

Same-sex marriage - the new Dark Age

By Brendan O'Neill, The Australian, 19 August 2015

Something terrifying has happened during the past five years: a belief that was held by virtually all human beings for centuries has been rebranded as bigotry, something that may no longer be expressed in polite society.

That belief is that marriage is something that occurs between a man and a woman, or between a man and many women: the idea that marriage is a union of opposite sexes.

This was once seen as a perfectly normal point of view. Now, in the historical blink of an eye, it has been denormalised, and with such ferocity and speed that anyone still brave enough to express it runs the risk of being ejected from public life.

The furious response

[Consider the ABC's Q&A this week](#), and the furious response to it. The show was unusual from the get-go because it featured not one but two gay-marriage sceptics: Katy Faust, an American Christian, and me, a godless Brit.

I made the argument that gay marriage now seemed to play the same role God played 200 years ago: anyone who didn't believe in it hadn't a hope in hell of getting ahead in public life.

There was a chokingly conformist climate, I said, with critics of gay marriage facing demonisation, harassment and, in some cases, expulsion from decent society. Consider Brendan Eich being sacked as chief executive of Mozilla for his belief in traditional marriage. Or all those Christian cake shops beleaguered by gay-rights activists demanding that they make gay cakes. Twenty-first century religious persecution.

How dare you say...

The response to my comments, on Twitter and in parts of the media, proved my point. It can be summed up as: "How dare you say that the gay-marriage campaign is intolerant, you bigoted asshole?! Get out of Oz!" "Irony" doesn't even begin to cover this.

Labor Senator Sam Dastyari, also on the Q&A panel, accused Faust of being "hateful" and talking "Christian evangelical claptrap". Yet all she said was that marriage should be between a man and a woman and children had a right to know both their father and their mother.

The demonisation of Faust shows how thoroughly the Christian viewpoint has been turned into a kind of hate speech. Something that was a standard outlook a few years ago is now treated as a pathology.

And as a liberal — small L — I find it deeply troubling that a moral outlook can be so swiftly put beyond the pale, branded "INAPPROPRIATE".

We're bigots, haters, scumbags...

Then there was Twitter, which went into meltdown over Faust's and my comments. We're bigots, haters, scumbags, "vomiting our bile"; we should be sent packing.

You know what? Scrap my comparison of gay marriage to God: 200 years ago, in developed Western countries, even the godless had a better chance of getting ahead than gay-marriage sceptics do today.

Are Faust's views really so controversial? Most people would back the idea that kids should ideally know their biological mum and dad.

Indeed, adopted children often seek out their biological parents, believing it will help them make sense of who they are. Maybe they're bigots, too?

Colonisation of public life by an elite strata of society

The response to *Q&A* shows that gay marriage is not a liberal issue. Rather, what we have here is the further colonisation of public life by an elite strata of society — the chattering class — and the vigorous expulsion of all those who do not genuflect to their orthodoxies. Whether you're a climate-change denier, a multiculturalism sceptic or, the lowest of the low, someone who believes in traditional marriage, you're clearly mad and must be cast out.

The social impact of this illiberal liberalism will be dire.

A whole swath of society — the old, the religious, the traditionalist — will feel like moral lepers in their own country, silencing themselves lest they, too, be branded scum.