

[\*3] Early Christianity—first, second, and third centuries CE—was, as I point out in *waking up*, a remarkably diverse, tolerant, and generative culture comprising many distinct communities that shared a few basic premises and ideals in common. I called this a “disorganized religion,” one that came to a gradual but devastating halt during the fourth and fifth centuries CE, as the Church consolidated its power, settled on its orthodoxy, excised all competitors, and transformed itself into an “organized religion” with all the basic features of the imperial Roman state with which it was allied. And it has stayed that way, astonishingly consistent, ever since. I said in that book that I believe all “organized religions” function in the same way cults do: buy in or get out. A couple of days ago Pope Francis issued an edict saying it was now acceptable to bless (though not perform) same-sex marriages, something Jesus, who was quite tolerant, would certainly approve, as he pointed out. Right wing Catholic cardinals, bishops, et al., have gone ballistic, regurgitating longstanding rules and prejudices with little if any support in the New Testament, which is the specifically Christian half of the Bible. I rest my case.