

“Marriage and Politics” by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson and Robert P. George, *National Review*, February 11, 2013; Cal Thomas, “When Public Opinion Trumps Eternal Truth”, *Washington Examiner*, March 27, 2013

Sixty years ago, a homophile monthly’s cover read: “HOMOSEXUAL MARRIAGE?” (*ONE*, August 1953) In 1963, its cover dropped the question mark: “Let’s Push Homophile Marriage”. In 1964, IVCF did not reappoint me to its staff at Penn because I pushed for *evangelical* support for gay couples. Three years later, while doing my dissertation on homosexuality, the U.S. Supreme Court finally legalized *interracial* marriage. Today’s gay marriage debate is yet another episode in the long history of struggles by people denied (often in the name of God) what the powerful enjoy for themselves. Though oppressors know *their* needs for closest intimacy, they close their minds and hearts to others’ needs.

God is emphatic: “It’s *bad*” for man to be alone! (Bruce Waltke’s rendering of the Hebrew) Besides communion with God, *we need closest human kinship*. God’s gift of a *mate* (not another beast of the field!) brought joy: “At last, bone of *my* bone, flesh of *my* flesh!” In this biblical phrasing, “gender distinctions play no role”. (James V. Brownson)

But Robert George, jurisprudence professor and conservative activist, and his two young protégés, balk at gay folks’ needs for same-sex marriage. They do this by evoking Natural Law while evading the Royal Law, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Jas 2:8)

Natural Law is a poor push back. Moral relativism across time and cultures as well as the lack of consistency of content among natural law theories dissolve any actual unity necessary for maintaining such a fixed Law. Slavery, women’s equality and capital punishment, for example, have all been both *supported and rejected* in the name of Natural Law. But, given his Catholic confidence in a *law of nature*, we may be wasting Calvin’s breath to cite to George, Calvin’s words: “Both for our dullness and our contumacy, the Lord has given us his written Law, which by its sure attestations, removes *the obscurity of the law of nature*, and also, by shaking off our lethargy, makes a more lively and permanent impression on our minds.” Moreover, Jesus pointed out that *the point of the written Law is love* – caring for *others*’ needs just as we care for *our own*.

As to *conservative politics*, even *National Review* notes that, “Conservative opinion on the intersection of homosexuality and politics is not monolithic”. *NR* objected to the Conservative Political Action Conference’s exclusion of a gay conservative group from CPAC meetings this year. Says *NR*: The gay group “has participated in past conferences with no discernible ill effects.” In 1974, *NR* published a pro-gay cover feature by David Brudnoy, a board member of the Homosexual Community Counseling Center that I founded in 1971. Another public intellectual at *NR*, Ernest van den Haag, also an HCCC board member, boldly and bluntly *refuted* the natural law objections to homosexuality.

George *et al* claim to “make a rational case for the historic understanding of marriage” but ignore the *actual history* of marriage. They ignore millennia of patriarchal power-arranged marriages, child marriages, legal inequality of wives, polygamy, concubinage, chattel marriages, levirate marriages, clandestine marriages, suttee (custom of the “good wife”), Islam’s *’urfi, misyar* and *mut’a* marriages, pre-modern marriages without a trace of taken-for-granted romantic expectations of our era and many other historic forms that neither these authors nor their followers have in mind as what they mischaracterize as “the historic understanding of

marriage”. So their arguments against “redefining of marriage” are unmoored from *historical perspective* – including the not so long ago resistance to the then alleged “redefining of marriage” in *Loving v. Virginia*.

Alleging that same-sex marriage “exclude[s] sexual complementarity” – as if that were a matter of mere genitalia – they fail to see that, without a *sensed experience of sexual complementarity* between same-sex partners, there’d be no *desire* for same-sex marriage. George *et al* fail to extrapolate from their own *heterosexual experience of complementarity* – *sexual attraction to the fascinating otherness* perceived in the *person of a spouse*. It’s an *idiosyncratic* experience. If complementarity came down to body parts below the belt, *anyone’s* vagina or penis would do. Such may be a *rapist’s* focus but it’s *not* the focus of *loving spouses*.

Their insisting on a *binary* sex model ignores congenital adrenal hyperplasia, partial or complete androgen insensitivity, penile and testicular agenesis, and vaginal agenesis, Klinefelter or Turner syndrome, etc. Their “conjugal” obsession with *procreation* for a marriage’s legitimacy incoherently includes the infertile and excludes same-sex spouses. Their slippery slope fear of same-sex marriages leading to “large ensemble” marriages ignores today’s *peer* spouse prizing of *parity*. Heterosexuals, too, slip into dysfunctional schemes, but George *et al* cite only *gay* pushers, not any of the many *straight* pushers.

Claiming to tell “the truth about marriage” and how “redefining” it “would harm the common good”, George *et al* fail at both. Instead, their arguments are soaked in sophistry and special pleading and show a strange insensitivity to the Golden Rule and Royal Law.

Cal Thomas attacks the increasing public support for same-sex marriage, failing to see that “them” have become *us* – family, friends. He cites Lincoln on principle over public opinion, warning that, “public opinion might well become mob rule”. It became and won a Civil War! As church-going slave owners did, he projects his *socially conditioned* readings into the Bible. He caricatures as “anything goes” and “nothing’s off limits”, the modest desire of same-sex couples to have the same support that heterosexual couples enjoy. Does he not recall this same scaremongering against *interracial* marriage? He complains that, instead of being led by the Bible, we’re led by Kim Kardashian! He slams same-sex marriage with a *heterosexual* marriage wreck? From within the comfort of his own marriage, he’d deprive same-sex couples of similar comfort. Why does he not let *himself* be led by the Bible to recognize, respect and treat others and *their* given needs for sexual intimacy as he recognizes, respects and treats *his own* given needs?

He signs off quoting Ibsen: “Public opinion is an extremely mutable thing.” And so are “immutable” *interpretations* of Bible verses. Thomas’ old Moral Majority colleague and co-author, Ed Dobson, responded with *Christian love* when *his son* came out as gay.