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The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage

By Tim Leslie

Anyone not living in a cave has noticed the intensifying attack on traditional marriage. Vermont, Canada, and Massachusetts—and now California, with the signing of a de facto gay marriage bill—the war drums against traditional matrimony are beating with ever growing intensity.

The onslaught will not be turned back unless the public is given better, more coherent arguments against same-sex spousal unions. While religion plays an obvious role in the debate, the effectiveness of faith-based arguments is limited because most Westerners care little what the Bible or theologians say. To argue from religion will only convince those who are already convinced and will simply alienate the rest.

So how can we assemble a coherent and persuasive case? By steering the discussion back to the historical understanding of marriage's primary end.

In recent generations, we've seen the belief evolve that the overriding purpose of marriage is the spouses' mutual pleasure. This is what enabled Sally Lieber (D-San Jose), my colleague in the California assembly, to say, "I don't see how my marriage is any more moral than the same-sex couples I know." This claim, of course, only makes sense if companionship and sexual pleasure are matrimony's preeminent ends.

But this deviates from what every culture in history has recognized as the heart of marriage: the begetting and education of children. The happiness of the couple is vital, of course, but it's not the only or primary purpose and never has been. Why? Because "happiness" produces no definitive benefit for society, whereas the rearing of children clearly does. As the Vatican recently noted, "Society owes its continued survival to the family, founded on marriage."

Because of this, it makes sense for society to support traditional marriage *above all else*. Conversely, allowing same-sex spousal unions makes no sense. Indeed, we can only allow homosexual spousal unions if the central purpose of marriage is the spouses' happiness. If that's true, then heterosexual-only wedlock is indeed discrimination. But if marriage has a higher purpose, then anything that undermines its traditional framework also threatens to undermine its desired result—the rearing of healthy, productive contributing citizens.

Promoting the General Welfare

If the central purpose of government is to promote the general welfare, then the state must promote always what is best for society's health, security, and long-term viability. This requires the state to make prudential judgments about various segments of our population. Those under 16 may not drive. Those under 21 may not drink. You must possess a high school diploma to join the military. Information about paroled child molesters must

made available so parents can protect their children.

Some label these prudential decisions "discrimination," but discriminating in such matter promotes the general welfare. The unique affirmation of heterosexual marriage operates under the same principle. Traditional matrimony is the foundation of society, and society should neither encourage nor recognize anything pretending to approximate it. Again, the reason for this relates to marriage's primary purpose: The spousal union produces families, and such families are the building blocks of society.

Granted, many marriages don't produce children. Most soldiers don't face combat and yet are still eligible for veterans' benefits. But the state rewards each institution based on its ability to provide society with a valuable function. Governments favor historical marriage and seek to strengthen it in its policies because virtually everything that happens in society, for good or ill, can be traced back to families and family life.

The marriage revolution would not only undermine matrimony—and thus society—but would effectively destroy it.

Gay Assemblyman Mark Leno asked during the floor debate for the California gay marriage bill, "Is marriage so fragile?" The answer is yes. The marriage rate is at an all-time low. Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce.¹ Annually, more than one million children experience divorce, and they will suffer in many ways as a result.² More couples than ever are living together outside of marriage, which several studies show leads to an even higher divorce rate.³

By equating homosexual partnerships with marriage, society's attitudes toward marriage will be cheapened to an even greater degree. As Canadian TV show host Michael Corcoran notes, "If marriage is suddenly fundamentally altered to include people of the same gender, it loses its genuine meaning to the rest of us. We may include the earthworm in the cat family. Does this make worms feline? Of course not. But it destroys the definition of a cat." Instead of being recognized as the crucial, indispensable building block of society through which most of its benefits flow—marriage will simply be another choice among many. "What's the big deal about marriage?" our children and grandchildren will ask. In the Sixties, this was a fringe sentiment. If gay marriage goes through, it will become the norm.

And as that happens, our society will slide with ever greater speed down the slope of social chaos. Why? Because it will only further encourage marital instability and broken homes, and children growing up in these situations are more likely to exhibit a variety of antisocial behaviors.⁴

Children growing up in traditional homes, on the other hand, have these problems to a significantly diminished degree.⁵ They have better emotional health, engage in fewer risk behaviors, are less likely to engage in premarital sex, and do better educationally and economically.⁶ Finally, a recent Utah study found that divorce costs the federal, state, and local governments \$33 billion per year. For all these reasons, the state has a vested interest in promoting stable traditional marriages.

Furthermore, these marriages provide the natural complementarity between the sexes which benefits children. Studies show mothers devote special attention to their children's physical and emotional needs, whereas fathers devote their primary efforts to character traits. David Popenoe of Rutgers University's National Marriage Project writes, "Both dimensions are critical for an efficient, balanced, and human child-rearing regime." Unsaid is the fact that same-sex couples can never provide this complementarity and thus *cannot* provide an optimally "efficient, balanced, and human child-rearing regime."

Still, some would argue, since gays will continue adopting, shouldn't we encourage same-sex marriage? Wouldn't this help give children the stability they need? No, because

studies by even homosexual researchers reveal that same-sex couples are fundamentally different from their straight counterparts. They are more promiscuous, have greater physical and mental health problems and shorter life expectancies, and the average duration of relationships is woefully short.⁷

And these differences don't produce a healthy environment in which to raise children.⁸ A number of indicators prove this; indeed, they prove that it would be detrimental and possibly even dangerous.⁹ For instance, the journal *Adolescence* reported that researchers found a "disproportionate percentage—29 percent—of the adult children of homosexual parents had been specifically subjected to sexual molestation by their homosexual parent, compared to only 0.6 percent of adult children of heterosexual parents having reported sexual relations with their parent.... Having a homosexual parent appears to increase the risk of incest with a parent by a factor of about 50."¹⁰

So, while same-sex marriage might promote a particular welfare—that of the couple—it would not promote the general welfare, which arises from raising healthy, balanced children who have all the interior resources necessary to become contributing citizens.

Infidelity and Promiscuity

Gay "marriage" would further redefine marriage in the way it treats conjugal fidelity.

In their book *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison found that of the 156 couples they studied, 75 percent of the partners learn within five years that for the relationship to survive, cheating had to be tolerated, as long as one or the other did not become emotionally involved with the other sex partner. In the book *The Mendola Report*, lesbian Mary Mendola conducted a nationwide survey of approximately 400 homosexual couples. She, too, found that homosexuals distinguish between sexual and emotional exclusivity. Indeed, just 26 percent of homosexuals believe commitment is paramount in a marriage-type relationship.

This translates to an almost unfathomable degree of sleeping around. A recent Amsterdam study found that men in homosexual relationships cheat with an average of eight partners a year. Others have found that the average homosexual has between 1 and 500 sexual partners over his or her lifetime. One study showed that 28 percent had had 1,000 or more sex partners, with another study placing the percentage between 10 and 16 percent.

While adultery is certainly a factor in traditional marriages, it is comparatively rare. In fact, studies on matrimony place the male fidelity rate between 75 and 80 percent and that of females between 85 and 90 percent. The reason is simple: Unlike homosexual relationships, emotional and sexual fidelity within matrimony are inexorably linked and always have been by definition. To extend the concept of marriage to a situation where fidelity is not the norm would not only cheapen the institution, but it would have disastrous consequences for children. Simply put, a marriage is not a marriage without exclusivity.

Homosexuals argue that marriage would make their relationships more stable. However, given the runaway promiscuity in this subculture, the assertion is at best unlikely. As UC sociologist Anne Peplau notes, "There is clear evidence that gay men are less likely to have sexually exclusive relationships than other people."

Their argument also fails to take into account the institutions that have relaxed prohibitions against homosexuals. The most poignant example of these is the Roman Catholic priesthood. It was argued in the 1960s that allowing gay men into the clerical state would instill in them sexual restraint and celibacy. Just the opposite happened. Most of the men have consciously subverted the historic norms of priestly celibacy. Furthermore, t

sex-abuse scandal was largely driven by homosexual priests in that 90 percent of victims were adolescent boys. One study of 50 gay Catholic priests found that only two abstain from sexual activity. Many were very open about their carnal habits. Therefore, we should seriously question the homosexual community's soothing words regarding consequences of gay marriage.

In response, gay activists point to Vermont and its civil unions and note the sky has fallen there. However, people said the same thing immediately after the changing divorce laws, which set in motion forces that would not be evident for 40 years.¹¹ Says a homosexual researcher who opposes same-sex marriage, "This new experiment would be unprecedented in human history, and yet we haven't taken the time to think carefully about possible consequences. Instead, we've allowed emotion to sweep aside all other considerations."

Redefining Marriage

The final reason same-sex marriage would have a detrimental effect on society comes from homosexuals themselves: Many freely admit they want to redefine marriage, not to include same-sex couples but to change its very scope and meaning.

Patti Ettelbrick, former legal director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund once said, "Being queer is more than setting up house, sleeping with a person of the same gender, and seeking state approval for doing so.... Being queer means pushing the parameters of sex and sexuality, and in the process transforming the very fabric of society."

Michelangelo Signorile, homosexual activist and writer, says the goal of homosexuals is "to fight for same-sex marriage and its benefits and then, once granted, to redefine the institution of marriage completely, to demand the right to marry not as a way of adhering to society's moral codes but rather to debunk a myth and radically alter an archaic institution.... The most subversive action lesbians and gay men can undertake... is to transform the notion of 'family' entirely."

Even when homosexuals are circumspect about their intentions, their goals are clear. Commentator Andrew Sullivan has said the "openness" in many gay relationships would in reality fortify heterosexual marriages by allowing straight couples to see that adultery does not necessarily destroy a marriage. Furthermore, once gay "marriage" is allowed, the faithful nature of traditional unions will be transformed accordingly. He says this is a good thing.

None of us should hate those with same-sex attractions. But while embracing them as people made in the image and likeness of God, we should instead make it clear that the problem is with their agenda because it goes against God's plan and would do great damage to our culture and its future stability. These are complex arguments and do not easily fit into a news producer's need for a sound bite. However, we must make the case for the central importance of marriage for society. If we don't, it will result in an unprecedented societal breakdown every bit as catastrophic as the disintegration of the great cultures of the past.

End Notes

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California Assemblyman Tim Leslie represents Placer, El Dorado, Alpine, and part Sacramento counties.

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