

To the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee, Parliament House, Canberra ACT

"Marriage Equality Bill 2010"

Marriage is Incomparably Christian - Without Equal

Australia's social debate about marriage now before our Parliament seeks to redefine the Institution of marriage. If this legislation is passed it will greatly impact the core belief of Christians. For me personally, and for Christians who have already entered into marriage for spiritual and religious reasons, or for those with the intent to do so, this will forfeit their religious right and freedom to exercise their faith through embracing only those virtues and values Christian marriage always has exclusively embodied.

The Christian foundation of marriage is what gives marriage its meaning, purpose and value. It is both a natural institution and a sacred union because it is founded in the divine plan for creation, bringing the most benefit to individuals, families and society. It is the reason why Christians believe the true meaning of marriage can only exist between a man and a woman. Same-sex union contradicts the nature of marriage. The natural purpose of sexual union, for instance, cannot be achieved. Therefore it is wrong to equate their relationship to marriage. One US Catholic source, expressing the scriptural basis for marriage in a similar debate in their country recently, quoted the following Scriptures with their clearly implied meaning to support their argument that marriage is exclusively for a man and a woman.

"Marriage comes from the loving hand of God, who fashioned both male and female in the divine image (see Gn 1:27). —A man "leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body" (Gn 2:24). The man recognizes the woman as "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gn 2:23). God blesses the man and woman and commands them to "be fertile and multiply" (Gn 1:28). Jesus reiterates these teachings from Genesis, saying, "But from the beginning of creation, —God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother [and be joined to his wife], and the two shall become one flesh" (Mk 10:6-8)"

A current attempt to reclassify marriage, it must be understood, disrespects what is central to all Christians, their faith and what they believe and is therefore deeply offensive. It insinuates that either God does not exist or that His teachings do not matter. Christ's relationship to the believer is characterized by imagery in many parts of scripture depicting Christ as the Bridegroom, and the Church, comprised of all believers, as His Bride of which He is the head. No confusion exists for Christians in this respect, for example, when the apostle, St. Paul writes to his fellow believers in the church at Corinth and says, "For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Cor.11: 2.

Children

Marriage is a personal relationship with public significance. It contributes to society because it models the way in which women and men live interdependently and commit, for the whole of life, to seek the good of each other. The marital union also provides the best conditions for raising children: namely, the stable loving relationship of a mother and father present only in marriage. The state rightly recognizes this relationship as a public institution in its laws because the relationship makes a unique and essential contribution to the common good, and to the welfare of children.

The Law

Laws play an educational role insofar as they shape patterns of thought and behavior, particularly about what is socially permissible and acceptable. In effect, giving same-sex unions the legal status of marriage would grant official public approval to homosexual activity and would treat it as if it were morally neutral, against the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures upon which Christians base their faith.

The Holy Scriptures recorded in the Bible are sacred to Christians. It is these scriptures that establish the foundations and origins of marriage from the beginning of time. To propose changing that meaning of marriage currently enshrined in our law, in order to grant same-sex unions the same standing is offensive to all that Christianity holds sacred. This sort of change to the law is of a magnitude that would alter the definition of a fundamental article of faith of Christianity and would unjustly impact the nation's largest religion.

Legislation that serves only to placate a minority, sectional interest group, should not be a prerogative the state is willing to endorse when its ramifications are so important to Australia's largest religious group. Were this bill to be successful in redefining marriage, it would, reprehensibly, elevate same-sex unions to the equivalent of marriage, which countless millions have held as a divinely instituted sacred union, taught and practiced by Christian societies for millennia.

Redefining Marriage Discriminates Against Christians

When marriage is redefined so as to make other relationships equivalent to it, the institution of marriage is devalued and further weakened. The weakening of this basic institution at all levels and by various forces has already exacted too high a social cost.

For these and many other reasons, same-sex union can never be equated with marriage. For our Government to vote to change the law to accommodate this practice would be to severely discriminate against Christians who hold marriage as an institution which sacredly unites those who have entered into it fully by their faith and by their belief that it is an institution ordained of God, their creator. The Holy Scriptures, which definitively establish all the parameters of marriage as Christian, are unambiguous and clear to all who follow them.

The point may be illustrated by suggesting, for instance, that Aboriginal communities would welcome non-Aboriginal people redefining their own non-Aboriginal customs as being identical to the sacred customs of Aboriginal belief. It would be entirely wrong for our society to expect Aboriginal people to deny something they hold sacred, (for the sake of fairness to non-Aboriginal people). In exactly the same way it is entirely wrong to expect Christians to do the same in relation to marriage.

If our society wants to continue to respect the culture of racial and religious groups, be they Aboriginal, Muslim or Christian, the law must not give offence to, nor must it discriminate against, the rights of those groups. The breach of rights and customs Christians will suffer under the proposed same-sex legislation changes, discriminates against Christians.

Justice Requires Society to Deny Same-Sex Marriage

Denying marriage to same-sex persons does not demonstrate unjust discrimination and a lack of respect for them as persons. It is not unjust to deny legal status to same-sex unions because marriage and same-sex unions are essentially different realities. In fact, justice requires society to do so.

To uphold God's intent for marriage, in which sexual relations have their proper and exclusive place, is not to offend the dignity of homosexual persons. Christians must give witness to the whole moral truth and oppose as immoral both homosexual acts and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons.

The revisionist's proposition that same-sex unions, defined as marriage, harm no-one, and that not allowing gay and lesbian couples to define their relationships as marriage is a denial of 'natural justice', collapses under close scrutiny. Under their proposal, marriage would be totally changed. Marriage would be something else. It would place adult sexual choice and emotions at the centre. In other words, marriage would not be about securing the rights of children, but rather about meeting the needs of adults. Marriage thus redefined would be just something that adults do, and would give the state no basis to be involved in it. Furthermore, the state would need to find some other basis for intervening on behalf of children, which is the legitimate state role, so far linked inseparably to marriage but potentially now to be removed.

Under these conditions there is no reason why marriage rights should not be granted to polyamorous relationships, or to any other type of sexual relationship. Indeed, it is unclear even why sexual activity should be the focal point - why couldn't long-term housemates or inseparable golfing partners, for instance, likewise seek recognition at law for their relationship, and call it marriage?

The State's Rightful Role

The state has an obligation to promote the family, which is founded in marriage. Therefore, it can justly give married couples rights and benefits it does not extend to others. Ultimately, the stability and flourishing of society is dependent on the stability and flourishing of healthy family life.

The legal recognition of marriage, including the benefits associated with it, is not only about personal commitment, but also about the social commitment that husband and wife make to the well being of society. It would be wrong to redefine marriage for the sake of providing benefits to those who cannot rightfully enter into marriage. Some benefits currently sought by persons in same-sex unions can already be obtained without regard to marital status. Redefining marriage is not the appropriate way to redress benefits if anomalies exist.

Faith And Life Not Separate Issues

The mantra of the separation of church and state should not mean the state has the right to dismantle deeply held spiritual values of proven long-term validity and value. There should be no separation between one's faith and life in either public or private realms. All Christians should act on their beliefs with a well-formed conscience based on the Sacred Scriptures. They should be a community of conscience within society. By their voice and their vote, they should contribute to society's welfare and test its public life by the standards of right reason and Gospel truth. Responsible citizenship is a virtue. Participation in the political process is a moral obligation. This is particularly urgent in light of the need to defend marriage and to oppose the legalization of same-sex unions as marriages.

Marriage is a basic human and social institution inextricably tied to its primary Christian foundations. Though it is regulated by civil laws and church laws, it did not originate from either the church or state, but from God. Therefore, neither church nor state can alter the basic meaning and structure of marriage. This is why marriage is so vitally important if we are to continue to enjoy the freedom to practice Christianity based on the authority of its sacred scriptural sources.

Marriage, whose nature and purposes are established by God, can only be the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life and must remain such in law. In a manner unlike any other relationship, marriage makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the common good of society, especially through the procreation and education of children. The union of husband and wife becomes, over a lifetime, a great good for themselves, their family, communities, and society. Marriage is a gift to be cherished and protected.

Our Australian society has to recognize the wisdom of the centuries and millennia in the definition of marriage that we have and protect it. Christians are not trying to oppress people, but they do want to do something important and good for our society based on their faith and conscience for which they firmly rely upon the tested values of the sacred scriptures recorded in the Holy Bible. If we learn anything from history, we should learn that now is the time to protect the time-honored institution of marriage, not the time to destroy it.