

Reproductive Sexuality in the Genesis Creation Account

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Thesis: Reproductive sexuality plays a surprisingly prominent role in the accounts of creation in Genesis 1 and 2.¹

Introduction

Few experiences affect us as much as our family and marriage experiences. Our profoundest joys, sorrows, anxieties, and confusions ordinarily result from our experience with family or marriage, or both. When we hear the words *family* and *marriage*, therefore, it is very difficult to hear them objectively or in the abstract. When we encounter the words, our minds tend to translate them into “*my family*” or “*my marriage*.” As a consequence of this, few people take the opportunity to think philosophically or theologically about marriage or family; their thoughts are usually subjective. People who think of themselves as “pro-family” are probably people who had happy marriages or happy family experiences, or at least wish that they *had* had happier experiences.

Such a subjective approach, while entirely understandable, is also entirely inadequate in a culture where the legitimacy and value of the traditional family are frequently challenged or denied, in a culture that may very well begin to persecute those of us who promote traditional marriage. Further, a merely subjective approach is also inadequate for those who regard the Holy Scriptures as God’s authoritative Word. Note how God’s apostle spoke about marriage: “Let

¹ By “reproductive sexuality” I mean the union of a man and a woman that *ordinarily* has the effect of bearing children, and rearing them to maturity. That is, “reproductive sexuality” does not comprehend merely heterosexual activity. Promiscuity and adultery, for instance, while heterosexual, are not behaviors that contribute to bearing and rearing children to maturity; to the contrary, they are ordinarily disastrous to those ends. The Scriptures are not “pro-heterosexual,” to use the politicized language of our culture, because the Scriptures condemn all heterosexual activity that does not take place within that lifelong union into which and by which children are *ordinarily* born and reared to maturity.

marriage² be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled...” (Heb. 13:4).

Marriage itself, as an institution (not just my experience thereof) is to be held in honor *among all*—among those who are married and those who are not, among those who are happily married and among those who are not. Note also that it is not mere companionship that is described; the second clause refers to the “marriage bed,” which we must candidly concede refers not merely to a place where people *sleep*, but to a place where they (at the risk of causing teenagers to titter) commit the reproductive act. Indeed, in the original, the term translated “marriage bed” is *koité* (ἡ κοίτη), from which we obviously derive our term “coitus,” also indicating the expressly sexual nature of the matter spoken of. “Marriage,” that is, does not mean “a pretty wedding,” nor even “companionship,” of a general nature, but the ordinarily-reproductive union of a man and a woman.

To honor this marital institution (or any institution) requires, at a minimum, some understanding of *why* it should be so regarded; it is not enough to say merely, “I found my own family or marital experience to be pleasant.” To say “I found my family or marital experience to be pleasant” is to regard it with gratitude, but not necessarily with honor. To regard an institution with honor is to regard it as especially valuable, and therefore, especially distinct; to regard it honorably requires us to preserve, celebrate and promote it. When we honor veterans on Veterans Day, or mothers on Mother’s Day, or important presidents on President’s Day, in each case we single out the particular category as worthy of special public notice and gratitude; and

² It should probably be observed that “marriage” is *gamos* (γάμος) in Greek, from which we get our English biological term, “gamete,” which Merriam-Webster defines as “one of the cells that join together to begin making a person or other creature.” In either language, the term is essentially a reproductive term. In the sixteen uses in the Greek New Testament, the only times it does not refer to the union of a man and a woman, are in the two figurative uses in Rev. 19:7 and 9, where it refers to the eschatological “wedding” between Christ and his bride, the church. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it is used for the union of a man and a woman, and sometimes for the feast that accompanies that union, as when Jacob wedded Rachel: “Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed.’ So Laban gathered together all the people of the place and made a *feast* (ἐποίησεν γάμον)” (Gen. 29:21-22).

the apostle requires that marriage itself be so honored. The apostle, informed by the Old Testament, understood marriage not only as *a* creational ordinance, but as perhaps *the* creational ordinance, and the remainder of my brief comments are designed to observe how foundational the ordinance of procreative marriage is to the created order itself, as Genesis 1 and 2 narrate that creational account.

Throughout what follows, I will sometimes refer to the “ordinance” of marriage, and sometimes to the “institution” of marriage, because both terms are appropriate. God ordained/instituted marriage in Genesis 2 (more below): “A man *shall* leave his father and mother and *shall* be joined to his wife.” Marriage is not a *human* institution or ordinance; it is presented in Holy Scripture as a *divine* institution or ordinance. To honor the institution, therefore, requires at least two things: that we recognize its divine *origin*, and that we recognize its divine *purpose*. To illustrate the latter point, let us imagine a 14-year-old son who once annually purchases his father a greeting card that says something about “The World’s Greatest Fisherman,” and that he says that he gives his father this card because his father does indeed fish well, and also in order to fulfill the commandment to honor one’s father and mother. But now let us suppose that for 364 other days of the year, the son does not do anything his father asks him to do—he does not mow the lawn, make his bed, or help clean the dishes when asked to do so. Has he really honored his father *as* a father, if he does not comply with his father’s directives? Giving him a “Greatest Fisherman” card does not really constitute honoring his father *as* a father. So also, then, to honor marriage, in fulfilling the apostle’s command, we must honor it *as* the institution God instituted it to be. We do not necessarily honor it by saying it provides wonderful companionship, or that it is very pleasant, or that it enhances our affection for one another. We honor it by promoting the purposes for which God instituted it. Merely saying something nice

(that it promotes affection, companionship, etc.) about it is like giving one's father a "Greatest Fisherman" card.

In Genesis 3, of course, the rebellion of Adam and Eve changes everything, distorting the relation of creature to Creator, and the relationships within the created order itself. Sinful and rebellious creatures need additional institutions, whether government to restrain and punish the wicked (Genesis 9, Romans 13), or the church to proclaim the hope of redemption from our rebellion and its consequences (Genesis 12, 15, 28, Matthew 28). But before these other two institutions were instituted by God to address the *fallen* human condition, marriage had been instituted, in the state of innocence, as needed and necessary even in the state of innocence.

Genesis 1 and 2 are an account of creational *purpose* more than creational mechanics. Reproductive sexuality has not only a surprisingly prominent role in that narrative; it also has a somewhat surprisingly *blunt* role in the narrative, referring to human sexuality with a candor that might have caused some Victorians to blush or some teenagers to snicker. In four specific ways, human reproductive sexuality is celebrated in the Genesis narrative:

I. Male-and-female and the image of God

Commentators have frequently observed the economy of the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2. The record of the creation of the entire cosmos is actually quite brief; therefore, everything that is said is fraught with importance, the way each word of a poem is ordinarily more important to the whole than would be each word of a prose composition. Note, therefore, the use of apposition in Genesis 1:27-28a:

- 1 So God **created** man (אָדָם)
- 2 *in his own image,*
- 3 *in the image of God*

4 he **created** him;
 5 *male and female*
 6 he **created** them. 28 And God blessed them.³

The use of apposition is not surprising at all here; the creation account is very poetic (by the standards of Hebrew poetry), and apposition or parallelism is common in Hebrew poetry. But the particular apposition here is three-fold and surprising. The verb “create” (ברא) is employed thrice (in **boldface**), and the initial four lines are chiasmic, with the (repeated) verb in the first and fourth lines, and the two prepositional phrases in the second and third lines. What is surprising, however, is lines five and six, because the verb is the same, but the qualifier is now “male and female.” “Male and female” in the third pair of lines is in apposition to “his own image” or “in the image of God” in the other lines (all *italicized*). This is especially odd or surprising, for two reasons. First, even if the apposition does not necessarily imply similarity in concept (i.e., that “image of God” *means* “male and female”), the apposition suggests that “male and female” is as significant as “in the image of God” in the creational narrative. And second, God is presented throughout Genesis not only as non-material, but as One who creates by word or fiat, rather than through biological reproduction.⁴ Humans reflect God’s image in many ways;

³ I tentatively include 28a here as part of 27; the verse-numbering may incorrectly disrupt the Hebrew syntax. In the eight uses of “and God said” in Genesis 1 prior to this verse, the expression always introduces a new part of the narrative. Therefore, the use of it at 1:28b should perhaps be taken the same way, and 28a should possibly be taken as the *conclusion* of 1:27: “male and female he created them. And God blessed them.” Also, while the Genesis 1 narrative declares each created thing to be good, only twice is God said to have “blessed” part of the created order; here in verse 28 and earlier in verse 22 (in each case it is ויברך), where also human reproductive sexuality was mentioned: “And God *blessed* them, saying, “Be *fruitful* and *multiply* and fill...” We note, then, that our capacity for male/female reproduction is literally a *blessed* reality in Genesis 1.

⁴ Indeed, as Gerhard von Rad et al. have pointed out, the narrative goes out of its way to distinguish the true and living God from the materialist/reproductive fertility deities common in the Ancient Near East. In the Genesis narrative, sexuality is not a divine reality that flows into the cosmos; sexuality is created by God and instituted into the created order. So von Rad: “But, for the historian of religion, what is most astonishing is Jahwism’s self-preservation vis-à-vis the mythicising of sex. In the Canaanite cult, copulation and procreation were mythically regarded as a divine event; consequently, the religious atmosphere was as good as saturated with mythic sexual conceptions. But Israel did not share in the ‘divinisation’ of sex. Jahweh stood absolutely beyond the polarity of sex, and this meant that Israel also could not regard sex as a sacral mystery.” *Old Testament Theology* 2 vols. (New

they are rational, imaginative, social, creative, linguistic, etc. Moses might have called attention to any of these (or other) ways in which the human reflects God's likeness or image; yet he elected to call attention to their sexual complementarity instead, and he juxtaposed the repeated reference to God's image to human sexual complementarity, probably the last thing anyone then or now would have expected. We may take the juxtaposition of "image of God" and "male and female" for granted, because we are so familiar with the narrative. But suppose it was one of the other two biological appetites (food and sleep) that was referred to instead; then we would regard the matter as most peculiar:

"In the image of God he made them; and they took a nap."

"In the image of God he made them; and they ate a sandwich."

This unexpected apposition of *imago Dei* and male-and-female, however, is theologically quite significant, because God is presented in the narrative as the Creator of all things, and the Creator, therefore, of all *living* things; He is presented as the Author of life. The human in His image will also be an author of life ("author" with a small "a"); the male-and-female human, precisely in his male-and-female-ness, will produce life. It is precisely and especially in his male-and-female-ness that the human fulfills his most significant task as a bearer of God's image; only in his complementary sexuality does the human imitate God as a life-giver.

This unexpected reference to the complementary sexuality of "male and female" appears again when Gen. 5:2 summarizes this creation event ("Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created"). But Moses also employed this language of male-and-female in the flood-narrative of Genesis 6 and 7, where "male and female"

York: Harper & Row, 1962), 1:27. So, in light of the special effort Moses made to distinguish the true God as a non-sexual entity from the false gods as sexual beings, it is especially surprising that he allows "male and female" to stand in apposition to "image of God."

is plainly employed in reproductive terms, as the reason for why Noah needed to assure that each species would be able to reproduce after the flood-judgment:

Genesis 6:19: And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark *to keep them alive* with you. They shall be male and female.

Genesis 7:3: and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, *to keep their offspring alive* on the face of all the earth.

Genesis 7:9: two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah.

Genesis 7:16: And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

In such an abbreviated narrative, the repetition of “male and female” recalls the language of Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 5:2, and in each case the import is the same: “Male and female” is the way many/most species reproduce and extend the life of their species.⁵ Although humans reproduce *differently* than God creates (God is not “male and female,” nor is He a material being), an essential aspect of bearing God’s image is to imitate Him as Author of life. It is precisely in the bearing *of* children and/or the caring *for* children that humans imitate their Maker, in Whose image they were made.⁶

⁵ In a recent interview, the well-known New Testament scholar N. T. Wright spoke of the important “binaries in Genesis...heaven and earth...sea and dry land...male and female.” If he is correct, then, the framing of creation as a series of complementary dualities is profoundly woven into the entire fabric of Genesis.

<<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2014/06/n-t-wrights-argument-against-same-sex-marriage> >

⁶ This “bearing” *and* “caring” is important, because it is irresponsible to bring children into the world and then abandon them (Rousseau?), and because, by contrast, it is honorable for adoptive infertile couples to care for children whom they did not themselves bear. Indeed, only a numerically small part of parenting (I speak as a male, so female readers may feel entirely free to shout at me here) is the actual nine months of gestation; the greater part is the two-decade (and more) process of caring for and nurturing children. Everyone who participates in the nurturing care of children, therefore, reflects the image of God: teenagers, aunts, uncles and grandparents who baby-sit them, nurses and physicians who treat them, teachers who instruct them, Sunday School teachers who pray for them, etc. The rearing of children may not “take a village” (with all due respect to Mrs. Clinton), but it does ordinarily take an extended family, in which the image of God is also reflected.

If the biblical narrative had ended at this point, we would know little more than two things: first, that God is the Creator of all things, and therefore of all living things, and second, that the human made in His image (as a creator himself, therefore) is expressly designated as “male and female” when he is designated to be God’s image. While we would expect the human to be richly creative in many *other* ways as God’s image-bearer, therefore, we would also expect that he would be especially creative in the reproductive sense.

II. The first commandment is expressed in three ways

Whether we agree with the talmudic tradition about there being 613 commands in the Hebrew Bible (248 positive and 365 negative), we all concede that there are many commands.

The first command ever given by God to the human is recorded in Genesis 1:28:

And God blessed them.⁷ And God said to them, “Be fruitful (פְּרֹו) and multiply (וּרְבֹו) and fill (וּמְלֹאוּ) the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

This is ordinarily referred to as the “cultural mandate” because the human is commanded/mandated to cultivate the created order. Emphasis is ordinarily given to the commands “subdue” and “have dominion,” and such an emphasis is very helpful. Three imperatives (all five are qal imperatives) precede these, however: “Be fruitful...multiply...fill the earth,” and these three are essentially synonyms. Together, they are three different ways of saying the same thing: Reproduce. Note that this first command, articulated in three different ways, immediately follows the description of the human as male and female:

⁷ Some commentators regard the blessing as part of the three following verbs, and therefore, properly a part of verse 28, rather than the conclusion of 27. So John H. Sailhamer, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* 12 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 2:38. Whether the blessing relates back to being male-and-female, or whether it relates forward to multiplying, in either case the capacity for reproduction is regarded as blessedness.

“...Male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion....’”

Divine blessedness is the source of human productivity, as God, the Author of life, extends to the creature made in His image the privilege and joy of procreating. Indeed, the genealogical list in Genesis 5 is not merely a matter of keeping records straight; it is also an attestation to God’s blessing the humans in their reproductive capacity. Procreative generating of others is a repeated emphasis in Genesis, and such procreation is always associated with divine blessing. The book even appears to be structured by the repeated “This is/these are the *generations* (תולדות) of...,” which appears at 2:4, 5:1, 6:9, 10:1, 11:10, 11:27, 25:12, 19, 36:1, and 37:2. Genesis structures itself around the procreative/regenerative human as the image of God.⁸ At each such point in the narrative, we are reminded of God’s original creation of His image as “male and female,” blessed by God in the mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. To structure the book around these ten “these are the generations” is not merely a curiosity; it is also a *celebratory* curiosity, because at each point Moses narrates God’s special creational purpose and blessing for His life-producing image. Contemporary readers may merely find these (or other) biblical genealogies boring; but theologically alert readers will feel their true weight, as they candidly testify that even after human rebellion and divine curse (Genesis 3), the original creational purpose to reproduce continues to be blessed by God.

III. “Not good” for the man to be alone

Genesis 2:15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall

⁸ Scholars still debate, however, whether the formula, “these are the generations” concludes the previous section or introduces the following section.

not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’ 18 Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’ 19 So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’

In Genesis 2, the command “to work it and keep it” (the garden) repeats, in its own way, the mandate to exercise dominion from Genesis 1. The command describes the priestly duty to care for the created order in slightly different terms than in 1:28 (“have dominion”). Note, for instance, the similarity between the language for the living beings in each place, because each narrative, in its own way, recognizes the care-giving dominion of the human over other species:

1:28: ‘...the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’

2:19-20: “...every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man.... The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field.”

What is very interesting about the two narratives (Genesis 1 and 2) at this point is the use of the adjective “good.” The stock, repeated phrase after each of the first five creational days in

Genesis 1 is “And God saw that it was good” (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). After creating the human in His image, the comment after the final/sixth creational day was even stronger, “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was *very good*” (1:31). In light of this repeated use of “good” (*tov*, טוב), what is very jarring in the Genesis 2:18 is “It is *not good* that the man should be alone.” At this moment in the creation narrative, the human is contemplated without the complementarity of male-and-female, as male “alone” without the female, and the divine opinion is that such sexually uncomplemented humanity is “not good.” To juxtapose Genesis 1 and 2 on this point, male-and-female is “*very good*,” whereas male-without-female is “*not good*.” In terms of the creational purposes for the race to fill the earth and exercise dominion over it, sexual complementarity is essential; the species cannot fulfill its inherent “goodness,” as it were, apart from its sexually complementary nature as male-and-female.⁹

IV. “Leave and cleave”

Gen. 2:24: Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife (KJV: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife”), and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Whether we employ, in English, the quaintly archaic language of the KJV (“*cleave* unto his wife”) or the more contemporary language of the ESV (“*hold fast* to his wife”), the meaning is unmistakable from the next clause: “and they shall become one flesh.” Such a candid

⁹ I speak of the species as a whole here because, of course, there would be some unmarried people or widowed people, who contribute to the overall task of responsible dominion over the created order in many other ways. When Genesis speaks generically of “the man” (האדם), however, it does speak generically, of humanity as a whole, not of individual humans. Only humanity as a whole can exercise dominion over birds of the air and fish of the sea; in practice, ornithologists would eventually specialize in birds and ichthyologists would specialize in fish. No individual human could fulfill this great mandate; but since the mandate requires both reproduction and the exercise of dominion, it could not be fulfilled unless a substantial part of the species reproduced.

endorsement of the sexual union of man and wife is perhaps surprising in a religious document, though less so in the Ancient Near East, where fertility deities were common, and the necessity of human reproduction was so important. What Genesis 1 referred to somewhat more indirectly as “be fruitful...multiply...fill the earth” is here rather directly biological: “man...woman... shall become one flesh.” Many in our culture may regard sexuality as mere recreation/fun, or as a mere expression of affection; but Moses presents our reproductive sexuality,¹⁰ both in Genesis 1 and in Genesis 2, as a creational mandate.¹¹

Human family analogous to the Trinity

It is not mere speculation for me to suggest that the human, as *imago Dei*, imitates the life-giving Author of life by bringing new life into the world. Such an inference is warranted not only by the way the narrative juxtaposes “image of God” with “male and female;” it is also warranted by the titles Holy Scripture applies to two of the Persons of the Godhead: “Father” and “Son.” Note how essential the parental analogy is to the reasoning of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount, for instance: ‘If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!’ (Mat. 7:11). Human paternal care in such passages is likened to divine paternal care, as even “evil” human parents are likened to God in the care they extend to their children.

¹⁰ There were no technological means of preventing childbirth in Moses’s day; the sexual union of male and female would ordinarily have the result of progeny. When Moses had employed similar language in Genesis 1:22 about other living creatures, it was not a reference to recreation or affection: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth....’ Complementary sexuality is simply the way in which many creatures were made to reproduce. Although many of the prokaryotic species are single-cell, Moses’s generation may have been entirely unaware of such.

¹¹ It is not my purpose here to wrestle with the question of whether or when the human eventually fulfills his reproductive task and “fills” the earth sufficiently. Even if such a moment were to arrive (China thinks it has), the continued survival of the species would still require that each couple produce two children to replace them after their deaths.

Conclusions

The union of man and woman is not merely reproductive, of course. Companionship, comfort and assistance in the difficulties of a fallen world, increased perspective on reality and truth, opportunities to express affection, and many other good things constitute healthy marriages. Nevertheless, what is striking about the Genesis creation narratives is how overtly the reproductive union is mandated. Even in a marriage that was largely bereft of these other blessings, even in a marriage that was less happy and pleasant, if the union produced other independent, adult humans, it would fulfill much of what the Creator designed humans to be and do. We may, therefore, safely conclude the following:

1. To “honor” marriage, at a minimum, requires us to regard it as instituted by God, to regard it as a divine institution, not a mere human invention.
2. To “honor” marriage, at a minimum, requires us to regard it as God regards it, to understand it as He instituted it to be, as an ordinarily reproductive union between male and female.
3. To “honor” marriage, at a minimum, requires us to understand that in the reproductive union of man and woman (which includes either child-bearing or child-caring, and ordinarily both), the human most imitates God as the Author of Life.
4. To “honor” marriage, at a minimum, requires our candid recognition that human reproduction is the first thing the human race was commanded to do (and the command was expressed in three different ways).

To “honor” marriage requires us to regard the union of man and wife, therefore, more highly than we regard any other divine institution and surely more highly than any other merely human institution. Civil government is also instituted by God, after the Fall, as a necessary evil

to curb sin and punish sinners; but it was not a creational institution, and we would not expect every experiment in human government to be equally just or to be honored “among all.” The church is also instituted by God, after the Fall, but we surely do not expect unbelievers to show much honor for it; we do not expect even the church to be held in honor “among all.” But marriage is instituted at creation itself, for the human race in its entirety as essential to its creational purpose, and is therefore, to be held in honor “among all.”

When conversing about the matter with those who do not regard the Holy Scriptures as authoritative, it would be well for us to point out the importance of the institution. We should gently remind others that their very existence on earth is the result of the union of a man and a woman (same-sex unions are simply not reproductive). We should also gently remind others, such as our DINK¹² friends and our homosexual friends, that when they retire and depend on government benefits, it will be our children, whom we brought into the world and reared for roughly twenty years (at a cost of about \$200,000 each), who will be the tax-paying citizens who pay for their benefits at that point (and, even more gently, we might remind them that their unions have not returned the favor; even adoptive homosexuals rear children who were the result of the complementarity of male-and-female).¹³

¹² DINK is now a common acronym for “dual-income-no-kids,” referring to couples who marry with the intention of having two incomes, having no children, and therefore, having the liberty to retire early. It is not, to my knowledge, a pejorative phrase, but a simple acronym.

¹³ One occasionally hears the objection that some homosexual couples adopt children, and therefore, should be permitted to be married. Yet even such couples are themselves the result of the complementarity of male and female, and public policy should recognize the normativity of sexual complementarity for reproduction, if not for child-rearing. And even here, public policy does not treat us as individuals, but categorically. For example, many (probably most) states prohibit mentally retarded people from marrying other mentally retarded people because of the likelihood of their progeny being retarded. Yet, it is genetically possible, if the couple each carry recessive genes, that their own children could be born normal. But public policy cannot consider the exception; it considers what is ordinary. The union of male and female ordinarily produces offspring until or unless something (birth control) intervenes; the union of same-sex individuals never produces offspring. Yes, some heterosexual couples are infertile, and yes, some couples later choose to be DINKs; but public policy deals with the ordinary, not the extra-ordinary. According to statistics published by the Department of Health and Human Services (April 19, 2013), 70.2% of adopted children are adopted by married couples, 22.7% are adopted by unmarried females, 5.5% by unmarried males, and 1.6% by unmarried couples (without specifying whether those unmarried couples are heterosexual or

Application to same-sex unions and to DINK unions

Same-sex unions and DINK unions are unproductive, and therefore, the body politic does not have the same interest (if any) in such unions as it does in the marriage between man and woman. In theory, however, there might be some other public benefit to such unions, provided that they were properly distinguished from those that are (ordinarily and potentially) reproductive. Such public policy matters, like all other public policy matters, should be settled the way other public policy matters are settled: Does the public have sufficient interest or benefit in the matter to justify its cost? If a convincing case were made that other types of (non-reproductive) companionships were beneficial to the public, and at a cost that was commensurate with the benefit, then the case should be duly considered.

It is unfortunate that the discussion of such unions has been injured by two things: First, in some cases, the discussion is not of same-sex civil unions, but of same-sex marriage; this is an inevitable principial barrier to those of us who believe that special consideration or honor should be given to that one institution essential to the survival of the species. To insist that the public regard nonreproductive unions as identical in public worth to reproductive unions effectively demands that we stop teaching Biology 101 in our schools. Second, in the unfortunate nature of public discourse in the post-printing-press era, many of the “arguments” for same-sex unions are

homosexual). Add these numbers, and you get 100%, so homosexual couples who adopt account for somewhere between 0% and 1.6% of the children who are adopted; such a small number as to be inconsequential. Only 2.5% of American children are adopted; the other 97.5% live with their biological parents. Even if the entire 1.6% of children adopted by unmarried couples were adopted by homosexual couples, the total amount of such children is .04%, less than one-half of one per cent of children, not enough to be considered ordinary. But the figures are worse: At most, 3% of the population is homosexual, so the real statistical likelihood is that only 3% of those 1.6% are homosexual couples, so the high figure on adoptive children reared by homosexual couples is .0012%, or one out of a hundred thousand children. This means that there is only one child adopted by a homosexual couple in the entire city for cities such as Manchester, NH, Lowell, MA, Clearwater or West Palm Beach, FL, Pueblo or Boulder, CO, High Point, NC, Green Bay, WI, South Bend, IN, Tyler or College Station, TX, or Erie, PA. Public policy can hardly adjust for such a statistical anomaly.

either irrelevant or illogical, and therefore, unpersuasive. The three or four I hear most frequently are these:

One: Those who oppose same-sex marriage are bigots or “haters;”

Two: Marrying whom one wishes is a basic civil right;

Three: Same-sex marriage is analogous to the Civil Rights movement;

*Four: History is “on the side” of gay marriage;

I turn to each, briefly, as a plea to my friends who promote same-sex unions to give me some help here. Give me a valid reason to consider supporting your agendum; do not make me commit some logical fallacy or another in order to be supportive.

First: Those who oppose same-sex marriage are bigots or “haters.”

Even if every opponent of same-sex marriage or same-sex civil unions were a bigot, such name-calling is both unproductive and irrelevant. Name-calling simply does not clarify the public discussion or give reasonable people a reason. Technically, such name-calling is an example of argument *ad hominem* (against the person), and all such argumentation is fallacious for these (and other) reasons. Even if a person’s motivations *were* entirely selfish, self-centered, and improper, this does not mean that the individual’s reasons or conclusions are or were wrong. An individual might teach the fundamental theorem of Calculus simply for the selfish reason of making money; but this would not make his proof wrong or the fundamental theorem wrong. Motives and reasons are simply different things. Second, the histories of theology, philosophy, drama and literature all suggest that all humans suffer from mixed motives: The noblest humans are flawed, and the worst individuals have some redeemable traits. So, if we exempted from

public discourse those whose motives were flawed, none would be left to conduct the conversation.¹⁴

Second: Marrying whom one wishes is a basic civil right.

I hear this frequently asserted, and all I can do when I hear it is shrug and say that it is what the logicians call *petitio principii*—begging the question, or stating as an *assumption* the very matter that is to be *proved*. To assume this, when it is, in fact, the matter that we are debating, has the general fault that it is entirely unconvincing to any individuals who do *not* consider it a matter to be assumed. To say, “As we all know, Hitler was the finest human who ever lived, and therefore, we should have a national holiday celebrating his birth,” is entirely unpersuasive to those of us who do not regard him as the finest human who ever lived. More specifically, the assertion of the very matter to be proved faces three enormous factual difficulties: First, until ten years ago, there was no known culture that protected marrying whomever one wished as it protected the union of man and wife; second, in the many 17th- and 18th- century statements about basic (or, in our founding documents, “inalienable”) human rights, marrying whom one wishes is never mentioned (life, liberty, property, and pursuit of happiness are the common ones); and third, in our own national life, the very condition of the Utah territory attaining statehood was their rejection of polygamy, plainly denying to them the right to marry more than one other person, despite the fact that it was a then-tenet of their religion.¹⁵ So, as a plain (and, in this case, significant) fact of our national history, we have not regarded the right to marry whomever one wishes as an inalienable right, but have limited the matter within the

¹⁴ I only add parenthetically here, in a footnote, that the allegation is often utterly and virtually libelous. Many of us who oppose same-sex marriage and who have reservations about same-sex civil unions have homosexual friends whose friendships we cherish, and whose companionship in life’s journey is a joy. I not only wish them no harm; I positively wish them nothing but happiness and health, and I believe they know it and return the wish to me. Disagreement with others (on any point) does not and need not imply malice toward them.

¹⁵ There are additional laws that restrict marital choice, such as those among individuals with certain degrees of mental retardedness, or those prohibiting marriage within certain degrees of consanguinity.

parameters of the public's perceived interest. When people assert or assume that marrying whom one wishes is a "basic right," they not only beg the very question we are debating, they do so in defiance of several factual realities that suggest otherwise. What they probably mean to say is that they *wish* it were regarded as a basic/inalienable right; not that, in point of fact, it *has* ever been so reckoned.

Third: Same-sex marriage is analogous to the Civil Rights movement.

In the technical vocabulary of students of linguistics, we might be able to say that there is or are some analogies between the two (in each case, there are humans; in each case, there are issues of public policy, etc.). If the analogy, however, is to be persuasive, it must be easily perceived to be analogous by its (otherwise) opponents. And this one is entirely unconvincing to any but to those who are already persuaded, and here is why. Go to any burn ward in any major hospital in the United States, and you may find, unhappily, people who are there for much or all of their lives because skin is a human organ, necessary to one's very survival, just as lungs or hearts are necessary. Severely-burned individuals, apart from extremely expensive and attentive care, will simply die. But unmarried people routinely live, and many of them live rich and happy lives. The choice to be sexually active (unlike the "choice" to have skin) is, therefore, a genuine choice. Some people have chosen to be celibate or chaste for all or much of their lives; some people have chosen to be celibate or chaste except within their marriage (no pre-marital or extra-marital relations). Many religious people, from a variety of a religious traditions (e.g. Mother Teresa), have taken life-long vows of celibacy, and have lived long and beneficial lives without any need of around-the-clock medical care. So people can live, and live happily, without fulfilling any sexual appetites at all. Unlike sleep and food, this biological desire need not be sated. So prohibiting Rosa Parks from using tax-funded public transportation because of her skin

is not analogous to choosing not to grant the state's promotion and protection to every sexual union. There may be good reasons to grant such promotion and protection to such unions, but the suggestion that human choices (the choice to have sex at all) are analogous to those organs essential to biological life is a suggestion that convinces only those who are already convinced. To those of us who have ever exercised any self-control over our sexual attractions or appetites, we are unconvinced that fulfilling such urges is as essential to our lives and well-being as having skin is.

Fourth: History is “on the side” of gay marriage.

I placed an asterisk before this one (above), because I regard it not as a real argument, but as mere rhetoric. That is, I do not think those who say this actually believe it themselves, because one would have to be naïve almost to the point of retardation to believe that every new historical movement is a step forward. Was it progress when Hitler became chancellor of Germany? Do the proponents of gay marriage think the Iraq war was progress, or that the election of George W. Bush was progress? To my limited knowledge, the first to employ this rhetorical trope was Premier Krushchev, who said, in 1956, “History is on our side and we will bury you.” Well, whatever one thinks about the former Soviet Union, it is indeed now “former,” as is Nikita Krushchev.¹⁶ At particular moments, history was “on the side” of Genghis Khan, Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler, Idi Amin, Pol Pot, Sadaam Hussein, and Richard Nixon; it appears not to be “on their side” now. At particular moments, history was *not* “on the side” of the Israelites enslaved in Egypt or captive in Babylon, *not* “on the side” of the crucified Christ, and *not* “on the side” of His martyrs. History, to my reading, is far more tragic than comic, and I am inclined to regard it

¹⁶ I ordinarily encourage respect for the dead, and I ordinarily discourage all acts of vandalism in public places; but if one were differently inclined than I, it would be hard to imagine a more fitting act of irony than for someone with graffiti skills to paint those words about burying on his tombstone; who, at the end of the day, buried whom?

as the late Barbara W. Tuchman did, as “The March of Folly.”¹⁷ So I regard this fourth “argument” as no argument at all; as a mere rhetorical device, and a fairly self-defeating one at that.

Reproductive complementary sexuality is surprisingly prominent in the creation accounts of Genesis 1 and 2. Were we not already familiar with the chapters, we would be surprised that something as “earthy” as sexual reproduction is mentioned so frequently, and attended by God’s blessing. In our more Victorian moments, we might even wish that Moses had been less overt about the matter. But for Moses, the reproductive sexual complementarity of “male and female” was an extremely important dimension of our being the image of the life-Authoring God, whose first imperative to His human image, expressed in three different ways, was to reproduce. And it was this reproductive institution that Christ’s apostle later commanded to be held in honor among all.

¹⁷ *The March of Folly: From Troy to VietNam* (New York: Random House, 1985).