

# A MARRIAGE MIRACLE

John 2:1-11

## I. A MARRIAGE: WEDDING in CANA

- A. Ubiquity of marriage: virtually all (both primitive and advanced) societies have rituals, celebrations—some simple declaration, others elaborate ceremonies, requisite dress, declarations
  1. Jewish weddings elaborate (hints in various OT texts; Song Solomon music)
  2. Modern developments reveal traditions long revered
  3. Marriage clearly valued, family basic social unit in good society
- B. Jesus' presence instructive
  1. Wedding ceremonies *good*—non-ascetic, joyous dimensions to event, more than mere legal contract; as witnesses (invited guests) we contribute important factors
  2. Marriage *good*—body's value; copulation & procreation endorsed; elsewhere Jesus asserted “as it was in the beginning”
- C. Current cultural war needs our attention—c.f. handout—“Future of Marriage”

## II. A MOTHER: MARY

- A. Virgin mother & understanding of Incarnation: fully God, fully man
- B. At Cana, doubtlessly helping a relative—as earlier helped her cousin Elizabeth (pregnant with John the Baptist)—probably entrusted with some role, providing food for guests
- C. In need, she turns to her trusted son, knowing he can help; her request suggests she clearly knew His divine/human nature; thus she had faith in Him and asked for his help re wine
- D. Mary's historic import & lasting exemplar—historic witness, dogmatic guidance
- E. Today's denigration of motherly/nurturing femininity worrisome

## III. A MIRACLE: JESUS' FIRST

- A. Wine essential for Jewish feasts—“warms the heart”—so at Cana, the family would be humiliated if supply depleted
- B. Jesus' response
  1. Fill six jars (ca. 20-30 galleon capacity) with water
  2. Instantaneously wine was available (ca 120-180 galleons)
  3. Augustine reminds us that nature continually does equally miraculous process as vines produce grapes from water absorbed through roots
- C. Delineating miracles:
  1. Healing: most recorded (critics stress psychosomatic possibilities, though restoring sight, healing lepers certainly demand supernatural powers)
  2. Nature: wine; walking on water; feeding 5000 (supernatural obviously necessary)
  3. Death: Lazarus & promise of resurrection
- D. Defending miracles, contra Hume *et al*, essential
- E. Eucharistic denominational differences re. Sacrament's miraculous (or purely instructional) nature—Catholics: transubstantiation; Lutherans: consubstantiation; Anglican: Real Presence; Reformed: symbolic; Quakers: irrelevant
- F. N.B. John's concluding verse 11 re importance of miracles, basic to Jesus' nature/ministry

# The Future of Marriage

The sexual revolution, now culminating in the legalization of same-sex marriage and celebration of transgender declarations, triumphed within a culture devoid of a Natural Law ethos. Though slowly giving way to an evolutionary worldview, wherein there are no established essences to things, the Natural Law (rooted in Aristotle and Cicero, Augustine and Aquinas and America's Founding Fathers) still provides a rationale for and defense of heterosexual marriage that forever makes sense. Conjoined with an earlier treatise he co-authored with Robert George and Sherif Girgis—*What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* (New York: Encounter Books, c. 2012)—Ryan T. Anderson's *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Regency Publishing, c. 2015) merits serious study and distribution. "With its decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court of the United States," Anderson asserts, "has brought the sexual revolution to its apex—a redefinition of our civilizations' primordial institution, cutting its link to procreation and declaring sex differences meaningless" (#80). Five unelected, elitist judges have rashly claimed the power to trash the most important association known to man! They not only "decided a case incorrectly—it has damaged the common good and harmed our republic" (#1009).

Consequently, folks who dare declare their support for traditional, heterosexual marriage are now pilloried as bigots (akin to racists) committed to immoral forms of sexual discrimination. Christians espousing heterosexual monogamy and everyone who dares condemn sodomy are now instructed "to take homosexuality off the sin list." Facing the fact that the ground has shifted around us, Christians must, Anderson says, clearly think through how to respond, taking to heart the patience and perspicuity of the pro-life movement. We must, first, identify and reject the judicial activism so evident in both *Roe v. Wade* and *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Poor jurisprudence can, and must be, refuted on the highest of intellectual levels. Then we must take steps to preserve our constitutionally guaranteed freedoms "to speak and live according to the truth" (#209).

To do so, Princeton Professor Robert George says: "We must, above all, tell the truth: *Obergefell v. Hodges* is an illegitimate decision. What Stanford Law School Dean John Ely said of *Roe v. Wade* applies with equal force to *Obergefell*: "It is not constitutional law and gives almost no sense of an obligation to try to be." What Justice Byron White said of *Roe* is also true of *Obergefell*: "it is an act of 'raw judicial power.'" The lawlessness of these decisions is evident in the fact that they lack any foundation or warranting the text, logic, structure, or original understanding of the Constitution. The justices responsible for these rulings, whatever their good intentions, are substituting their own views of morality and sound public policy for those of the people and their elected representatives. They have set them selves up as super legislators possessing a kind of plenary power to impose their judgments on the nation. What could be more unconstitutional—more anti-constitutional—than that?" (#1031). Importantly, Professor George's strong critique of the Court can be found, in equally emphatic language, in the four justices' (John Roberts; Antonio Scalia; Samuel Alito; Clarence Thomas) opinions who dissented from *Obergefell*.

The author's "goal is to equip everyone, not just the experts, to defend what most of us never imagined we'd have to defend: our rights of conscience, our religious liberty, and the basic building block of civilization—the human family, founded on the marital union of a man and a woman" (#237). "Whatever the law or culture may say, we must commit now to witness to the truth about marriage: that men and women are equal and equally necessary in the lives of children; that men and women, though different, are complementary; that it takes a man and a woman to bring a child into the world. It is not bigotry but compassion and common sense to insist on laws and public policies that maximize the likelihood that children will grow up with a mom and a dad" (#267).

To declare this truth we must first insist that words mean something. *Marriage* can only describe a *conjugal union*, the fleshly union of a male and female human being. To accept the Supreme Court's verdict is to grant its faulty "assumption that marriage is a genderless institution" (#288), nothing more than an agreement between persons to enjoy some sort of emotionally rewarding relationship. The Court's position was, of course, largely set in place by the sexual revolutionaries who promoted cohabitation, no-fault divorce, single parenting, and the hook-up culture dramatically evident on university campuses.

Still more, as a conjugal union marriage is designed for and ordered to *procreation*, a fact vociferously denied by sexual revolutionaries. In the marital act two become one flesh. It's not an ethereal, spiritual bond between "loving" persons but an intensely physical act, uniting a man and woman in a thoroughly "comprehensive" manner. Note, Anderson says, this "parallel: The muscles, heart, lungs, stomach and intestines of an individual human body cooperate with each other toward a single biological end—the continued life of that body. In the same way, a man and a woman, when they unite in the marital act, cooperate

toward a single biological end—procreation” (#407). Bringing children into the world entails forging intact families suitable for their rearing. “Marriage is based on the anthropological truth that men and women are complementary, the biological fact that reproduction depends on a man and a woman, and the social reality that children deserve a mother and a father” (#470).

To redefine marriage in accord with the sexual revolution charts a dire course for our future, says Anderson: “The needs and rights of children will be subordinated to the desires of adults. The marital norms of monogamy, exclusivity, and permanence will be weakened. Unborn children will be put at even more risk than they already are. And religious liberty—Americans’ ‘first freedom’—will be threatened” (#692). We already see the harms done by single parenting, whereby children suffer on almost every score—increased poverty, abuse, delinquency, substance addictions, dysfunctional relationships. So too a “study undertaken by sociologist Mark Regnerus of the University of Texas demonstrated the negative impacts among children being raised in the context of a same-sex home” (#1509).

And there’s more to come as proponents of erotic rights envision moving beyond same-sex marriage to “legally recognizing sexual relationships involving more than two partners” (#765). The California legislature recently passed a bill allowing a child to have three legal parents. Though the governor vetoed it, such legislation will quickly cascade from similar chambers in the wake of the Supreme Court’s recent decision. Yet other theorists propose temporary marriage licenses—leasing a spouse, much as you lease a house, for as long as he or she suits you. Once marriage has been reduced to a “lifestyle option” valued primarily for its benefits to autonomous adults, little remains to that most essential “little platoon,” the family. And precisely that, for the sexual revolutionaries, has been the purpose all along. As Michael Lehrner and the Weathermen said, “smash monogamy.” It all fits nicely into the agenda of Marx and Engels, who placed the abolition of families high on their list in order to create a pure, socialist society.

Turning to the question of what we can now do, Anderson leads us back to the carefully-wrought, timelessly true theological position of the Christian Church. The creation account in Genesis provides a wonderful prescription whereby a man and a woman form a divinely-ordained covenant best illustrated in “God’s own covenant-making love in Jesus Christ” (#1670). This new covenant of grace reaffirms the old covenant, with its rules regarding sex and marriage. “Sex, gender, marriage, and family all come together in the first chapters of Scripture in order to make clear that every aspect of our sexual lives is to submit to the creative purpose of God and be channeled into the exclusive arena of human sexual behavior—marriage—defined clearly and exclusively as the lifelong, monogamous union of a man and a woman” (#1739).

Today, of course, there are revisionist thinkers within the religious world who explain away the clear words of Scripture and insist the modern world requires a new morality better attuned to its desires. In their view, convictions rooted in antiquity have no more value than pre-scientific notions regarding astronomy or immunology. To such thinkers—and the many churches embracing their views—orthodox believers “must speak a word of compassionate truth. And that compassionate truth is this: homosexual acts are expressly and unconditionally forbidden by God through his Word, and such acts are an abomination to the Lord by his own declaration” (#1778). Strong words! But compassion need not walk weakly, extending approval to everyone in every situation! Without a mental toughness, we will fail to resist the sledge hammer blows now bludgeoning traditional marriage.

Similarly, we dare not stand aside (under the auspices of kindness and tolerance) while this nation’s religious liberties are attacked. Revolutionaries of all sorts, sexual revolutionaries included, know they must establish their ideologies in a people’s legal structures. No one thinking clearly about America’s recent history can avoid concluding that Christians who dare deviate from the erotic revolution’s dictates will be punished. Given the decades-long shift to administrative law courts (invisible to many of us), people are increasingly fined for failing to measure up to the precepts of sexual “equality” or mouthing “hate speech.” So florists and bakers and photographers refusing to participate in gay weddings have been found guilty and harshly fined for their conscience-bound commitment to traditional marriage. “Erotic liberty” outweighs religious liberty and threatens to entirely subvert it.