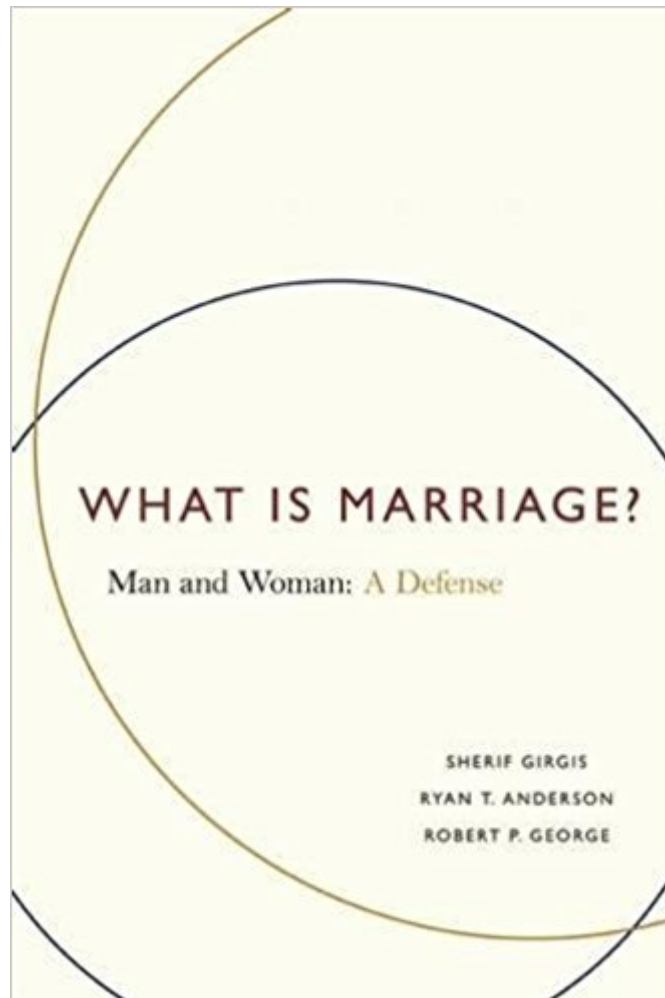


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What Is Marriage?: Man And Woman: A Defense



Synopsis

Until yesterday, no society had seen marriage as anything other than a conjugal partnerÅ Å-ship: a male-female union. *What Is Marriage?* identifies and defends the reasons for this historic consensus and shows why redefining civil marriage is unnecessary, unreasonable, and contrary to the common good. Originally published in the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*, this book's core argument quickly became the year's most widely read essay on the most prominent scholarly network in the social sciences. Since then, it has been cited and debated by scholars and activists throughout the world as the most formidable defense of the tradition ever written. Now revamped, expanded, and vastly enhanced, *What Is Marriage?* stands poised to meet its moment as few books of this generation have. Rhodes Scholar Sherif Girgis, Heritage Foundation Fellow Ryan T. Anderson, and Princeton Professor Robert P. George offer a devastating critique of the idea that equality requires redefining marriage. They show why both sides must first answer the question of what marriage really is. They defend the principle that marriage, as a comprehensive union of mind and body ordered to family life, unites a man and a woman as husband and wife, and they document the social value of applying this principle in law. Most compellingly, they show that those who embrace same-sex civil marriage leave no firm ground--none--for not recognizing every relationship describable in polite English, including polyamorous sexual unions, and that enshrining their view would further erode the norms of marriage, and hence the common good. Finally, *What Is Marriage?* decisively answers common objections: that the historic view is rooted in bigotry, like laws forbidding interracial marriage; that it is callous to people's needs; that it can't show the harm of recognizing same-sex couplings, or the point of recognizing infertile ones; and that it treats a mere "social construct" as if it were natural, or an unreasoned religious view as if it were rational. If the marriage debate in America is decided soon, it will be with this book's help or despite its powerful arguments.

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Customer Reviews

"What Is Marriage? There is the question. Thanks to these three eloquent authors for so cogently reminding us of that, and for showing us how reflective reason answers it." -- Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York "This book brilliantly explains why the definition of marriage is so critical and why the strengthening of marriages is absolutely essential to our freedom and our future." -- Dr. Rick Warren, Author of The Purpose Driven Life and Pastor of Saddleback Church "A lot more is at stake in the marriage debate than the definition of a word, and this book reveals just how much. Its defense of marriage is philosophical and sociological, not theological, but people of all faiths will find it illuminating and edifying." -- Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, Zaytuna College "What Is Marriage? is the most insightful, eloquent, and influential defense of marriage as it has been historically and rightly understood. People of all traditions--and everyone who cares about the future of this central and sacred social institution--owe Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George an extraordinary debt." -- Meir Soloveichik, Associate Rabbi at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun and Director of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University "With many countries on the verge of redefining a basic social institution, What Is Marriage? issues an urgent call for full deliberation of what is at stake. The authors make a compelling secular case for marriage as a partnership between a man and a woman, whose special status is based on society's interest in the nurture and education of children." -- Mary Ann Glendon, Learned Hand Professor of Law, Harvard University "What a joy to see this book by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George, which presents the most philosophically astute and historically accurate defense of traditional marriage to date. It exposes the incoherence of attempts to radically redefine marriage by showing the inherent wisdom in what is our oldest social institution." -- David Novak, J. Richard and Dorothy Shiff Chair in Jewish Studies, University of Toronto

Sherif Girgis is a Ph.D. student in philosophy at Princeton University and a J.D. candidate at Yale Law School. After graduating Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude from Princeton, where he won

prizes for best senior thesis in ethics and best thesis in philosophy, as well as the Dante Society of America's national Dante Prize, he obtained a B.Phil. in moral, political, and legal philosophy from the University of Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Ryan T. Anderson is William E. Simon Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and the editor of Public Discourse: Ethics, Law, and the Common Good, the online journal of the Witherspoon Institute. A Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University, he is a Ph.D. candidate in political philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. He has worked as assistant editor of First Things and was a Journalism Fellow of the Philip H. Reilly Foundation. His writings have appeared in the Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy, First Things, the Weekly Standard, National Review, the New Atlantis, and the Claremont Review of Books. Robert P. George is a Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School and McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and Director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University. He is a member of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and previously served on the President's Council on Bioethics and as a presidential appointee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. He is a former Judicial Fellow at the Supreme Court of the United States, where he received the Justice Tom C. Clark Award. He is a recipient of the United States Presidential Citizens Medal and the Honorific Medal for the Defense of Human Rights of the Republic of Poland.

This book gave me a lot of food for thought. But because the authors are scholars and wrote as such, I need to read it a second time to make sure I understand the breadth and depth of their argument. They argue in defense of "a comprehensive union: a union of will (by consent) and body (by sexual union); inherently ordered to procreation and thus the broad sharing of family life; and calling for permanent and exclusive commitment...a moral reality: a human good with an objective structure, which is inherently good for us to live out" [p. 6]. And in doing so, they showed many consequences of accepting the revisionist view of marriage, which runs contrary to the conjugal view. I won't be sorry to set aside the time I need to reexamine their line of reasoning. In fact, I look forward to reading it again.

This is a remarkable and timely book. As a Catholic Christian, I find it difficult if not impossible to explain why I believe marriage is between a man and woman without bring in the Church, God, or the like. This book, through reason, philosophy and natural law, explains why traditional marriage makes sense and why we should care about it and defend it. This book is great for anyone looks for reasons other than theological. It's also a short read; a bit dense at time, but at only 100 pages, one

could read it within a couple of weeks while working full-time. I plan on reading it again in light of the recent SCOTUS ruling and plan on studying it more closely in order to better give an explanation of my beliefs. Every reasoned person should read this book, regardless of where you stand on the matter. At the very least, you'll understand why people like myself believe what we do. This book is a great investment.

Something so basic and intrinsic to us human beings is being distilled, discussed and deliberated thoroughly here. A resource worthy of read, reflection and recalibrate, especially in this day and age where marriage is not entered into unadvisedly or discretely but with extravagance, bells and whistles and/or hurriedly. Going into the 'insides' of the conjugal view provided me with greater and deeper understanding and reflection on my own marriage. Word of warning though, its a very technical and weighty book.

If I wanted to offer students evidence of the fact that political correctness and sound rationality are by no means an exclusive pair, I would probably have them read this book. I do not think that the Supreme Court will side with George et al. later this year (although they do not always side with slight-majority public opinion), but I think this book gives enough reason that they could. If nothing else, the authors make a persuasive case that whatever happens, revising the definition of marriage in a liberal-individualist direction is likely to have specific negative consequences at the individual and social levels. There is no cake-and-eat-it. Some goods come at the cost of others. Also, it is a marvelous example of how the best argument against a thing does not have to be animated by reprehensible emotions towards one's opponents. I believe this brave book will have value even after the Court (probably) rules against the conjugal model of marriage as the authors--and pretty much everyone in the world since prehistory up until the last few decades in the West--understand it. The most pressing chapter, in a way, seemed to be "A Cruel Bargain?", where the authors address the charge of heartlessness in wanting to restrict marriage to (at least formally) procreative couples. I will not review their arguments here, although I think they do a careful job of analyzing and responding to this charge. It struck me, however, that part of the problem is that the popular image of (heterosexual) marriage--the one in a zillion books and movies--is not really about the conjugal ideal that the authors present here. It is purely about emotional attachment, which makes it quite natural that some people could say: "why not put any two adults in front of that altar?" Or: "why not put any number of adults in front of that altar?" Or: "why not put the same individuals any number of times in front of the altar?" (The latter is largely the case already!) In this regard, the

conjugal view of marriage may actually include a crucial self-abnegating element, a sense of formal idealism and social duty that colors and perhaps even constrains affection as a principle of action. On this view, the impulse behind arranged marriages may not be fundamentally unreasonable, even if such marriages can be imprudently or insensitively managed. (But are they bungled more often than the self-arranged marriages of today?) Perhaps the arranged marriage is the absolute example of non-gay marriage. Just a thought. In any case, today's popular image of heterosexual marriage is in many ways closer to the revisionist model than the conjugal model, which makes the moderate popularity of the "fairness" argument more understandable.

Lord, this is embarrassingly bad. I had to buy a copy for research purposes, and I am upset that a dime made it to the authors. They should pay me, if anything. If this is the best social conservative has to offer, no wonder the position is in disrepute.

This is a very good resource for the study and research of why a marriage should be between a man and woman. Simple facts and data that show it is the best way to bring children into the world. It shows how when government steps in and legalizes something it doesn't mean it is in the best interest of the people. Society is actually trying to do away with marriage altogether by redefining it. Soon it will be so complicated we will wonder what happened.

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