

2nd December 2016

The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby
Lambeth Palace
London
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Your Grace,

I am writing to express concern at the possibility that the Church of England may in some way move towards recognising committed same-sex sexual relationships as being in accord with God's will. I would urgently counsel against this on grounds of Theology and of Science.

Theology

Throughout the history of the Church I am not aware of a case where a sinful practice was re-categorised as a grace. This would be a dramatic 'first'.

In order to justify such a radical re-classification, it would be necessary to set out a robust theological underpinning. The necessary theological work has not been done. It would have to be consistent with the Scriptures, which the best scholars agree is impossible. Conservative scholars take this view, of course. I had the privilege last year of introducing you to Dr Robert Gagnon at Lambeth Palace. His position is well known. Also Wolfhart Pannenberg wrote, 'the biblical assessments of homosexual practice are unambiguous in their rejection'. But scholars from the other side of the debate also agree:

Dan Via: "Prof Gagnon and I are in substantial agreement that the biblical texts that deal specifically with homosexuality condemn it unconditionally"

Pim Pronk: "wherever homosexual intercourse is mentioned in Scripture, it is condemned."

Walter Wink: "efforts to twist the text to mean what it clearly does not say are deplorable. Simply put, the Bible is negative toward same-sex behavior, and there is no getting around it."

Bernadette Brooten (*contra* exploitation argument): "Boswell ... argued that ... 'The early Christian church does not appear to have opposed homosexual behavior per se.' The sources on female homoeroticism that I present in this book run absolutely counter to [this view]."

William Schoedel (*contra* 'the Bible is only against homosexual sex by heterosexuals'): "We would expect Paul to make that form of the argument more explicit if he intended it ... Paul's wholesale attack on Greco-Roman culture makes better sense if, like Josephus and Philo, he lumps all forms of same-sex eros together as a mark of Gentile decadence.

Louis Crompton: "According to [one] interpretation, Paul's words were not directed at "bona fide" homosexuals in committed relationships. But such a reading, however well-intentioned, seems strained and unhistorical.

Luke Timothy Johnson (*homosexual sex is not supported by Scripture – it depends on a different authority*): "The Bible nowhere speaks positively or even neutrally about same-sex love... we do, in fact, reject the straightforward commands of Scripture, and appeal instead to another authority when we declare that same-sex unions can be holy and good. And what exactly is that authority? We appeal explicitly to the weight of our own experience.

Johnson's analysis is surely right, but his way of doing theology is not compatible with the Anglican way.

Science

But what about the scientific assessment of these matters? Please be clear that **the Royal College of Psychiatrists misled the Church of England on a number of vital points** in 2007 (Listening Process) and 2012 (Pilling) and have not corrected these to the Church. For example, the College:

1. misreported a study on 'ex-gays', changing the word 'majority' to read 'small minority'.
2. wrongly claimed that the causation of homosexuality was essentially biological. I challenged this and they later acknowledged the importance of 'postnatal' environmental factors' in shaping sexuality (but only after Parliament had passed the same-sex marriage legislation). **So 'Born Gay' cannot now be sustained.** This is of great significance.
3. failed to acknowledge that **homosexuality is fluid** and often changes over a lifetime. Now they belatedly accept this – again a most important fact.
4. wrongly implied that the poorer mental health experiences of LGB people are caused by discrimination. Pilling [205 – 208] rejected this assertion.
5. were also rejected by Pilling [209 – 213] on a similar argument re the short term character of same-sex relationships.

It would be tragic if the Church of England were to redefine sinful practice as a grace, without warrant from Scripture or from science.

And please hold firmly to two undeniable facts:

- (i) ***the LGBT movement will not be satisfied with blessings on faithful same-sex relationships.*** Malcolm Macourt has written on behalf of LGCM: "I suppose that the society to which they [lesbian and gay people] aspire is one in which young people, as they grow up, will become aware of a wide variety of life patterns: monogamy - multiple partnerships; partnerships for life – partnerships for a period of mutual growth; same-sex partners – opposite-sex partners – both ..." [*Towards a theology of gay liberation*, p25]. If the Church concedes the initial demand, it will be powerless to draw a line in the sand at any stage thereafter.
- (ii) LGBT activists have a sexual ethic that is fundamentally opposed to the Christian ethic and will destroy it. Researchers McWhirter and Mattison (themselves a gay couple) found that "all [male gay] couples with a relationship lasting more than five years have incorporated some provision for outside sexual activity ... To arrive at the acceptance of being gay and of extrarelational sex, each of these men has had to alter his own value systems." ***Adoption of gay practices in the Church will lead to adoption of altered value systems and destruction of Christian morality.***

You have rightly expressed concern about the widening gap between Western society and the Church. Yet it is hardly wider than the gap faced by the early Christians who turned the world upside down. ***This is not a 'Northern Ireland' situation, where reconciliation is needed, nor is it a justice issue. It is a struggle between obedience and selfish desire (which applies to us all).***

I pray that you may have God's blessing and strength to stand against the immense pressures facing the Anglican Communion, and yourself in particular, at this time of moral confusion in the world

Yours sincerely



Dermot O'Callaghan
Director, Core Issues Trust

[Full List of Extended References here](#)