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## Foundations of Sand and Shadows of Love (Part IV)

Thus far we have taken up two of the three essential reasons for marriage, proles (offspring) and fides (fidelity). Next comes the third and final reason, sacramentum (sacrament or sign).

Proles has to do with the original unity of friendship between male and female and their extension of this friendship in procreation. Fides has to do with faithfulness in general, but also with the more redemptive view of marriage as a remedy, a medicine, for the sins of the flesh. The idea of sacramentum takes us more completely into the realm of redemption.

By sacramentum, Augustine means a sign that pertains to a divine reality (res). Marriage is a symbol of the everlasting love that binds the heavenly City to God.

In this idea Augustine follows St. Paul once more. In the famous passage from his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul compares the relation of husband and wife to the mysterious union between Christ and His Church. Marriage is a union of love, of mutual submission, and of reciprocal sacrifice...for the sake of Christ.

Cranmer takes this aspect of redemption as the third reason why marriage was ordained. He writes, "Thirdly, for the mutual society, help, and comfort, that the one ought to have of the other, both in prosperity and adversity." Here we revisit the nature of friendship that Augustine includes as the original purpose of marriage, but with the change that adds the perspective of the redemption of human nature. Mutual society, help, and comfort are the expressions of good will in the midst of "prosperity and adversity." The changes and chances of this mortal life become the occasions for support and selflessness as well as joy and delight.

And so for Augustine and for Cranmer, the fabric of marriage holds together like a seamless garment. Friendship, procreation, mutual help and comfort, all belong to human nature as it now is, both fallen and redeemed. The tendency of sin and malformed habit remain in us, but the Spirit is ever working through the sacramentum of marriage to sanctify us.

In this way, sanctity, holiness, is the end and goal of marriage. Matrimony has as its final purpose to help us grow to be more like Christ.

Sanctity is the reason why St. Augustine placed such great emphasis upon the place of procreation, and upon sexual activity in marriage as a "remedy" for sin. Not even friendship is designed by God merely for us, but for us in our common love and enjoyment of God. The principle is this; all things, including marriage, are to be used for the one ultimate enjoyment of God's love. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength." One can see, therefore, how Augustine understood the sacramentum of marriage, the sign of the heavenly City bound in love to God, as an indissoluble union.

The notion of same-sex unions violates the principle of marriage. Such a "union" is incapable of the natural and spiritual qualities of holy matrimony.

Now we should consider each of the essential reasons for marriage in comparison with the notion of same-sex unions.

We begin with friendship. Friendship, as originally conceived by God, holds its true form only through participation in God. He made human nature to flourish in His fellowship. And so the context of marriage must always be what God has created it to be. The Lord Jesus affirmed this. "Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh?' Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

The divine idea of a man leaving father and mother and cleaving to his wife, forsaking all others for her, and ready to risk the selflessness of love, especially in the procreation of children, is a divine design that can not and dare not be altered. Jesus knew well that this original intention for friendship in marriage had been disrupted in its very core by the chaos of sin. But now, in Christ, what is flawed in matrimony by our sinfulness can experience new life and love through grace

I do not dispute for a moment that homosexual relationships are often heart-felt and contain precious moments of human caring and affection. These are gifts distributed throughout the family of man.

But in the final analysis, those who advocate homosexual practice have not yet considered the gravity of sin and the radical need of human nature for the holiness of God. And though the actual marriages of heterosexuals are never perfect, the institution of their union and its redemptive power are of God. For those who are given the gift of marriage, there is only one form.

Next is procreation. Procreation is still essential to marriage. When it is possible, when biological and psychological conditions are sound and healthy, the procreation of children extend friendship and growth in holiness. Nothing is more joyful than for a family together to worship God, and spiritually to walk together and observe together where they are walking. A family that rejoices together in the Spirit has its heart filled with thanksgiving.

But the sanctity of the family also includes encountering sin and heartache and disappointment. Here also, and most importantly here,

the opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation finds an even deeper peace than existed before. Same-sex unions can not procreate. The adoption of children by practicing homosexuals sadly reveals the false nature and incapacity of the so-called marriage. No, children are a gift of the Lord, and they are entrusted to us through the capacity for life that God has given to male and female.

*...to be continued*

**The Rev. Dr. Michael L. Carreker**

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