

Marriage

Marriage is the most despised institution on earth. It is also the mother of all laws. These two go hand in hand and will never be parted until marriage ends in heaven. It may help us all to know that marriage has not just recently become the most despised institution, but has always held this dishonour since the fall. What first seemed to make perfect sense in the garden — that coitus, with its form of pleasure, unites husband and wife in their different complementarity for the purpose of creating children and caring for them — suddenly became despised work. Luther calls it the “cross” laid on marriage in his little marriage booklet: so marriage concerns whom you choose to have children with despite the distress and work and also whom you choose to serve in the hour of death.

No matter what you try to do with marriage on earth there is a threat in it since it is God’s institution for life and he wants it for something other than yourself. It is his building block for society that sanctifies its officeholders by taking the life from them and giving it to others. It is a wise thing on God’s part that there is normally natural desire to bring people into this useful form of sacrifice of the body for the neighbour, since people are also naturally reluctant to enter into it or stay in it due to the contrary desire for survival. Luther knew that a man and woman getting married are indicating that they know something about “what danger and need they are exposing themselves to... For we experience every day how much unhappiness the devil causes in the married estate through adultery, unfaithfulness, discord, and all kinds of misery.”

In light of the threat in marriage (despite its blessings), sinners constantly look for a loophole in the law. The gutsiest attempt is to say the marriage institution is not for humans, but by them. I live daily among people who think marriage is a social construct. Humans created it for their own interests via shifting linguistic signs that change to meet new circumstances. Marriage is then a game of chess that has certain rules that have developed over time and become conventional, but they could have been different and may well be in the future if enough players think the knight should not leap. Marriage, it is thought, will then become palatable or even desirable, since it meets our interests and does not demand that “the birth of the child is the death of the father” (Hegel).

So we have entered the great experiment of remaking marriage into friendship based on pleasure rather than the office of unity of male and female in coitus for the biological purpose of procreation. It is strange to be on the minority side when it comes to marriage and being forced to publicly defend the thing. We are told that marriage as instituted by God’s command is on the wrong side of history. Man rose and said, “I have made!” And lo, it happened! The estate of government overruled the estate of marriage, proving that marriage was merely political as defined by the majority (or even a few judges). But theologians of the cross are always on the wrong side of history precisely because history is not a social construct, even though sinners necessarily try to make it such. It is true that by faith we conduct our lives as if there were no God, and it appears most often to be true. But we are assured there is a creator who makes marriage the chief law.

Unfortunately, social experiments like this one are not neutral. They have real consequences for people’s lives or non-lives. What appears as a way of giving recognition through the office of marriage to those who feel marginalized because of their manner of sex has within it what every law has — a threat. As Jesus recited to the Pharisees who wanted a loophole in marriage: “Male and female he made them... [T]he two shall become one flesh... [W]hat God has joined let no man put asunder” (Mark 10 and Genesis 1 and 2). You are not a unity, and you cannot unite yourselves to whomever you want. You do not even have God’s image in yourself since *imago Dei* is precisely the joining of flesh between man and woman in the office of marriage. And where there is a threat there is also divine wrath, even though God is slow to anger and abounding in mercy.

So we pray as Luther suggested at the end of the marriage service: “We beseech your never-ending goodness that you would not permit this your creation, ordinance, and blessing to be removed or destroyed, but graciously preserve it among us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Marriage may be removed from us, but it will not be removed from the world, since God is already seeing to it. God will not give marriage over to social constructors. He alone brings this law to its end when the world ends, not before. *Steve Paulson, Logia, Holy Matrimony.*

