

Why the UK Government is Wrong About Gay Marriage

It is hard not to be troubled about the government's moves towards legalizing same-sex marriage. Although the words used are those of 'consultation' there is evidence that ministerial minds are already made up.

Yet you do not have to be a Christian to have concerns about the issues raised by this concept. It is important to remember that despite the sneers, it is not homophobic, fundamentalist or politically incorrect to raise such concerns. Indeed, you could argue—as some have—that redefining marriage in this way does no service to the gay community itself.

Let me raise the issues as I see them.

There is the issue of *motivation*. Civil partnerships have existed since 2004 and appear to work satisfactorily. So why is there this demand for a change in the basis of marriage? It's hard not to conclude that this is a deliberate and aggressive attack on traditional heterosexual marriage. A small but vocal minority within the gay community seem to be pushing for a 'take it or break it' attitude to marriage. And within this government there appears to be little more than a desire to follow the crowd and gain votes. This combination of hostility and expediency is the worst possible basis for legislation.

There is the issue of *principle*. Jews and Christians would point to the clear definition of marriage set out in the first pages of the Bible (Gen. 2:18-24) and see in this God's design for the human race. The Christian would want to point out further that this definition of marriage is reaffirmed both by Jesus (Matt. 19:4-6) and by Paul (Eph. 5:31). Non-believers and believers alike must recognise the near universality of

this pattern of marriage in history and geography.

It is also an unarguable fact that a working marriage is the foundation of social stability, a proven source of human happiness and the best basis for the nurture of children. Surveys suggest that most women and many men in partnerships would prefer to be married. If ever there was an institution over which the phrase 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it!' was written, it is traditional marriage.

There is the issue of *precedent*. If we feel that we are free to redefine marriage what, if anything, do we now exclude from legal 'marriage'? Polygamy? Any combination and number of partners? Once you have dismantled the weighty historical and biblical foundations that uphold traditional marriage, what other foundation will you build in its place? And why should this new foundation hold? On a related issue, although we are assured that vicars, priests, rabbis and imams will not be forced to conduct gay marriages, can we really be certain that, in 10 years' time, this will not be the new frontline? I think not!

There is the issue of *gender*. At the heart of the 'gay marriage agenda' is a presumption that men and women are sufficiently identical that they can be interchanged in relationships. It is taken for granted that it doesn't fundamentally matter whether a relationship is male-female, male-male or female-female. Yet the Bible, psychology and experience combine to state that men and women are different in many ways. Feminism did not simply achieve a measure of equality for women but also a hard-won acceptance that women and men are different and that those differences can be celebrated. Allowing same-sex marriage tramples over that recognition of gender differences.

There is the issue of *appropriateness*. Traditional marriage is designed—or has evolved—to accommodate the complementary psychological and physical differences that exist between men

and women. Same-sex relationships are very different. So on what basis do we assume that marriage is appropriate for them? Legal homosexual relationships are a relative novelty in the West and surely we need time and study to find out what is the best legal and social framework for them. To assume it is marriage is yet another presumption.

The evidence is utterly overwhelming that this proposed 'consultation' on same-sex marriage is hasty and ill-conceived. This proposed consultation is driven by the desire of the government to be popular; to overturn it will require little more than the recognition that it is, in reality, deeply unpopular. This is a bad proposal, made for the worst reasons and one that could have a lasting impact on society. Silence is not an appropriate response.

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