

# Explorations towards a Theology of Marriage

Questions & offerings from a  
wider perspective

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# **Six acts - a biblical theology of marriage**

**(with acknowledgement to *True Union*)**

**Act 1: Creation**

**Act 2: The Fall**

**Act 3: The Life of Israel**

**Act 4: The Ministry of Christ**

**Act 5: The Era of the Church**

**Act 6: The ultimate New Creation**

## *SMR §27*

The absolutely fundamental fact of our existence as human beings is, quite simply, the fact of our having been created by God. Of all things in creation, the existence of human beings is a unique kind of existence, for we are brought into being specifically in order to reflect the 'image' and share the 'likeness' of God (*Gen 1.26; Ps 8*).

## *SMR §30*

While men and women, having been created in the image of God, share a perfect equality as human persons, they also participate in the genetic difference of their maleness and femaleness.

Historically, many have understood this to be a relationship of complementarity, in which men and women, in being created by God, were created male and female precisely for one another (*Gen 2:18-24*)

## *SMR §30*

This is understood to be the foundation of the institution of marriage (*Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6*). In creating human beings male and female, then, God created them with the potential not only to 'be united' in a relationship of love and creative complementarity, but to 'be fruitful' in that union.

Without either male or female, without both man and woman, the perpetuation of human life in the created order would not be possible.

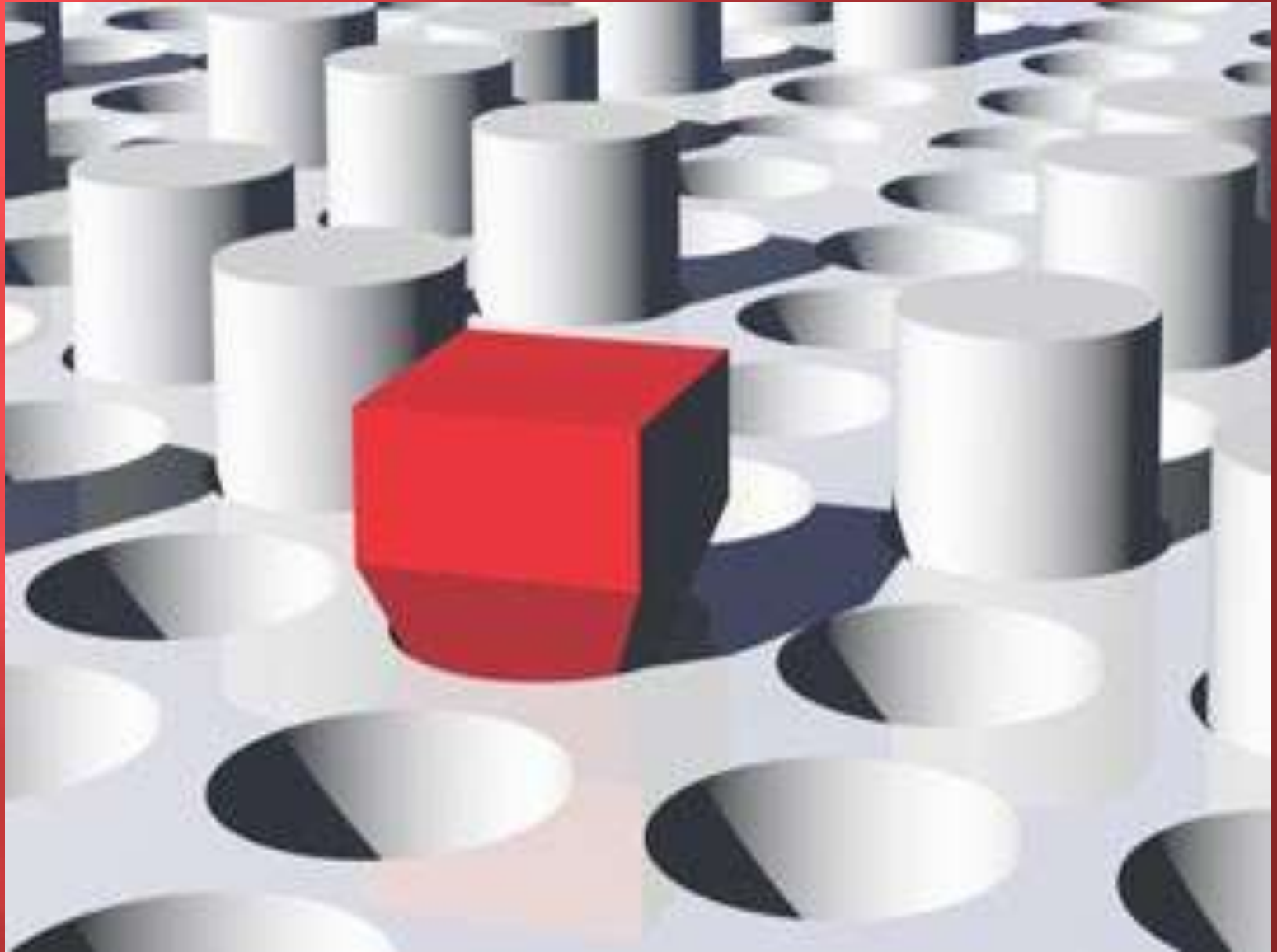
## *SMR §30*

In their equal dignity as persons, as well as in their difference as male and female, a man and woman may form 'one flesh' in marriage, and thereby make possible the continuation of human life, as ordained and commanded by God (*Gen 2:24; 1:28*).









Are there essential dimensions to marriage that are not for us to change?

On a secular worldview: NO

- 'marriage' is socially constructed and anything can be adapted (or set aside) if for good reasons & communal assent

Are there essential dimensions to marriage that are not for us to change?

On a theistic worldview: YES

- 'marriage' is given by God and not for us to change

- given by God for the well-being of society (and various other purposes)

- adaptable to significant range of cultural variations, on basis of 'core' dimensions

Are there essential dimensions to marriage that are not for us to change?

Is there a 'third way' – hybrid option?

A form of 'theistic creational evolution'?

Has God endowed us with the capacity and scope to further develop and adapt marriage to address changing cultures and times... ?

Are there essential dimensions to marriage  
that are not for us to change?

*Book of Common Prayer* – YES

- gender pairing as per Gen. 1 & 2, Christ
- committed exclusive companionship

*NZPB 2<sup>nd</sup> Form* – YES, but less than BCP  
– committed exclusive companionship

# Scriptural guidance on the purpose of marriage

*Relational* – clarifies relationship expectations and undertakings

*Personal* – as a safe-guard from sin and means of grace (giving & receiving)

*Societal* – locates relationship within wider familial and community contexts

# Elements of an 'essential' notion of marriage

A committed & publicly accountable relsp -  
witnessed vows and undertakings (not unique)

Leaving and cleaving – capacity &  
undertaking to establish a distinctive  
household\* unit (= *oikos*)

Sufficient maturity and 'coming of age'

Interweaving of 'kinship' ties & extended  
family (including recognition, blessing)

## Elements of an 'essential' notion of marriage

Binding of 'two into one' – oneness of heart, soul and 'mind', 'consummated' in physical sexual expression

Exclusive – 'forsaking all others'

Life long – 'as long as we both shall live'

Affirming and supportive of gender pairing of male & female as primary procreative means / estate for the future of humanity



Less 'essential' but common features of marriage

Very often – but not 'essentially' for the purposes of procreation AND nurture

Interweaving of 'kinship', including extended

Bringing together of two 'estates' and possessions (what is mine is yours)

# Elements of an 'essential' notion of marriage

Historically & traditionally... (church & state)

Between 'a man and a woman'  
(not just male & female – involves maturity  
'coming of age' & social capacity)

Is this *essential* or 'primary with other  
expressions of marriage'?

# Covenanted Friendship & Companionship

Naomi and Ruth

David & Jonathan

Note politics and conventions of kinship & 'friendship'

Bonds that go deeper than marriage?

More eternally enduring than marriage?

\* *Not exclusive* - releases the other to marry & procreate (ie. not a version of marriage)

## Some key questions...

Marriage understood as a heightened form of exclusive friendship & companionship (so popular perceptions ... and vows)

AND/OR...

The creation of a 'kinship-household' around an exclusive 'two into one' pairing recognised by society & contributing to community

# Cultural questions...

(sexual)  
attraction



emotional  
engagement



exclusivity



Marriage

Other cultures –  
attraction & emotional  
engagement are lesser  
considerations:

kinship responsibilities  
economic realities  
social shape & order

## Criteria for any amendment of marriage:

Supports a safe-guarding from sin

Secure and nurturing 'home' (*oikos*)

Good or better for society – social fabric and associated lifestyles

Within the values, character and creational ('now and not yet') purposes of God

