

On Defending Classic Marriage

© A. R. (Sandy) Grant, 2015

[Synod motion mover's speech, October 2015, final form of resolution at end]

Friends of Synod, In many ways, the Archbishop's powerful remarks on the topic in Monday's presidential address could easily be the primary speech in support. But I'm glad one of the young members of Synod can speak as my seconder. In addition, I want to say the initiative for this motion lay with the Social Issues Committee. And we have many helpful [resources on this topic on our website](#). In particular, I thank Michael Jensen who put the first draft together, when we were all flat out, and who has spoken and written so well in the arena of our national public broadcaster. So with that preamble, Mr President, Members of Synod, I move the motion regarding marriage.

God is the ultimate marriage celebrant. Our Prayer Book Marriage services, the only services by which Anglican clergy are authorized to conduct marriages says, "What God has joined together, let no one put asunder". And these words are repeated after the couple's vows, as part of the minister's declaration of marriage: "Those whom God has joined together let not man put asunder." Indeed, if the couple chooses either the Gospel of Matthew or Mark as their Bible reading, you will hear those words for a third time!

God is the ultimate marriage celebrant. The union is not just a secular legal status. Marriage existed before nation states and their laws. With marriage we are talking about absolute reality. It's God who joins people together in marriage. A society can redefine marriage in its rhetoric and laws. But we cannot redefine the ultimate deep reality of marriage.

In fact, if you have a Bible, would you open to Matthew 19? For it's the single passage to recall if you want to know what Jesus thought about marriage. And as Creator and Lord, what he says is both right and very good for us. In context, Jesus opposes easy divorce. But at the heart of his answer, in Matthew 19:4-6, is his view about marriage as *gendered* and *lifelong* in intention.

⁴ 'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," ⁵ and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh"? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.' [NIVUK]

This underlines paragraph (a) of the motion.

Most basically, Jesus quotes from the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, Genesis 1: “at the beginning” (Gen 1:27). That is, he goes back to the way the world is wired up. And his creation pattern says God made humankind “male and female”. He emphasises the fact of *two* genders. Then Jesus immediately quotes the second chapter of Genesis to say that it’s *for this reason* – of maleness and femaleness – ...it’s for this reason that a man will leave his parents and marry a woman.

These words make it clear that marriage is to be gendered. And the one alternative Jesus gives is singleness and celibacy. Which he exemplified: the most together man who ever lived was single!

There is a second essential part to the Bible’s view of marriage. And it’s that marriage is *inherently oriented towards children*. Sex is for making you close as a couple and for making you parents. Again, we see this from Matthew. When Jesus links to God creating us “male and female” from Genesis 1:27, immediately v28 says God blessed man and woman together *to be fruitful and increase in number*. The oneness that sex brings to spouses in marriage has a direct connection to God’s desires for the next generation [see [Malachi 2:14-16](#)].

Children are not just an after thought. We must never accept the way some people speak of children as an optional lifestyle choice, whose costs are weighed against career and travel ambitions. We care about marriage for the good order of society and especially the welfare of children, as paragraph (c) of the motion says.

There is one other reason Christians believe marriage is special. It’s that in the Bible, a husband’s love for his wife is an analogy of God’s love for his people. Now I know this is a belief particular to Christians, but marriage is sacred since it reflects the gospel truth that as a loving groom, Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy... to present her like a radiant bride [[Ephesians 5:25-27](#)]. And clearly this relationship of Christ and his church is not reciprocal. This underlies para (b).

Now most of all we need to defend marriage within our churches. Let’s recall that our youth have never known a time when family break up is anything else but typical though sad, sex before marriage is generally encouraged, and society sees homosexuality as perfectly normal. So we need to compassionately encourage

those with gay relatives, or promiscuous children, or their own failed relationships, as to the truth and goodness of the biblical vision.

And recall that post-puberty, celibacy will be the *normal way of life for all Christians* for some, even many periods of life. We need to teach that sexual expression is not the essence of identity. As humans, we are God's image-bearers, precious to him. And we are male and female, married or single. Most importantly of all, if we are believers, we are children of God, brothers and sisters of Christ.

We need to teach an absolute 'No' to any bullying of those we deem immoral. For example, I am sure that most gay fathers or lesbian mothers want to be the best they can for their children. And heterosexual parents can stuff up big time too. In encouraging us to pray to God as a heavenly Father, Jesus himself said, Matthew 7:11, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven...!" In other words, most fallen parents try to do their best for the kids.

Remember that the same Lord Jesus who challenged the woman caught in adultery to her life of sin also protected her from the stone-throwing bullying of the self-righteous. Disapproval of the lifestyle does not need to mean harshness, personal rejection. On the other hand, deep compassion and true kindness does not require us to approve a morality, which we know the Bible identifies as sin.

But no child should be picked on, full stop. Children are rightly taught at school that it doesn't matter if another kid's parents are gay or single or divorced or Muslim or hippies or Jehovah's Witnesses or rich upper class twits, there is never any excuse to bully or pick on each other. Christians believe that, as paragraphs (d) and (e) indicate.

Nevertheless research is advanced by lobbyists to say kids raised in same-sex partnerships do no worse than other kids. Mr Rudd trumpeted such research when he announced his change of mind a couple of years ago: the [Australian Study of Child Health in Same-Sex Families](#). I say: read the [research methods](#) for yourself. This study had only gone a year or two, so it has no longitudinal validity, which should be critical in studying child development and welfare. But you don't hear any caution in the results it is already claiming. Yet its [methodological limits](#) include non-random sampling, with self-reporting from self-selecting participants, targeted out of gay and lesbian communities, with a small sample size, especially for gay

parenting, without a proper control group. Honest researchers should know it's ethically dubious to claim this study *proves* kids raised by same-sex couples are happier and healthier than others (as the *Washington Post* headlined it!)

By contrast, just Google Mark Regnerus' work in the June 2012 edition of the peer-reviewed journal *Social Science Research* [[pdf link](#)] It reveals from studying large, random, population-based samples, that children do best as adults – on multiple counts and across a variety of domains - when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father in an intact relationship, compared to all other family situations. He himself notes some limits to his work. But Sydney University Professor of Law, Patrick Parkinson's review of literature, *For Kids' Sake* [[pdf link](#)] also showed that on average against all other family types that it has been possible fairly to measure against, kids do best when raised by their own mother and father in an intact relationship. This is a social good which public policy like our marriage institution and laws should model and encourage.

Recently, feminist Germaine Greer decried the marginalisation of motherhood implied by gay parenting. Even Elton John, though he's in a gay marriage, previously admitted that for his son, born via donor egg and surrogate mother for two gay men, "It's going to be heartbreaking for him to grow up and realize he hasn't got a mummy" [[source](#)].

The new tolerance, so-called, demands that no one disagree with current political correctness. But tossing accusations of bigotry just chills free speech. It may silence people, but it doesn't change anyone's heart. We need the old tolerance: disagreeing peacefully and defending the right of those you disagree with to hold their views. Paragraph (g) says we must advocate any political compromise should have robust protections of freedom of conscience and religion, not just for clergy, but for public servants in marriage registries, and for those involved in the wedding industry. And I am glad to commend those discussions, for example, by Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson, who though in a gay partnership himself [wants Christians and others to have significant freedom](#) to follow their convictions lawfully.

Nevertheless, I also say to Christians: get used to being called a bigot. Following Jesus has never been easy. Have courage. In a vigorous democracy, we have

freedom to express our views. We need to accept that sometimes people are rude and aggressive. Our job is to speak the truth in love.

[N.B. These paragraphs were not delivered due to time limits... But isn't it said that we can't or shouldn't legislate morality for unbelievers? Friends, marriage is a creation ordinance. It belongs to all human society, not just the church.]

And as those with dual citizenship, in heaven, but also on earth, then like the exiles in Babylon, we seek the welfare of the cities we find ourselves in. And the classic view of marriage is good for everyone, especially for children.

And in God's providence, he has placed us in a democracy that invites us to participate in the political process, as citizens, who are free to be Christians! So what do we do? I think we plainly state our biblical reasons for our beliefs as clearly as we can. But alongside that, we also try to give an account that supplies plausible reasons independent of religion for upholding the conjugal view of marriage.]

As the Bible says, we pray for all those in authority, including those we disagree with. We write to them. In doing so, we write cogent, clear, polite letters, in the main of no more than one page. The SIC website [has suggestions](#).

But here's my 15 second 'Daily Tele' version of the argument: **Redefine marriage, and you redefine family. You intentionally deprive any child brought into that situation either its own mother or father.** *[Repeat.]* And that's not fair.

+++

Affirmation of marriage as between a man and a woman

Synod –

- (a) affirms once again that marriage, as a gift from God who made us male and female, is the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life,
- (b) recalls that marriage is the symbol of God's unending love for his people, and of the union between Christ and his Church,
- (c) recognises that marriage is a bedrock institution of society, designed for its good order and the secure and loving care of children by their own mother and father,
- (d) notes, nonetheless, that many children are lovingly cared for in other contexts, and affirms that the welfare of such children must be paramount, along with support for their parents and other carers,

- (e) condemns any violence against or mistreatment of our neighbours who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex (LGBTI),
- (f) calls on all Australian Christians to engage respectfully in the debate over marriage and to pray for the members of the Federal Parliament in their consideration of this matter,
- (g) insists that, should the Federal Parliament decide to change the legal definition of marriage, robust provisions for freedom of speech and religion are included in relevant legislation, to protect those whose conscientious beliefs mean they cannot celebrate such a redefinition; and nevertheless,
- (h) urges the Federal Parliament to uphold the classical understanding of marriage as being between a man and a woman, in accordance with current provisions of the Marriage Act 1961.

(Canon Sandy Grant/Mrs Tara Sing, passed 14/10/2015)