

A move to end the “historic injustice” of excluding mothers’ names from marriage certificates has passed its first parliamentary stage in a private members’ bill brought by the Bishop of St Albans, Dr Alan Smith.

The bill, which also includes provision to modernise registration with electronic registers, received its Second reading in the House of Lords.

In his speech, the Bishop described the origin of the present practice of naming only the father on marriage certificates as “archaic and unchanged since Victorian times, where children were seen as fathers' property, and little consideration was given to mothers' roles in raising children.”

Dr Smith continued: “As we approach the centenary of the Representation of the People Act, it is only right that we consider how existing legislation excludes or does not recognise the contributions made by women. This Bill allows for this important and symbolic change to be made.

“It's important to note that this Bill would allow mothers' names to be included when registering all marriages, not just those that take place in Church of England Churches.”

Dr Smith said there was popular support for the change in Parliament and across society. Many who were getting married themselves or whose children are to marry will, he said, have been "shocked" to discover the continuing exclusion of mothers' names.

Dr Smith also made clear that the Bill covered other matters relating to marriage registration, namely the modernisation of the system for recording marriages, moving away from a paper-based to a digital system for record keeping.

It does not, he said, “...alter who can get married, or where they can get married, or who can perform that marriage. The bill does not propose any changes to marriage ceremonies, or the Church of England's doctrine of marriage. These are all far greater questions, which fall beyond the scope of this Bill.”

Baroness Williams of Trafford, Minister of State at the Home Office, responding to the debate, said: “It is a very important issue and one which the Government fully supports. I am grateful to the Right Revd Prelate for bringing this Bill forward to remove the inequality which currently exists.

“The marriage entry doesn't reflect modern Britain and it's high time it did.”

After passing Second Reading, the Bill now proceeds towards its Committee Stage in the House of Lords.

An identical bill, introduced in the House of Commons by Dame Caroline Spelman, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, will have its own Second Reading there next month.

Further details including the text of the bill are available [here](#).

Proceedings can be viewed online [here](#)

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