

Genesis 1:27-28

*27 So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.*

28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth

I joined the Anglican church about 10 years ago. I knew this issue was lurking in the background, but I hoped common sense would prevail and this discussion would be seen for what it is, an undermining of the Church. I am a layperson and was not aware until a month ago that the due date for submissions for this issue was so soon. Consequently this submission will not be as comprehensive as I would like it to be.

The Image of God

When the church speaks of God we speak of Him as being a Trinity. One God - 3 persons. Much has been written on this doctrine and there is certainly not unanimity on the finer points, however, it is the doctrine accepted by the Anglican church and affirmed each Sunday by reciting the creeds. The Genesis creation account is very clear that when God created mankind it was male and female that reflected His image. Neither sex by themselves complete the task of being God's image bearer. Anyone who makes the argument that there is no essential difference between men and women apart from anatomical differences simply loses credibility. Marriage is used throughout scripture to symbolize God and our relationship to Him. Time doesn't permit a full development of this theme. The bottom line is that same sex marriage is akin to God the Father being in relation to God the Father. Both statements are equally absurd. As two members of the same sex cannot produce children, neither can they reflect the image of God. God created man and women to compliment each other, something members of the same sex cannot do.

Creation and Procreation

Creation and love are themes tied closely together. God created out of love and sustains His creation out of love. Only in a heterosexual marriage can life be created and nurtured. The arguments that I've heard that 2 men or 2 women can provide a child the same nurturing environment as a man and a woman are absurd. The only people making such an argument do so out of a vested interest in having that fantasy being true. What appears quite evident is that there seems to be little concern for what is best for the child. It's all about the adults and what would make them happy.

The changes in family law, with regard to children, to accommodate this redefinition of marriage is fraught with danger. Here again to even start down that road in this paper would require more time than I have to give to its composition.

Chief Purpose of Man

Is. 43: 7 *everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."*

By today's standards the chief end of man is to be "fulfilled." How that fulfillment is accomplished is determined by one's own personal agenda. Objective standards by which one can gauge progress are constantly moving targets. The concepts of sacrifice for a greater good, or that there is even a concept of an objective greater good, seems foreign to modern thought. The modern notion is "the only greater good is self-fulfillment." God, if He exists at all, is there simply to satisfy our wants and wishes. The idea of laying up one's treasures in Heaven, to the modern mind, is a fanciful concept with no sensible basis for such a notion. This life is all there is.

The church has been marketing Jesus like any other consumer product. A. W. Tozer in his book "Knowledge of the Holy" said it much better than I can. *"The message of this book does not grow out of these times but it is appropriate to them. It is called forth by a condition which has existed in the Church for some years and is steadily growing worse. I refer to **the loss of the concept of majesty** from the popular religious mind. The Church has surrendered her once lofty concept of God and has substituted for it one so low, so ignoble, as to be utterly unworthy of thinking, worshipping men. This she has done not deliberately, but little by little and without her knowledge; and her very unawareness only makes her situation all the more tragic. The low view of God entertained almost universally among Christians is the cause of a hundred lesser evils everywhere among us. A whole new philosophy of the Christian life has resulted from this one basic error in our religious thinking."*

Jesus did not come to earth to die on a cross so the Church could acquiesce to cultural pressure. Quite the contrary, He called us to stand against it. The surrendered life to Jesus Christ is constantly running into personal short comings. The fact that I must daily take up the cross of Jesus becomes a burden too hard to bear when I try to do it on my own. When I focus on my relationship with Him and allow the Holy Spirit to guide and get my personal agenda out of the way, then it is not so hard. Living by the sexual standards God has set for us is difficult and demands discipline from all of us. None of us are at liberty to fulfil our sexual urges any way we please.

The Dying Church

Reginald Bibby in his latest book, A NEW DAY, explains why church attendance has declined significantly over the last 50 years.

"Demographically-speaking, one age cohort has been primarily responsible for "the great Canadian attendance drop-off" – Baby Boomers, people born between approximately 1945 and 1965. As far back as 1975 – when the oldest boomers were just turning 30, only 15% were attending services weekly, well below the 37% level of their parents, grandparents, and others born before 1945.

There was much speculation in the 1980s and '90s about Boomers "returning to church" as they got a bit older and began to have families of their own. We now know that the hype wasn't warranted – at least

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not in Canada. As of 2005, when the Boomers were now between 40 and 60, their collective weekly attendance level had gone up very little; the Pre-Boomer level held steady at 37% over the thirty-year period.”

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My adolescence was lived in the 60’s. This was a time of great social unrest. In the US we saw the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.. There were massive protests against the Vietnam War and racial tension regularly exploded into riots. It was also the time of the Beatles, Hippies, Woodstock, free love and flower children. Baby-boomers threw off ideologies that were perceived as impediments; *“keeping us from reaching our full potential.”* We grabbed for it all, sex, drug and rock-n-roll.

Where was the church in all this upheaval? For the most part rendered silent. When she did speak, she was ridiculed and humiliated. Her response was to retreat, but unfortunately, not to retrench. She built walls and stayed behind the walls in her Christian ghetto, because it was safer there. For the mainline denominations, we not only lost their social prestige, we also lost our identity because we lost our message. In an effort to regain social status we compromised the Biblical and historical message of the church in an effort to recover the lost social standing. That never happened, but in the attempt to do so we evicted God.

Ravi Zacharias offers this analysis:

“It is not unprecedented that as a young nation begins to reach its adolescent years, it craves freedom from any restraint. Emulating a legal proceeding in which an attorney tries valiantly to discredit witnesses who injure his or her case, secular thinkers unleashed a concerted effort to prejudice the minds of this generation. If even a slight doubt could be raised upon any minutiae of theistic belief, it was exultantly implied that the whole worldview should be deemed false. The goal was to forge a new breed of young scholars and opinion-makers who would be perceived as saviours, delivering society from the tyranny of a God-infested past and remaking culture in their own image.

The principal means to accomplish this was to take control of the intellectual strongholds, our universities, and under a steady barrage of “scholarly” attack, to change the plausibility structure for belief in God, so that God was no longer a plausible entity in scholastic settings. This assault on religious belief was carried out in the name of political or academic freedom, while the actual intent was to vanquish philosophically anything that smacked of moral restraint.”

Conclusion

I came to the Anglican church because some of the most influential Christian authors I read in my formative years were Anglican. Today another Anglican is considered the foremost theologian of our time, N.T. Wright. The following is his take on the issue.

"Now, the word "marriage," for thousands of years and cross-culturally has meant man and woman. Sometimes it's been one man and more than one woman. Occasionally it's been one woman and more than one man. There is polyandry as well as polygamy in some societies in some parts of history, but it's always been male plus female. Simply to say that you can have a woman-plus-woman marriage or a man-plus-man marriage is radically to change that because of the givenness of maleness and femaleness. I would say that without any particular Christian presuppositions at all, just cross-culturally, that's so.

With Christian or Jewish presuppositions, or indeed Muslim, then if you believe in what it says in Genesis 1 about God making heaven and earth—and the binaries in Genesis are so important—that heaven and earth, and sea and dry land, and so on and so on, and you end up with male and female. It's all about God making complementary pairs which are meant to work together. The last scene in the Bible is the new heaven and the new earth, and the symbol for that is the marriage of Christ and his church. It's not just one or two verses here and there which say this or that. It's an entire narrative which works with this complementarity so that a male-plus-female marriage is a signpost or a signal about the goodness of the original creation and God's intention for the eventual new heavens and new earth.

If you say that marriage now means something which would allow other such configurations, what you're saying is actually that when we marry a man and a woman we're not actually doing any of that stuff. This is just a convenient social arrangement and sexual arrangement and there it is . . . get on with it. It isn't that that is the downgrading of marriage, it's something that clearly has gone on for some time which is now poking it's head above the parapet. If that's what you thought marriage meant, then clearly we haven't done a very good job in society as a whole and in the church in particular in teaching about just what a wonderful mystery marriage is supposed to be. Simply at that level, I think it's a nonsense. It's like a government voting that black should be white. Sorry, you can vote that if you like, you can pass it by a total majority, but it isn't actually going to change the reality."

The church is not ours it belongs to Jesus Christ. I do not belong to the church and attend service so I can feel good. I do it so I can find God. Feeling good is a result of doing the right thing. If the Anglican Church of Canada passes this measure to marry same sex couples, the few that remain will become fewer still.

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No To Same Sex Marriage

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