

Gay Marriage

PART I: INTRODUCTION

Do Catholics oppose same-sex marriage because they think sex is dirty? Do they not want others to have fun?

The Catholic Church takes a very high view of marriage and human sexuality. As the account of Genesis shows, marriage and sexuality were created by God and given to mankind as gifts for our benefit. Scripture records God's statement that "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18). As a result, "a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Some may forego the good of marriage to serve a higher calling (cf. Matt. 19:10-12), but it is a good nevertheless.

Marriage is a conduit through which God's grace flows to the couple and their children.¹ The Catholic Church understands marriage between a baptized man and woman to be a sacrament, a visible sign of the grace that God gives them to help them live their lives here and now so as to be able to join him in eternity.² For Catholics, marriage is social as well as religious, but its religious aspects are very important. The Bible repeatedly compares the relationship between man and wife to that between God and Israel (cf. Hos. 9:1) or between Christ and his Church (cf. Eph. 5:21-32). For Catholics, marriage is a holy vocation.

Since the Church sees marriage as holy, it believes it must be treated with reverence. It also recognizes that marriage is basic to the health of society and therefore a public institution that must be defended against harm.

Marriage is a public institution. Consequently, proposals that could harm the institution of marriage must be subjected to the same sort of objective analysis that we give any public policy question. Marriage is not just a private matter of emotion between two people. On the contrary, its success or failure has measurable impact on all of society. Rational analysis yields solid, objective reasons for limiting marriage to one man and one woman—reasons anyone can agree with on purely secular grounds.

Our analysis will show that prohibition of homosexual marriage is not just a "fairness" issue, nor does it require anyone to "force religious dogma" down anyone else's throat. Nor is it a manifestation of hatred, as proponents sometimes suggest.

How do you answer the charge that the Catholic Church or opposition to same-sex marriage is "homophobic"?

The term *homophobic* refers to fear of homosexuality. This term often is used by homosexual activists to end rational discussion of the issue by accusing their opponents of having an irrational fear. This is unjust. One can disagree with and be critical of a behavior without having a fear of it. When the charge of "homophobia" is made, it signifies that those making the accusation do not have reasoned responses to their critics, so they switch to portraying their critics as irrational rather than responding to their arguments.

While the Church does recognize homosexuality as disordered, this does not mean that the Church is uncompassionate to those who suffer from the disorder.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies . . . must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided."³

We have to remember that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated as such, no matter what their behavior. We make a distinction between person and behavior, sometimes expressed as "hate the sin, love the sinner." The *Catechism* describes homosexual acts as "intrinsically disordered": "They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."⁴

So we deplore acts of discrimination or unkindness against homosexual persons, but we insist on speaking the truth about the nature of homosexual acts. This is not a phobia. It is compassion together with frank recognition of the nature of a disordered condition.

The Catholic Church opposes homosexual activity because it is intrinsically disordered, an abuse of our human nature. But legalizing same-sex marriage would also have harmful effects on society, as we will see in the remainder of this special report.

PART II: HETEROSEXUAL MARRIAGE

What kind of impact does heterosexual marriage have on society?

Recently, Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher reviewed the published literature on marriage and presented their findings in a book entitled *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*.⁵ The evidence is clear. Married people are better off than single or divorced people. The better the marriage, the stronger the "marriage effect" on physical and mental health, longevity, and prosperity. Let's look at this in detail.

Thirty years ago, Harold Morowitz of Yale observed that divorce is as hazardous to a man's health as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day.⁶ The same is true for women. Unmarried women are 50 percent more likely to die in any given year than are married women; unmarried men are five times more likely to die in any given year than married men at any age.⁷ Being unmarried shortens a man's life by ten full years.⁸ Marriage is a major public health issue, because its absence shortens people's lives.

Unmarried people are sick more often, stay longer in the hospital than married people with similar problems, and are two and a half times more likely to end up in a nursing home.⁹ Unmarried people are even several times more likely to get the common cold than are married people.¹⁰ That probably happens because unhappiness weakens the immune system.¹¹

Scientists have shown that these health advantages are not merely accidental. Studies consistently show that marriage itself improves people's health.¹² Sick people who married got healthier. Healthy people who married got healthier still. Marriage itself made the difference, and the happier the marriage, the greater the health advantage. The health benefits of marriage have been observed around the world.¹³

If marriage has such benefits, why not let same-sex couples share them?

Heterosexual marriage has these benefits, and it is what the scientific studies have looked at. There is no data showing similar benefits for same-sex couples. We don't know whether same-sex couples would enjoy any of these benefits, and there are reasons to think they would not. This is a subject we will deal with more in Part

IV of this special report. For now we are looking at the benefits and public impact of heterosexual marriage.

What is it about marriage that makes people healthier?

Psychologists have discovered several factors: On the trivial end, single men do stupid things. They drink too much, take drugs, get into fights, drive when drunk, and take unnecessary risks. And when they marry, they do fewer stupid things. Women benefit less from this effect of marriage, because single women do fewer stupid things than single men do.¹⁴

Another minor factor improving the health of married people is having a spouse who monitors their health. This benefits men more than women,¹⁵ since men tend to be more careless of their health than women are, but the biggest reason for the health advantage of marriage—a reason that benefits both men and women—is the emotional satisfaction of a happy and fulfilling marriage. Studies consistently show that as marital happiness increases, so do objective measurements of health and longevity for both husbands and wives. Stress levels, blood pressure, cholesterol, immune function—many objective measures of physical health improve as marriage improves.¹⁶

These advantages work to the benefit of both men and women. There were studies in the 1970s that suggested that marriage benefits men but hurts women, but those studies have long since been repudiated, even though some marriage and family textbooks still quote them. Badly executed studies die hard, it would seem, when they serve an anti-family agenda. But all the modern evidence shows that marriage greatly benefits the health and longevity of both men and women.¹⁷

Are these the only factors by which marriage produces greater health?

No. Psychologists tell us that much of the health and longevity benefit of marriage comes because married people have a greater sense of life purpose. Married people are happier, more optimistic, and more energetic than singles, and they are less likely to become depressed.¹⁸ Proponents of same-sex marriage have sought to debunk these statistics as self-fulfilling prophecies, reflecting that happy people are more likely to get married than unhappy people. But careful studies have found that marriage, in itself, improves mental health just as it improves physical health.¹⁹ It isn't just avoiding "stupid bachelor behavior" or making more trips to the doctor that is at work here. Marriage itself makes people healthier and happier and therefore allows them to live longer.

Married people have sex considerably more often than single people do, and they enjoy it more. Studies consistently show that both married men and married women enjoy sex much more than single people do-especially single women, who, in most studies, don't seem to be having much fun.²⁰ But it isn't just women having better sex: Studies show that men find sex in a committed relationship far more satisfying than casual sex. Despite all the myths and television shows, men value commitment nearly as much as women do. Researchers also have observed that sexual infidelity hampers sexual satisfaction and general happiness in both sexes.²¹ Fidelity makes you happier and improves your marriage, and, as we have seen, people in happier marriages live longer.

Heterosexual couples who cohabitate-who live together without marriage-do not enjoy most of these benefits of marriage.²² Their lack of commitment to one another and their preference for autonomy and separateness deprives them of most of the emotional and sexual benefits of marriage and most of its health and longevity advantages. Marriage matters.

What other benefits does marriage have?

Marriage, unlike cohabitation, also makes people richer.²³ After men marry, they work more productively and make more money than they did when they were single.²⁴ Women also become more productive workers when they marry and earn more money than they did when they were single,²⁵ although they do leave the workforce from time to time to bear and raise children. Marriage overall has a positive financial impact on both sexes.²⁶

Married couples tend to specialize, dividing household tasks according to the talents and interests of each spouse. Specialization makes them more efficient, so they have more time for each other, for parenting, or for other activities.²⁷ Further, since two can live almost as cheaply as one, household overhead decreases with marriage, and savings increase.²⁸

Many people fail at marriage. What does it take to be successful?

Social science, philosophy, and common sense have discerned a number of requirements for successful marriage. People have needs that must be satisfied if they are to be happy. These needs are not just a matter of taste; they are built into our nature. They are universal and change little from one person or culture to the next.

One universal feature of human existence is the need for relationship. The expression of this need may vary from culture to culture and between men and women, but the need seems universal. Man is a social creature. We were created to be in deep and loving unity with other persons. Our need for unity is intense, and it is not easily satisfied. It insists on a profound relationship and will not settle for less. But relationships come in different intensities, different degrees of significance, and different depths of satisfaction. Belonging to a club is nice, but it's not deeply satisfying. Having friends is important, and being part of a community helps our sense of well-being, but none of these types of relationships are intense enough to satisfy the deepest needs of our souls.

We can get there only through profound loving union with one other person- and *only* one other person. The deepest relationship can involve only two people. It cannot be the work of a committee. Not everyone is called to marriage, but everyone has the desire for deep relationship. And the deepest relationship can be between only two persons. If two persons wish to merge their individual "I's" into a shared "we," they must exclude all others. Introduce a third person into their union and you sow competition and jealousy, and you reap disunity. You destroy the union. Only two can tango. Three step on each others' toes.

To obtain maximum satisfaction, one must build an exclusive relationship with one other person that excludes all others. There is no other way to do it. Affection spread among many people may give short-term pleasure, but such relationships necessarily will be superficial and not satisfying in the long run. And as we have seen, superficial relationships are less fulfilling than committed ones. This is why marriage must be *exclusive*, that is, with just one other person. There is nothing arbitrary about this need for exclusivity: Our nature as human persons requires it.

After couples are married, they continue to deepen their union. That takes a while. The mature union achieved by people who have been married for years does not happen overnight. It develops between them as each is free to reveal his or her true self and to find that true self accepted and loved. It requires a lot of confidence to risk self-revelation. There's always the fear that your loved one may stop loving you. That's why so many people put up "a good front" to impress a person of the opposite sex.

One of the first shocks in marriage is to discover that your spouse is not quite the person you had imagined. A wife finds that Prince Charming doesn't really wear shining armor around the house nor ride a white charger; worse yet, he's got some amazing and disgusting habits. A husband finds that Cinderella's foot doesn't quite fit the glass slipper, and, worse yet, she's got a terrible temper. So there are reasons

people hide behind a mask. But to grow closer as a couple they have to be willing to risk self-revelation. That takes a lot of confidence in the relationship.

There is a price to that level of confidence: Each partner has to be sure that the other is totally committed. Commitment has two features: intensity and permanence. A halfhearted commitment will not do. Neither will a temporary one. Unless each spouse is confident that the other is committed unconditionally and for life, neither will trust enough to risk self-revelation. But without that, a couple will never achieve mature marital unity.

To be successful, marriage needs to be exclusive, unconditional, and permanent. Without these qualities, it will not thrive. We have not chosen those three features arbitrarily. People know that love must be exclusive, unconditional, and permanent in order to trust enough. Psychologists never tire of telling us that marriages die for lack of exclusiveness, unconditional mutual acceptance, or commitment to permanence. Couples who fail to develop these features often fail at marriage.

There is also a fourth quality needed for long-term success. It also is dictated by the nature of the human person. That feature is sexual complementarity. For the deepest unity, you need one man and one woman.

What is the evidence that sexual complementarity is necessary?

There is both positive and negative evidence. We will consider the positive evidence here and discuss the negative evidence in Part IV. On the positive front, explanations for the need for sexual complementarity vary, but experience from every world culture shows it to be true. The Russian existentialist philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev tried to explain the need for sexual complementarity by saying that loneliness is part of the human condition and that loneliness occurs because, deep down, we all realize that neither a man by himself nor a woman by herself is biologically completely human. Each lacks the perfections and capabilities of the opposite sex, and in that sense each is incomplete-and lonely-without the other.²⁹

Men and women are different and in many ways complementary. The differences between man and woman are obvious to all but the most ideologically blinded deconstructionists. Men and women have been found by psychologists in every culture to differ in aggression and general activity level, types of cognitive strength, sensory sensitivity, and sexual behavior.

These differences matter both spiritually and physically, for without the complementarity between a man and a woman on all these levels, the deepest

forms of union are not possible. The unity possible to two men or two women will be necessarily lopsided, both spiritually and anatomically, and therefore ultimately unsatisfying. Two men together cannot capture the fullness of human personhood, and neither can two women; for that, you need one man and one woman. However exclusive, unconditional and permanent same-sex relationships may aspire to be, they lack the complementarity that the deepest fulfillment requires. This fact may explain some of the amazing sexual behavior in the homosexual subculture.

Sexual complementarity between man and woman makes possible another feature of marriage: the giving of life. The love between man and woman is designed to call new human life into existence and in so doing make the shared life of the couple more abundantly fulfilling. It does not always produce new life, but that is what it is designed to do. So marriage, to succeed, must be exclusive, permanent, unconditional, and open to new life.

What about childless heterosexual couples? How does an infertile heterosexual marriage differ from a same-sex marriage?

One big difference is that the heterosexual couple enjoys sexual complementarity, and the fullness that brings into their relationship, even if they cannot have children. Though the situation of an infertile couple is very different, there is a disturbing parallel to same-sex marriage in the situation of couples who simply choose not to have children.

Such couples are still able to have sex, the fullest physical expression of love between husband and wife. But they are doing something that profoundly disturbs the nature of the sexual act. Sexuality has two aspects: the procreative (bringing forth children) and the unitive (strengthening the union of the couple). Artificially separating the unitive from the procreative brings discord to a marriage, distorts the relationship between husband and wife, and ends up harming their unity as spouses.

Pope John Paul II explains this with what he calls the "language of the body." He observes that in the sexual act, man and woman implicitly give themselves totally to one another. That is what their bodies are saying, both symbolically and literally. Sexual expression, by its very nature, implies total gift of self to the other. The language of the body says, "I give myself to you completely, without reservation or condition."³⁰ But sometimes that statement is a lie. Sometimes one or both do not give themselves completely to the other but instead use the other selfishly, as a pleasure object. Treating the other as an object is divisive rather than unitive.

There are several ways men and women can reduce one another to the status of object. Sex between couples who are not married and therefore do not bring a total commitment to their union are, in the Holy Father's terminology, telling a lie with their bodies, because their bodies speak a language of total, unconditional, and permanent self-giving when in fact they are doing nothing of the sort.³¹ In that sense, their sexual expression becomes a lie, because it misrepresents their relationship. Regardless of their feelings for each other, their sexual expression promises more than it objectively delivers.

Fornication and adultery are not the only ways couples can lie with their bodies. Married couples who are committed to exclusive, permanent, and unconditional love may also tell a lie with their bodies when they separate the procreative aspect of sex from the unitive through contraception. Here, the failure to give oneself fully is more subtle but nonetheless real. Deliberately frustrating the procreative aspect of a sexual act creates a condition that makes self-giving only partial and reduces the spouse, in some degree, to a pleasure object used for selfish purposes.

This does not mean that sex can be truly self-giving only during fertile parts of a woman's cycle. The Church has never taught that couples must have as many children as possible. Rather, it means that interference with fertility both arises out of spousal selfishness and increases it. The Church approves natural family planning, in which couples abstain during fertile periods when they prayerfully have determined that there is a need to avoid pregnancy. In these cases the spouses are not separating the unitive and procreative aspects of a sexual act; they are simply refraining from performing the act. Similarly, sex after menopause or when suffering from other forms of infertility do not divide the unitive from the procreative. The couple's act is still ordered toward procreation; it is simply that procreation will not occur.³²

Are you saying married people have to have children or it's not a full-fledged marriage?

No. The key to understanding this teaching is to realize that the deliberate separation of the unitive from the procreative aspects of the sexual act makes sexual self-giving conditional, which is contrary to the unconditional requirement of successful marriage. Doing so reduces the spouse to the level of an object, whose body is manipulated artificially for selfish pleasure. Pope Paul VI predicted in *Humanae Vitae*, back in 1968, that contraception would produce marital discord.³³ Experience of the last thirty years shows that he was right: Studies show

that the divorce rates of couples practicing natural family planning is less than 1 percent, far lower than couples using contraception, whose divorce rates run between 13 percent and 50 percent in numerous studies.³⁴

The procreative, life-giving aspect of marital love necessarily implies that sex will be between a man and a woman. Sex between two men or two women is never life-giving, for it is biologically incapable of producing children or enhancing the health and well-being of the participants (see Part IV).

Thus, marital love must be exclusive, unconditional, permanent, and open to life. The absence of any of these qualities constitutes an abuse of human sexuality. It also affects society adversely, as we will now see.

PART III: THREATS TO MARRIAGE

How would allowing homosexual marriage threaten heterosexual marriage?

One of the downsides to redefining marriage to include same-sex couples would be the weakening of the meaning of marriage, which would cause more divorces. Human nature being what it is, if the meaning of marriage is weakened, it will be psychologically easier for even more people to divorce. Look at what happened when "no-fault" divorce was legalized. The divorce rate skyrocketed.³⁵ If the nature of marriage is further undermined in the minds of couples then when things get rocky, more couples will be tempted not to work through their problems and get happy again but rather to divorce and find someone else.

That is a bad idea, because most marriage therapists agree that divorce generally "doesn't work." Divorce doesn't solve the problems that caused the first marriage to break up. Divorced people bring the same problems to their new marriages that broke up their old ones. That's why second and later marriages are statistically far more likely to end in divorce than first marriages are.³⁶ Also, a large majority of couples who contemplate divorce but stay together describe themselves as "happily married" five years later.³⁷ So staying together "works" better than divorce.

Why would same-sex marriage increase the divorce rate?

Feelings of love are only part of what holds a couple together. When things get tough, as they do from time to time in every marriage, external factors help hold the spouses together-external factors such as concern about their kids or about the attitudes of society, including their friends, relatives, co-workers, or church. The exploding divorce rate we have seen since "no-fault" destroyed much of the stigma of divorce shows how important external factors are in keeping couples together.

Wouldn't couples who need these external aids to stay together be better off divorced?

Usually not. As I mentioned, the overwhelming majority of couples who contemplate divorce, yet for some reason stay together, find themselves happily married five years later and glad they didn't divorce. They are grateful for the external factors that helped keep them together when things were tough. Also, the "happy divorce" myth has been debunked completely. While it is true that health

correlates positively with happiness in marriage,³⁸ people in difficult marriages are statistically happier and healthier than divorced people.³⁹ Divorce makes most things worse.

How did no-fault divorce weaken the factors that hold couples together? Is that what increased the divorce rate so much in the '70s and '80s?

That is certainly part of it. No-fault laws coincided with a message from Hollywood that marriage is a mere convenience, an institution that exists only for personal happiness and pleasure, something that could be discarded or traded in for a snappier model. Books and movies taught the same message. But it did not work. Far from it.

As mentioned earlier, Dr. Morowitz at Yale found that divorce had the same impact on longevity as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day—for both men and women. There also are many other health and longevity impacts, such as unmarried people getting sick more often, staying in the hospital longer, and so on. Divorce has a very negative impact on the couple, but its impact is even worse on their children.

What are the effects of divorce on children?

The children of happy marriages are statistically much healthier, physically and mentally, than the children of divorced parents or the children of single parents who were never married. This is not to say that all children of divorced or single parents are doomed to be physically or emotionally impaired. There are many exceptions to statistical generalizations. Rather, the evidence shows that being born into a happy marriage gives the average child great statistical advantages in health, happiness, future longevity, and career success over children born into less fortunate circumstances.⁴⁰

Even being born into an unhappy marriage is generally better than growing up in a broken home. The '70s myth that "a happy divorce is better for children than an unhappy marriage" has been proven false overwhelmingly. Even married parents who fight often have happier and healthier children than divorced parents.⁴¹ That may sound surprising, but social scientists have found that kids don't care much about the quality of Mom and Dad's emotional life; they just want Mom and Dad to be there, and if one of them (usually Dad) goes, his departure never stops hurting, and it never stops generating painful consequences.⁴² "Staying together for the children" makes sense. Children whose parents divorce get less education, are less

successful in their adult careers, and are far more prone to drugs, illicit pregnancy, and getting divorced themselves when they grow up. Children of divorce are even more likely to be injured accidentally than the children of intact marriages, and they die at a younger age.⁴³

Remarriage generally does not improve the lot of the children of divorce. Children in "blended" families are dozens of times more likely to be the victims of physical violence or sexual abuse than children who live with both natural parents,⁴⁴ and they are far less healthy, happy, and successful in the long run.⁴⁵ To make matters even worse, statistics show that 76 percent of second marriages break up within five years, as do 87 percent of third and 93 percent of fourth marriages—all of which expose the involved children to further turbulence and desertion.⁴⁶

Social science is very clear: Marriage brings health, happiness, wealth, and length of days to husband, wife, and children. It is marriage itself that makes the difference, not any pre-existing personal advantages of people who marry. Children benefit from marriage even more than parents do.

Couldn't a same-sex couple adopt, just like a childless heterosexual couple, and commit themselves to each other exclusively, permanently, and unconditionally? In such a case, would it be fair to exclude them from marriage?

Even if it were possible for homosexuals to commit themselves to each other in the ways described, their relationships would still lack the orientation to procreation, the openness to life, that marriage is all about. This of itself means that any unions between homosexuals are not marriages, regardless of what people may wish to call them.

Further, if you wish to extend marriage to same-sex couples, you must look at the scientific evidence regarding the ability of male or female homosexuals to sustain such healthy relationships. This is unquestionably a sensitive subject, but it is important to the legalization debate. If homosexual "marriage" were to be legalized, and homosexuals were later found to be unable to create exclusive, permanent, unconditional marriages, their failure would reinforce the idea that marriage lacks these qualities and is just a matter of private happiness to be discarded on whim. That would be a great step backward for society, for it would increase divorce and all its associated pathology and create yet another impediment to the happiness and fulfillment of millions of people.

PART IV: HOMOSEXUAL "MARRIAGE"

Why isn't it enough for marriage if two people have feelings for each other?

Marriage is about more than just the feelings of two people. Feelings are important, but they aren't the whole of it. We all know that feelings change and that any marriage has its ups and downs. A good marriage has more ups than downs, a bad one more downs than ups, but emotions change from one day to the next. Sometimes they're very loving, and sometimes they're very negative.

Marriage does involve very personal feelings, but this does not mean that it is merely a private matter. Whether it succeeds or fails, a marriage has a huge impact on the couple, their children, those around them, and the entire society. As an institution, marriage is the business of everyone in society. It takes more than emotion to hold a marriage together, as we have seen.

What does the scientific evidence show about homosexuality?

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of diagnostic disorders. In retrospect, this decision appears to have been inspired by political pressure rather than medical evidence.

Homosexuals of both sexes remain fourteen times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexuals⁴⁷ and 3½ times more likely to commit suicide successfully.⁴⁸ Thirty years ago, this propensity toward suicide was attributed to social rejection, but the numbers have remained largely stable since then despite far greater public acceptance than existed in 1973. Study after study shows that male and female homosexuals have much higher rates of interpersonal maladjustment, depression, conduct disorder, childhood abuse (both sexual and violent), domestic violence, alcohol or drug abuse, anxiety, and dependency on psychiatric care than heterosexuals.⁴⁹ Life expectancy of homosexual men was only forty-eight years before the AIDS virus came on the scene, and it is now down to thirty-eight.⁵⁰ Only 2 percent of homosexual men live past age sixty-five.⁵¹

Male homosexuals are prone to cancer (especially anal cancer, which is almost unheard-of in male heterosexuals) and various sexually transmitted diseases, including urethritis, laryngitis, prostatitis, hepatitis A and B, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia, herpes, and genital warts (which are caused by the human papilloma

virus, which also causes genital cancers).⁵² Lesbians are at lower risk for STDs but at high risk for breast cancer.⁵³ Homosexuals of both sexes have high rates of drug abuse, including cocaine, marijuana, LSD and other psychedelics, barbiturates, and amyl nitrate.⁵⁴

Male homosexuals are particularly prone to develop sexually transmitted diseases, in part because of the high degree of promiscuity displayed by male homosexuals. One study in San Francisco showed that 43 percent of male homosexuals had had more than 500 sexual partners.⁵⁵ Seventy-nine percent of their sexual partners were strangers. Only 3 percent had had fewer than ten sexual partners.⁵⁶ The nature of sodomy contributes to the problem among male homosexuals. The rectum is not designed for sex. It is very fragile. Indeed, its fragility and tendency to tear and bleed is one factor making anal sex such an efficient means of transmitting the AIDS and hepatitis viruses.

Lesbians, in contrast, are less promiscuous than male homosexuals but more promiscuous than heterosexual women: One large study found that 42 percent of lesbians had more than ten sexual partners.⁵⁷ A substantial percentage of them were strangers. Lesbians share male homosexuals' propensity for drug abuse, psychiatric disorder, and suicide.⁵⁸

The statistics speak for themselves: If homosexuals of either gender are finding satisfaction, why the search for sex with a disproportionately high number of strangers? In view of the evidence, homosexuals will not succeed at establishing exclusive relationships. Promiscuity is a hard habit for anyone to break, straight or homosexual. Promiscuous heterosexuals often fail to learn fidelity; male homosexuals are far more promiscuous than heterosexual males, and therefore far more likely to fail. Lesbians are more promiscuous than heterosexual women. There is little good data on the stability of lesbian relationships, but it is reasonable to speculate that their higher rates of promiscuity and various deep-seated psychological problems would predispose them to long-term relational instability. Existing evidence supports this speculation.⁵⁹

The more radical homosexual activists flaunt their promiscuity, using it as a weapon against what they call "bourgeois respectability."⁶⁰ But even more conservative advocates of gay marriage such as *New Republic* editor Andrew Sullivan admit that for them, "fidelity" does not mean complete monogamy, but just somewhat restrained promiscuity.⁶¹ In other words, they admit that exclusiveness will not happen. And without exclusiveness, their "marriages" will have little meaning.

Sullivan argues that marriage civilizes men, but anthropology would counter that marriage *to women* civilizes men. Male humans, homosexual or heterosexual, are more interested in random sex with strangers than women are.⁶² Men need to be civilized, to be taught the joys of committed sex, and that lesson is taught by marriage to women, not by other men who need to learn it themselves. The apparent instability of lesbian relationships suggests that lesbians understand that lesson less well than heterosexual women do. Exclusivity will not happen, and without exclusivity, marriage does not exist.

Without exclusivity, permanent and unconditional relationships will not happen, either. By definition, a relationship that allows for "cruising" will be shallow and mutually exploitative, just as sex with strangers is shallow and mutually exploitative. So far, same-sex marriage is 0 for 3: likely to be neither exclusive nor unconditional nor permanent.

Can homosexual unions be life-giving?

Homosexual sex is not procreative and thus not life-giving in the most literal and important sense of the term. Further, the health statistics are clear. Any sexual behaviors that cut longevity almost in half before the AIDS virus came on the scene are death-dealing, not life-giving. The longevity and disease numbers speak for themselves. So do the psychiatric and drug abuse numbers. Likewise, promiscuity statistics suggest that homosexual activity is not providing much fulfillment to its practitioners. If it were, they would not feel the need for sex with armies of strangers. The statistics make it very clear that homosexual behavior is not enhancing anyone's inner well-being; in that sense, too, it is anything but life-giving.

What about situations in which homosexuals adopt children or use artificial insemination?

There is almost no good data to answer this question. We know that children raised in families containing one non-biological parent are dozens of times more likely to be abused than children raised by both biological parents.⁶³ In some studies, children raised by homosexual partners seem to suffer from sex-role confusion.⁶⁴ Studies by Cameron and Cameron have shown a high incidence of incest between minor children and homosexual parents of both sexes.⁶⁵ These investigators suggest that homosexual parents may be more likely to abuse their children sexually than heterosexual parents, so although the point is not definitively proven, the available evidence is worrisome.

Children raised by both biological parents are significantly healthier, happier and better adjusted emotionally than kids raised by single parents of either sex. They are less likely to live in poverty or engage in violent crime or sexual promiscuity and more likely to be successful in school, career, and marriage.⁶⁶ Same-sex couples, by definition, would have at least one non-biological parent.

There seem to be good reasons that children need both biological parents. The sexes are different. Because gender is a real phenomenon, it should come as no surprise that men and women parent differently. Men and women bring different, complementary skills to childrearing. Men are more likely to play expansively with their children than to do mundane care taking; women tend to be more practical. Mothers tend to be more responsive to their child's immediate needs, while fathers tend to be more firm, more oriented to abstract standards of justice (right and wrong).⁶⁷ Kids need both.

Mothers tend to emphasize the emotional security of their children, while fathers tend to stress competition and risk taking. Mothers tend to seek the immediate well-being of the child, while fathers tend to foster long-term autonomy and independence.⁶⁸ Children need both parents, because they learn different lessons from each. Neither fathers nor mothers are expendable. The presence of a father is critical to a male child's learning self-control and appropriate male behavior, especially learning to respect women. Similarly, the presence of a father is vital for a female child's self-respect and eventual development of a healthy adult sexuality.⁶⁹ Children need mothers just as much. The presence of both parents seems to be necessary for ideally balanced emotional and mental development.

Put in technical psychological jargon, the social science evidence suggests that women teach children communion (in English, that means the drive toward inclusion, connectedness, and relationship) and that men teach children agency (the drive toward independence, individuality, and self-fulfillment). Further, children of both sexes appear to learn self-control and responsibility primarily from their father.⁷⁰ They fail to learn them when he's not involved in their lives. Our national epidemic of fatherlessness has spawned an epidemic of antisocial children.

Marriage, for all these reasons, is a major public health issue and not just a private affair. Marriages that are exclusive, permanent, unconditional, and life-giving contribute much to public health and longevity; marriages that fail any of these criteria and end in divorce create an enormous social, emotional, and health care burden for the couple, their children, and society.

What do homosexual activists hope to gain from legalizing same-sex marriage?

Motives probably vary, depending on the activist. Many are seeking public approval of homosexuality. They want societal acceptance. Others may be seeking absolution for a guilty conscience. Some probably want society to say that what they are doing is morally right. But you don't have to be a theologian, nor even religious, to understand that any form of behavior that cuts a person's longevity in half and comes with a lengthy list of venereal diseases is simply not right. You don't have to be the pope to see that. A thoughtful atheist can discover easily a completely secular natural morality that says: This behavior kills people. People should live. But homosexual behavior kills homosexuals. That's not right. Homosexuals need to live just like everyone else.

The statistics make it very clear that homosexuals are not at peace with themselves. No one who is at peace seeks sex with hundreds of strangers. That is bizarre behavior. Something is dreadfully wrong with the psychology of people who seek random sex—a fact we see confirmed by their suicide, drug, and antisocial behavior statistics.

Legalization of same-sex marriage will not bring absolution nor deliver inner peace. Homosexuals will continue to suffer from the problems their "lifestyle" creates, even if every state legislature and both houses of Congress were to pass bills extolling homosexual behavior and privileging their relationships over those of heterosexuals. Active homosexuals will continue seeking something that they will never find through the things they do with strangers. They will still be tragically unhappy people. Such behavior will never offer the basis for marriage nor satisfy their relationship needs as persons. Homosexuals need compassion, but since they will not benefit by homosexual "marriage," there is no reason for society to redefine marriage to include same-sex couples. In fact, recognition of this intrinsically disordered behavior can have only bad effects on society.

If same-sex couples won't reap the health and emotional benefits of marriage, why do they keep asking for legalization?

The reason probably is not economic, though many same-sex marriage advocates appeal to the economic benefits of marriage. A clever lawyer can create partnerships to confer most of the economic advantages of marriage. Durable powers of attorney, surrogate decisions, wills, and inheritance—any of these can be

tailored to cover homosexual relationships without the need for marriage. There must be other reasons.

Stanley Kurtz of the Hudson Institute offers a possible explanation. In the September 2000 edition of *Commentary*, he quotes radical homosexuals who state that their goal is not personally to be married, nor to achieve domestic equality with heterosexuals, nor even to attain social respectability, but rather to empty the institution of marriage of its meaning.⁷¹ Kurtz quotes their writings, which make clear they want to "destroy bourgeois marriage." After all, if two men or two women can marry, then why not more than two? If marriage is just an expression of temporary, private emotional states, and not a social institution with real meaning connected to biological realities, why stop with same-sex couples? There are already more than two hundred sites on the Internet advocating "polyamorism"-sexual relations between whole groups of men, or groups of men and women, or groups of women.⁷² And if groups can marry, then why not humans and animals? Why not a nerd and his computer? Brother and sister? Mother and son? A boy and his dog?

Once you go beyond the demonstrable needs of human relationship, and beyond the limits that protect the welfare of spouses, children, and society, then there is literally no limit to the possible combinations. Nor the possible damage to the common good.

Where do all these considerations leave the courts?

There seems to be a race between the courts and legislatures to define marriage. Court decisions in favor of same-sex marriage have led to campaigns to nullify those decisions by passing constitutional amendments to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Three states-Alaska, Hawaii, and Nebraska-already have amended their state constitutions to define marriage as requiring one man and one woman. Numerous other challenges to the status quo have arisen in Canada and Europe, all of which are in varying stages of litigation.

The American constitutional tradition has been described as "ordered freedom." We have many rights, but the expression of any right is limited when it threatens harm to others. Free speech, for example, is almost unlimited, but no one is free to libel or slander someone else, nor to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theater. There has never been an unlimited right to marry in this country. States have provided minimum age requirements and have insisted that both persons be unmarried, that one be male and one female, that they not be too closely related, and that adequate public notice and records be kept.

Marriage is not an unlimited right. It exists in a social context. Its success or failure has public health and financial impacts. Legalization of same-sex marriage would detach marriage from reality. It would deprive marriage not just of "bourgeois respectability," but of any objective meaning whatsoever. It would open the door to group marriage, polygamy, bestiality, and whatever other permutations the imagination can invent.

Why should we care? Because the survival and prosperity of our society rests on the institution of marriage. As we have seen, healthy citizens are far more likely to be produced by intact marriages than by broken ones. Same-sex marriage would empty marriage of its meaning, make heterosexual marriages even more disposable, and undermine the health of our nation.

What stand should informed people take on same-sex marriage?

Our society is at a turning point. Are we going to undo the mistakes of the past thirty years that have given us an epidemic of divorce, fatherlessness, drugs, and violent and promiscuous children? Or are we going to continue the legitimization of same-sex unions by giving them the same status as heterosexual marriages?

The choice is an easy one. Marriage should be exclusive, unconditional, permanent, and life-giving. Marriages like that lead to health, happiness, prosperity, long life, and social peace. And the evidence is there to prove it. Homosexuals will not be able to create marriages like that, even if their "marriages" become legal. Statistics reveal that the lives of homosexuals are anything but gay. A more accurate description would paraphrase Thomas Hobbes's vision of life apart from civilization: nasty, lonely, and short.

The loneliness and short lives are not due to the fact that same-sex marriage is illegal. They are inherent in the nature of the homosexual lifestyle itself. Homosexuality doesn't satisfy; sexually satisfied people don't seek random sex with hundreds of strangers. Gay activists who seek absolution from society will not find it, even if same-sex marriage becomes legal. Courts and legislatures cannot create clean consciences.

But legalization of homosexual marriage would empty marriage of its meaning. And that will tend to weaken marriage even further, which will further increase the divorce rate and maximize divorce-related misery.

The institution of marriage is precious. It enhances the health, longevity, and well-being of married couples. It increases the health, vocational success, and emotional

well-being of children. In providing all these benefits, heterosexual marriage contributes to the happiness and prosperity of society. Marriage must, therefore, remain limited to one man and one woman who strive to keep their marriage exclusive, unconditional, permanent, and life-giving. Nothing less will ever meet the needs of the human person, because nothing less satisfies.

Because it is intrinsically disordered, we must not recognize homosexual activity as legitimate, and we must not give public approval to homosexual marriage because of the harm that will do to the institution of marriage and because of the social harm that will result from emptying marriage of its meaning. Perhaps the most serious social harm would be to children: the children of divorce and the children of same-sex couples, who will suffer all the ills we have discussed.

Society has a lot to lose from legalizing homosexual marriage. And homosexuals have nothing to gain.

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