



## **Preface**

“I will always love you.”

Many of us don't remember the first time we felt such a sentiment; some of us may have never felt it at all. If we first encountered it in our youth, as most do, we were probably advised not to consider it very closely. The first word the sixteen-year-old in love hears is that the emotions will not last, that love is a choice, that the heart is untrustworthy, that he really should give the whole business some time. It is the responsibility of adults to help the young direct their erotic impulses, but it is easier and safer to destroy them altogether. Love is intoxicating. And it should be, for it moves us to willingly take on obligations and commitments that help make us adults. Only the one thing the young lovers want in the midst of their rapture—for it to go on, *always*—is the one thing our society tells him will never happen.

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The torrents of passion the sexual revolution released are now receding, leaving behind the ruins and rubble of broken lives and homes. We once thought we might have all the feelings of love without any of the boundaries; but by trying to set *eros* free, we instead shattered it. Once *eros* became a god, he laughingly absconded. It is in his nature to do so. *Eros* awakens us to mystery, and now that we have broken all the taboos, there is nothing left to enchant.

Except perhaps glittery vampires. The Greeks worshipped the deathless gods; Stephenie Meyer made teenagers love the benevolent undead. The intense longing and passions of *eros* depends upon the presence of an *always* and of *boundaries*, a combination that *Twilight* amplified and exploited.

Because there is nothing sacred left to profane, at least in matters of sex, amplifying love's rules and costs is the only way to keep meaning alive. Unfettered sex might sound "fun," but sexual pyrotechnics without sharp boundaries eventually lose their luster. **We don't have romantic comedies any more because there is no romance to lampoon.** It is the absence of erotic desire that is now our grave social crisis, not its presence.

In our response to the great crisis of marriage, social conservatives have frequently objected to how emotional construals of love and romance have overwhelmed the institutional, covenantal, or procreative aspects of marriage. We have **chastened against grounding the commitment of marriage in our feelings**, have objected to 'merely emotional' unions, and have argued our society is besotted by '**companionate models of marriage.**'

Such critiques are aimed at showing how our changing intuitions around love and romance have stripped the power from the traditional view of marriage. They are meant to counterbalance and reframe the emotions of love, not to undermine them.

But it is with *eros* that I want to begin, with all the sentiments and the yearnings and the hopes and dreams that make it easy to roll our eyes at googly-eyed teenagers.

For it is in marriage—and marriage alone—that *eros* finds its consummation and discovers resources for its ongoing renewal. *Eros* can destabilize us and make us go

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topsy, but it also helps us see why marriage matters. There is only an adventure if we accept its dangers. And marriage is a good great enough to justify its demands.

## 1. The Permanent Union of Two Particulars

“I will *always* love you.” Let us begin again with what I hope we can all agree upon: Whitney Houston could sing. I don’t even care that she’s singing with synthesizers about Kevin Costner: with that voice, I would buy whatever she was selling.

We only dimly understand what we mean while making such rash vows, but it’s easy to see that the feeling that leads us to them leaves us a bit lightheaded. When Harry meets Sally, *will they or won’t they* ends with him realizing (at last!) that he has met the person he wants to spend the rest of his life with and wants to get on with it. It had to be her. For Hitch, being in love makes him feel like he can fly—straight into the dance line at his wedding. Julia Roberts is just a girl asking a boy to love her, and when he does she’ll linger in England “indefinitely.”

The joy of being in love is only complete when it is reciprocated: the heartsick, unrequited lover might feel a stabbing pain at the sight of the one to whom all his longing is directed. But when his “yes” is answered in kind, the boundless joy is too potent for a single moment to contain. It bleeds into the future, wraps itself in time, and engenders a willing and grateful self-imposition of obligations and burdens. A man knows no higher freedom than when he shuts every door to his romantic future besides this one. The joy of saying we belong to another is the glory of the lover. We make promises in such moments because we can’t help ourselves.

Besides, freedom is the least concern of someone in love. When *eros* grips us, we happily give our selves up. We relinquish our wills to the other, cheerfully establishing them as an authority over us. The joy of love consists in submitting to the goodness and beauty of the other. “As you wish”—what man does not want to meet a woman who moves him to say so? Love makes us beggars and servants; we plead and give, for when in love our lives are not our own. Erotic attraction depends upon the mutual humbling of ourselves before the other. *Eros* can only ask, and delights in asking: it cannot demand and long remain, for lovers will only have their beloved if the gift is given in freedom.

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But I wish to consider the *always* more carefully. Love takes the form of a lock, as countless couples still understand better than the cynical New York Times writers. Love does not “alter when it alteration finds,” but is an “ever-fixed mark, that looks on tempests and is never shaken.”



The moment of reciprocation fills us with the hope that such a love will endure forever—and with the fear that *eros* cannot endure the union. Whitney Houston’s song, after all, keeps *eros* alive only through the lover’s *absence*, rather than his *presence*. But there is an inevitable absence that any erotic sentiment must eventually come to terms with. *Eros* is shaped by the shadow of death. Joy, stretching us into the future, discovers our mortality and fosters the perhaps irrational hope that we might become stronger than it. Love “alters not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of doom”—and, if such a thing were possible, even beyond such an edge. *Twilight* used vampires because those in love hope to become like gods.

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That erotic attraction reminds us of our finitude and mortality, of our impermanence and instability, should not surprise us: the movement between lovers attends to their bodies, to the locus of human fragility and vulnerability. Unless we deliberately resist, the delighted gaze moves naturally into a caress, as lovers extend their mutual welcome into an embrace. While the elevated atmosphere of *eros* prompts us to speak of a ‘mingling’ or ‘union’ of souls, such hyperbolic rhetoric only dimly describes a richer, more colorful bodily life than we know now.

Indeed, disciplining the attentiveness toward each other’s bodies is essential for safeguarding lovers from devouring each other and allowing *eros* to endure. The consummation that *eros* seeks is not a fusion: the absorption of both parties into a single, undifferentiated unit would make *eros* both suicidal and nihilistic. If the joy that another loves us can endure, the other person must as well. Learning to deny ourselves safeguards the otherness of the person before us and keeps intact the essential and inherent division that love depends upon. But such discipline takes its nature and shape precisely because a bodily consummation wherein both people remain separate, whole, unique individuals is both possible and desirable. Only a stunted love would be satisfied with an image or picture of the beloved.

The interested aliveness to the other’s bodily presence confronts us with our own needy vulnerability. The encounter with one who is lovely makes us feel the lack when they are absent. **Tom Cruise destroyed the sentiment**, it should be said, by banally approaching it head-on. Yes, Christian youth leaders everywhere reminded us that that only Jesus can complete us. But we should not ignore the half-truth present in Tom Cruise’s pleadings: when the whole person is awake to the beloved, life seems imperfect and unfulfilled without them.

That absence, however, cannot be filled by just anyone. To those suffering from a broken heart, no suggestion is more offensive than that they might find “someone else,” or “the right one.” And understandably so. In an important sense, there *can* be no one else. The lover does not seek an abstraction nor a person conceived as a member of a general class (‘woman’ or ‘man’). They seek a particular, a specific individual, whose life and history are irreplaceable and unrepeatable. The joys of falling in love again might make us dull to the loss of another—but they can never quite repeat or replace it.

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Let's walk through why that is a bit more closely. *Instruments* and *tools* are marked in part by what we might call their 'fungibility' or 'interchangeability.' They can be replaced by similar objects with no significant loss. When building a fence, two equal hammers are as good as each other. There's no point to choosing one over the other. *Persons*, however, are not interchangeable in this way. We cannot swap one friend for another without some kind of loss. Persons are particulars: they have irreducibly unique histories and perspectives and in relationships where those histories and perspectives are the pre-eminent purpose—like love and friendship—they cannot be interchanged without being dehumanized.

The erotic impulse turns upon this irreducible particularity of persons: a man in love does not have any interest in transferring his affections to another person. He may not even be able to imagine such a possibility.

The departure of *eros* from our world is perhaps most clear from our rampant willingness to replace the objects of our love at our whim. Consider our use of pornography, which preys on *eros* in order to destroy it. The men and women presented within pornography are instruments for the sake of a viewer's pleasure and become, as a result, almost entirely interchangeable for others who fall into similar "types." Those on screen are not encountered as subjects with their own unique histories: they are objects, whose performances are not communications of love or interest to us as viewers, but rather theatrical displays meant to titillate an unknown audience. There is no *eros* in watching pornography, as the viewer and the actors do not interact with each other as persons.

The "I" and the "You" are the substance of *eros*: change either one and the aspiration itself changes. The idea that one party might be replaced (now or ever) appears to the person in love as a genuine *sacrilege*, a corrosion that undermines the very nature of the union. For *eros* aims at a permanent union of just those people and no others.

*"I will always love you."*

## 2. The Vow

“Then the man said,

*‘This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man.’*

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

We hear in Adam’s poetry a note of relief at having discovered a companion. It is easy to forget the terror that isolation can evoke, and the joy that can come from no longer being alone. Chesterton was at his most astute when he acknowledged that however right the mathematicians were about twice two being four, they botched one plus one. The proper answer is nearer 1000, for having another by our side offers us exponential comforts.

Adam’s poetry also contains a vow—a promise. The idea that Eve is “bone of [Adam’s] bones” is often read as having an ‘ontological’ dimension. That is, Adam recognizes Eve is made out of the same stuff he is, fully human, and as such an equal player on the scene.

But that does not preclude other meanings: “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” also means something like “strength of my strength, and weakness of my weakness.” Or as a more modern rendition might put it, “In sickness and in health, ’till death do us part.”<sup>[1]</sup> The elevated form of poetry is part of the point: vows are a human act wherein we bind ourselves to one another. We place our character in peril by doing so, opening up the possibility of fragmentation and dissolution if we break our word. They are a matter of great seriousness, if anything is.

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A marriage vow is a closure—the kind of closure that is easily looked at as foolish because of its demands. Those who make vows open themselves to the possibility of pain and suffering, betrayal and loss. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, we are familiar with the hurt of broken hearts. Tragedy is not inevitable, but its all-too-real possibility heightens our awareness of the unknown, potentially unstable path ahead of us. No aspect of human existence is as impenetrable as the future, and a vow pledges our selves to another “**come what may.**” The vow is not a leap into a void: we make the promise with the knowledge of our own character and with glimpses of our spouse’s. But the marital commitment brings us face-to-face with the fragility of our lives, with the threat of betrayal and our vulnerability. The vow reminds us that our futures are in the hands of providence.

Vows give form to the unknown and begin a new moral reality; they stretch our character out into the future, establishing new boundaries and opportunities for our character and our lives. When we make vows, we make ourselves. Vows give us new glories to attain and new levels of baseness to fall into. And so as we lose confidence in

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the promises that constitute the marriage, we lose confidence in ourselves—and vice versa.

It might seem that marriage, with its ceremonies and its rules, is an unnecessary restriction on *eros*. We would be better, the notion goes, with a future unfettered by the outdated notion of binding ourselves to one another *for life*. Yet some limits expand us. Even the joy of mundane activities like chess or piano depends upon their rules.

Marriage demands the strength of will to keep our word. But in offering our word, we can also discover unknown strengths to keep it. We undertake obligations, even of the most extreme variety, because fulfilling them demands every ounce of our creative and spiritual energy, energy we may not have tapped into otherwise. The man who wishes to join the ranks of Monet or Mozart will in many cases find himself adopting a monkish approach to life. His asceticism will be real, as he abstains from goods like sleep or sociality that he otherwise might enjoy for the sake of attaining the glories he seeks. But such costs are often the price of greatness; the goods truly worth having are those that we can live and die for.

The simplicity of the marriage vow is one of its greatest strengths. It is a vow made for all seasons of life, and enables those who make them to grow in wisdom as they face situations they could not have possibly anticipated at the outset. Making the vow dependent upon each party fulfilling specific behaviors—as **polyamorous** or prenuptial agreements do—undermines its intrinsic power and requires lovers to become prophets. “To have and to hold, from this day forward” is general enough that no two happy marriages will ever look exactly alike and broad enough to provide the couple creative resources to meet any situation imaginable.

Such vows make formal and public what every true lover knows in the heat of passion: that if we could harness and direct the impulse to remain together, forever, we might discover even deeper joys than those we can imagine in the moment. That this kind of union is *very good*, and that however good it might seem now, such goods will be even greater if we can endure to the end. **Such vows, as Chesterton understood, take lovers at their word.** But in doing so, they ennoble us and raise us to the heights of human

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expression, drawing us nearer the gods than the beasts. It is not surprising that our greatest art is either religious or erotic in nature.

But while we make our vows, and our vows make us, we do not create their form *ex nihilo*. If a man and a woman consent to a marriage, they form a new bond. But they do not create a new kind of thing. Marriage exists as an institution, yes, and is passed on as a tradition within a society. The vow makes public the lovers' union and locates them in a pre-existing network of communal ties, which exist in part to create pressures that ensure they keep their word. But the institutional dimensions of marriage are not the deepest form. Marriage presents an opportunity that a man and a woman who marry discover, but do not create. We may be *godlike*, but we are not gods, and the moral goods marriage makes available to us existed long before any particular couple and will endure long after. A man and a woman are like that curious explorer at the beginning of *Chesterton's Orthodoxy who comes upon a land* he thinks to be New England and then discovers it was Old England all along. In making their vows, they enter for the first time upon a new moral terrain—and then proceeds to discover that it is already well known by others, because they did not make it themselves.

Yet it is the self-imposed limits of the marriage vow that the drama and excitement of *eros* hinges upon. If a man could make the world in accordance with his own will or desire—as pornography mimics—he might experience an initial thrill of delight, but the sensation lacks the power to endure. Viewing the world as an extension of our wills leaves no room for the *surprise* that comes from discovering unexpected goods in the obligations we take upon ourselves, and the *spontaneity* that comes from the presence of another's will. Overspecifying the conditions of our commitments to each other diminishes the risk of our own pain; but by arrogating to ourselves the power to determine what kind of union we shall have, we infantilize ourselves. The glory of humanity is found in creatively living within and responding to an existing world of goods, one of which is the opportunity “to love and to cherish, ‘til death us do part.”

It is a curious fact about *eros* that it pursues privacy between the lovers even while longing for public recognition. The man who wishes to keep his lover only beneath the secrecy of night may justly have his affections questioned. The lovers' mutual “mine” establishes a boundary that others may not be admitted to. But boundaries are only real

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if they are known to the world. Walls demarcate gardens, but they only do this meaningfully if there is an ‘outside’ to set them apart from. The public and private are co-dependent: the shape of the latter is determined by the former and vice versa.

So the vow is the official public-making act of an erotic desire that wishes to privately delight in the union. The intense power of *eros* is too good for other eyes. The face-to-face intimacy of *eros* makes it beholden to the ‘**observer effect**’: the presence of a camera or third party invariably changes its nature by giving it an aura of performance. The communication of welcome, of delight, allows the other to absorb one’s attention and draw us out of ourselves. And so *eros* seeks privacy, for the intensity of the communion negates and denies the rest of the world. The face-to-face union of the couple appears in public through the vow of marriage, its native home and safeguard. If *eros* is sacred, it should be hidden. For to profane it—to shine a light upon it—destroys it altogether.

In the words of Genesis, both the vow and the union make the two “one flesh.” The two individuals become a visible unit, a *social* organism, with its own internally directed ends. They are a community—and while they are privately *two*, they are in public, *one*.

The traditional manner of making marriage vows known—though not the only possible one—is the wedding. To make such a promise is a civilized act, which is to say it founds a civilization, which is to say it is a human act. However much else we might learn from them, the birds and the bees do not gussy themselves up and go down to the chapel.

As acts of civilization, though, weddings are rational. They are made up of symbols and meaning and words and reasons and art and all the other kinds of things that go into the human world. But they are also rational moments of excess and abundance. As they begin one of the most transcendent opportunities for a human life, weddings evoke the finest and the best we can muster. It is a glorious thing to commit oneself to another for a whole life. Our current **unhinged aesthetic arms-race started over engagements and weddings** because we forgot the meaning of the symbols. But the impetus behind putting on our Sunday best for the union is the right one.

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Despite this heavenly vision of the vow, many of us are more familiar with marriages that come nearer the atmosphere of hell. My account is idealistic, because I am defending ideals. Few who are in love hope for anything less, because people in love are filled with a *rational* confidence that their story will end happily. Why would they not be? Such confidence is the wellspring of human greatness, and in many cases the beginnings of social renewal. Diminishing the ennobling possibilities of marriage for young people because their hopes are “unrealistic” or “unlikely” might keep them from broken hearts, but it will certainly keep them from even greater joys. If we expect little from our young people, that is what they will be. Some goods are only won through risking great unhappiness.

And some goods are so grand and beautiful that the risk is *worth it*. I have long thought the rationality of the marriage vow depended upon the unshakable conviction that the final five years of marriage will be better than the first five, despite the appearances around us to the contrary. Adopting such an outlook may be an article of faith—but it is

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a better, truer, more beautiful article of faith than the bland cynicism of our day. We bind ourselves to one another because we hope we both might become *better* and the whole union become greater than either of us could be alone. “Eyes have not seen, ears have not heard”—those goods that *can* be known within a marriage. All the great and deep emotions that motivate our deepest and most profound arts are in this union contained. We know the sorrows that an unhappy marriage leads to, and yet we refuse to be deterred completely.[2] We are either a colossally stupid people, or our hearts know more about the world than we might care to admit.

We do not know in setting out what marriage will demand of us. But this is part of its beauty and its point: in wedding ourselves to providence, we must be open to carrying a cross. A man who vows to live *with* a woman may not yet be ready to die *for* her. And he may not need to be—yet. He may not know that the vow will demand his life; all he needs is his ineradicable commitment to his own word, an unwillingness to break his bond. The growing good and glory of the marriage depend upon the willingness to forgive grave moral wrongs, or more likely, a thousand petty ones. Whether *eros* is stronger than death will be discovered only through testing. As lovers take up their crosses and forgive, they may find a path toward joys that their initial moment of delight in the mutual “yes” could only dimly anticipate.

### **3. What Love Demands Of Us**

Suppose two people are madly in love and wish to remain that way. Suppose they are not prudes with aversions to sexual pleasure, but that they are gripped by a vague, inarticulate intuition that the joys of mutual love they discover in their early days might lead on to even deeper, greater goods. What kind of practices would they undertake to discover them? What kind of mental disciplines might they strive for, and what kind of emotions or attitudes would they seek to cultivate?

Suppose they are a typical modern couple and have not only witnessed divorces first-hand, but are well-acquainted with lifeless marriages for whom the possibility of *eros* sounds more like a cruel mirage than a word of hope. They might eagerly wish to avoid such a fate; but it would not be fear that would animate them so much as an

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earnest hope that their love might become a thing of beauty, perhaps even a thing of legends, like [Beren and Luthien](#) or [Coach and Mrs. T](#).

Such a couple might develop an incredible and exacting rigor in their relationship. To the outsider, they might seem obsessively, rigidly puritanical; they might adopt norms that seem hopelessly unattainable and downright masochistic. Their fastidiousness might seem as strange as the asceticism of the [Desert Fathers](#) or as irrational as the mysticism of the medievals. But their self-imposed burdens and practices would sound to the married couple like the very substance of love.

Let us give such a set of practices a name: *fides*, or in our own language, “faithfulness.”<sup>[3]</sup> While such practices might involve any number of negations or denials—“I will not...”—at its heart beats an unrelenting and uncompromising commitment to love and cherish the other. Those who cultivate *fides* understand and delight in the irreducible uniqueness of the other, and the other’s irreplaceability with respect to the union.

Bringing two lives together in the union of marriage necessarily involves a whole host of activities: couples cook, work, garden, do housework, and so on. But for those motivated by *eros*, sex takes on a heightened importance because of their attentive interest and delight in the bodily presence and openness of the other. In a sexual encounter, two persons meet as embodied subjects who have their own histories and obligations that shape their respective futures. Some people deliberately hide those histories and obligations, reducing the encounter to a purely transactional one. The particularity of the person is subordinated to the satisfaction of sexual pleasure. For those motivated by *eros*, however, the subordination of the union with *that particular person* to *any* extrinsic quality (like pleasure *or* procreation) corrodes it. It is not “sex” that the person in love wants as a general class of action, such that just *anyone* would do to “scratch the itch.” Instead, *eros* seeks a union with another “I” whom we encounter as irreplaceable, since our point is not something beyond them but the person themselves.

As sex has *something* to do with marriage, then, our hypothetical couple would need to consider what kind of practices they would undertake in order to keep *eros* alive and

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strong within the sexual union. How might they approach sex so that “*I will always love you*” has a meaningful chance of becoming true?

For one, this couple might fastidiously expunge any willingness to engage in any kind of sexual activities that would *replace* the other person with respect to their union. They might refuse to watch pornography, for instance, because it inculcates in the viewer a willingness to replace their spouses with respect to sex. Pornography habituates a person’s thoughts and attitudes toward sex to pursue some end—bodily pleasure—outside or beyond that delight which is had in the *person* of one’s spouse. Pornography “works” in part based on the viewer identifying himself with the scene in some way—an identification that treats one’s spouse as replaceable with respect to sexual activities and pleasure. And such exclusivity would clearly not be limited to porn. This couple would also be vigilant to deny thoughts or sentiments that were directed toward engaging in sexual acts outside their own marriage.

And there is another step they would take, a more controversial step but an equally important one: this couple would withhold approval from those who engage in sexual activities outside of marital contexts. To approve of a behavior is to treat it as morally permissible, not just for the people engaging in it but for *anyone* similarly situated—including ourselves. What we bestow approval on not only reveals our character, but determines it. To approve of someone playing golf is to render the judgment, “If I were similarly situated I would play golf.” Approval indicates we have a conditional willingness to participate in the same activity; by approving we admit that we *would do* the thing if our situation were the same as theirs.

To approve of two people “having sex” outside a marital covenant renders the verdict that if one were similarly placed, one would engage in the same kind of activity. Which is to say: approving of sex outside of marriage inculcates a *willingness* in the approver to have sex outside of marriage, and by doing so, treats sex *within* one’s own marriage as simply an instance of a general class of activities (seeking “physical pleasure,” perhaps). But the moral content of sexual activity is determined by marriage; within the marriage, sex is a specific, unique activity of the irreplaceable and irreducibly unique individuals. It is not an instance of a general class of activity with a general aim, like “seeking pleasure” or even “procreation.” Its moral and communicative prospects are uniquely

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determined by the presence of just those two people and no others. Merely having the *willingness* to ‘have sex’ as a *general class of activity* corrodes one’s commitment to the irreplaceability of the other—it corrodes one’s *fides*, that is. To approve of sex outside of marriage destroys the unique moral prospects of sex within one’s *own* marriage.

What good might such moral rigor be? To those in love, the question is silly: once we taste the joys of *eros*, the disciplines needed to preserve them take on a new and more gracious atmosphere. *Fides* may not seem like it is worth the hassle, especially initially. But that is only because we have not seen it practiced. To steal from Chesterton yet again, it is not so much that marriage has been tried and found wanting so much as that it has never been tried at all. The highest goods are inaccessible to those who have not the virtues to taste them, the way the finer arts or foods are impenetrable to those of us who do not speak the languages required. But the pure in heart will see God, and the pure of body will discover delights that will be inarticulable to the rest of us. They will have an atmosphere and aroma that, when encountered, will be beautiful even if we cannot give it a name.

#### **4. Love’s Transcendent Hope**

*Eros* longs for a beloved. But what happens when the union is attained? Is there a satisfaction of *eros* that will not extinguish it, but renew it and keep it alive? Can there be a searching that, when it comes to an end, begins again? If the beloved is not simply present to us, but makes themselves available to be known by us, to be explored and delighted in, will there be an end to our searching? Or will *eros*, “having” the object that we longed for, wither away and die?

Perhaps this also is an article of faith, but I have long considered the idea that love could be satisfied and renewed within the same moment to be a necessary part of an elegant, beautiful universe. Like the edges of the cosmos, love’s organic law is growth and its true power tends toward expansion. Those who give much will have more—to give, rather than to keep—and those who do not give, even what they have will eventually wither away.

Love must be open-ended, then, at least for those who are creatures of time. And so love of another is. When encompassed and motivated by *eros*, the knowledge of a person

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becomes a renewable resource. It is not as though once a person is known they are somehow possessed or determined, that such knowledge is a closure. Our understanding grows with them; the other perpetually evades our grasp, surprises us, and is encountered again as “unknown.” Intimate knowledge is a never-ending business. We are not wholly new in each moment—but as long as there are movements left in the symphonies of our lives, our character and our persons are not fixed. And so *eros*, while delighting in the knowledge of the other, remains open to the future and to the freedom of the other.



All this is present in the intimate union *eros* is most closely associated with. In the throes of desire, lovers—as we so inelegantly say these days—“make love.” Their delighted exploring may be spontaneous and carefree, or done reverently, soberly, and in the fear of God. The secrecy that such lovers pursue for such intimacy demands our respect, and I see nothing to be gained by profaning such moments with crass or medicalized descriptions. Poetic speech about the union of husband and wife is not

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motivated by fear, but the truth, for only such speech reflects the ennobling opportunity such marital love presents to the world.

Still, the dignity and glory of this human action is not something separate from its animalistic quality. For those who are married, who meet in such a union as subjects, the physicality of the act is embedded within a history and context that transposes it into a new key and gives it a texture and meaning that it nowhere else has. Sex within marriage is not the same kind of thing that other animals have; its meaning and content is inextricably determined by the vow, and vice versa, even if the lovers are wholly unconscious of those dimensions in the middle of their pursuit of it.

The bodily union that consummates the lovers' open-ended knowledge of each other is one that perfectly expresses its character. Their union is as open-ended as their love; it gives a particular form to an unknown future, establishing a new opportunity and depth for their lives that they can know in no other way. Their communion may have moments of ecstasy, but it makes possible a lifetime of joys—or sorrows.

*Always.* The *I* and the *You* who meet might even hope for the perpetuation of their bodily union beyond the death they know will inevitably tear them asunder. But only one path *can* provide the hope of such satisfaction. And here we come to the center of the argument: The bodily union of *fides* can lead to children, can bring about new members of the community who are not equal sharers of every aspect of it, but who are embodied icons of the exclusive and unmediated devotion of the husband and wife to each other and no other.[4] The “I” and the “You” who express their undying love to each other *alone* can experience a kind of satisfaction in a child who can outlive them both, who is uniquely begotten as the heir and embodiment of their union, who carries in his own character and identity the exclusive, permanent commitment of his parents love. The “I” and the “You” come together into one who is neither—but for whom *both* are required.

The husband and wife's resolute commitment to the irreplaceability of each other with respect to their union—their *fides*—with all its joyous, self-imposed, exacting rigor establishes a moral environment wherein the child has the security of knowing that their identity and personhood has its foundation within the exclusive devotion between just

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two people. The child's life and origin begins in the secret, hidden mystery of love between the man and the woman whose shape is made public in their vows of marriage.

To be clear, my point is a moral one and not about biology per se. But what's true at the moral level is also true biologically: if either member of the union were replaced, the DNA of the child would obviously come from a different pool. To the extent that matters for the determination of a child's life—and it clearly matters *some*—that would be enough to indicate that there is something about being begotten from just *those* two parents and no others that matters to the child's future.



To be an icon, and to know that one is an icon of their parents' love, is a peculiar kind of good. It is a status, a morally-laden status, which provides an important sense of security to a child, even if the conditions of their biological life are vulnerable. To know whence we come is one of life's great questions. And *fides* secures the knowledge not simply of one's biological parentage, but of the moral conditions of one's own birth. For those *moral* conditions are inextricable from the knowledge of one's own parents

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as *persons and agents*. We know each other in part by discovering their character, and to know that one's parents fastidiously cultivated an ecosystem that was oriented toward the exclusive and permanent erotic attachment between them and no other is to learn something deep and important about them—and about one's own origins. It is something more than simply knowing that I am the son of my parents: being an icon means the possibility of knowing that such sonship *means* being an extension of the devotion a father and mother have for each other, and that my origin was contained in their mutual ecstatic joy and sacrificial love. To recognize this is to see not simply that the union of their bodies created mine; it is to see that their love for one another brought me into existence.

If the union *eros* seeks is good for humans to pursue, then being born into an environment determined by it is also a good—and its absence would be a moral injury. But paradoxically, such an absence may not be discernible *as such* to those who lack it, just as those who are born into a society that lacks clean water, or penicillin, or equal voting rights for women may not recognize their absence as injuries. Or consider a person who is slandered and so denied opportunities he otherwise might have chosen, but who never learns of it. Such a person has suffered a real loss, even though it is invisible to him. The moral injuries children suffer may only dimly appear in the present **to our empiricists**, if at all, for their effects may only be seen when aggregated over an entire society over multiple generations, while “chastity” and its norms recedes further into our cultural memory.

If my argument is right, gay marriage is not a revolution; it is simply the final stage of the erosion of *eros*. The divorce revolution destroyed *eros* by attacking its foundation, namely the commitment to the permanent union with just *this* person and no other. Remarriage is predicated on the possibility that we can swap out our marital partners with respect to our vows without loss—it denies the permanence *eros* aspires to, and so cannot make sense of how children uniquely satisfy that aspiration. And by considering one's spouse to be *replaceable* with respect to one's marital vows, remarriage generates a moral outlook that inevitably leads to gay marriage. It is not just *any* man and woman who can appropriately or fully satisfy *eros* and generate the kind of community wherein children are *icons* of the love of their parents: only *this* woman and *this* man can fully do so. The divorce revolution simultaneously undermined the irreplaceable particularity of

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a man and woman, and the permanence of their vow, making gay marriage immensely more plausible than it ever would be otherwise.

But the cruel paradox is that societies immersed in atmospheres of injustice are *least* well equipped to see them as such. Our standards of ‘normal’ for what constitutes marital flourishing are *themselves* the problem, as they rarely get beyond the mammon-worshipping categories of wealth and economic status. Having considered each particular, individual men and woman as fungible with respect to their marriages for the past fifty years (due to our rampant acceptance of remarriage), we have no ability to see why *men* and *women* as general classes might not be fungible as well. But going on further in the direction we are headed would be a wrong nonetheless, one which a society ordered toward promoting and promulgating the good for its citizens would take with the utmost seriousness given marriage’s central role to the child’s life and moral outlook.

One final word about the moral opportunity that *eros* leads us to. Childbirth is a process that, once begun, happens without intervention. While we have learned to support the process and to intervene when there is danger, such decisions respond to an existing natural process that happens outside the direct, voluntary control by the mother. As such, an intimate, bodily union of a man and woman that can begin the procreative process has a twofold open-ended quality that makes it unique among any human actions. It can start a biological process that carries on long after the momentary action, and that process can culminate in the appearance of new human life into the community begun by the exclusive, permanent commitment of the husband and wife. Of all the acts that communicate love, devotion, or commitment to each other, only procreative acts require our intervention to ensure they do *not* generate human life.

This open-endedness toward the future is what lovers bind themselves to in the height of their expressions of erotic love: “I will *always* love you” casts us upon the fortunes of providence in a way that the biological processes of procreation mirror. A couple that longs for the fulfillment of their *eros* opens themselves to tragedy. Procreation is (still) risky, and makes us vulnerable to serious sorrow and loss. It puts the life of the mother at risk and begins human life in the most fragile of ways. And some couples may find—or even know in advance—such fulfillment is not available to them. Providence does not

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smile on us all—but the possibility of such suffering or frustration is contingent upon and discloses the uniqueness of the good. Infertility is tragic because joy is possible, and because new life can appear. The openness to sorrow, loss, betrayal and heartbreak that the great goods of the marriage vow demand of us are contained in bodily form in the possibility of procreation.

## **5. Fine Tuning In Response to Objections, Including Thoughts on Adoption**

That is the core of the argument. There are objections to it, to be sure. And I wish to provide a few brief responses to those here. My aim is twofold: first, I want to show that the above view provides reasonable answers to them. To do that properly may involve clarifying some of what I have said. But we should not let that scare us: sometimes the truth emerges dialectically, through the giving and taking of reasons and counter-reasons. Second, I want to try to articulate what I think are the underlying presuppositions of the objections, to provide a glimpse of the kind of comprehensive outlook that I think makes gay marriage more plausible.

The first and most obvious objection is that not everyone who marries is capable of engaging in “procreative acts.” That is to say, some couples are not simply infertile: they may be incapable of engaging in any sexual activity at all, or be missing organs that are essential for the procreative process. How does the above view allow them to marry, while denying those who are of the same-sex?

This is a serious objection; answers to it might seem like special pleading or overly technical. But as with the moral rigor the couple engages in to preserve the vitality of their union, so here as well such distinctions are the substance of love and ethics. The careful pursuit of precision in response to a question like this may not indicate a deep aversion to people with same-sex desires, but an urgent sense that such distinctions really matter for living our lives together well.

So, then: Whether a man is *willing* to engage in sex with someone who is not his spouse, and whether he actually does, makes a real difference in how we evaluate him. We might be tempted to give him a pass, to overlook it as a mere indiscretion (but would we if the woman said this?). But to his wife, his *willingness* might seem much more grave and important, and appropriately so. It might feel like a personal slight, a violation of their

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marriage vow, a tacit suggestion that she is replaceable with respect to their union and its central activity. If such a willingness is justified because such an act ‘wouldn’t mean anything’ or is ‘just for pleasure,’ the wife would rightly be justified in calling into question precisely what the *same physical* acts meant even within their own marriage, and whether she at any point was reduced to a disposable means for his pursuit of physical pleasure. His approval of the depersonalized pursuit of sex reveals something about his character, after all, which cannot be extricated from his own union. In short, *willingness* matters for moral evaluation as much as the act itself.

Whether a man and a woman can marry depends not upon their ability to have children or even engage in procreative acts *per se*, but rather whether it makes sense for them to be willing to do so—even if they *choose* not to. It makes sense that a man and a woman who are incapable of engaging in procreative acts could be willing to do so under certain conditions, namely the conditions wherein their bodily functions were restored. Regardless of how unlikely those conditions are, most of us would recognize that the medical interventions that would enable them to engage in such actions would be choice-worthy for them to pursue, and would restore certain capabilities and functions that human beings naturally have. Their willingness to have children has a clear and intelligible logic to it, one that even comes through in the emotions that might take root in their union: such a couple might feel a deep sense of frustration and sorrow over their inability to engage in such acts despite their erotic longing. And such frustration would be entirely reasonable.

Could we say the same about a couple of the same-sex? It seems unlikely; for the moral opportunity inherent in procreative acts to be intelligible to them, one member of the couple would *necessarily* have to be replaced (with one potential exception that I will discuss below). Their non-procreativity is of a different kind than the incapacitated opposite-sex couple; any “willingness” to have a child on their part must violate the conditions of *fides*. The inability of some male and female couples to have children is a tragedy, and easily seen as such; for the same-sex couple, it is a structural feature. It would be strange for a same-sex couple to “regret” their non-procreativity; there is nothing to regret, because no moral opportunity has been lost. Even if one member underwent the radically invasive, non-curative surgeries required for sex-reassignment, they would still require a third-party to provide either the sperm or egg required for

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conception. As such, any ‘willingness’ to have children *within* the union is, quite literally, unintelligible.

Now, this establishes at a certain level that same-sex unions and different-sex unions are morally distinct, and that same-sex unions lack certain features that allow and enable them to experience the satisfaction of the kind of love that motivates them to enter the union. Same-sex unions might share in any number of goods, even if they are not marriages. But the aspirational love that aims at extending the *union itself* past the death of its members is impossible in same-sex unions in a way that it is not impossible in different-sex unions. It is *in principle* impossible in same-sex unions, whereas in infertile or incapable different-sex unions it is only *conditionally* impossible.

What of those different-sex couples who do not want to have children? One implication of my argument is that such individuals permanently frustrate the very aspiration that originally brought them together. They work against the very grain of their union’s existence. This is an implication I am happy to adopt; the existence of those who seem happy and content while willfully denying themselves the possibility of children does not on its own establish that my argument is wrong.

Some readers might also object to the above because same-sex couples *do* have children via adoption. Given that’s the case, why should we not grant that such couples are married? It’s important to underscore that a child’s life might be improved by being adopted into any number of relationships, and that is no small thing. For a child in foster care, the stability and opportunities that come through being adopted into a new home are considerable. Their social status and economic prospects may quite literally be transformed overnight.

But adoption into *any family* still either *constitutes* or *depends upon* a moral injury to the child, as it entails they no longer are present with the mother and father whose love they are an icon of. It is sometimes said that adoption is “redemptive”, and that may be. However, it is no *substitute* for biological parentage; adoption establishes some new goods, but it does not replace those that are lost.

Childhood *as* childhood has something to do with marriage: the moral norms by which a child comes to know himself and the world are, in part, determined by the marital status

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of those who raise him. If there is a morally-laden status of being the “icon of the parents’ devotion to each other and none other” that biological parentage *can* provide a child, then we should strive, as much as possible, to preserve the child’s presence within that communion and view adoption as a last-resort. As [the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child](#) puts it, every child should grow up “wherever possible...in the care and under the responsibility of his parents.” Adoptions happen only because tragedy exists.



But sometimes adoption *does* happen and *should* happen. What then? Different-sex couples who adopt welcome children into a community where the moral opportunity of marriage is intelligible, even if that moral opportunity is only imperfectly realized. But as same-sex couples have no similar opportunity, adoption doubly deprives a child of a first-hand encounter with the goods of marriage; having been deprived of their biological parents, adoption into a same-sex couple also withholds first-hand, pervasive encounters with the unique moral opportunity at the heart of marriage, even if the

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child's socio-economic status improves (which, again, is a considerable good in its own right). It is not simply the presence of children within a community that establishes that community as a marriage; it is marriage and its goods that establish the moral contours and opportunities of childhood.

The cases of children entering a same-sex union through IVF or surrogacy most clearly demonstrate marriage's distinctive moral opportunity. If a different-sex couple uses IVF, the child who enters the union might have the biological lineage of *just those two parents* and no other. I am opposed to IVF as a general practice; but for same-sex couples, these means of childbirth *require* replacing one of the members of the couple. Such methods make one member of the union fungible for purposes of having a child; this difference alone should be enough to show that the unions in question have different moral structures and opportunities inherent in them.

I said above that there was only *one* way in which same-sex couples could generate a child who was the “icon” of the non-fungibility of their parents. And it is this one: If researchers are **able to engineer sperm and egg cells out of genetic material from same-sex couples**, it would provide them an approximation of the moral opportunities inherent in opposite-sex couples. Such children would share, it seems, the DNA of both parents and so in that sense would be a “biological child.”

What should we make of this? For one, it is helpful to see the kind of universe that same-sex unions *need* in order to mimic the moral opportunities inherent in opposite-sex unions. This possibility would not have been conceivable without the developments in scientific knowledge and practice over the past 50 years. The gay marriage argument is persuasive to many people partly because of those developments—without IVF or surrogacy or improved contraceptive practices, the moral differences with respect to childbirth would have been much clearer. Adopting the arguments for the moral equivalence of gay marriage may commit us to accepting this technologically determined ecosystem. But it is not a very elegant system, and it should give us pause. Different-sex unions have a simplicity that the technological artifice beneath same-sex marital unions lacks: if sex makes babies, we don't need scientists to.

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No one should question that any biological children who come about in such a way are fully and properly human. But they come into the world as subjects of moral injury and harm, through no fault of their own, that children of opposite-sex couples (generally) do not. It is important to understand why.

The child who arrives through procreation is not, strictly speaking, chosen. While a different-sex couple may strive for health, identify the optimal time to conceive, and so on, indirectly supporting the procreative process is the best they can do. Parents directly choose to engage in an action that begins a process that they then can only choose to stop or support, but which will otherwise carry on without their intervention: parents do not, strictly speaking, choose *to* have a child. That possibility exceeds their direct grasp. The conception of a child is, instead, directly and immediately linked to the face-to-face encounter between a husband and wife, an encounter of love that is unmediated by any third party and that happens in secret, wherein each member of the union fully reveals themselves to the other in a loving embrace. The parents may *welcome* and *accept* the child, as indeed they should. But as much as they might hope for and want one, the conditions by which children come into the world mean ‘having a child’ cannot be a choice by them.

Mediated practices like IVF turn children into objects of choice. The trajectory of *agency* is very different in IVF than in natural childbirth. In procreation, the one moment of decision makes parents subsequently passive and hostage and vulnerable to fortune. IVF and other processes seek to remove this passivity as much as possible, to improve the chances and eliminate risks. Doctors play an instrumental role in the process, distancing the birth of the child from the initial and fundamental encounter of love between the two parents *alone*. This makes it much more likely that the child will be instrumentalized by the parents, as undertaking more direct control over the process will require *reasons for* choosing a particular embryo over another, instead of passively awaiting whomever appears. (The logic of ‘designer babies’ is already incipient in IVF; if we have to select embryos to implant, why *wouldn't* we try to evaluate them and choose ones that match our wish list of potential qualities?)

But such a process also instrumentalizes the parents’ union for the sake of having a child, as it does the woman’s body. The inability to directly choose to have a child

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through natural procreation means that the only reasonable point of the sexual union is *the union itself*, especially since physical pleasure can clearly be had in different ways. However, those limits chasten both husband and wife from instrumentalizing each other or their union for some third-end beyond it (including children), a limitation that the direct aspirations of IVF seeks to overcome. And IVF brings the disproportionate burdens of childbirth into the very *origins* of the process as well. The consent and self-giving required by the sexual union is symmetrical; procreation clearly is not. But IVF intensifies that asymmetry by requiring women to undergo elaborate procedures to harvest their eggs even *before* they bear the child for nine months. Such a process risks instrumentalizing women and their bodies for the sake of procreation, rather than viewing them as equal even if asymmetrically burdened participants in the process.



It is important to see how counter-intuitive the above is: the logic of the pro-choice movement has inculcated into all of us the idea that children are best served when they are *chosen directly*. The view treats children as isolated individuals who have no prior

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connection to the parents *until* they are chosen by them. But the child is welcomed and received into marital unions, not chosen. The life who appears to us in procreation is an authoritative good who justly demands the submission of our plans, lives, and aspirations to their well-being until they can become independent of us. In that sense, the *eros* that kneels before the authority of the beloved is heightened and de-sexualized in the face of the child, who enters as an irreplaceable, equal member of the community, even if that community is asymmetrically ordered. The child is the son or daughter of his parents regardless of what his parents ‘decide’. He bears the status as an icon of their devoted love prior to and before their “choice.” It is not their choice of him that makes him a child; their exclusive and non-instrumentalizing love for each other organically brought a child into the world.

The logic of gay marriage, then, and the logic of abortion come together at this crucial point. To support gay marriage, and to support the notion that the children who are brought into same-sex unions are “no different” than those brought into opposite-sex unions, is to adopt an understanding of the child at the heart of the pro-choice outlook on the world. All children deserve respect, care, and love. But that means that they also deserve to be welcomed into the world as those who come from *outside* our wills, whose lives are formed in the secret and hidden recesses of the most intimate and powerful act of human love known to humanity, whose sanctity and well-being exists outside of the direct choices of the rest of us.

Even if that argument isn’t persuasive, it will always be the case that same-sex couples are dependent upon either the *tragedy to which adoption responds* or *third parties* for the introduction of children into them. There is some wisdom to the adage that opposite-sex unions are “pre-political”; it is possible for a community to emerge from a male and female pair in total isolation, without the assistance even of a midwife. Such a simplicity is part of marriage’s power and why, as an institution, it is so structurally important. **Its decline and erosion invariably leads to the expansiveness of other institutions** (especially the government), which must fill the gaps left behind and attempt to correct the harms done within such failed marital relationships.

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## 6. Some Further Reflections About the Debate

One position in this debate is wrong, which means that one group's critical and rational reflecting has led them astray. One side is 'deceived' on some level; either they have made certain deliberative mistakes, or they have closed themselves off to certain thoughts or arguments, or they not had enough experiences, or they have drawn the wrong lessons from the experiences they have. One side is giving approval to what the other thinks is a grave moral wrong. There are a host of ways in which our critical reflection about the world can go wrong; there are far fewer ways that it can go right.

On this question, the suggestion that one side is morally wrong rarely leads to a self-reflective conversation about the merits of the arguments. It is easier, more politically potent, and safer for individuals *on both sides* to dispense with arguments altogether. After all, to enter into the process of giving and exchanging reasons is to momentarily open ourselves to the possibility that we might be wrong. And for gay or lesbian individuals, in particular, the burden is even heavier. The inevitable implication of this debate is not simply that their reasoning might be misguided—that is possible for heterosexual supporters of their view, as it is of opponents of their view. Instead, the implication of this debate is that the 'experiences' of gay and lesbian individuals of love, joy, happiness, acceptance, welcome, and so on do not hold the meaning or moral content that they think. There is an unavoidably disproportionate burden here; the conclusions I come to will unquestionably affect some people's lives more seriously than they do my own.

But this disproportionate burden is also an inescapable feature of moral reasoning. Consider the arguments against eating meat, for instance. To those who think that vegetarianism is mandatory not simply for health reasons, but because killing animals is unethical and inhumane, eating meat seems like a grave moral offense. Even more to the point, the *pleasures* and *delights* that meat-eaters have in consuming meat are, on this hypothesis, not sufficient to justify the practice—and may even be part of the problem. The intensity of the enjoyment of eating meat deepens the meat-eaters attachment to his own outlook, so that relinquishing the practice would require an ascetic abstention from delights he otherwise would enjoy. The conversion would cost him something, and those stakes make it understandably difficult to change his mind.

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The analogy is an imperfect one. Food is not sex; sex entangles us with other human persons in a more immediate way, and sexual desires may be more pervasive in our consciousness and resistant to change than our desires for food. It is relatively easy to learn to like tomatoes or curry; finding someone to love, on the other hand, is one of life's great challenges. But my point is a narrow one here, and should be (I hope!) uncontroversial: not all that appears to be good for us truly is, and not all pleasures reinforce moral outlooks that are justifiable upon reflection. Our experiences of happiness or joy or sadness are not infallible or translucent to us.

Additionally, I argued earlier that the moral rigor embedded in the aspiration to keep *eros* alive is a universal one. It places an equal demand on all those who are in love, namely to expunge any sentiment, thought, impulse, desire, or any other psychological feature that engenders a willingness to replace one's beloved with respect to the marital union. While my 'form of life' may be nearer that which I think is morally permissible than, say, an active and practicing same-sex couple, the moral scrutiny my view engenders of my own practices are not exactly an easy burden either. (So much moreso, I note, my pleas for mercy in my own life, unable to bear up this weight perfectly as I am.)

## **7. A Concluding Word, At Last**

There is much more that deserves saying. Despite having gone on too long already, the above is nearer to an outline of an argument than it is a complete case. I have said less than I should have about the institutional dimensions of marriage, for one. Vows generate obligations, and in marriage where in most cases children *are* a possibility, those obligations are of the most serious kind. The government should allow couples to live their lives as they may, but it does not, should not, recognize those unions as marriages that lack the marriage-making features I have tried to articulate above. On what basis the state might do this while preserving the equal dignity of its citizens deserves an essay at least as long as this one—if not three times the size. But I have also not demonstrated how my above argument shows why polygamy and incest are wrong. And I have not mapped it on to any of the existing social science research, psychological research, or any other field that has some role in this debate, or explained why I think such fields are subordinate to the kind of critical reflection I tried to undertake

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here. **Many others have taken up aspects of those arguments already**; I have no plans to fill them out in the near future.

However, I will note that nothing in my argument depends upon any kind of special revelation. I am a Christian—a Protestant, specifically, an evangelical even, and a conservative evangelical at that. While I deployed a text I hold to be sacred and inspired, it can function in this context simply as an account of the world that has an authority similar to Plato: the authority of wisdom, from which we might learn something about ourselves. Even so, readers need no existing religious commitment to find the above essay intelligible and, I hope, persuasive.

Still, I *am* a Christian—and I am enough of one to know that the above comports well with traditional Christian doctrine on the subject. In that way, I am happy to admit that my arguments here have bearing on my religious commitments. But bearing in which direction? I might just as well say that the above arguments are why I believe the witness of the Gospel, rather than that the Gospel is why I believe the above arguments. I *might* as well say that because it is true. I began thinking about this argument for the first time by reading Plato; if we speak from the standpoint of faith, I see only more reasons to think that same-sex sexual relationships cannot deliver on what they promise.

Marriage is an institution that elevates us and ennobles us, that helps us aspire to a kind of greatness that we still—despite our attempts to obscure it—can glimpse today. We *can* always love another person. We *can* commit ourselves with the single-mindedness of devotion and discover that there are depths to ourselves and one another that we might never have known otherwise. Our marriages *can* get better—but only if we learn their meaning and begin to submit to their moral demands.

Treating same-sex and different-sex erotic relationships as equivalent removes from *eros* the glorious possibility that we might discover a love stronger than death, that a man and a woman might be so devoted to one another alone that they would form a community whose children would be icons of their exclusive, permanent commitment. That glorious aspiration and the hope of its fulfillment make us vulnerable to nearly

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infinite depths of sorrow and loss. But they also make the world a more exciting, dramatic, and beautiful place to live.

## Notes and Credits

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*I am grateful for the editorial help of James Arnold, and for the very helpful comments I received on previous drafts from a number of readers. I make clear my most recent intellectual influence below. The other figures that have shaped this in some way are too many to name here. However, the content of the above, and especially its errors, are my responsibility alone.*

[1] See the argument Walter Brueggemann’s makes in “Of the Same Flesh and Bone” is contained in *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, volume 30, 1970, pages 532-542.

[2] Yes, marriage rates are declining. However, even if they are waiting for it, young people still seem to **think that marriage is an important part of their future**.

[3] I am heavily indebted to the work of John Finnis throughout this essay, but especially for his language of ‘non-fungibility’, the notion that children are “icons” of the non-fungibility of persons, and for the argument that approving of particular acts implicates us in them. Any and all errors are, of course, my own. See especially Finnis, John. “Marriage: A Basic and Exigent Good.” *The Monist* 91, no. 3 (2008): 388–406 and also “The Good of Marriage and the Morality of Sexual Relations: Some Philosophical and Historical Observations.” *The American Journal of Jurisprudence* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 1997): 97-134.

[4] The language of ‘icon’ here is directly taken from Finnis.

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