



Written by [Jack Kerwick, Ph.D.](#) on March 18, 2013

The Logic of Marriage

In response to Ohio Senator Rob Portman's recent reversal on gay marriage, House Speaker John Boehner said that, unlike his fellow partisan, he could never envision himself changing his mind on this topic. "Listen," he told Martha Raddatz on ABC's *This Week*, "I believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman." (Emphasis added.)

Boehner's reasoning represents that of most opponents of gay marriage.

The opponents of gay marriage invariably claim, along with Boehner, that they do not "believe in" gay marriage, or that they do not "support" it. Rather, they favor "traditional marriage." We should most definitely not "redefine" marriage so as to accommodate gays, they insist.



In doing so, however, the opponents of gay marriage actually *reinforce* their rivals' assumption that what is real and true is *determined* by what human beings happen to want.

The point that they should be making, though, is that if there really are such things as truth and reality, then we can no more believe or disbelieve in, support or condemn, "gay marriage." There is no "traditional marriage." There is only marriage — and it is beyond our capacity to either define or redefine it.

Words are human inventions, but the most elementary principles of *logic* are not. For example, if you hear that a man is a bachelor, then without seeing or knowing him, you know that he can't possibly be married at the same time. Similarly, if you are told that something is a green Martian, then without knowing a thing about whether Martians really exist, or what color they are if they do, you nevertheless know that this thing *can't* be colorless.

Words signify concepts, and concepts have their own logic independently of human whims and desires. I can no more believe in or support a married person's "right" to enter into bachelorhood while remaining married than I can believe in or support a person's "right" to enter into a state of celibacy while living a life of sexual promiscuity. Nor does it make any sense for me to claim that I favor "traditional" bachelorhood or "traditional" celibacy, for this implies that there are other, non-traditional forms. And I most certainly cannot weigh in on "redefining" the terms "bachelorhood" and "celibacy," for this countenances the idea that it is within our power to define or redefine them.

Note, in rejecting as illogical the idea that the married and the sexually active have a "right" to bachelorhood and celibacy, respectively, I make no appeals to God or religion. For that matter, I don't even appeal to morality; ultimately, this is a question of logic, not morality. This, in turn, means that in denying their "right" to bachelorhood and celibacy, I in no way mean to insinuate that the married and



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the sexually active are immoral.

What is true for bachelorhood and celibacy is true for marriage. Homosexuality could be a blessing to humanity and every gay person the planet over could be a saint, but no matter; marriage remains an intrinsically *heterosexual* concept. There isn't much upon which human beings everywhere and forever could be said to have agreed, but this is one of them. Repeat: Conflicts over monogamy and polygamy and whether the members of different races should be permitted to marry one another, etc. are irrelevant. These considerations no more belong to the essence of marriage than "six feet tall" belongs to the essence of a human being.

Marriage is essentially, intrinsically a heterosexual union. The world's peoples from the beginning of time have agreed upon this up until the last 10 to 15 years or so when some Americans and Europeans began telling us that the human species had it wrong all along. But it isn't that marriage was heterosexual *because* there was a timeless consensus on the matter. Rather, there was a timeless consensus that marriage was inherently heterosexual *because marriage is inherently heterosexual*.

Whether our government decides to permit homosexuals to enter into legal unions with one another that it will then call "marriage" is neither here nor there. My point here is something else.

To paraphrase the old saying, you can put lipstick on a pig and say it is something else, but a pig is still a pig.

Similarly, call anything you want "marriage," but real marriage always has been and always will be a heterosexual institution.



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