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The Role of Faith in Development and Humanitarian Assistance

_A Conversation with Katherine Marshall & Sharon Eubank_

Religion has a place [in humanitarian assistance] because it is an accelerator either for good or for bad. If people are driven by their faith, their belief, and their openness to respect other people’s faith and belief, it is an accelerator toward things like forgiveness and tolerance.

Is There Anything “Essentially” Human?

James Wilson’s Critique of Locke

_Daniel N. Robinson_

What fleshes out the nominal essence of anybody is just what happens to be rattling around between their ears. It is their particular history of experience that gives them the ideational stock of which they construct nominal essences.

What Follows for the Family—Logically and Psychologically—from Re-Defining Marriage?

_Robert George_

When it comes to the social importance of marriage under the conjugal view, it is predicated on the idea that it is a good thing for children to have both maternal and paternal role models, influences, and care.
The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom

Ryan T. Anderson

We are created in the image and likeness of God. We are created male and female. Male and female are created for each other. If you look at the challenges of our generation, it is going to be those three truths in particular that are going to need defending.

Suffer the Little Children:

How a culture centered on individual rights has impacted the lives and wellbeing of children

Jenet Erickson

Marriage is the only thing we can find that actually binds parents in a committed way with all their resources and the best of themselves to their children’s development.
Fred Axelgard: What is it, either out of your own experience or your own thought processes, that makes you want to be involved in this work at this time?

Katherine Marshall: Well, let me start with the issue of injustice and inequality. I think there is no challenge in the world and no moral challenge and no practical challenge that is as great as the misery of people who live in abject poverty, who live in situations of conflict—and something that is completely unavoidable in today’s world is the inequality. We have many stories, but I will tell you one that has never left my mind. I was responsible for the Sahel department in the World Bank, which was 10 countries in West Africa, and I was visiting Niger, which at the time had only 22% of children in primary school. We had a $200 million IDA
grant ready to go, but there was a teacher strike and political problems. We went to visit a school where there were 120 children in the class sitting on the ground with no books, nothing. They were the lucky ones because they were the ones who at least had some opportunity. I went home, and my son was about three years old at the time, and I went to look at one of the schools that he would go to. They were debating whether computers in the classroom was a good idea and whether 14 children was too many and there was color and light and it affirmed something that goes way back in me, that there is just no way that this is right and just and that our challenge is to give everyone the opportunity to develop their God-given gifts and to do something about these injustices in the world.

Sharon Eubank: Well, I really resonate with what Katherine just said, this idea of allowing the human potential in each person to grow up and flower. There are so many barriers in the world. Let me just tell a story. It isn’t why I am in this industry, but it is a good example. When ISIS came out of Raqqa and headed toward Mosul in Iraq, they persecuted Christians and others, and you had a mass of people who had nowhere to go except for the Kurdish border. A lot of those Christians came into Erbil and congregated at the Anglican Church. The Vicar of Baghdad who runs that church suddenly has in one day 5,000 refugees. He doesn’t know how to feed them. They have come with nothing, and every two minutes cars are pulling up with more people. This was in the Christian quarter and the LDS Charities office happened to be across the street. The Vicar of Baghdad walked across the street and he said, “I have got to have some help.” They said, “Well, what is the problem?” He said, “Well, the first thing is, I don’t know how to feed these people.” So they started working together. As they
worked together in that situation, horrific stories were coming up about women with their little toddlers that had just seen all the men in their family massacred in front of them. I have gone back to them, and the Vicar of Baghdad has come to Salt Lake to talk about that. [We have] a warm relationship. When you have gone through something terrible like that to set aside whatever differences you have to work together for the potential in people’s hearts, it [can] bond you in a way that nothing else does. I know the situation is real because I lived through that and it is still going on. That is the reason I am doing this. I am an addict. When it actually happens, to me that is more powerful than a drug, and to save the rising generation in those ways and their human potential, to me it is a privilege to be part of, and it wakes me up every morning.

Fred Axelgard: Let me ask each of you, what is it that faith brings to a development situation or a humanitarian assistance situation? What is valid and effective and impactful about faith-based effort being involved there?

Katherine Marshall: Well, I think there are at least two sides to it. One is the world’s population and then the other is this complex issue about motivation and drive. The sort of no-brainer on the faith issue is the estimate that 84% of the world’s population belongs to one faith tradition or another because they have some faith affiliation. That is a pretty large group of people and it is an enormously important part of people’s lives and how much it is changing, we are not sure. In other words, some people say there is a resurgence of faith. We are not sure. Certainly, it is a vital part of people’s lives and it is simply foolish to ignore that part of it. It is ferociously complex and I discover new traditions virtually every day. When Jim Wolfensohn launched this initiative in the World Bank, he is quite proud of saying that of 184 member countries of the World Bank it was 184 to 0 for the World Bank getting involved and we needed to spend quite a bit of time figuring out what the problem was. Essentially the view was that you shouldn’t touch religion because it is divisive, it is political, it is against a lot of the principles of development like gender equality. Yet, the fact is that there are religious dimensions to every single issue on the planet.
The question though, is trying to understand it within the context of the very different religious traditions. So I think that just the fact of life, of the importance of religions, religious beliefs, religious communities, religious practices within the human families and including those that are the poorest and those in conflict areas is vitally important. I think the issue of the motivation within the faith-inspired organizations and the somewhat complex issues of state and church or of religion and then governance, are important. I think that it is very dangerous to assume that faith is the only motivation that can give people passion and caring for people. It is something you have to watch out for. I also think that in thinking about these questions of poverty and the role of religion, your personal belief is much less important than the belief of the people who you are trying to work with. That is a balance that people need to keep in mind. It is obviously true that people are driven and motivated to care and to keep the balance of values by the teachings of their religious traditions. That plays a very important role and I think always has in the way people think about development. It has been an integral part of the evolution of approaches toward development I think from the beginning.

Sharon Eubank: I believe that religion has a place, not only because 85% of people adhere to some kind of religion, but because it is an accelerator either for good or for bad. You see this sometimes in religious conflict when people have very entrenched beliefs and they are reinforced by what people assume is a religious sanction. Things can go bad really fast. On the flip side of that, if people are driven by their faith, their belief and their openness to respect other people’s faith and belief, it is an accelerator toward things like forgiveness and
tolerance and it allows things to happen that would take in, a secular situation years, even decades to happen. Let me give some examples. One of them is an old example that happened after World War II. The Netherlands was completely decimated by German aircraft and the city of Rotterdam was carpet bombed in a way to break the Dutch spirit. [The Dutch] had very strong feelings and resisted. When the Germans pulled out, they stole everything. Food, furniture, they just wiped the earth clean as they were leaving. The Dutch have very strong feelings about this. The Dutch government gave everybody seed potatoes and asked after the war, “Try and grow these in window boxes” because they were facing a winter of starvation. So Dutch communities started to do that. Well, there were some religious communities that were in touch with their sister organizations in Germany, which was also decimated by the war. As it came up, there was this idea, maybe we should give these potatoes that we have been growing all summer to the Germans. The answer was, “No. We are not doing that!” Obviously, they would never do that for their bitter enemy. As [the communities] discussed this, the idea was that “they are starving in a worse situation than we are. Can we live our Christian religion and donate this?” The answer was, “No! We are not doing this.” Over the weeks, as they discussed this, they decided, and I think they sent 74 truckloads of potatoes over the border to the Germans. Now this is a nice Christian act—it healed the feelings, the bitterness of these enemies between themselves because the Germans couldn’t believe that the Dutch had done this thing. So you could have had meetings and conferences and all this discussion and peace building, but it takes an act like that within one year to heal things that would not have been healed in a secular setting. So there is an example.

Fred Axelgard: You can end on a positive note or perhaps, if there is just one barrier that you wish you could remove, one technical, political, cultural barrier that has made it hard for religion to have its impact in development [please share it].

Sharon Eubank: Katherine will have a good answer to this one, so I am going to give a short answer first. As I think about what has been successful for me or as I have seen of others, it has to do with this idea that no one way is right. There
are many options and we can be open to those options. I think it has to do with asking a lot of questions about why things are the way they are in each instance. It has to do with the warmth or the ability to create strong relationships with people who feel differently than I do, and then maybe [another] thing would be time. We talked at dinner as we were sitting there that it feels so discouraging to try and make progress and then to go backwards, but as you look over 40 years or 50 years, you can see the progress that is being made. These kinds of things won’t get solved with a bunch of projects and they won’t be forced into a time table but if you can cultivate the ability to ask questions, cultivate the ability to connect with people who feel very differently from you in a very sincere kind of way, give yourself the time that it takes and the ability to innovate and ask why is this the way it is so that you can understand the core issues. To me, those are the skills that are behind religious literacy. You will be the leaders. I am going to be gone in five years. I will go retire and go do something that is not as complex, but you are these leaders that are coming up and it gives me a lot of energy and hope because you care about these issues, you are structuring your lives around these issues, your personal commitment, and the careers you’ll hopefully have.

Katherine Marshall: Well, Sharon said it all, but let me add one last issue and then essentially make the same plea to you. In all the crises, you mentioned hot button issues. I think there are many people who feel that we are facing crises and challenges that we have not faced before. As you say, there are so many of these conflict situations, so many of them unexpected and they don’t end. Situations you thought were solved, then the conflict erupts again, but in virtually every one...
of them, this broad term of governance comes up and it is an absolutely vital issue and it is one that I think the religious world needs to be part of thinking about. You can’t just dismiss governance as hopeless. We need governance. When people use the term governance, they basically mean the way that societies are governed by their political and administrative institutions. In all of these situations, you are seeing a complete breakdown of governance. The specific issue of corruption is one that is a grievance in every single crisis situation that I can think of and that I know of. I think that it is one that all of us should be putting our minds to because it is something that you can do something about. It is useful to remember that Boston and New York and perhaps even Salt Lake City went through periods of being corrupt and these have been mastered. It is one that affects all institutions, so starting at the family and going all the way to the global society. Religious leaders and institution have been surprisingly absent from a lot of the discussions about these issues for a variety of reasons. First of all, one of the reasons is they are a bit uneasy about their own houses so let’s get their own houses and deal with that issue, but then really, speaking truth to power, but also dealing with the practicalities of what it means. I think it extends beyond that to the basic responsibility of providing security for citizens and providing education and health and so forth. Dick Ruffin is dealing with the thousands, hundreds of thousands, even millions of NGO’s. I don’t think that the solution to poverty and to conflict and so on lies with a myriad, a thousand flowers. It has to be within some kind of structure and I think we need to find ways to work within that structure, even as we challenge them. So the issue that we are looking for is indeed to have groups like you be the leaders in making this. There is one of my colleagues who has an article that she wrote called *Religion: The New Normal*. It is not an exceptional issue. It is not one that is related to your personal beliefs, but that it is a fundamental part of understanding the world and engaging in it.
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Sharon Eubank is currently the director of LDS Charities, the humanitarian organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She received a bachelor’s degree in English from Brigham Young University. Her career includes working as a legislative aide in the U.S. Senate for 4 years and owning a retail education store in Provo, Utah, for 7 years. Since 1998, she has been employed by the Church in the Welfare Department. She helped to establish 17 international LDS employment offices in Africa and Europe. For five years she directed the humanitarian wheelchair program expanding its scope to 50,000 individual donations each year and implementing World Health Organization training standards. In 2008 Sharon became regional director of the LDS Charities for the Middle East Africa North area where she oversaw humanitarian work with active country offices in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Jordan, and Morocco. She also served on the Relief Society general board during Sister Julie B. Beck’s administration until April 2012.

This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered on February 24, 2016. To watch the full discussion, please go to wheatley.byu.edu.
Philosophers, political scientists, and political philosophers, have composed veritable libraries on the subject of rights: political rights, Hohfeldian rights, libertarian rights, and so forth. The problem is that we are never told what a right is. I would like to begin by raising an ontological question: Is there anything in the real world to which rights intelligibly attach themselves such as gravity attaches to weight? There is a natural connection there: that is why you weigh less on the moon. What could it be in a right that makes contact with something real, something really existing? Some years ago, my Oxford colleague and distinguished philosopher of science, Rom Harré, and I wrote a widely uncited article in *The Review of Metaphysics* titled “On the Primacy
of Duties.” We advanced the idea there that the one thing about an entity that matches up with the notion of the entity being rights-bearing is that the entity has a certain class of vulnerabilities. The one thing that matches up with an entity having something that makes real-world contact for this airy thing called a “duty” is a possession by that entity of what we call powers. Insofar as you have powers, you may have certain duties, duties regarding the exercise of those powers or the context in which that exercise becomes permissible. Once you accept at least that skeletal idea, a couple of things fall into place that are not counterintuitive, but

Whatever rights turn out to be, clearly they cross national boundaries and they are utterly indifferent to gender, religion, and political affiliation.

might be counter to common understandings. First, rights and powers are not mutually entailing. An entity might be quite robust in vulnerabilities, witness an infant, but so destitute of power as to have no duties at all. There would at least be some vulnerabilities that do not match up with some relevant power and some vulnerabilities which are not offset by certain powers. They are not conceptually or logically entailing.

That is just a gloss to introduce this subject. James Wilson engages the question of the sources of rights, and recognizes a position that Locke takes that may actually turn out to be inimical to rights as these are to be understood within the framework of our Constitution. We now have so many more rights than anybody else ever had. I think this inflationary tendency might have begun thanks to Eleanor Roosevelt and other worthy persons finally finding their way into Article 2 in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. I shall quote it to you. “Everyone,” so you begin to see the size of the relevant domain, “is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or

other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

So it not only is something everybody has, but everybody has everything. “Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political”—listen here now—“jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing, or under any other limitation of sovereignty.” So whatever rights turn out to be, clearly they cross national boundaries and they are utterly indifferent to gender, religion, and political affiliation. One has to understand the context for a statement this gaudy. The war is over. Genocidal acts that beggar the imagination have been perpetrated by an allegedly civilized people. Someone has to put an end to this. Now, to be the sort of entity that carries this range of protections, this defense against one’s own vulnerabilities, with one, wherever one goes, with any set of political, social, religious circumstances, presupposes a creature of a certain kind, presupposes that those thus covered are essentially what they are. When Aristotle says, that Coriscus is musical is an accident, that Coriscus is a man is essential, do you see? It is some property that is so coextensive with the being himself or herself that absent the property you would not have the being—essential and essentialism. It is a thorny topic in metaphysics.

Kit Fine, who has done a very fine essay on this entitled “Essence and Modality,” this is an older 1994 paper. Kit Fine says, “The metaphysician may want to say that a person is essentially a person or that having a body is not essential to a person or that a person’s essence is exhausted by his being a thing that thinks [a Cartesian person] . . . . On the one hand, essence has been conceived on the model of definition. . . . On the [other] hand, the concept has been elucidated in modal terms.”

Now this is the distinction that I believe Kit Fine is getting at. Aristotle tells us that man is a rational animal so the essence is in the definition itself. We

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iii Ibid.


might say that although H₂O does not “define” water, it is the necessary chemical substrate of anything that answers to the category of water. That is what we would mean by a modal qualifier, that it is necessarily the case that H₂O is water. What defines a rights-bearer or stands as a necessary property in virtue of which something actually does bear rights? That is, if we use Kit Fine’s distinction, is there something definatory that establishes rights-bearers? Is there something modal, something that must necessarily be the case for Smith to have rights? Well, one foundation we can reach for to answer this question comes by way of natural law.

Consider this passage from Cicero’s Pro Milone:

“There exists, Judges, this law which is not written, but inborn; we have not learned it, received it, or read it, but from nature herself we have snatched, imbibed, and extorted it; a law to which we are not trained, but in which we are made; in which we are not instructed, but with which we are imbued.”

You see, this becomes the non-reductive starting point for the concept of law to have any meaning at all. To be a creature fit for the rule of law, there must be something in place, something capable of resonating to the summons of law. On this account, human beings are possessed with some essential quality of which they are somehow made or with which they are imbued. Wilson cites this very passage as part of his analysis of natural rights. The question he raises is whether rights, as such, are derivative of civil rights or have a standing independent of them. The authorities behind the former proposition are many and they include both Edmund Burke and William Blackstone. When Wilson gets to parsing Georgia’s claims, that Georgia cannot be sued in a federal court because it enjoys something called state sovereignty, Wilson says, “I can’t find that word in the constitution. We do not have subjects, we have citizens.”

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vii Chisholm v. Georgia, 2 U.S. 419 (1793).
sovereignty come from? Suppose nobody actually lived in Georgia. Would it still have sovereignty? If that is the case, we cannot have a nation.

As I shall say toward the end of my remarks, Wilson reaches the inevitable conclusion based on the logic of his argument that sovereignty is in the person. As he puts it, “sovereignty is in the man, that all sovereignty grows out of that source.”

So how should conservatism be understood? It should be understood as starting with the proposition that sovereignty is in the person. We made the government, it did not make us. What Wilson is going to find wanting in Locke are certain sections of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* where as a prelude to Hume, Locke is this way and that way on the whole notion of human beings being an essential type.

Locke’s famous political treatises, even while granting to government the power to enforce the law, does declare, “that there remains still inherent in the people, a supreme power to remove and alter the legislature.” However, on this very point, Wilson notes Blackstone’s observation that, regarding Locke’s somewhat eerie supreme power, “we cannot adopt it, nor argue from it, under any dispensation of government at present actually existing.” Locke’s contention, Wilson concludes, is “merely theoretical.”

Now look, if you are a good Reid scholar and you have got a temporary disciple who uses the phrase “merely corporeal in some trite, accidental sense. He is essentially spiritual or he is essentially something else.”

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viii Ibid.
Theoretical,” you know how to read that. “Theories are the creatures of men,” says Thomas Reid, which nature seldom mimics. So you know you have a bald fact in front of you and a theory that denies it. Which one are you going to jettison? There goes the theory.

Now, I want to spend a few minutes on the Locke of the essay. Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is a work of first-rate philosophical thought, of the seventeenth century. The essay is to establish everything Locke wants the world to accept by way of the Newtonian conception of reality. Locke is a doctor and a man of science. If you do not understand Locke as a scientist, you are missing two-thirds of the story. What is seventeenth-century science at war with and what is it joined to? It is joined to an essentially mechanistic conception of reality. What lingering mythology has to be exploded for this correct view of things to prevail? That is the notion of essence, the real essence of things. Do you see? Man is corporeal in some trite, accidental sense. He is essentially spiritual or he is essentially something else.

Locke takes it upon himself to examine the concept of essences. He says a distinction has to be made between what might be called the real essence of things and the nominal essence of things. The real essence of anything is its ultimate constitutive content. That being corpuscular, allowed Newton, or as we would say today, sub-particle, hence what? Hence you could never know the real essence of anything. What I come to call something depends on context. It depends on culture. It depends on prevailing conditions, modes of use, so that there is not some fixed nominal essence. There is a nominal essence that is tailor-made for particular purposes. In fact, what fleshes out the nominal essence of anybody is just what happens to be rattling around between their ears. It is their particular history of experience that gives them the ideational stock of which they construct nominal essences.

What is it that Wilson finds in Locke’s attachment to the idea theory so heartily attacked by Reid and that later Hume will bring to perilous fruition? You do not have direct access to objects in the external world. An object in the external

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world sends a beam of photons into the eye. If you put about 500 quanta in, you will get maybe 5 to 10 actually striking retinal receptors. So your picture of the external world is a representation. You do not even know how good or bad it is because you do not have some means external to experience to judge the veridicality of the perception itself. That is the box you are in. Now I will simply tempt you with this. One of the most original pieces of philosophical work I have ever confronted for sheer originality is a section of Reid’s inquiry called “The Geometry of Visibles.” The Geometry of Visibles” anticipates geometry by 50 years, and it is dazzling. It shows how, granting everything I just told you, you nonetheless get a depiction of the external world, faithful to its external properties, hence Reid is called a direct realist. He knows all about optical illusions. Wilson is concerned now that the idea theory conduces both to a materialism in that the whole game is played at the level of the organs of sense, and a relativism in that what we come to know is relative to the apparatus that stands between us and the external world and there is no other apparatus to provide a refereeing function. Reid says, “Yes, there is. You know what the refereeing authority is? It is called lived life.” Reid says, “I accept that the whole thing is delusional. What is the net effect? I step into a dirty kennel and I bang my head against a side post,” he says, “and after 1,000 such experiences, I am ready to come to the conclusion that maybe the world is as I see it.”

Now when Wilson recurs both to Blackstone and to Locke, he concludes that if you accept the reasoning there, what you will discover is not merely that man is made for the government, but is made by the government. It is a cultural

Laws derived from the pure source of equality and justice must be founded on the consent of those whose obedience they require.

xiv Thomas Reid, the Works of Thomas Reid.
xv Ibid.
artifact, which is to say that “find the authority that sets up the table and you have found what it is that will shape the mind, shape the character.”\textsuperscript{xvi} We are all passive on this account, and that this is simply inimical to the whole point of the constitutional jurisprudence of the United States. Wilson quotes Blackstone and says, “The law, says Sir William Blackstone, ascribes to the king the attribute of sovereignty: he is sovereign and independent within his own dominions; and owes no kind of objection to any other potentate upon earth. Hence it is, that no suit or action can be brought against the King, even in civil matters; because no Court can have jurisdiction over him.”\textsuperscript{xvii} Wilson categorizes this view as nothing less than a “plan of systematic despotism,” unthinkingly embraced by those who have not examined the principle on which such a plan must be based. The foundational principle, says Wilson, is “another principle, very different in its nature and operations. . . . Laws derived from the pure source of equality and justice must be founded on the consent of those, whose obedience they require. The sovereign, when traced to his source, must be found in the man.” \textsuperscript{xviii}

Now, there was something in Burke, yes. In his commentaries about natural rights, Blackstone acknowledges that there are natural rights, but he declares, talking about natural rights, that “their establishment, excellent as it is, is still human.”\textsuperscript{xix} The rights are man-made: at least for the English, they are derived from Magna Carta. Well, on the view that these things are man-made, rights take on the character of civil privileges, proffered or denied by way of a legislating authority. The obvious implication to be drawn from such an understanding, which by the way, later legal positivists would draw, is that rights are legal constructs, grounded in certain social and historical facts. For Burke and for Blackstone, this does not amount to a denial on the naturalness of rights, only to their ultimate source within civil society. That is the position for which Locke provides a philosophical foundation in the essay concerning the human understanding, rendering the essay

\textsuperscript{xvii} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{xviii} Ibid.
incompatible with the second treatise, and all of those works incompatible with the founding assumptions behind the Constitution of the United States.

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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered on February 11, 2016. To watch the full lecture, please visit wheatley.byu.edu.
I want to explore the logical and psychological consequences of redefining marriage. Let me begin this way. The Youngs are women in a committed relationship who love and care for and look after each other. They share domestic duties and financial responsibilities. They share a bed and a sexual partnership. They have a child, courtesy of sperm donation and in vitro fertilization. They are just like any ordinary Massachusetts opposite-sex or same-sex married couple, only they are not a couple. Doll, Kitten, and Brynn Young are a throuple, a three person unit. Massachusetts, like other states, does not recognize as marriages polyamorous unions, that is, unions among three or more persons, romantic partnerships with multiple partners. At least, Massachusetts and other

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states do not recognize those unions yet. Doll and Kitten and Brynn think that that is unfair and should change. They want marriage equality for themselves and other polyamorous families.

The message is that polyamorists are the next sexual minority whose human rights, including, of course, the right to marriage equality, must be honored. They are following to a T the playbook that same-sex marriage advocates created, and

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**There is a powerful psychological pressure to follow the logic of one’s beliefs when other people are pointing out inconsistencies.**

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they are doing it in the cause of mainstreaming polyamory and putting in place the cultural predicates for its legal recognition—things like planting sympathetic articles in *USA Today*, *People* magazine, the *Atlantic*, *Newsweek*, and so on. The most recent polling has it that a quarter of our fellow citizens are now prepared to recognize polyamorous marriages. Think about that. Twenty-five percent of the general public are prepared to recognize polyamorous marriages, and among religiously unaffiliated citizens, whose numbers are climbing in the United States, the figure is 58%. These percentages, I want you to note, represent far higher levels of support than same-sex marriage had within the memory of many people living today, and not just the oldest like me. With *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *People*, the *Atlantic*, and other respected publications sympathetically presenting

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iv Bennet, “Polyamory: the Next Sexual Revolution?”


vi Ibid.
polyamory, more and more polyamorists and allies of their cause will feel safer in coming out. The politicians are not there yet, of course, but in this late season of our experience, we all know that they are almost always among the last to arrive at the party. Soon enough, a small number will break the ice, just as they did on same-sex marriage. They will, to use President Obama’s famous description of his own flip-flop on same-sex marriage, evolve.

The extraordinarily influential legal philosopher and constitutional theorist Ronald Dworkin, a champion of aggressive judicial action to advance liberal causes, taught that law is fundamentally about a society making commitments to certain moral principles and working out their implications over time. vii Fundamental to that enterprise is treating like cases alike. The heart of the case for same-sex marriage was that gender differences, or what used to be called sex differences, are irrelevant to what marriage actually is, namely a form of committed sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership. The challenge for same-sex marriage supporters is either to accept polyamory on the basis of the very same vision of marriage or to offer a new and more specific vision, one that can explain why number is relevant, but gender is not, why marriage has to be two and cannot be more than two, although it can be same-sex or opposite sex. Pushed by the logic of the position, very soon people who are holding the line, wanting to affirm same-sex marriage but not polyamory, will yield. It seems to me that there is a powerful psychological pressure to follow the logic of one’s beliefs when other people are pointing out inconsistencies.

The case for polyamory and its legal recognition presupposes that marriage is, in fact, what the advocates of what they call marriage equality have depicted it as being: again, committed sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership. This is precisely what has been denied by defenders of what used to be known as marriage and is now called traditional marriage—that is, the union of husband and wife. Those defenders are most assuredly right when they say that the new idea of marriage—marriage as a sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership—is not an expansion of marriage, but is rather a

redefinition. It is one that treats what has historically been regarded as a relevant
difference, a centrally relevant difference, namely sex or gender, as if it were
irrelevant, not central to the very idea and social purposes of marriage. In law
and culture, marriage has historically been understood as a conjugal union, a
union in which a man and woman consent to unite in a bond that is (1) founded
upon their sexual reproductive complementarity as male and female; (2) specially
apt for and would naturally be fulfilled by the couple, the spouses, having and
rearing children together; and (3) consummated and renewed by acts that unite
the spouses as a reproductive unit (in biblical terms, “one flesh”) by fulfilling
the behavioral conditions of procreation, whether or not the non-behavioral
conditions happen to obtain. That is why historically in our law and culture,
religious as well as secular, marriage could only be consummated by an act of
coitus, but marriage was consummated by that act, whether or not a child was
conceived or could have been conceived. Even in the case where let’s say, due to
a wife being past childbearing, a child could not have been conceived. Still, the
marriage is consummated, precisely by the sort of act that is apt for procreation.
The sort of act that fulfills the behavioral conditions of procreation, whether or
not the non-behavioral conditions obtain. Behavioral conditions are conditions
over which human beings have agency. Non-behavioral conditions are those over
which they do not.

The historic understanding of marriage is child-centered and yet it does not
instrumentalize marriage to the great good of having children. Marriage is rather
the kind of union that would naturally be fulfilled by having and rearing children
together. Participating in marriage as a conjugal union is regarded as, in our law
and culture, inherently humanly fulfilling. That is why marriage is not, as we have
historically understood it, a merely instrumental good, whether it is instrumental
to personal fulfillment or instrumental to having children. Although of course,
children are a blessing that come when properly conceived in the bond of
marriage, and children are participating perfections of their parents’ marriages.

One problem with the sexual-romantic companionship view of marriage (the
view of marriage that will give you same-sex marriage or multi-partner marriage
or what have you) is that it is hard to explain on that understanding of marriage
what is distinctive about marriage, why it is not just like other forms of friendship, maybe just with more emotional intensity. Those are different in degree, but not in kind. Of course, if marriage is distinguished only or mainly by its emotional intensity, then there really is no reason that two men or two women cannot marry. Any two people, after all, can feel romantic attraction for each other, commit to support and care for each other, share a domestic life, and believe that their relationship is enhanced by mutually agreeable sex acts with each other of any kind. So can three men or three women, say Doll and Kitten and Brynn, or a man and two women, whether they are united as a polyamorous ensemble or the

*Marriage is the kind of union that would naturally be fulfilled by having and rearing children together.*

man is in a separate relationship or marriage with each woman. On the conjugal understanding, you can see exactly the difference. It is a difference not merely of intensity of emotions, but a difference of kind. On the conjugal understanding of marriage, marriage cannot be understood simply as your relationship with your number one person. On the alternative view, that is just what marriage is. As John Corvino, a well-known philosopher who is a defender of same-sex marriage, says when pressed to define what marriage is, “Marriage is simply your relationship with ‘Your Number One Person.” viii

As a conjugal relationship, rather, marriage is the type of bond that is ordered to procreation and would naturally be fulfilled by spouses having and rearing children together, the point I made earlier. On the conjugal understanding, marriage is the relationship that unites a man and a woman as husband and wife, to be father and mother to any children who may come of their union.

Now what about the social role of marriage? Why should the law be involved? Why should we care about marriage as a legal institution? The social role of

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marriage, if you accept the conjugal understanding, is to maximize the odds that children will grow up in the context of the committed love, the matrimonial bond of the man and woman whose actualization and renewal of that bond in sexual intercourse brought them life; the children will be linked to their parents and to their parents’ families. It ensures that as many children as possible will be reared with the advantages of both maternal and paternal role models, influences, and care. A large part of the project of trying to defend same-sex marriage is to try and show that male and female parents, mothers and fathers, are interchangeable, that there is no difference between mothers and fathers, no difference between males and females that cashes out at the level of when people are mothers and fathers. When it comes to the social importance of marriage under the conjugal view, it is predicated on the idea that it is a good thing for children to have both maternal and paternal role models, influences, and care. I think it is important that there be male as well as female role models and examples given the kind of care that is characteristic of men and women.

The revisionist challenge, especially as a result of the sexual revolution and the mainstreaming of non-marital sex and cohabitation, out of wedlock childbearing, and divorce, especially with the introduction of no-fault divorce, has eroded the public understanding and support of marriage as a conjugal union, though this vision has not been completely lost. The erosion helps to explain why an idea that was quite literally inconceivable as recently as a generation ago is accepted by some now. When my mom and dad were growing up, it is not that they rejected the idea of same-sex marriage; it was like thinking of square triangles. Nobody could conceive it. I think this erosion in other spheres that has nothing to do with homosexuality—opposite-sex promiscuity, the divorce culture, the breaking down of traditional norms, the glamorization of out-of-wedlock childbearing—has all created the situation in which what was once inconceivable is now defended as morally necessary, even a matter of civil rights.

In the Supreme Court case of Obergefell v. Hodges, five justices of the Supreme Court, led by Justice Anthony Kennedy, claimed to find in the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment the revisionist understanding of marriage. I introduce this case because it forces us to focus on the logical implications of
abolishing the conjugal understanding of marriage in our law and replacing it with a revisionist understanding of marriage as sexual-romantic companionship, and all by judicial fiat. Here is where Professor Dworkin’s point about the centrality of principle to law has its significance for the cause of polyamory, at least for his fellow liberals who approve of the role assumed by the judiciary in cases such as Roe and Obergefell. He who says A must say B where the same principle requires B. He who says that the judiciary who has the power to dictate A must say that the judiciary has the power to dictate B even if B does not yet share A’s popularity and even if the people’s representatives in the legislatures say no to B. The constitutional case for the judicial imposition of same-sex marriage requires the belief that the Constitution somewhere, somehow, incorporates the idea of marriage as sexual-romantic companionship. You have got to believe that in order to affirm this case. If it does, then there can be no reason or principle, absolutely none, for withholding legal recognition from the marriages of Yemeni immigrants or breakaway Mormons who are in polygamous relationships, or to polyamorous people like the Youngs.

If Obergefell stands, and I hope that it will not stand, the question of legal recognition of polyamorous partnerships simply will not be able to be avoided. The arguments of those who want to retain the idea of marriage as sexual-romantic companionship or domestic partnership while denying legal recognition of polyamorous marriages will sound weaker and weaker, more and more like mere rationalizations for stigmatizing what many people (for now, at least) still find “icky.” Under the psychological pressure of the natural human desire for logical consistency, the liberal movement will gradually come to embrace the polyamorists’ cause. Liberal jurists—though they may swat away on procedural grounds the first few constitutional challenges to marriage laws, excluding

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**It is important that there be male as well as female role models and examples given the kind of care that is characteristic of men and women.**

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polyamorous romantic bonds from recognition—will eventually have to say B because Obergefell is the A. He who says A has to say B. Where marriage is sexual-romantic companionship and therefore two persons of the same sex can marry is A, then B is marriage is a sexual-romantic companionship, therefore three or more persons can marry.

Will there be a C? That will likely be the abolition of laws against consensual adult incest, parent-child or sibling, and correspondingly the elimination of consanguinity laws forbidding marriage between a parent and his or her adult child or between adult siblings. Do you think I am engaging in scare tactics? Do not listen to me. Western Europe was ahead a bit of the United States on same-sex marriage. It was established in certain Western European countries before it came here, and Western Europe is now pointing the way for liberal opinion on incest. Germany. You know Germany, right? It is a classic Western democracy. Germany is very much like us. Germany is not some weird place. Germany’s national ethics council, their equivalent of the President’s council on bioethics, in 2015 issued a report urging parliament to revoke legal prohibitions of incest involving consenting adults, arguing that these prohibitions violate “fundamental freedoms” and “force people into secrecy or to deny their love.” The ethics council described opposition to consensual adult incest as a mere social taboo and declared that “neither the fear of negative consequences for the family nor the possibility of the birth of children from such incestuous relationships can justify a criminal prohibition. The fundamental right of adult siblings to sexual self-determination has more weight in such cases than the abstract protection of the family.”ix The vote was overwhelming, with only a couple of dissenters. If one grants the premises of sexual liberalism, that consenting adults have a right to enter into whatever types of sexual partnerships they like without state interference, and if one embraces the revisionist conception of marriage as committed sexual-romantic companionship, then what the German ethics

council says has to be correct. If you have those two premises, this conclusion is unassailable: the council’s logic is impeccable. If there is a flaw, it must be in those premises. Yet it was precisely those premises that were adopted by the liberal movement in our own country, and so C will indeed come in due course unless A is abandoned.

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This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered on March 23, 2016. To watch the full lecture, please visit wheatley.byu.edu.
It was around March 2015 that I started writing a book titled *Truth Overruled: The Future of Marriage and Religious Freedom*. Like most thinking people, I think we knew that Justice Kennedy was going to rule with the four liberal Supreme Court Justices in redefining marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*. I said, “Alright. If come June we get the *Roe v. Wade* of marriage, what should we do in response?” In thinking through how to answer that question, I looked to “What did the pro-life movement do successfully after *Roe v. Wade* to make it easy to be a pro-lifer today in the United States?” Forty years ago when *Roe v. Wade* was decided, all the talking heads said that the Supreme Court has settled the abortion issue, that a generation from now, all of the young people will be pro-choice, that the last pro-lifers would be in nursing homes and inside of the Vatican. All of those talking heads got it wrong. Your generation is more...
pro-life than your parent’s generation. The reason is the work that your parent’s generation did. Right now, all the talking heads are saying that the Supreme Court has settled the marriage debate. They are saying that a generation from now, all of the young people will be in favor of this new understanding of marriage and the last “traditionalists” will be inside of the Vatican, maybe inside of Salt Lake City, and in nursing homes. What can we do to prove those talking heads wrong? The future isn’t a blind force, the future is something that we are active participants in shaping.

As I was researching for the book, I drew three large lessons from the pro-life movement. The first lesson from the pro-life movement is that they rejected *Roe v. Wade*. They did not accept *Roe v. Wade* as the last word. They said that *Roe v. Wade* tells a lie both about the U.S. Constitution and a lie about unborn human life. They said that there is nothing in the actual text or logic or structure of the U.S. Constitution that guarantees a right to an abortion. There isn’t anything properly understood that says—in this case it was seven unelected judges—they could simply rewrite the abortion laws in all 50 states. The reason I say that is if we lost 5–4, the pro-lifers lost 7–2. At least we have a closer ruling. We also got four magnificent dissenting opinions. Justice Scalia’s dissent will still be read in the Obergefell decision in a way that Justice Kennedy’s will not. Law professors find it embarrassing to try to teach and defend Justice Kennedy’s opinion. They say, “We agree with the outcome, but the logic and the reasoning is embarrassing.” Scalia and Roberts and Alito and Thomas, all four of them, wrote their own dissenting opinions, pointing out various aspects of the flaws. They have given us some ammunition here to explain why the court got this case wrong, why it got the Constitution wrong, why it got marriage wrong. What is important from the pro-life movement here is that they said, “This isn’t an issue that is the domain of the eminent tribunal of the courts.”
Every year for the past 43 years, hundreds of thousands of Americans come to Washington, DC, on January 22, and they don’t come because that is when the cherry blossoms are blooming. They don’t come in the middle of January because the weather is great, because airfare is cheap, they come then because that is the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*. They frequently come in the middle of blizzards as they did this past year, and they are there to bear witness to the truth. They are there to bear witness that the court got this wrong, it is continuing to perpetuate an injustice against the unborn Americans who are denied the law’s equal protection, and they are there to send a signal. Little by little the pro-life movement has made progress in undoing that court precedent, first with the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act and then with banning partial-birth abortion, and it took them two attempts to do that. The first time they banned partial-birth abortion, the Supreme Court struck it down as unconstitutional. They did it a second time, they went back to the Supreme Court and it was upheld as constitutional. Right now, you are seeing states that are banning abortion at 20 weeks, the federal government is about halfway there, the House has passed it, and the Senate hasn’t taken it up yet. You are seeing states that are saying abortion clinics need to meet the same surgical standards and ambulatory standards as other medical centers; there is a variety of ways to slowly back up the abortion license of *Roe*. We need to learn from the pro-life movement how to do that on the marriage case, how to deny the ability of the court to say it gets the last word, and how, particularly as a teaching function, not to allow the court to shape the opinions, the beliefs, and the self-understanding of future Americans. You will see right after *Roe*, opinion changes—the court taught something about abortion, that it was a constitutional right and therefore a moral right, and the generation who came of age during the time of *Roe v. Wade*, they are the ones who are most pro-choice because of the law’s teaching function. We need to prevent that from happening here. We need to say that the court got it wrong.

The second lesson, the next thing that pro-life movement did was that they protected their freedom. The pro-life movement said the Supreme Court has just created a constitutional right to choose to have an abortion, but that needs to be balanced by a right to choose not to perform an abortion, not to have an abortion,
not to pay for an abortion. Six months after the *Roe v. Wade* decision, a Congress pass that was known as the Church Amendment: the Church Amendment was not named for buildings made out of stone or brick with steeples and stained glass windows and bell towers. It was named for the Senator from Idaho, a Democrat, Frank Church. What took place in Congress in June of 1973 was that they said, “We are supposed to be a check and a balance on the Court. The reason we have three branches of government is so that we can check and balance each other. The Court has now issued its ruling on abortion, we are going to place one check on the Court by saying the federal government will never force someone to perform an abortion.” Later with the Hyde Amendment, named for Congressman

*The reason we have three branches of government is so that we can check and balance each other.*

Henry Hyde of Illinois, it said that no taxpayer funds could be used to pay for an abortion. Later with the Weldon Amendment, named for Congressman Weldon, it went beyond just doctors and nurses to any health care professional could never be forced to assist in an abortion or to be forced to learn about how to perform an abortion. So if you were a medical school student, you wouldn’t be forced into training to be an abortionist. This was vitally important for several reasons. One is that it was a bipartisan attempt. They were able to get both Democrats and Republicans to support this. They were able to get pro-lifers and pro-choicers to agree to this. They were able to say, “Even if you are in favor of an abortion and you are pro-choice, do you need to coerce me into violating my beliefs about the dignity of unborn human life? What is it about your right to an abortion that says I have a duty to perform your abortion or to pay for your abortion?” They were able to win that argument. There has largely been a consensus about this for the past 40 years. What is so remarkable with the HHS Contraception Mandate (from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) is that in March 2016, the Supreme Court case involving the Little Sisters of the Poor* was one of the

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*Little Sisters of the Poor Home for the Aged v. Burwell.*
first times since Roe v. Wade that that consensus has been violated. The Obama Administration, first in the assault on Hobby Lobby and now on Little Sisters, was actually going to force people to violate their core convictions about the sanctity of life. There is also a lawsuit right now from the ACLU suing one of the largest networks of Catholic hospitals because they don’t perform abortions. These issues now are being re-litigated and I think it is partly because it is a proxy war for the religious liberty on the marriage issue.

The third lesson from the pro-life movement is that we have to make the case for marriage, just like the pro-life movement made the case for life. The pro-life movement didn’t rest content saying, “Alright, we have protested Roe v. Wade, we have said the Supreme Court got it wrong, we have now protected our rights not to have to perform abortions, and now we are done.” The pro-life movement said, “Those were just kind of the preliminary steps to do the real work, which is rebuilding a culture of life, which is bearing witness to the truth about life, both in law and in culture.” This is particularly important because I actually think you can’t do those first two steps without doing this later step. My average classmates at Princeton are secular, liberal, progressive, in favor of abortion rights, pro-choice individual, but they are mainly not in favor of forcing Catholic hospitals to perform abortions, or forcing an Evangelical nurse to assist in an abortion. The reason why is that even though they disagree with me about abortion, they understand why I believe what I believe about abortion. They could say, “I think you’re wrong about unborn human life, but I understand your argument and I could see how if I believe what you believe about that unborn child, I wouldn’t want the government forcing me to perform an abortion.” Now, despite the best of my efforts, my average classmate at Princeton still doesn’t understand what I believe about marriage. They think the Westboro Baptist Church speaks for me and they think the Westboro Baptist church speaks for you. If all you know on Christian beliefs on marriage is “God hates fags,” how are you going to respond to the adoption agency, to the school, to the baker, the florist, and photographer? You are much more likely to say, “These people are evil, these people are crazy, and the government has to stop it. The government has to eliminate it. What is being taught at your university is Westboro Baptist Church theology.” At a
cultural level, you have to remember that there is going to be a legal battle, but there is also a court of public opinion battle that takes place. At the court of public opinion, most people say that if you are evil, if you are crazy, if you are delusional, if you are causing harm to other people the way the Westboro Baptist Church is, you don’t deserve to have your religious freedom rights protected. That is what the cultural message was in the Bob Jones University case. One of the challenges for us is going to be, “Can we bear witness to the truth about marriage in a way that even our neighbors who don’t share all aspects of our worldview can understand? Are we going to be able to explain why both the Westboro Baptist Church is wrong and Anthony Kennedy is wrong?”

Lastly, what can we do to form our own children, our own communities to be able to live out the truth about marriage? And obviously here, the LDS community has a lot to teach the rest of us. When you look at the rates of marriage within the LDS community, they are the highest, they are the strongest. You get some of Utah’s rates on family structure, dependency, non-marital childbearing, those are some of the best statistics on this. You look at the programs that the LDS church is doing inside of its church communities. The rest of us have a lot to learn from the LDS people. I mention this for two reasons. First, as a Catholic, I have to quote popes, so let me mention two and then I will be done. Pope Benedict XVI, a world-class theologian and a world-class intellectual, says that it is not the arguments of the intellectuals that win converts: it is the lives of the saints and it is the beauty of the artists.\footnote{Joseph Ratzinger, “The Feeling of Things, the Contemplation of Beauty,” message given at the communion and liberation meeting at Rimini, Vatican website, August 24, 2002, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/re_con_cfaith_doc_20020824_ratzinger-cl-rimini_en.html.} It is all the more powerful coming from Pope Benedict because he is a world-class intellectual. He knows it is necessary...
to do that part of the puzzle and that is obviously the part of the puzzle that I can make contributions to. What Pope Benedict is getting at here is that all of us have a vocation to holiness, and it is going to be our own families, our own lived holiness that will be the best apologetic, the best defense, for marriage going forward. I think that we can all make that contribution. Lastly, John Paul II. John Paul did a diagnosis of the twentieth century. He says that what has gone wrong in the twentieth century is that we have a bad understanding of the human person.iii Whereas earlier times in the church, a focus might have been on Trinitarian theology or ecclesiology, today’s debates focus on the nature of the human person. Obviously that has implications for theology and theology has implications for that. He said that as we have eclipsed God, we have denigrated man.iv The twentieth century, with the eclipse of God, meant a diminishment of that creature who is made in the image and likeness of God. That is what gave us the two world wars, the Holocaust, the Gulag, the Killing Fields, the totalitarian regimes. It is also what gave us abortion on demand, embryo-destructive research, the redefinition of marriage, and the rise of transgender ideology. What all of those phenomena do is they get three central truths wrong, three central truths right from the beginning of the book of Genesis: one, that we are created in the image and likeness of God. Two, that we are created male and female. Three, that male and female are created for each other. If you look at the challenges of our generation, it is going to be those three truths in particular that are going to need defending. They are going to need defending at the intellectual level—philosophy, theology, social science, psychology, psychiatry—and they will need defending at the practical level, simply living them out, being a witness. That is where I think the lives of holiness will be our long-term best defense.


This article is an abbreviated version of a lecture sponsored by the Wheatley Institution and delivered on March 24, 2016. To watch the full lecture, please visit wheatley.byu.edu.
As a student, I was exposed to *Anna Karenina*. While I was reading that, there was this interesting statement that Tolstoy makes as he is describing the effect of Anna’s extramarital affair on her abandoned son. Anna was in a very difficult marriage and had one son. Tolstoy describes the son in this way: in his daily walks, Seryozha was constantly on the “lookout for his mother,” but he does not find her, and one is left with a poignant image of his broken heart.\(^1\) Insightfully, Leo Tolstoy makes the comment that children are the compass that reveals how far we have diverged from what we know is right, but do not want to see.\(^2\) I think he is right. That is,

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when we look at children and their well-being, we can see what has gone right or wrong with what adults have done.

We saw divorce rise in the eighties, and we might say it peaked in the eighties. We have yet to see what that means exactly in terms of peak, but a dramatic rise in cohabitation came after that. It has tripled since the late 1990s. In a cohabiting family, children are three times more likely to see the dissolution of their family. If you look at children who are born in the first five years of that cohabiting relationship, 50% of them will have their parents break up. What is interesting about that in America in particular, is there is also increased likelihood to see someone else move in as a new parent.

We get a sense that there is a tremendous revolving door for these children, people coming in and out of those relationships with them. Of course, as you might expect, the data suggest they are more likely to use drugs, suffer from depression, drop out of school, and experience poverty, and there is an independent effect beyond poverty that they have experienced.

Then we look at divorce. Divorce is also something that is hard to predict, but the best measures we can get say that for marriages that are happening right now, there is a 42% to 45% chance that they will break up. That means that a lot of children are going to experience divorce at some point in their lives. Compared to 10% of children who grow up in a married family, 25% of children from divorced families are predicted to have or have already had serious emotional

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In a cohabiting family, children are three times more likely to see the dissolution of their family.

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or psychological problems, including lower academic performance, social achievement, and challenges with psychological adjustment. vi What we find out is that on quite a few measures, including teen pregnancy, educational failure, delinquency and child abuse, it does not seem to matter if you have that extra parent. These children who grew up in these homes look a lot like those who grew up without a dad at all in a single-parent family. vii I think we understand better than ever what divorce means.

We also understand, with divorce, with cohabitation, that children, especially in the United States, go through a lot of changes in relationships. Andrew Cherlin wrote about this and provided some statistics. Forty percent of American children will experience a breakup between their parents by age 15. viii The next highest statistic that we know is Sweden, at 30%, with France and Italy close behind, but the United States is way above other nations, in terms of the likelihood of a child experiencing a breakup. ix Then what happens is 50% of them are likely to see a new partner enter the family within just three years. This is the revolving door that I talked about. American children experience more breakups and more adults moving in with their biological parent who cares for them. Now look at this statistic: 10% of women in the United States have three or more husbands by age 35. x That is several times higher than any other place in the world.

In most cases, what this means is that children grow up without their dad. What does that mean? This has important implications for understanding why both a father and a mother might matter. What do we know about children growing up without a dad? A third of girls whose father left home before they turned six ended up pregnant as teenagers, compared to 5% of girls with fathers still at home. xi Boys raised without dads in a single-parent household are more than twice
as likely to be incarcerated, after controlling for all kinds of things—education, race, ethnicity, parental income.\textsuperscript{xii} Something about not having a dad means a lot for boys in terms of delinquency and anti-social behaviors. We also know dads matter hugely for college graduation rates.\textsuperscript{xiii} Whether they had an involved dad in their life affected how safe children were from abuse and other things, whether or not they engaged in risky behavior, their psychological well-being, depression.\textsuperscript{xiv} Without a dad, the likelihood of a girl experiencing depression is much higher in high school. What about poverty? Children in married couple households have an 11\% rate of poverty, versus cohabiting and single-mother households, which have 47\% and 48\%.\textsuperscript{xv} It is interesting that cohabiting families do not look that different from single-mother families in terms of rates of poverty. Now obviously, this is because those who choose to cohabit or those who are single mothers are more likely to have a lower education, lower income, less secure employment, and to have relationships that dissolve, all of which would predispose a child to growing up in poverty. It makes life difficult. What about dangers? Children living in a home with a mom and an unrelated male boyfriend are 10 times more likely to be abused than their peers growing up with married, biological parents.\textsuperscript{xvi} Those with biological, cohabiting parents, so they are their biological parents, but they are cohabiting, are


four times more likely to be physically, sexually, and emotionally abused. It is much less safe for women and children to be outside of marriage.xvii

Many have experienced divorce in their family. My husband’s parents divorced when he was six. He is a great person, he has recovered in a sense, but what we understand better now is what divorce means for a child’s inner world. Elizabeth Marquardt described, she herself having experienced the divorce of her parents, “For those of us from divorced families, a moral drama was ignited the moment

American children experience more
breakups and more adults moving in with their biological parent that cares for them.

our parents parted. . . . They didn’t have to deal with each other’s differences anymore. We, as the children, had to reconcile those differences on a daily basis. The conflict between our parents’ widely differing values, their beliefs and ways of living. We had the responsibility of bridging those worlds.”xviii Statistics would show these children are much more likely to talk about experiencing loneliness during childhood, a sense of a divided self. Who am I? A less secure sense of home. Where is home? They start to talk about their homes as shadow homes. My mom doesn’t know the kind of home my dad has. My dad doesn’t know the kind of home that my mom has for me. I am in both of those homes, neither of which is fully complete. A sense of unsafety in either world. If I talk to dad about mom, am I betraying her? If I talk to mom about dad, am I doing some kind of betraying? It leads to this need to keep secrets, not tell each other. They are much less likely than those coming from married, biological families to go to their parents when there is a need or concern, and more likely to go to peers. How do you go to a parent? You would feel like you are abandoning one to go to the other. “We searched for belonging and feared exclusion. To gain one parent always means

xvii Ibid.
xviii Elizabeth Marquardt, Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005), 17
to lose another.”\textsuperscript{xix} They often talk in these interviews about the need to be an adult. “I had to be the adult. I felt like I was an adult from the time I was young. I had to be the one who was grown up about everything.” She concludes with “exile,” as a spiritual name for this feeling of inner division: it was a “conflict for which we could imagine no resolution, a conflict for which many of us thought we had only ourselves to blame.”\textsuperscript{xx} It is interesting that when lay people talk about this, they will say that children, even though they know their parents will never get married again, when they get a step-parent, experience a feeling of such tremendous loss, almost like internally there is continual hope of being brought back together somehow to have that wholeness again. So we understand that even though children do well, they recover after these circumstances, there is a lot going on inside of them that we need to appreciate.

I want to conclude with the idea that children will lead us out of this. Children can lead us out. Children can give us a better way, giving us something outside ourselves to give our lives to, one which binds a family. The ethical imperatives that are inherent to those family bonds demand more care and responsibility, better decision-making, and most of all, the development of our noblest virtues: commitment, sacrifice, and love. Children need adults. In every one that I would read, these accounts of children’s voices, they would say things like, “I had to be the adult. I had to be the adult.” I appreciate Michael Novak once writing, “Only humans enjoy the liberty to do—or not to do—what we ought to do. It is this . . . kind of liberty—critical, adult liberty—that lies at the living core of the free society. It is the liberty of self-command, a mastery over one’s own passions,

\textsuperscript{xix} Ibid., 168.
\textsuperscript{xx} Ibid., 17.
bigotry, ignorance, and self-deceit. It is the liberty of self-government in one’s own personal life.”xxi He calls that adult liberty. It is liberty, not the freedom to do what you wish, but the freedom to do what you ought, with children’s faces calling forth what we ought to do. No other institution reliably connects parents, their money, their talent, and time to their children in the way that marriage does. Cohabitation cannot do it; step-parenting cannot do it. Marriage is the only thing we can find that actually binds parents in a committed way with all their resources and the best of themselves to their children’s development.

I will end with this idea that being an individual, being one’s own person does not entail escaping our ties to others. Real freedom lies in fulfilling those ties to others. I want to just end with, just to comment on how children change us. Michael Novak said, “They are my liberation. They force me to be a different sort of human being in a way that I want to be forced. I want to become the kind of person that rearing a child requires me to come.”xxii I love Jean Elshtain, and she once described the death of the 18-year-old son of her cousin. He was born anencephalic. He could never eat, speak, feed himself, or sit up unaided. In reference to his brain, doctors had consistently told his parents that there was nothing there. He stared out at the world, making no apparent distinctions until his mother came into view and then “his face would light up.” It “would beam.” He knew her and he loved her. As she described, this mother’s love and care and devotion kept him going for 18 years and when he died, a family of parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and a wider community grieved their loss.xxiii Truly a child with a mother who would give her life leads us out of this terrible culture of rampant, radical individualism. “They give the word ‘love,’” as Wendell Berry writes, “its only chance to mean, for only they can give it a history, a community, and a place. Only in such ways can love become flesh

and do its worldly work. . . . [marriage, kinship, friendship, and neighborhood] are forms of bondage and involved in our humanity is always the wish to escape . . . but involved in our humanity also is the warning that we can escape only into loneliness and meaninglessness”xxiv without the bonds of these precious relationships of which children are the heart.


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