good but which required that one baby must be sacrificed every year you would be guilty by association of murder.

Read this bit carefully. A religion is based on dogmas. A dogma is something that is settled and not for debate. Whoever debates a religions dogmas is denying this. He denies the very point of having religion.

I would not ask anybody to give up their faith. I would ask them to check it out knowing that if they are open-minded it will evaporate so they won't need to give it up.

You didn't mention if you felt you were being asked to sacrifice your religion for social reasons? The social problems the Catholic faith creates for gay people are worse than anything it throws at gay people through politics. You committed the social aspect - significant. "Please don't ask me to sacrifice it for political reasons." If you had read my article properly, you would understand that it was not about political reasons so much as matters of principle. My message was that a person should not support an organisation that it against his or her rights when that person does not believe in the religion and does not follow it. This would have political consequences down the line. It was the principle not the politics I was really concerned about. There are forms of Catholicism around that accept gay people without reserve. If you of your own free will stay in a religion that officially and with the fullness of its authority, condemns what you do - especially when it is something that can be good like your homosexuality - you are implying that you side with that religion in its evil. Leave it for the sake of the principle. Matt would say you should not join a violent religion even if you will not participate in the violence and would say its the principle. He needs to apply his standards for others to himself.

The concept of God itself feeds homophobia. It implies that by having anal sex for example gay men are refusing to obey God's design. The justification for homosexuality is solely that some people are gay and deserve to be happy and enjoy sex and relationships together. We don't care about design and indeed shouldn't. To care is to waste concern on a being that might not even exist. People come first. This is logical and rational. Any gay man who disagrees is speaking from the heart not from the head and doesn't not deserve to be taken seriously. Feeling that somebody is wrong does not amount to disagreeing with them at all. Disagreeing is in the head and thinking. Another problem is how the concept of God is so manipulative. People are made to take comfort in a being who without justification considers what they do to be his

business. In fact, it is not God's concern what we do. If we say that good is good and evil is evil because God says so then we are saying that God can make even something very harmful good simply by saying it is good. If good is good and evil is evil regardless of what God thinks then it is unimportant if we believe in God and only discerning good and evil matter. LGBT who embrace such a symbol of oppression as God are letting themselves down. To advance it is to open the door to such things as scriptures and revelations that condemn casual sex and same-sex relations.

The law of the land has the right to force any form of moral behaviour on the people it wishes. Different countries having different laws reflects the acknowledgment of that right. Matt there will be Catholic countries in the future that will forbid homosexuality

Matt you are not being logical. You ignore the logical things I say. Its logic says them not me. If there is a logical contradiction between Catholicism and support for gay rights then deal with it and face it. There are a lot of logical people around for a start and people will see through your pretence.

"My religion belongs to me, please don't ask me to sacrifice it for political reasons." My article did not ask anybody to sacrifice anything. If you can't identify as Catholic you shouldn't. And its Catholic teaching that Catholics approach God as a Church not as individuals. Your religion does not belong to you - you have to belong to your religion. You need to at least consent to the rules for that to happen. You disagree with a foundational teaching of the Church that sex must only take place within marriage between a man and a woman and are under excommunication for that reason. It is not your religion.

Christianity is very powerful as a political force. The hypocrisy of the members who do not take it seriously but who give it money and who support it publicly is its political impetus. Though its meant to be a religion, it is more politics than religion. A Catholic is made by a sprinkle of water. That is the religious equivalent of nationality. Eg if you are born in Italy you are Italian. Human personhood begins some time after conception so if your Italian parents were in Spain when the foetus became you then you are Spanish. Nationality like water baptism is just a label based on political divides. The Christian leaders engage in the same lies and manipulations as politicians do. The leaders treat other religions like other political parties. The supporter of same sex marriage or LGBT Rights is only betraying his or her cause by being listed as say a Catholic.

While you refuse to sacrifice your religion for political reasons, you stay in it for political reasons - the state has to take account of religion and give it a voice and offer political powers to religious people who get voted in - and abet its dabblings in state matters. What religion you are in is a political matter both directly and indirectly. If it were not for members like yourself, the Church would not be in a position to meddle in politics and get such a good podium to speak against human rights. Clearly getting politics to respect and advance gay rights is less important to you than the Church. If enough obedient Catholics are in the country, Catholic teaching will be reflected and sanctioned in law. It is the principle - staying in Catholicism is a vote for Catholicism. A religion is a form of politics - it governs, it lays down laws, it hopes to see members of other religions abandon their religions and join it, it claims the right to influence the law and voting.

As long as you declare the pope the head of the Church and the representative of Jesus Christ on earth and your leader and you are responsible for what he teaches in the sense that you confer responsibility on him. If there were no members in the Church the pope would have no voice. The media would ignore him completely and he wouldn't be able to do so much harm with his nasty mouth.

"My religion belongs to me".

It only belongs to you Matt if you first and foremost belong to it. Its not up to any religion to belong to you but to you to belong to it.

Do you really belong to the Spiritualists if you deny that anybody can communicate with the dead? If you say you do, it is the religious label and the trappings you want not the religion. It is that what belongs to you. Same with Catholicism. Don't be a hypocrite. You just want to use the Church for your own ends - community and the occasional feel-good factor.

You think you have the right to obscure and dissent from the Catholic faith and misrepresent it. You do not. People exposed to Catholicism have the right to know the real teaching of the Church a teaching you oppose. You oppose their right.

The word religion means to bind. You consider yourself exempt from the homosexuality ban. You do not belong.

Many confuse their beliefs with their religion. Your beliefs could be seen as your own business. But if you are part of a religion, then it is incorrect to speak of your beliefs. You are part of a group united in faith that means the beliefs you have are not yours but the group's. What you must speak of is the religion's beliefs.

And your beliefs are not about you but about the world. There is no excuse for somebody being in a religion when they

reject that religions beliefs.

LGBT who do not consider themselves to be sinners in being active LGBT should make their separation from the Church official for they have already separated from the Church in their hearts.

Clearly you are going to side with the Church even if it harms the cause of LGBT civil rights. Thanks for the candour. It is Church law and commonsense that determine if you are true Catholic Matt not you. And if you are a practicing Catholic you were not asked to sacrifice Catholicism. I do expect you if you class yourself as Catholic to stop pretending that you can speak for the Church and advocate LGBT rights. Who made you Pope. You wrote that being gay and Catholic "are not mutually exclusive". It is not up to you to decide what the Catholic Church should teach or want to teach. If the law of the Land made homosexuality a crime would you argue that being a good citizen and homosexuality are not mutually exclusive?

Read the revelations of God in the Old Testament where he described a man who lies with a man as an abomination who must be stoned to death to purge the evil from the midst of the people. I recommend the book *The Sins of Scripture* by Spong. I also recommend *The Truth about Homosexuality* - Ignatius Press, by Father John F Harvey. Why? These books expose the lies of those who delude themselves that gay sex and being obedient to the Bible are not mutually exclusive. Remember that you believe that God at that time was the maker and head of the Jewish religion. Jesus came along and said he brought the religion to its fulfilment. So Christianity is really evolved Judaism. Its the same religion. Thus it is correct to say that the Christian religion legally and cruelly murdered gay people in Old Testament times.

The problem is bigger than the direct condemnations of homosexuality by the Church. The gay basher gets forgiveness and a passport to heaven by going to confession without even apologising to the victim or sending compensation. This faith condones gay bashing. And the Church accepts half-hearted repentance that is barely repentance at all which makes it worse. There is also the insistence that sex indicates and pledges lifelong fidelity and commitment. A faith that teaches that people go to Hell for missing Sunday Mass through their own fault is not the kind of religion any LGBT person should belong to. It is vicious and manipulative and untrustworthy. Parents who lose an LGBT child to suicide should not have to endure the additional torment that their child might have gone to Hell forever for their "sin". Every religion should be formulated in such a way that no harm is done if the religion is untrue. Nothing should ever be condemned purely because scripture says its wrong.

The Catholic Church makes very big and serious claims. The bigger the claim the more evidence is required. Unless you have evidence that the Catholic Church is a supernatural entity set up by God to teach on his behalf you should not be setting your face against LGBT rights by upholding Church membership.

The teaching that God alone has the power to punish the sin of homosexuality is very vicious. The Church says we leave punishment to God where the law of the land cannot or doesn't get involved. In other words, if they knew what God knew and were in a position to judge a person with they would. There is an undercurrent of evil in authentic Catholicism despite the outward veneer of benevolence.

I terminated membership of Catholicism because I am a secularist and a LGBT rights supporter. This would not be for political reasons so much as social. The decline of the Church means the decline of its influence. The social influence of the Church does LGBT people infinitely more harm than the influence of the Church on politics. The Church claims to be a family thus it opposes the individualism of today. To be part of a religion means you are repudiating individualism and complete independence and are making it other people's business what you do. The Catholic's duty is to help others live by the official teaching of the Church. If you don't want the duty, then leave the Church.

Your beliefs are not about you. They are about the world. Your religion is not about you. It is about the universe and the world and the supernatural. It is not up to your religion to belong to you but you to belong to it. If you can't, use the door.

You talk as if you need the religion like a crutch. For your information, the New Testament makes it clear that being a real Christian will make life harder and Jesus called us to lift up the cross. Christianity is not about feel-good love but about sacrificial bleeding love. Using religion and faith as a crutch makes people as hypocritical and irrational as yourself.

"The two (being a gay man and Catholic) are not mutually exclusive, no matter how upset I sometimes am over statements by the Pope."

Liar. Church teaching and Church law and the revelations the Church recognises as having come from God state that it is unChristian to practice homosexuality. Not once have you expressed any devotion to God in your letter. God by definition is that what comes first and what is owed complete obedience and we are expected to try and understand his rules and keep them even if we can't. Ignorance will not exempt you from any law including that of the Church and God.

Church teaching is clear that sex is giving the whole self to another in an attitude of total self-sacrifice for the wellbeing of another. It says that is the language of sex and the person who has sex without love and without marriage is lying with his or her body.

The person like Matt who agrees with sex outside marriage and gay sex and encourages it by his letter would be a liar in the sight of the Church on the level of a Bill Clinton.

Matt, they are not mutually exclusive if you admit you are a sinner in being a practicing gay man. And as for your being upset, I don't believe that when you support a regime that tells the world that the Pope stands in the place of Jesus on earth and to hear the Pope is to hear Jesus. If you are really upset, you can't ask for sympathy. Its self-inflicted. Would you be upset about the British Prime Minister being homophobic - no for you are outside his authority. Put yourself outside the authority of the Pope.

The Vatican does not use the word gay. It uses the word homosexual. It says a homosexual person can be a good and real Catholic only if he or she believes in the teaching of the Church against homosexual activity and against LGBT activism and refrains from any erotic activity and thoughts regarding a person of the same sex.

The founder of a religion may have a definition of religion and what it is for. Even if the whole religion ends up with a different purpose from his that is still not what it is for. Only the founder can determine what the religion is and what it is for. You may have a purpose for his religion but it remains yours not the religion's. A religion with a bad purpose is bad. A bad religion is bad no matter how many good people are in it. It is the purpose makes it bad. The members degrade themselves if they refuse to do the bad things for they make themselves hypocrites. And goodness is defiled when you let yourself be part of a bad religion. To defile goodness is actually worse than to just be bad.