

The Difference that Makes Marriage and Sustains Society:

A Biblical, Traditional and Rational Perspective

By Gordon Preece

Summary

Many Christians today, especially younger Christians, while positive about marriage, are unsure about the difference that makes or defines marriage, and the difference marriage makes. They waver about marriage's universal applicability, i.e. to non-Christians, its preferability to cohabitation, the importance of procreation, and its restriction to heterosexuals. Many see these as private, consenting adult rights issues, individual choices, not public justice issues of social significance. However, these issues involve 1. relational beings oriented by creation to the opposite sex and 2. ontologically open to reproduction, the forgotten factor, the elephant in the room, of children, who have no choice, voice or vote in these discussions. Sexual difference is critical to the stability and sustainability of marriages, families, and society and for treating social differences respectfully and equally. Further, on biblical, traditional, and rational (natural law and biological) grounds, that sexual difference is critical to our sexual and social ecology, and the primary reason for rejecting gay marriage as discriminatory, unsustainable, and non-procreative.

1. Introduction

Christians are broadly supportive of marriage as the goal and primary context of sexual relationships for Christians. But many are ambivalent about its applicability to non-Christians advocating cohabitation and same-sex marriage. They are unsure how to interpret Scripture or respond to contemporary western culture's rapid retreat from the traditional Christian perspective on life-long heterosexual marriage open to children. This paper presents a positive view of heterosexual marriage from its long pedigree in Scripture and Christian tradition as context for the 'negative' biblical passages against homosexual practice, but for homosexual people made and loved in God's image.

A ladder of authorities shapes Christian ethical thinking: Scripture, tradition, reason, which address both the primacy of sexual difference in making or defining marriage and through its reproductive role, its broader public significance in sustaining families and society. Many see Christian sexual morality as a strict sectarian taboo, increasingly irrelevant to secular, pluralistic cultures. But the prioritising of these authorities, with Scripture first, beginning with its universally oriented creation narrative, upheld and restored by Christ the Creative Word, presents a more expansive and universally life-giving picture, for all peoples.

This is not merely Christian, but as Rabbi Sacks shows in *The Dignity of Difference*,¹ belief in the universal covenant with creation, upheld by Noah, is largely shared by the Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam). Further, the significance of the Bible in shaping English-speaking and global culture, language and political practice, has been acknowledged recently on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible.

It is modern western society that is increasingly sectarian in its secularism and monistic (not pluralistic) in its almost compulsory commitment to unlimited consumer choice at all costs in all contexts, from the most intimate (marriage) to the most institutional (politics and law). Christian and Abrahamic monotheistic tradition counters the blinkered parochialism of the present, blindly assuming we are the peak of progress.

Finally, reason and natural law reinforce the fact that sexually differentiated marriage and its integrally related good of procreation is almost universally recognised. This is also reinforced by the universal human rights tradition recognising rights of children to a mother and father. Natural law and biology back up the Bible on the nature and purposes of marriage.

2. Scripture

Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2 portray a created order of male-female difference as central to humanity's sexual ecology. We are gradually rediscovering our natural ecology, that everything is connected and has ecological consequences, as in a butterfly's wing movements in Brisbane setting off a hurricane in the Bahamas. How ironic, that even the most green ecologists assume that our humanity and sexuality stands outside this natural order in a subjective erogenous zone of consumer choice or preference. The biblical ecological view of heterosexual marriage is in fact far more 'green', more conservationist and grounded in nature or creation, than Green and Left views.

Sexual ecology means that creation is differentiated in *kinds* or species (Genesis 1) not just in our *minds*,² whether hetero or homosexual. Our sexual complementarity is a key part of how we are created in God's image (Gen 1:26-28) and re-created in Christ (Gal 3:28). Men and women represent or image God in loving the (sexually and biologically) different one, not in undifferentiated love of the same. This image is reflected in our biological male and femaleness, our co-humanity, whose sexual difference in unity is an analogy for the Trinity.

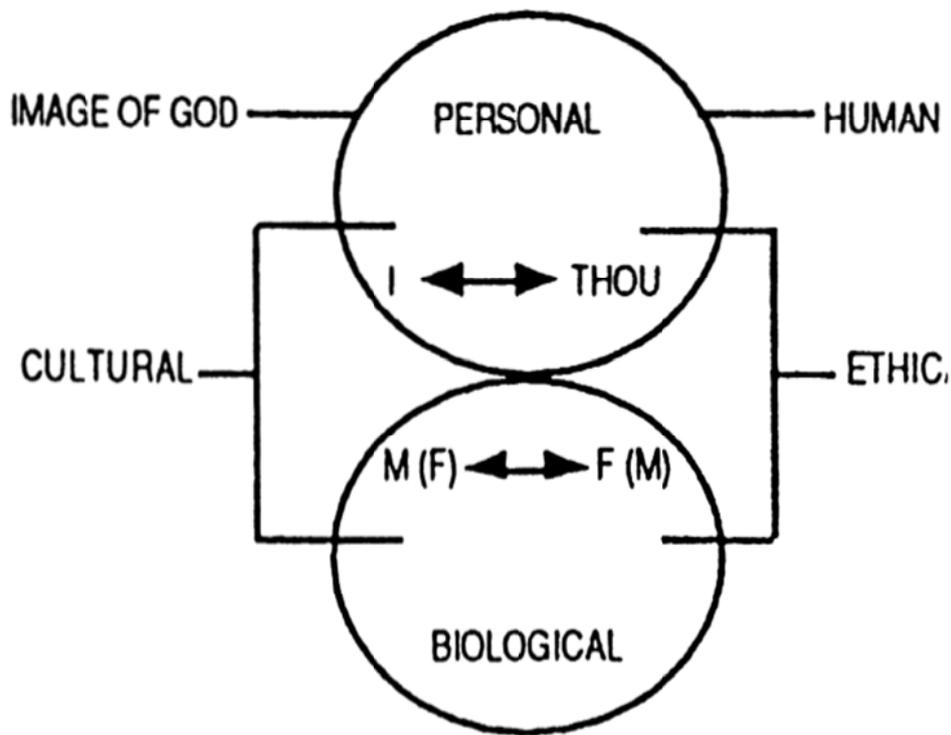
Some liberal or revisionist theologians see God's image referring to our undifferentiated loving relationships reflecting God as Trinity. So, loving, monogamous same-sex relationships can be recognised by marriage. But this only reflects God's unity, abstractly, not

¹ *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilization*, Continuum International, London, 2002. This creation based, universally accessible covenant is foundational to Abrahamic religious understanding of marriage as intrinsically involving male and female, and children, not same-sex couples.

² Following Oliver O'Donovan "The Natural Ethic," in D. F. Wright ed., *Essays in Evangelical Social Ethics*, Paternoster Press, Exeter, 1979), 19-25.

God's particular diversity as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Diagram 1 this abstraction is expressed in I-thou personal relationships not overlapping with biological sexual difference but floating above it like oil on water.

Diagram 1

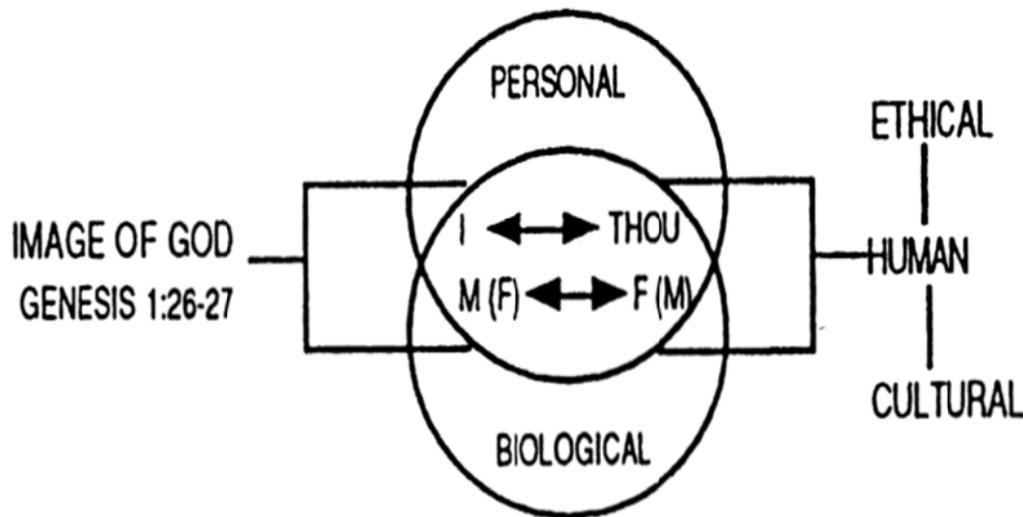


However, Ray Anderson literally draws on Karl Barth's critique of this common but vague view of God's image.³ So Diagram 2 below displays God's image specifically through male-female biological/sexual difference (in the overlap of the circles above), expressed in familial, ethical, human and cultural relationships.⁴ The marriage of difference is the membrane through which difference flavours all of these relationships. This makes all the difference to social relationships.

³ 'Homosexuality and the Ministry of the Church: Theological and Pastoral Considerations', in M. A. Rae and G. Redding ed. *More Than A Single Issue*, ATF Press, Hindmarsh, 2000, citing Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/4*, T.&T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1961, 166.

⁴ Anderson, *Ibid*, 61.

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Marital sexuality is primarily for companionship and mutual ‘help’- hence ‘it is not good for the man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him’ (Gen 2:18). ‘Without female companionship and a partner in reproduction the man could not fully realise his humanity’.⁵ The antidote to Adam’s ‘not good to be alone’ –ness is not an animal, or another man. A male ‘clone’ is not an adequate or ‘good’ enough or ‘suitable’ answer to the problem of being alone (Gen 2:18). It is not an – other, not different or hetero, but the same, or homo.

Marriage is by definition a particular cross-sexual and, in principle, procreational partnership and kinship, integrally related to our bodily sexuality. Genesis 1:28’s command to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ depicts it as part of the creation commission to fill and rule the earth in shared stewardship of creation and as part of marital blessing. Natural Law theories recognise this. Nonetheless, the priority of complementary companionship is clear. In Genesis 2:23 Adam cries ecstatically, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, for from man she was taken’, not ‘big hips for child-bearing and big breasts for child-rearing!’ Nor does Paul mention procreation in rejecting homosexual practice in Romans 1:24-27, though it was then an urgent imperative.

This heart-felt reunion story of the man with his lost half or ‘suitable helper’ is explained in Genesis 2:24 as the rationale for the man putting her first, leaving his parents’ family and household to found another and cleaving or ‘sticking’ faithfully and loyally to her, and ‘becoming one flesh’, forming an exclusively monogamous sexual union. This is a three-legged stool where all three are required for marriage, and its stability and balance. As Walter

⁵ *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1985, 9.

Trobisch says: ‘there is a legal, a personal, and a physical aspect of marriage. They are inseparable. If separated, the whole thing disintegrates. Traditional marriage is entered via the legal side, where in arranged and dynastic marriages there may be no love; modern marriage, culminating in gay marriage, is entered via erotic love or ‘one flesh’, but without the other two becomes a ‘revolving-door’. Biblical marriage is entered via faithful cleaving, complete commitment, loyal love, as part of a package deal involving the other two legs of the stool.’⁶

Sadly, despite the media’s idealisation of gay relationships,⁷ this marriage pattern of leaving, cleaving, becoming one flesh is unable to be fulfilled in gay marriages as they lack the sexual differentiation necessary to becoming one flesh i.e. male and female parts becoming whole again, are unable to naturally reproduce kin (Gen 37:27 flesh=kin), and commonly lack the continuity and sustainability of life-long cleaving for monogamy and secure child-rearing.⁸

The shameless, shared nakedness of the original couple in Gen 2:25 puts to bed the mythology of Christian coyness or negativity about sex. Sex in its right place, i.e. heterosexual marriage, is revelled in. The passionate love poem, Song of Songs, is an extended erotic elaboration of Genesis 2, set in another Garden, of paradisiac and aphrodisiac mutual delight in the opposite sex. It is an echo of Eden, full of playfulness and fertility imagery. Love abounds in all its abundance.

Moving to the gospels we find Jesus in Matthew 19:1-12, questioned by liberal (Hillelite) Pharisees justifying easy divorce, also recalling Genesis 2:24. He upholds the sexual ecology of humanity’s original purpose in the creation of marriage - one-man, one-wife for life, or celibacy.⁹ The cliché that Jesus says nothing negative about homosexuality is an always last resort argument from silence. It reverses the onus of proof from the radical revisionists to those conserving the universal Jewish rejection of homosexual practice, grounded in Genesis. It also overlooks what Jesus says positively here about heterosexual marriage and its permanent purpose. Further, Jesus’ first miracle, gracing the wedding at Cana, is a sign of God’s creative abundance and blessing of marriage, pointing ahead to the marriage feast of the lamb in Revelation 21:1-2. These are key links (along with heterosexual marriage imagery of God’s relationship with his people, from Hosea and Song of Songs to

⁶ See Walter Trobisch, *I Married You*, Quiet Waters, Bolivar Missouri, 2009.

⁷ E.g. as in *Sex and the City*, whose gay script-writers often portray gay relationships as the only happy and loving ones in New York.

⁸ See Loren Marks’ ‘Gay and Lesbian Parenting: the State of the Science’, 735-51 and Mark Regnerus’ largest survey yet which found children succeed best as adults ‘when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father, and ... parents remain married’. ‘How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships?’, 752-70, both in *Social Science Research* 41, 2012.

⁹ For faithful eunuchs or celibates, even foreigners, and homosexually inclined, Isaiah 56:1-8 promises God’s blessing and inheritance ‘a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters’. Jesus reflects this in Mt 19:12: Some eunuchs are born, some made, by castration, some for the Kingdom’s sake. Cf. Acts 8:27, 38-40 on the Ethiopian eunuch.

Ephesians 5:21ff and Revelation 21:1-2)¹⁰ in the broad biblical bridge spanning both Testaments, Law and Prophets, Gospels and Epistles, upholding heterosexual marriage.

The clearest and most extensive biblical passage about homosexual practice is Romans 1:18-27. It also draws on Genesis' stress on sexual distinctiveness as a key part of our sexual ecology. Our feelings (e.g. 'God created me gay' or 'it's love, it must be ok') may subjectively reflect what tragically seems 'natural' to some in a fallen creation but do not reflect what is 'natural' in God's original and ultimate intention for creation. This structured sexuality or 'ordered ontology'¹¹ includes the basic *difference, otherness or complementarity* of male and female. Homosexual practice is therefore wrong primarily because it is a sexist, discriminatory rejection of that basic difference which makes or defines marriage, overturning the created order, exchanging natural relations for unnatural ones (Rom 1:26-27).

Further, despite revisionists re-reading Paul to make him condemn natural heterosexuals turning to homosexuality, or pederasts, temple prostitutes etc. the context is the universal cosmic order not what is natural to some. Indeed, homosexual practice is a key symptom of Gentile and western culture's rejection or suppression of the created order. Plus, Paul uses the most inclusive terms possible to cover the wide range of homosexual practice, including, uniquely in Scripture, lesbianism and most likely loving gay relationships well known to Gentiles and to Paul.¹²

If we tamper with our sexual ecology, long-term damage may be done, as our environmental carelessness has caused catastrophic climate change. As a culture, when we lie (or approve of lying) with the same-sex, rejecting our opposite, we idolatrously suppress or exchange the truth of God for a lie, exchanging 'natural relations for unnatural ones' (cf. vv. 23, 25, 26). This is sexist, unjust, and discriminatory against the opposite sex, and against God's revealed ecology of sex.

In addition, contrary to some Christian activists for whom only poverty or racism is regarded as injustice, this rejection of God reflected in homosexual practice is described as injustice (v.18, weakly translated 'wickedness' NIV).¹³ We don't give God the worth-ship or honour due to him or the opposite sex or our own bodies, dishonouring them. Homosexual practice and marriage is not a private peccadillo but a public justice and morality issue, though not a criminal issue (as Old Testament civil law punishments do not apply in the New Testament).

Other sins or injustices, to which heterosexuals are prone, also fall short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), so no-one should be self-justifying or perversely peer review

¹⁰ Sebastian R. Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene, OR, 2011.

¹¹ Anderson, 'Homosexuality and the Ministry of the Church', 61.

¹² Larry W. Hurtado 'The Bible and Same-Sex Erotic Relations', *Crux*, June 1996, Vol XXXII, No. 2, 19 'doubts ... claims that the ancient world knew nothing of consensual, caring, same-sex relationships or nothing of people whose sexual desires were exclusively same-sex. The ancient Greek evidence indicates otherwise'.

¹³ N.T. Wright, *The New Interpreters Bible* Vol. X, 'Romans', Abingdon, Nashville, 2002, 432.

themselves by approving similar sins by others (Romans 1:28-32).¹⁴ We are all, straight or gay, in the same sinking boat of sin. We all need God's justifying, saving and re-creative power displayed in the Gospel (Rom 1:17-18). As Luther said, 'God carves the crooked wood and makes it straight'.

Though Genesis 1-2 and Romans 1 treat procreation as secondary to male-female differentiation and companionship, in their rejection of homosexual practice, unlike contemporary Greco-Roman critics, it is still a significant part of the package deal of marriage. Paul presents Abraham and Sarah as the model of God's literally life-giving, procreative pattern for marriage in Romans 4:18-21.¹⁵ Further, in Romans 12:1-2, presenting our bodies as living sacrifices in conformity to Christ stands in deliberate contrast to the pattern of rejecting and dishonouring God through homosexual and other practices in Romans 1:21-28.

Having surveyed the scriptural spine or main biblical passages on marriage, and some rejecting homosexual practice, we need to examine some of the limbs, attentendin to recent revisionist readings, showing how they fail to do justice to Scripture or its traditional reading. For instance, their view is that the Sodom story of Genesis 19 is primarily against homosexual rape and inhospitality. 'A more reasonable view is that this action is (rightly) regarded by Lot as wicked on three grounds - ... breach of hospitality; forced rather than voluntary; and ... a prohibited form of sex ... i.e. homosexual intercourse'.¹⁶

Similarly, the rejections of homosexual practice in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are due to the confusion of the differences (human-animal, male-female, parent-child, brother-sister etc) that God built into creation as expressions of human wholeness or holiness. They are not just Jewish cultic rules. Instead they are holiness laws based on the need to maintain boundaries between categories of creation that are different.¹⁷

This creational basis is reinforced in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 where the Levitical terms for active and passive homosexual practice¹⁸ are used in Paul's rejection of such practices for Gentiles, not just Jews. In context in 1 Corinthians 8:6 Paul identifies Jesus with the Jewish Shema (Deut 6:4) to the one God through whom all things are created. 'Turning to the one God from idols also and equally means for those who engage in sexual practices the turning to one heterosexual spouse. Paul's negativity towards homosexual practices is the flip side of his positivity about heterosexual marriage that in turn expresses his view of the unity of the Creation that is from the Father and through the Lord'¹⁹ (cf. Romans 1: 20ff, 1 Thessalonians

¹⁴ See E. Michael Jones, *Degenerate Moderns: Modernity as Rationalized Sexual Misbehavior*, Ignatius, 1993.

¹⁵ N.T. Wright, 'Romans', 500.

¹⁶ Lindsay Wilson, 'Let Sodom be Sodom! Another Look at Genesis 19' in G. Preece and M. Bird ed. *Sexegesis: An Evangelical Response to Five Uneasy Pieces on Homosexuality*, Anglican Press Australia, 2012, 62.

¹⁷ See Katy Smith, 'The Culpability of Sexual Offence: Understanding Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 in Context', ch. 3 in Preece and Bird, *Sexegesis*.

¹⁸ Paul Barnett, 'God, Creation and Sexuality in First Corinthians: A Response to Alan Cadwallader', in Preece, *Sexegesis*, 108.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 114-116.

1:9-10; 4:1-4). Revisionists ignore the way monotheism and heterosexual monogamy go together. They also ignore the role of sexual differentiation and procreation in a Gnostic way that ignores God's creation and our earthy materiality or biology seriously.

3. Tradition's Affirmation of Sexual Difference

Despite contemporary debates about interpreting these 'vexed' texts of Scripture we need to focus not just on more recent controversies but the vast canonical canvas of Scripture affirming sexually differentiated marriage and the consensus of the ages in affirming it. Against the levelling tide of the democratisation of instant knowledge on the internet and poll-driven politicians, the 'democracy of the dead' (G.K. Chesterton)²⁰ is to be listened to and respected. As the grandchild test or what would they say? is critical for natural ecological decisions so is the same question valid in the grandparent test. While neither is infallible, both are important as part of the wisdom of the ages and the relational ties of the generations.

At the fount of that living tradition,²¹ St. Augustine outlined a coherent consensus theology of the continuity of sexual difference, from creation to new creation, from the Garden to the City of God, in the light of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Augustine's theology was developed by later theologians: Bernard of Clairvaux and Aquinas in the Middle Ages, Luther and Calvin in the Reformation, Karl Barth and John Paul II in the 20th century. Some, like Aquinas, primarily tied sexual difference to its potential for procreation on natural law grounds. Though significant, integrally related, and a great blessing of marriage, procreation is secondary in Scripture, to our sexual difference as a key way of externalising or representing the relational image of God in mutual companionship.

As Christopher Roberts sums up the tradition: 'Sexual difference is the most primordial of the distinctions between different modes of being human, ... the only distinction that implicates everyone'. 'Sexual difference is something humans should embrace and welcome, for to do that is to honor creation and anticipate redemption'. However, a theology of sexual difference was so taken for granted that it was difficult to articulate clearly before contemporary controversies. Hence today's church 'is less than unanimous about sexual difference', though all accept only monogamous marriage covenants.²²

But as Roberts shows: 'The revisionists simply have not engaged all of the arguments and presuppositions that make traditional marriage coherent... [T]he significance of sexual difference becomes aesthetic and private, an incidental feature of human creaturehood, to be valued or not according to an individual's taste'.²³

²⁰ See G.R. Preece, 'The Democracy of the Dead': Homosexuality and Tradition Ch. 4 in B. Edgar and G. Preece ed. *Whose Homosexuality? Which Authority? Interface* 9/1 & 2, (May and Oct. 2006), ATF Press, Hindmarsh.

²¹ See my "'The Democracy of the Dead": Homosexuality and Tradition', ch. 4 in G. R. Preece and B. Edgar ed. *Whose Homosexuality? Which Authority? Interface* vol 9 Nos 1 & 2, May & Oct. 2006, ATF Press.

²² Roberts, *Creation & Covenant*, 235-38.

²³ *Ibid*, 240-41.

Companionship and covenant making without the ballast of creation-based sexual difference and procreation bob aimlessly on the sea, open to every wind and wave of culture. Without a transcultural, creation-based anthropology and relational ontology of difference, revisionism cannot resist the collapsing of marriage covenants into short-term contracts as part of the socially eroding effects of capitalism.

4. Reason: Biology and Natural Law Back up Bible and Tradition

To Roberts, ‘The revisionists assumption that a basic feature of human biology is spiritually insignificant seems to sever the material creation and “spiritual” redemption. It seems to assume that basic biological and sexual differences are only significant in an idiosyncratic and ad hoc way’. They seem ‘to conceive sexual difference voluntaristically – as significant only to the extent that the human will would like it to be’ – a common error.

But there is biological backup for the biblical and traditional significance of our sexual difference. While humans are, unlike animals, made in God’s image, we share a sense of sexual differentiation. ‘The need to find and seduce a mate is among the most powerful forces in evolution’. ‘Sex is easily the biggest physical difference within a species. Men and women, unlike blacks and whites, have different organs and body designs. The inferable differences in genomes between two people of visibly different races is one-hundredth of 1 percent. The gap between the sexes vastly exceeds that.’²⁴

Biblical sexual ecology is also supported by the biology of gay health activist Gabriell Rotello’s book *Sexual Ecology*. He challenges various deadly gay myths, especially ‘that humans have somehow transcended the limits of the biological world’. ‘The highly selective spread of HIV around the world shows that AIDS is ... an ecological epidemic that exploits certain behaviors, ... the single riskiest sexual practice of all: anal sex.’

While supporting safe sex campaigns, Rotello challenges sole reliance on a consequentialist ‘condom code’ as an ‘anti-ecological’, ‘technological fix’. His argument is ‘rooted not in traditional morality, but implacable biology’.²⁵ But unless he arbitrarily separates moral and biological, his logic leads towards a ‘moral ecology’. Biology and ecology support the Bible’s view of our complementary sexuality. God’s two books, Scripture and nature, in that order, agree. This is particularly significant for ethical apologetics in secular society.

Rationally based natural law and natural rights arguments also support the centrality of sexual differentiation in defining marriage. This is firstly not a matter of unjust or irrelevant discrimination as in racial discrimination barring supposedly less intelligent black children being educated with whites, but of discernment of pertinent differences definitional marriage as heterosexual.²⁶ Abandoning a neutral or positive sense of ‘discrimination’, as in

²⁴ Roberts, *Creation & Covenant*, 241-42.

²⁵ *Sexual Ecology*, Plume, London, 1998, 8-10, 187-88.

²⁶ For Jewish natural law philosopher David Novak ‘only *arbitrary discrimination* is morally objectionable’. ‘Same-sex couples have no right to marry’, www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2011/11/30/3115445.htm.

the old Benson & Hedges ad ‘for the discriminating [i.e. discerning] smoker’ confuses public debate on discrimination.

Secondly, the gay marriage debate is about the wider social significance of marriage and the State’s interest in it as a procreational public institution. It is not about State interference in consensual adult issues of love as in standard liberal individual rights cases. Most now recognise the rights of same-sex couples to legal entitlements like welfare, medical access, inheritance etc, on equal footing with de facto heterosexual couples.

The ground has shifted to the public turf of procreation and rights of children, but the debate is still stuck in the mud of the previous battle of private adult rights. Marriage is by definition or in principle open to children. The State has an important interest in children’s generation, clarity of biological identity, and continuity of biological care. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds children’s natural rights to know and grow with their biological parents and upholds biological parents’ consequent responsibilities.²⁷

Dual-sexed marriage is widely recognised as the ideal condition for raising children.²⁸ It is not just any two-ness, as an issue of quantity, but the difference of kind, of two sexes-becoming one-ness that is a critical to marriage and family, modelling both male and female sexual and parental roles. Empirical debates about whether heterosexuals or homosexuals are better parents are difficult, though evidence of a lack of sufficient continuity of gay relationships²⁹ is a major concern regarding child welfare.

The ‘adultism’³⁰ involved in the imposition of an adult individual rights perspective, ignoring child rights, is a discriminatory, irresponsible and unsustainable social experiment. This anti-child trend parallels ancient Greco-Roman culture’s neglect of children. Christianity achieved a ‘moral revolution’ by expanding the public domain to include the previously invisible and inaudible, ‘the private sphere of women, children, slaves, and other outcasts’. Thus the personal and pastoral became political.³¹ Gay marriage is a key pillar in a regressive reversal of these civilizing achievements.

²⁷ Article 7 states that they ‘also have the right to know their [biological] parents and, as far as possible, to be cared for by them’. This is impossible in gay marriages.

²⁸ The Nov. 2011 Ambrose survey found that while 49% of the sample approved of gay marriage 73% agreed that two biological parents of the opposite sex was the ideal context for raising children.

²⁹ See Loren Marks’ ‘Gay and Lesbian Parenting: the State of the Science’, 735-51 and Mark Regnerus’ largest survey yet which found children succeed best as adults ‘when they spend their entire childhood with their married mother and father, and ... parents remain married’. ‘How different are the adult children of parents who have same-sex relationships?’, 752-70, both in *Social Science Research* 41, 2012.

³⁰ Brian T. Trainor, *Christ, Society and the State*, ATF Press, Adelaide, 2010, 247-51 states that ‘Talk of homosexual “families” is a misnomer’. Whatever definition of “family” we use, it must ‘be non-adultist and have the welfare of children as its ... central focus. On the presumption that coming into earthly existence in the first place and being reared by their own natural parents is integral to the “welfare of children”, homosexual couples simply do not fall within a child-focused understanding of the family’.

³¹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*, Princeton University Press, 1981, 56, 58.

5. Conclusion

The biblical creation accounts affirm sexual difference as critical to and definitional of our sexual ecology and being made in God's image. This is affirmed by Jesus and Paul in constituting a strong biblical bridge from Law to Gospel to Epistle, not just a few contested passages in the eyes of revisionists. Paul upholds the sexual ecology of Genesis in rejecting homosexual practice as a sexist rejection of difference. 2000 years of Christian tradition upholds this affirmation of sexual difference as a sign of God's covenantal marriage to his people and of the continuity of human sexual difference into the new creation through our resurrected bodies.

This is a hope of healing for all humanity and all sexual relationships. It is not a sectarian view of sex but is affirmed by natural law and biological arguments affirming the predominant public interest in sexually differentiated marriage as procreative. The acceptance of difference in marriage, and children's rights to know their biologically different parents is foundational to a creational/natural plurality and social ecology in a wide range of social relationships and institutions.

Genuine gay concerns for legal safeguards for their relationships are already achieved through civil partnerships, largely answering the equality concern. Understandably, some gay people want the belonging and honouring or respect of marriage, beyond effective legal equality of rights and benefits. But the belonging and stable continuity of marriage is embedded in the bodily differentiation of male and female. Bodily and spiritually male and female belong together as Adam's cry of delight in greeting his fitting companion attests. Gay marriage changes the very definition and sexual ecology of marriage involving sexual difference for the majority, for society, and for its most vulnerable, children. These are arguments that apply to all humans. 'The Kingdom of God is creation healed'.³² For Christ is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, our sustaining source, our destiny, deepest desire and delight. Christ's Cross and resurrection brings complete healing to our natural ecology, our bodily humanity, and our polluted sexual ecology.

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³² Hans Kung, *On Being a Christian*, William Collins, London 1977, 231.