

Same-Sex Marriage

Development or Departure?

The socio-ecclesiological and theological setting of Same-Sex Marriage in the Irish context.

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## **Abstract**

In Irish society at present, same-sex marriage is a topic that is welcomed either with great enthusiasm or consternation. Such diverse reactions are echoed, no less strongly, in the church. This dissertation seeks to explore same-sex marriage from a socio-ecclesiological and theological perspective. By doing so, the aim is to gauge the points where it can be seen as either a development of, or a departure from, an already established sexual ethic. Because same-sex marriage is such a large part, not just, of the current religious discourse, but also the more secular narrative, the points of development and departure are multiplied. Attempts are made to acknowledge this complexity throughout the dissertation, especially when considering the modernising dialectic between the church and the State on this one particular subject. If such a dialectic exists then the church cannot afford to uncritically imbibe what passes for cultural norms today. Therefore this dissertation also concentrates on some of the assumptions at work within an acceptance of same-sex marriage. The reason for this is to create a greater appreciation for the motivations that fuel such an acceptance in the hope that a more meaningful pastoral engagement will be achievable. In the end, this dissertation itself is driven by pastoral concerns. It is neither content with some of the more recent revisionist readings of Scripture, nor is it satisfied with simple blanket prohibitions. The issue of same-sex marriage is indeed divisive, but it might also helpfully expose other, perhaps even more serious issues, that challenge the church's life and witness in the world today.