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A Day That Will Live in Infamy -May 17 in Massachusetts

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Monday, May 17, 2004

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Why? Because today—by the unilateral decision of activist judges—the State of Massachusetts will legalize same-sex marriages. This is a day that will live in moral infamy. Civilization itself has been attacked by forces that would redefine marriage, normalize homosexuality, and transform our understanding of family, gender, parenthood, and human relationships.

According to press reports, homosexual couples began lining up outside government offices as early as Saturday night. Just as the clock struck 12:01 a.m. in Cambridge, city officials began issuing same-sex marriage licenses. Though Massachusetts has a three-day waiting period, judges were expected to issue waivers to allow homosexual couples to marry on Monday.

Cambridge—a notoriously liberal community that is home to Harvard University—was the only Massachusetts city to open its offices Sunday night in order to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. First in line were Susan Shepherd and Marcia Hams, a lesbian couple who have lived together for 27 years. “It’s a little overwhelming to be the poster child for gay marriage,” said Shepherd. In Boston, the first same-sex marriage licenses were reserved for three of the plaintiff couples in the case that eventually led to today’s cultural watershed.

All this takes place after the Massachusetts General Assembly had passed a proposed constitutional amendment prohibiting same-sex marriages. When the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts handed down its infamous Goodridge decision last November mandating same-sex marriages, public outcry forced the legislature to act. Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney also opposes same-sex marriage, and he sought an emergency stay from the Supreme Judicial Court in order to allow the people of Massachusetts to make their will known, rather than base such a momentous act on seven judges who voted 4-3 in their decision. Even if passed by vote of the people, a constitutional amendment cannot take effect until 2006.

Appeals to federal courts were unsuccessful, as the U.S. Supreme Court refused to intervene on Friday. Another federal appeals court is scheduled to rule on the issue in early June, but few expect that court to stop the marriage licenses from being issued.

As expected, the religious enablers of the homosexual movement were celebrating this “victory” and getting themselves ready for a week of busy wedding schedules. In Cambridge, a multi-faith service called “Blessings on the Eve of History” was held at the historic Christ Church on Sunday night. According to The Washington Post, the service featured ministers and rabbis fanning out in the congregation to bless homosexual couples. In the sermon, Rev. Steven Charleston acknowledged that opponents of same-sex marriage believe such unions “will end civilization as they know it.” He continued: “Perhaps they are right.” The Post reported that the congregation greeted that line with “wild applause.”

The Unitarian Universalist Association—the far-left religious body headquartered in Boston—announced its intention to make history by marrying large numbers of same-sex couples as quickly as possible. Today, the group’s president, Rev. William G. Sinkford, is scheduled to officiate at the marriage of Hillary and Julie Goodridge, the lead couple in the court decision that now bears their name. The Unitarian Universalist congregation in Littleton held a special “Freedom to Marry Sunday” on May 16, opening the service with trumpet fanfares and testimonies from gay couples.

The state’s Episcopalians, on the other hand, should not be performing same-sex marriages, at least if they obey their three bishops. All three are supporters of homosexual marriage, but they have forbidden their priests to marry gay couples out of concern for the larger church. In response, Rev. Carter Heyward, a professor at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, announced plans to defy the bishops and perform same-sex marriages. She was one of eleven women who were irregularly ordained in 1974, when the Episcopal Church did not ordain women. She told *The Boston Globe* that her rebellion against the bishops was a form of “constructive disobedience.”

What will all this mean for Massachusetts, for the nation, and for marriage? The media will show the nation a mass of smiling couples today—basking in their newly-declared “right” to marry. Commentators will describe this historic day as a monument on the road to the full liberation of homosexuals, the complete normalization of homosexuality, and the total flexibility of marriage. Where is the harm?, they will ask.

The harm is first to the institution of marriage itself. Today, the State of Massachusetts joins the Netherlands, Belgium, and three provinces of Canada as the only major jurisdictions where homosexual couples can marry. If this decision stands, marriage will never be the same again. Humanity’s most venerable and cherished institution has been redefined by a secular elite in the name of liberation—and it will inevitably be destroyed in the process.

The Massachusetts court ruled that marriage should be seen as a basically secular institution, and thus is open to secular reinterpretation and redefinition. But this logic ignores the fact that church and state have shared a common understanding of marriage at the basic level—that it is the union of a man and a woman. That stands no more. From this point onward, the believing church must know that its definition of marriage is not shared by the state. This will lead to truly tragic levels of confusion—and perhaps even to coercion.

C. S. Lewis rightly described the Christian understanding of marriage as “based on Christ’s words that a man and his wife are to be regarded as a single organism.” As he continued, “The male and the female were to be combined together in pairs, not simply on the sexual level, but totally combined.”

Marriage was given to humanity at creation, when God instituted marriage as the most basic unit of human civilization—the most fundamental building block of society. Marriage regulates sexuality, provides the man and woman with protection and partnership, and creates context for procreation and the successful raising of children. Marriage creates the household and establishes the family unit. Without marriage, social and sexual anarchy are set loose, and human suffering will inevitably follow.

None of this will be obvious in the media coverage today. Instead, reporters and analysts will tell the nation that happy couples were joined in homosexual marriages—and that marriage still stands. It will, of course—at least for a time. But, like a crack that begins in the corner of a window and then slowly spreads across the pane, marriage will suffer the slow death of a thousand insults. Once marriage no longer means the union of a man and a woman, it can and will mean anything. Once it means anything, it means nothing. Only those who define marriage by a transcendent standard will retain the cherished memory of what marriage once was—and among biblical Christians, what marriage must always be.

A conservative, said Russell Kirk, “is a person who sees human society as an immortal contract between God and man, and between the generations that are dead, and the generation that is living now, and the generations which are yet to be born.” We now witness the breaking of this immortal contract. The State of Massachusetts—ruled by a tiny elite of activist judges and encouraged by a brigade of renegade religious leaders—will now break the contract that would receive marriage from our ancestors and pass it on intact to our children and to our children’s children.

This is a day that will live in moral infamy. The attacks on Pearl Harbor, New York, and Washington awakened the nation to peril and called citizens to action. That must happen once again, as millions of Americans must now awaken to the fact that an out-of-control judiciary and an army of social engineers are forcing their will upon us. If the Massachusetts decision is allowed to stand, this nation faces nothing less than moral disaster. America is now a nation at war with itself,

and with marriage.

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