

relevance to Catholic bioethics. Here Bristow spells out the anthropology of John Paul II's theology of the body, gleaned from the Genesis text in Scripture. Only if we understand God's plan for the creation of man and woman can we understand the meaning of sexuality and gender. It is against this backdrop that Bristow critiques as inadequate current feminist anthropologies. The woman's body has been a particular target of reproductive technologies, from in vitro fertilization to surrogate motherhood.

The body is deeply implicated in the topic of the penultimate chapter, on *Humanae vitae*. Bristow clarifies some misunderstandings, especially in this statement "The body, rather than part of 'nature' or the 'natural world,' is part of the subjectivity of the person and therefore pertains not to the domination of nature but to the mastery of oneself" (341). Where through contraception man dominates nature, through periodic abstinence he conquers himself. Finally, Bristow shows the significance of the Church's moral teaching to evangelization.

A brief review can barely describe even the surface of the riches to be found in Bristow's comprehensive overview of the renewal of moral theology according to John Paul II since Vatican Council II. Bristow's book both draws on the wealth of the Catholic Tradition and responds to the seductive arguments of our culture of relativism. Eminently readable, it provides an invaluable grounding in Christian anthropology for those engaged in current pressing bioethical issues.

MARY SHIVANANDAN

Mary Shivanandan, STD, is a retired professor of theology at the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family in Washington, DC, where she was also associate dean. She is the author of Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage (Catholic University of America Press, 1999). This review is based on a shorter one dated November 5, 2010, that appeared on the Christendom Awake! website, at <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/pbristow/ce&hp/ce&hp-reviews1.htm>.

***What Is Marriage?
Man and Woman: A Defense***

by Sherif Girgis, Ryan T. Anderson, and Robert P. George

Encounter Books, 2012, paperback, \$15.99

147 pages, bibliographic notes and index, ISBN 978-1-59403-622-4

The canard is well worn: "Gay marriage" is inevitable, and reasonable people have already jumped on board or soon will. Those who do not will find themselves on the wrong side of history.

Catholics today find themselves in one of the most crucial moments in recent centuries, perhaps, as we face a dramatic clash between two antithetical visions of marriage. Understanding these two visions, and electing to hold one, is necessary for every citizen. The choice at hand is straightforward: support what some consider the next frontier of civil rights movements in history, securing "marriage equality" for citizens who have been discriminated against for too long, or

join the ranks of those who defend a natural institution whose redefinition would undermine the common good and families, would harm children, and would sound the death knell of a vital institution that is in need of rehabilitation, not redefinition. The two views of marriage cannot coexist.

Catholics, and all those of good will, must become informed and equipped to more deftly grapple with the questions surrounding the institution of marriage and homosexuality. The esteemed authors of *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman: A Defense* focus on the former while firmly stating that their book "is in the end not about homosexuality" (10). In doing so, they have made available an

exceptionally comprehensive primer on the two visions of marriage. As promised, Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson, and Robert George scrutinize what marriage is while disproving the claim that the debate is really about who is allowed to marry. By philosophical argument, they systematically show that the conjugal view of marriage is most reasonable and that this view neither denies equality nor institutionalizes unjust discrimination against a minority group.

Stating that we can adequately define and recognize marriage for *what* it is only after we debate *who* should be married, the authors ask which view of marriage is most reasonable. Their answer—an expansion of a 2010 article published by the *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy*—led Archbishop Charles Chaput, OFM Cap, to describe their book as “a wonderful tool” while exhorting the reader, “Buy and read this book. Then buy another copy and give it to a friend” (ncregister.com, April 1, 2013).

Lead author Girgis is a PhD candidate at Princeton University and a JD candidate at Yale Law School. Anderson is the William E. Simon Fellow at the Heritage Foundation and the editor of *Public Discourse*, the online journal of the Witherspoon Institute. George is a visiting professor at Harvard Law School and, at Princeton, McCormick Professor of Jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions. Together, they have written a book about marriage that is addressed to opinion leaders, teachers, students, religious bodies, current and future spouses, and finally “revisionists,” who “see the marriage debate as one between people of sound mind and character who disagree on the solution to what they agree is a debate worth having” (12).

The debate (properly framed) is between two views of marriage that the authors identify as “conjugal” and “revisionist.” The conjugal view recognizes that marriage is a comprehensive union of persons realized by “a union of will (by consent) and body (by sexual union); inherently ordered to procreation and thus the broad sharing of family life; and calling for permanent and exclusive commitment” (6). This view acknowledges

marriage as a personal, social, moral, and objective reality.

The revisionist view sees marriage as the most intense of emotional bonds between people who commit to fulfilling one another’s emotional needs, and which is enhanced by the sexual activity to which partners consent. On this view, marriage is not necessarily homosexual, but it is malleable—comprehensive union, exclusivity, and children are nonessential elements. As the emotional fulfillment derived from a relationship waxes and wanes, it may be enhanced by a variety of means or the marriage can cease to exist.

Girgis, Anderson, and George argue in the first chapter that the revisionist view of marriage cannot explain “any systematic difference between marriage and deep friendship” (19). If there is no systematic difference, the authors suggest, what interest does the state have in regulating either? If marriage can be entered into on the basis of the degree of emotional bonding, how can the revisionist deny that any type of relationship that elevates emotional bonds is legitimately called a marriage—polyamory, open marriage, or even widowed sisters living together? Under the revisionist view, if partners deem such arrangements to increase the emotional well-being of those involved, wouldn’t the denial of marital status to such arrangements be the height of unjust discrimination? For the authors, this view of marriage presents no reason for the state to be in the business of regulating and protecting marriage, leaving it formless, and perhaps even pointless (21).

The authors argue (chapter 2) that marriage involves consent to the particular goods of comprehensive (body and mind) union, procreation and family life, permanence, and exclusivity. Explaining that the marital union between two people “*must include bodily union* to be comprehensive” (24) the authors argue that the generative act is “the most distinctively marital behavior . . . chosen for distinctively marital reasons” (26). Pleasure and delight are insufficient goods of marriage because the experience of pleasure is not truly common but is, rather, a

private mental state. The distinctively marital behavior chosen for marital reasons is having and raising children. Children and family life enrich marriage, and marriage is the unique institution that is particularly apt for family life: “In short, marriage is ordered to family life because the act by which spouses make love also makes new life; one and the same act both seals a marriage and brings forth children. That is why marriage alone is the loving union of mind and body fulfilled by the procreation—and rearing—of whole new human beings” (30).

Other kinds of relationships involving multiple partners or persons of the same sex “cannot be marriages because they lack this inherent link to procreation” (30). The *inherent link* to procreation is necessary to realize marriage. Further, while the revisionist vision of marriage deems exclusivity and permanence as optional or even superfluous, the conjugal view recognizes that the goods of marriage (union and new human life) inherently demand exclusivity and permanence.

The argument offered by Girgis, Anderson, and George provides a valuable contribution, and I find no significant flaws in its premises or conclusions. But does their audience have ears to hear?

The authors take an approach to the issue that is characterized as a secular or new natural law approach. They make “no appeal to divine revelation or religious authority” and instead make a purely philosophical or rational argument (10). Ostensibly, the practical strength of this approach (and if ever there were a test case for the effectiveness of the new natural law theory, this is it) is that having removed God from the discussion, it is likely to be received more readily than arguments derived from a traditional natural law theory rooted in (and finding its final cause in) God.

On the one hand, this secular approach is fitting because marriage is a natural institution, the health of which society depends upon regardless of the religious beliefs of its members. As the authors reasonably claim, “One need not believe in God, just in some constants of *human nature*” (47). But the vast

majority of our fellow citizens *have already* lost the ability to reason and no longer understand the concept of a common human nature or even, as David Bentley Hart recently lamented, the “necessary bond between what is and what should be.” Hart is not optimistic about the effectiveness of such approaches: “To try then to convince someone who rejects those [supernatural] convictions nevertheless to embrace those truths on purely ‘natural’ grounds can never be much more than an exercise in suasive rhetoric (and perhaps something of a *pia fraus*)” (*First Things*, March 2013). While I suspect that Hart would hesitate to apply his general critique of new natural law approaches to discourse to the specific argument presented in *What Is Marriage?*, it is legitimate to ask whether the approach taken by the authors will resonate with anyone who does not already accept the vestigial belief in objective truths, a common nature, and final ends.

The problem with this approach becomes evident when one considers that modern culture has for decades forgotten and even outright rejected with little argument the notion that sex has any intrinsic connection to marriage or children. This connection is central to their argument: “Note the importance of the link between marriage and children in both stages of our argument,” which provides “a powerful reason” and “the central reason” for their conclusions (44). Even if the argument is sound—and it is—many if not most of those whom the authors would like to reach have lost the ability to exercise the faculties necessary to hear and reason through it because they have already rejected the premise, having forgotten what sex is for and when it is a good. (This does not mean, of course, that the argument should not be made, but it needs to be made with a sober recognition of the purchase it has warranted.)

To reach this audience, the philosophical argument cannot stand alone. This makes the authors’ presentation of the social scientific and historical data, especially in chapters 3 and 4, especially important. The authors give these data “merely supporting roles in our argument,” but their inclusion may help move

the targeted reader to appreciate the persuasiveness of the philosophical arguments that constitute the majority of the text (11). These sections alone make the book worth reading.

The difficulties notwithstanding, the authors make a strong case for why the conjugal view of marriage gives the state a vested interest in its protection: social stability and the good of children, who fare best when reared in stable homes with their mother and father. The kind of relationship that is ordered toward begetting new human beings demands some regulation, recognition, and support if society is to thrive. A strong marriage culture that is protected by the laws of the nation encourages and brings pressure to bear on couples so that they care for their children and one another. Obscuring the meaning and goods of marriage makes it harder to live well and undermines marital stability and the essential role of parents. It is, therefore, necessary that the state define marriage properly.

A final critique: In their effort to convince the revisionist or mainstream reader by focusing on the definition of marriage rather than homosexuality (and without appeal to God or faith), the authors, at times, give the impression that they are neutral toward or opposed to Church teaching on some matters.

The authors resolve to pass no judgment on the morality of same-sex relationships except to classify it as “private behavior.” While this serves to focus the reader on the key argument—that the conjugal view of marriage most successfully secures the common good and the commonly accepted goods of marriage—does it not ignore that society has at least some interest in the sexual activity of its members outside of conjugal marriage? They write, “Promoting conjugal marriage need not *and should not* involve prohibiting any consensual relationship” (42, emphasis added). I agree that securing legal protection of conjugal marriage in the midst of efforts to redefine it does not necessarily require the legal prohibition of nonmarital consensual sexual relationships. I am less convinced, however, that in principle society (and perhaps even the state) should never prohibit any consensual nonmarital relationship.

Rather, society should never encourage, should always discourage, and may at times prohibit nonmarital consensual relationships. The latter, for that matter, was the case until 2003 in numerous states where it pertained to homosexuality (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 [2003]). Arguably, nonmarital sexual relationships should be prohibited in some cases, such as prostitution. Interestingly, Robert George was the Counsel of Record for the 2003 amicus curiae brief of the Family Research Council in that case. The amicus curiae brief argued that “a reasonable legislator could instead decide that where marriage is not and cannot be present, incipient, or remotely in view, the common good is better served by prohibiting deviate sex acts.” Remaining silent or neutral about these consensual sexual relationships implies consent, is likely to undermine conjugal marriage, and dramatically affects the common good and the ability of couples to live conjugal marriage well.

Further, in a number of instances, the authors appear to be neutral or even in favor of civil unions: “So it is not the conferral of benefits on same-sex relationships itself but redefining marriage in the public mind that bodes ill for the common good. Indeed, societies mindful of this fact need deprive no same-sex-attracted people of practical goods, social equality, or personal fulfillment” (7). While I wholeheartedly agree with their conclusion, the premise that “the conferral of benefits on same-sex relationships” does not bode “ill for the common good” presents cause for concern. Conferral of benefits on a class of relationships is a different and more open-ended proposal than recognition and protection of the rights of individuals. The authors go further when later they state, “To these ‘sex neutral’ civil unions, we have no objection in principle” (85). And they argue that sex-neutral civil unions might be useful in certain circumstances (85). While they do not articulate what this would look like in their view, such a position may well (if it created a virtually identical institution, except in name) contradict Church teaching, especially as articulated in *Considerations regarding the Proposal to*

Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 3, 2003).

These reservations aside, *What Is Marriage? Man and Woman, A Defense* is an excellent resource as we face the defining clash over marriage. The authors masterfully rebut all the main arguments or assertions against the conjugal view while addressing the legitimate concerns of revisionists. This book is a rare and essential resource as

society grapples with the question “What is marriage?”

ARLAND K. NICHOLS

Arland K. Nichols, MDiv, is the director of education and evangelization for Human Life International, in Front Royal, Virginia. He is cofounder of the John Paul II Foundation for Life and Family and serves as the executive editor of the Truth and Charity Forum, at <http://www.truthandcharityforum.org>.

***What to Expect When No One's Expecting:
America's Coming Demographic Disaster***

by Jonathan V. Last

Encounter Books, 2013, hardback, \$23.99

238 pages, bibliographic notes and index, ISBN 978-1-59403-641-5

In *What to Expect When No One's Expecting*, Jonathan Last gives an excellent and broad overview of the demography of the United States and much of the world in a page-turning style. He humorously and insightfully covers a topic of significant ethical importance for US social and even foreign policy. Demography and economics, which largely consist in numbers and tables, can lend themselves to dry narratives. Last explicitly keeps the math to a minimum.

One difficulty with writing about demography is the tendency of authors to overcompensate for the mathematical nature of their subject by using apocalyptic language. The archetype for this fatal flaw was *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich. Last reproduces in his book the infamous lines Ehrlich wrote in 1968: “The battle to feed all of humanity is over,” he proclaimed. “In the 1970s the world will undergo famines—hundreds of millions of people are going to starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked on now. At this late date nothing can prevent a substantial increase in the world death rate” (7). Last ironically points out that Ehrlich was not only wrong but managed to cry that the sky was falling at the precise moment when the opposite began to unfold. For his own part, Last manages to present the

gravity of the now inevitable “demographic winter,” or population aging and decline, that most industrialized countries will undergo in the next twenty years while maintaining a dispassionate and even at times hopeful tone.

The author is a journalist, not a population scientist, but his research and writing skills and his enthusiasm for the subject make this a highly educational and enjoyable book. Last was inspired by such excellent demographers as Phillip Longman and Nicholas Eberstadt to produce a highly accessible monograph that synthesizes a huge amount of cultural and demographic information on fertility.

Last draws the reader in from the very first page, with references to his own family. The narrative begins, “Once upon a time, my wife and I lived in Old Town Alexandria” (1). He waxes eloquent about the good life in this affluent city near Washington, DC, for those who are childless. Predictably, residents have, on average, 0.57 children. Everything is geared to the lifestyle of the “child-free” young urban professional. Inevitably, however, the question arises: what will happen when these carefree people reach retirement age, and a pitifully small younger generation is expected to replace them in the workforce and pay their Social Security and Medicare bills?