



Liberty and Logic: The Real Significance of “Same-Sex Marriage”

So-called “same-sex marriage” is the issue of the week. The Supreme Court is expected to make a ruling on its constitutionality in June.

My prediction: Same-sex marriage will soon become the law of the land.

The reason for this is simple: Conservatives who claim to favor “traditional marriage,” “disbelieve” in “same-sex marriage,” and oppose “the redefining” of marriage have ceded too much ground to their opponents.

And they have ceded this ground by speaking of *traditional* marriage (as if there were any other kind), their *belief* that marriage is between a man and a woman (as if this were a question of belief), and their opposition to the act of *redefining* marriage (as if it were within anyone’s power to define or redefine marriage).

In short, by way of their arguments (or non-arguments) against “same-sex marriage,” conservatives actually reinforce the idea — long championed on the left — that institutions are “social constructs,” artifacts that government, or “society,” can create and destroy at will.

The problem with this reasoning is that if institutions such as marriage really have been arbitrarily constructed by government, then there is no reason that they shouldn’t be *deconstructed* in the event that Equality or some other ideal demands this course.

With an eye toward ascending from the mire of confusion in which far too many of us have been wading for far too long, I offer the following comments.

First, homosexuality may be the most moral, most natural, most divine-like activity in which human beings are capable of engaging. No matter. The fact remains that marriage can no more accommodate homosexuals than bachelorhood can accommodate those who are married.

Just as bachelorhood is a state of being that inherently excludes the married, so too is marriage a state of being that inherently excludes homosexuals. Thus, the language of “same-sex marriage” is as self-contradictory, as ridiculous, as that of “married bachelorhood.”

To put it another way, same-sex marriage is no marriage at all.

Inseparable from this first point is another: This issue is not now, nor has it ever been, about “the redefinition” of marriage. It is as impossible for you or me or the Supreme Court to redefine marriage as it would be for any of us to redefine bachelorhood.

Human beings invent words, it is true; but our words are pointers — vehicles by which we express and



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relay concepts or ideas. This is crucial, for internal to each idea is its own logic that makes it the idea that it is. So, for example, whatever word we choose to affix to the concept of a bachelor, the concept of a bachelor has always been and will always be the concept of an unmarried man. Even if there are no bachelors, even if we somehow managed to drop the word “bachelor” from our vocabulary, never to use it again, the logic of the concept once denoted by this word would remain forever intact: A bachelor could never be anything other than an unmarried man.

The case is much the same with the concept of marriage. The government can choose to allow homosexual unions and endow them with the term “marriage.” And, in theory, the government can allow married people to regard themselves as “bachelors.” In reality, however, the government can no more allow “same-sex marriage” or “married bachelorhood” than it can decree that the world started yesterday.

Third, as points one and two make clear, it makes about as much sense to say that one “believes” that marriage is between a man and a woman as it does to say that one “believes” that only single men should be considered bachelors. Marriage is what it is — an essentially heterosexual union. It is not an object of *belief*; it is an object of *knowledge*.

Finally, the supporters of “traditional marriage” must stop using such a term. Besides lending legitimacy to the proposition that there *are* forms of marriage other than the heterosexual variety, the term “traditional marriage” is meaningless by reason of redundancy. There is no *traditional* marriage. There is only marriage.

As I said, these considerations aside, in all likelihood the government will eventually ascribe the label of “marriage” to those homosexuals who wish their unions to be recognized as such. An ever growing number of people fail to see why anyone would or should have a problem with this. But there *is* a problem.

Every change, however great or small, is purchased at a cost. The loss of the familiar and the uncertainty regarding the new situation produced by a change are costs common to all changes. Because of this, the prudent have always preferred changes that are small and gradual to those that are grand and transformative.

Yet the kind of change in our marital arrangements that the Supreme Court is presently contemplating is one of the latter kind: Never in the history of the world has anything like it been conceived, much less seriously considered. Only fools and liars would have us believe that there won’t be a substantial price to be paid for legalizing “same-sex marriage.”

Admittedly, I don’t think that marriage will suffer as a consequence of this. Marriage is far more threatened by a hyper-sexualized popular culture, the ease with which divorces are pursued and granted, etc. Still, while marriage may be no worse off as a result of the legalization of “same-sex marriage,” our liberty just may be.

American liberty consists of all of the liberties laid out in our Constitution. If any one of these liberties is threatened, the entire system is imperiled. Now, freedom of religion is a fundamental liberty. If it becomes unconstitutional to prevent homosexuals from “marrying” other homosexuals, then religious organizations that refuse to accommodate homosexuals along these lines may very well be convicted of acting unconstitutionally. Hence, freedom of religion, along with freedom of conscience, will be forever lost.

This is anything but a far-fetched scenario. Consider that the vast majority of the proponents of same-



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sex marriage, and virtually all of its most militant supporters, are located solidly on the Left. Then consider that for at least a couple of centuries, leftist revolutionaries and radicals have recognized religion to be the most formidable obstacle to their designs, for the religious insist upon deferring to an authority higher than that of the government.

What better way to weaken religion than to coerce its practitioners to submit to the state? And what better way to coerce its practitioners than by threatening them not only with legal penalties, but with acting disreputably?

Thoughtful people, regardless of their religious, political, or sexual orientations, will realize that the issue of “same-sex marriage” is not just, and not even primarily, about marriage.



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