

## Moderator's Address

The Moderator's opening address affords a unique opportunity for our denomination to speak to the nation. In so doing today, I wish to confront one subject that continues to cause us great concern; indeed, it is the subject within Scotland that provoked the greatest response to any consultation exercise hitherto, and is an issue which continues to stimulate serious discussion within the Scottish media. That subject is, of course, the Scottish Government's current proposals to introduce same-sex marriage. Similar proposals are under consideration in Westminster. I address this subject for two reasons:

Primarily, and put very simply, homosexuality is a grievous sin. While the question is asked what is wrong with two human beings 'loving' each other and being 'faithful' to one another, we would respectfully point out that the Bible never defines homosexuality in these terms. Paul describes such behaviour in his epistle to the Romans not as love, but as 'vile affections' and as 'lust' (Romans 1:26-27). When commenting on these verses, John Calvin describes homosexuality as "...the dreadful crime of unnatural lust" and goes on to say that the practice of it is highly degrading since it reverses the whole order of nature.

John Gill, the great 18<sup>th</sup> Century theologian, commenting on the same passage in Romans, states "The very sin of 'sodomy' is here designed...an exceeding great sin this is, contrary to nature, dishonourable to human nature, and scandalous to a people and nation among whom it prevails..." One could replicate these sentiments from a variety of Christian Theologians of all shades down through the centuries.

Further, in November of last year I was reported to the police by several persons accusing me of 'homophobia' and of comparing homosexuality with pedophilia. The fact that to date no action has been taken by the police or by the Procurator Fiscal is probably a reflection of the fact that I never actually said the things of which I was accused e.g. of directly comparing homosexuality with pedophilia. That is to some an irrelevance. The homosexual lobby uses intimidation, the cry of 'Homophobia!', and the threat of the law to try to close the mouth of anyone who seeks to oppose their view. My address today should be a sign to the people of Scotland that no such intimidation will close our mouths in speaking out against proposals for sinful legislation; no threat of the police or the courts of the land will prevent us from warning the people of Scotland against homosexuality, whether such legislation is passed or not.

My address is in two parts.

1. The Christian view of same-sex marriage.
2. The Christian response to same-sex marriage.

## 1. The Christian view of Same-sex marriage

What is the Christian view of same-sex marriage? One may wonder why such a question should be asked. After all, are the Scriptures not abundantly clear on this issue? Apparently not, in the eyes of some. Numerous homosexuals believe the Bible condemns their practice and will openly say so; sadly, they care little about that fact. Increasingly, however, one hears of 'Christian Gay Associations' and 'Gay Churches' where it is deemed acceptable to consider oneself a Christian and a practicing homosexual at one and the same time. For example, we now have a self-professed homosexual as an ordained minister within the Church of Scotland. What then is the proper Christian view on same-sex marriage?

One may look at the view of the fathers of the Church, or consider what eminent theologians of the past have said on this issue, and rightly conclude that those who argue against us are not simply arguing against the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). Indeed, their argument is not primarily with any of the Churchmen of today. Their argument is with the whole weight of Christian opinion over the past 2,000 years. For any politician to arbitrarily redefine marriage, a Christian ordinance, in the face of the overwhelming opinion of the Christian Church for over 2,000 years is to demonstrate a degree of arrogance which is almost unimaginable and truly staggering. Yet this is what is happening today.

But the collective view of the Church is not the primary reason that determines the issue for the Christian. The Bible is our ultimate authority and not the traditions or views of men. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

We today could set out all the arguments from the Old Testament to prove without any doubt that homosexuality is an abominable sin and, by reasonable deduction, that same-sex marriage is condemned in the Old Testament. For example, Leviticus 18:22 states: "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination." But whatever we may think of such verses, what is really fundamental to our understanding of any issue is what the Lord Jesus Christ has to say about it. We may get things wrong, but the Lord is never wrong. Surely his view should put an end to all disputation for the Christian. What then does the Lord say about marriage?

Let us look at one passage in Matthew's Gospel.

In Matthew chapter 19, Jesus addresses the issue of marriage and divorce. The Pharisees came to him to tempt him saying, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every

cause?" These Pharisees were not really serious nor interested about knowing what Jesus had to say, but were more interested in justifying themselves. One wonders if that may be true even today. Are we really interested in what the Lord has to say? The Pharisees approached Jesus with their question which was to the effect, "Should there be such a thing as 'quickie divorce' procedures as we now have them in Scotland?" Moses had permitted divorce but how would Jesus response? To what moral standard, if any, would the Lord appeal, and how would his response compare to Moses? Jesus answered as follows.

"...Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

(Matthew 19:4-6)

We note several points from this answer of our Lord.

1. In addressing this question, the Lord goes back to the Genesis account. He says, "Have you not read..." Later in the same incident, when he is asked why Moses commanded to give a writing of divorcement, again the Lord refers to the initial institution of marriage as given in Genesis, saying, "...but from the beginning it was not so..." (v.8). By this response of the Lord, we can establish two facts:
  - a. Jesus lent the full weight of his own authority to the account of marriage as given at the beginning of Genesis; and,
  - b. He confirms that that account is itself absolutely authoritative and determinative when it comes to identifying what marriage is. In answering any question on marriage, we have the authority of Jesus Christ to determinatively use the Genesis account as the God-given template because that is what he did himself.
2. The Lord refers to the Genesis account, by stating "...he which made them at the beginning made them male and female..." Adam and Eve were created with a clear distinction between them; the one was male and the other female. Indeed, the Genesis account lays the obligation upon them to "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth" an obligation that would have been truly hindered were either of the two of them anything other than fully heterosexual. While it may be somewhat convenient therefore for homosexuals to suggest that there is some gene within their biological makeup which uniquely determines that they are born different to the rest of humanity, such an idea is clearly refuted by the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Adam was created a man; Eve was created a woman. It is true that as a result of the fall of our first parents deviations and many perversions from God's created order have been introduced into the world. Indeed, it would be incredible were that not to be the case as we are all born sinners and, as such, we all have sinful inclinations of one kind or another; in that a

homosexual is no different to the rest of us. However, temptation or inclination is not the sin; practising the inclination or succumbing to the temptation is. No matter how one looks at it, homosexuality is a lifestyle choice for the homosexual just as much as it is a lifestyle choice for the pedophile, the murderer, the thief, the liar, the drunkard or the adulterer. In every case, it is man who freely chooses to depart from God's way of living. Judgement came so severely upon Sodom and Gomorra for this very reason. They freely chose to depart from God. As such, God left them to their own heart and when he did, they freely chose to practice what later became identified as sodomy. The practice of sodomy was therefore itself part of God's judgement upon them, while at the same time it was a lifestyle of their own free choosing.

3. Jesus states further, "For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife..." It should be noted that the injunction for a man to leave his father and his mother and to cleave to his wife was not a commandment that was given simply to Adam. He had no mother or father to forsake. This gives us the clearest indication that the account of marriage in Genesis, and the specific details contained therein, are of universal application; rules to be observed throughout the generations. They were not given just for Adam's good but for the good of us all. Is this not exactly what Jesus recognised when he quoted these verses in response to the Pharisees?
4. When Jesus says, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother..." to what cause or reason is he referring? It is surely to the 'fact' which he had just quoted from Genesis, that God had created them male and female i.e. "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female...**For this cause** shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife..." This is why man should marry and why he should forsake his paternal home and cleave to his wife. His wife alone was able to be the true help meet for him. She alone was designed psychologically, emotionally and physically to help him in his quest to glorify his Creator, and she alone was created by God to assist him fulfil God's purpose in replenishing the earth. Eve had been specifically created by God with that role in mind. To suggest that someone else can fulfil that role, or that any other combination can now replace this God-given model is to suggest that we know better than God Himself. Such a thought is, of course, blasphemy.
5. Among all the institutions and offices belonging to human society, the marriage commitment is the foremost of all, and the most sacred. Even the close relationship that exists between parents and their son must take a back seat to the marriage relationship; a son must *leave* his paternal home and cleave to his wife. In the eyes of the Lord, marriage outweighs every civil relationship. It is therefore a most solemn and a most serious thing for a nation to seek to redefine marriage simply to accommodate a small minority within society. Such a suggestion will inevitably have dire consequences for Scotland and for the United Kingdom.

6. If, as the words in Genesis clearly indicate, marriage is the most fundamental of all civil relationships within society, then we also learn a further two very important lessons from our Lord's words:

(i) Faithfulness - there must be faithfulness in marriage. The man is to 'cleave to his wife'. If there is no faithfulness in marriage why should we expect it in politics, in the press, in the boardroom, or anywhere else for that matter? The marriage bond of all relationships must surely exemplify true faithfulness

(ii) Morality - there must equally be morality in marriage. The man is to cleave, but he is to cleave to his wife, not to another man. If there is no moral code in marriage, why should we expect moral standards in politics, in the press, in the boardroom, or anywhere else? If marriage is to exemplify true faithfulness, it must equally exemplify sound morality. The only moral standard for marriage so far as the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned is that set before us in Genesis where a man cleaves to his wife.

7. The assertion is often made that marriage is a civil institution, and therefore why should homosexuals not avail themselves of marriage as a civil right? This assertion is correct in one respect in that marriage is indeed primarily a civil, and not a church, institution. It is certainly not a church sacrament. It was instituted before the fall and therefore applies civilly to all mankind. However, what that assertion fails to take account of is the fact that marriage, as opposed to what is today called civil partnerships, is a Divine Ordinance. This is clearly shown in the words of the Lord before us, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder..." This is why so many homosexuals are not interested in these proposals coming before Parliament. Many of them are not religious and cannot understand why marriage is such an issue. They already have all the privileges afforded to them under a civil partnership, why the need for marriage?

## **2. The Christian response to same-sex marriage**

Considering the above, what is to be the response of the Christian Church? All would surely agree that there must be some response, but what is that response to be? Is ticking a box on the computer, registering your vote in yet another petition, the answer or are the words of Micah 6:1 more appropriate, "Hear ye now what the LORD saith; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice."

I wish to look at four areas where we must contend, and where we must lift up our voices, and even let the hills echo with our cries. We must cry:

1. To the Lord
2. To the Church
3. To the Nation.
4. To the Homosexual

## **To the Lord**

This is surely a day for prayer, to lift our voices to the Lord. We must encourage our people to pray for the future of marriage. We must gather with like-minded Christians and press the Throne of Grace for God's mercy that the sanctity of marriage in our land would be respected. In this regards, let our prayers to the Lord be both broad and full. Perhaps there are times when our prayers are characterised by being very narrow, simply asking for deliverance. But what if it is not God's Will that we should be delivered? What if it is within God's decretive purpose that our nation in judgement will descend more and more into immorality and godlessness? We have no promise that the Lord will even keep the Gospel light in this land let alone safeguard marriage. These are things that are hidden from us, but our prayers in such a situation must be broad and full, conditioned by the petition, "not my will, but thy will be done". For what should we then pray?

While deliverance for our nation must be a primary desire as we pray, surely our first point in prayer is thankfulness. We must thank God for the gift of marriage and the great blessings marriage brings. As the basic building-block of society, marriage brings stability to families and communities where children can be raised with both a mother and a father. In the Genesis account quoted earlier, where the Lord deals with the issue of marriage, the son is to leave his 'father and mother' and to cleave to his wife. The happy picture is of the son leaving the great blessings of a stable home with a father and a mother, to take up that same responsibility with his own wife. We must pray that parents will be given the necessary skills to raise their children so that children's early training would benefit fully from the marriage bond. We must pray that in a day where almost every medium is used to promote uncleanness, that the innocence of our children would be protected.

But we must also remember in prayer the many children today who are being raised within civil partnerships where there are no proper role-models, and where the environment within which they are being raised will undoubtedly convince them that homosexuality is the norm. Such an environment is more likely to deceive these children into believing they are themselves homosexual when in fact they are not. While there is little evidence to suggest homosexuality is fundamentally genetic, there is much evidence to show that the environment within which a child is raised plays a major part in his or her future sexual behaviour. We should therefore pray for children being raised by adults in a same-sex relationship.

We must pray and thank God for the stable marriage relationships within the Church and within society. We should pray that such marriage ties would be strengthened. It is surely a great indictment on the Christian Church of the present day when one hears of divorce among Christian couples. What a sad example that is to the world of Christian marriage. We should pray for healing in such situations. We need to pray that Christians especially are properly schooled in all the obligations as well as all the benefits of married life so as

to show to the world that "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4).

Above all, we must pray the Lord will deal with the leaders of our nation that they will repent of such proposals as are now under consideration. The same God who gave King Saul another heart is able to give our leaders another mind on this issue. We pray it may be so. Lord is able to do mighty things with us and for us: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). Does the time not call above all for fervent prayer?

### **To the Church**

If our first cry is to the Lord, our second cry is to the Church. In considering this, we must pose the question: What is the Church? In this we must consider two issues. In the first place, there is the need to recognise that ministers who are practising homosexuals are not true Ministers of Christ and ought to have no place as ministers of the Church. Christ defines marriage in terms of a man and a woman as in the Genesis account. But he also says elsewhere, "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples..." (John 8:31). Ministers who are practising homosexuals are not disciples of Christ because they do not continue in Christ's word. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul states, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Now is the time for those evangelical ministers who sit in the same General Assembly as such men to take a clear and a principled stand. Will they implicitly acknowledge those ministers as true ministers of the Gospel by their actions, or will they make their views known not only by word but also in deed? Whatever happens, we pray the Lord will give such men the wisdom, courage, and grace to do what is right and what is God honouring.

Yet, we must also ask ourselves with whom we are to unite in our opposition to the same-sex marriage proposals. For example, are we at liberty to join forces with the ecumenical group 'Scotland For Marriage' or are we not? This is a very relevant question for us as some Christian organisations believe we are.

At the rally organised by 'Scotland For Marriage' leaflets were distributed. One such leaflet correctly identified the problem of same-sex marriages and the dangers posed by the immorality of the present day. The leaflet began by quoting Romans Chapter 1. However, it then asked the question "This is so big a problem, why has God not intervened?" The answer given in the leaflet is as follows:-

“He has! He sent His mother and ours to Quito, to Akita, to Fatima and to several other places... Our Lady reiterated the basic message of the Gospel -- prayer, penance and amendment of life...Say the Rosary every day to obtain peace for the world...[Our Lady] appeared in 1925 and said ‘...all those who for five months on the first Saturday go to confession, receive Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for 15 minutes meditating on the Rosary, with the purpose of making reparation to Me, I promise to assist them at the hour of death with all the graces necessary for the salvation of their souls’...Jesus also spoke...’Have pity on the heart of your Most Holy Mother which is covered with thorns...’ You can remove thorns from Her heart with your loving “First Saturday” devotion and receive the graces she promises...Have confidence in God and Our Lady...May God and Our Lady be with you!”

While we are very pleased that others have stood out against same-sex marriage, and indeed would fully acknowledge that some have made their position on the matter clear in a most courageous and commendable way in the face of much fierce opposition, for us Scripture truth and the Gospel must come first. It is not to be voted on by referendum of the people, and it should not be compromised for the sake of advantage.

In Deuteronomy 22:10 we read "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." Paul expands on this in 2 Corinthians 6:14-1, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness...Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord...". How can we in conscience protest about two of the same sex being unequally yoked if, in so doing, we ourselves become unequally yoked?

We call upon all who love the Gospel message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, by Christ alone, and the Scriptures alone to be separate, to go forward together in full dependence on the Lord, trusting not in the arm of flesh, but trusting alone in the power of the Almighty, knowing that Jesus has been raised, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:21).

## **To the Nation**

If our first cry is to the Lord, and the second is to the Church, our third cry is to the nation. We would respectfully place before the Scottish nation the following:

The demand by a minority to change the definition of marriage has, in our opinion, little to do with equality, but has everything to do with imposition. "Equality" is already enjoyed within civil partnerships. "Marriage" will add little to this. What then will redefining marriage achieve? We believe it will achieve exactly what its proponents want it to achieve; the imposition upon society of same-sex marriage. Many may innocently ask what is wrong with that. Surely this law will bring equality within Scotland and at the same time no minister will be required to perform such a marriage against his conscience. What is the problem?

We believe this will have a major impact on virtually every family in the country. We believe this is but another step towards homosexuality being imposed on our children. Schools will no longer be able to speak about marriage without teaching the equality of same-sex partnerships. Children's books from infants upwards will be required to recognise it. Why? Because the law recognises it.

While it is stated that a minister may not be forced to perform a same-sex marriage, will that same minister be persecuted as others have been in our nation for speaking out against homosexuality once same-sex marriage is legalised? Surely if something becomes law, every institution will be expected to at least acknowledge that law. Will parents be persecuted when they remove their children from classes and maybe even be forced to remove them from state schools altogether to protect the moral upbringing of their children? Will private schools be prosecuted for failing to acknowledge such unions? The humanists, of course, support same-sex marriage and one can understand why. Humanists remove their children from religious education. With the introduction of same-sex marriage into the school curriculum, Christians would be forced to remove their children. Herein is a very subtle way of ensuring that religious education is removed from the school curriculum altogether. This, of course, is a prime aim of the humanist movement, but such an outcome will deprive many parents of the right to have their children taught some decent moral standards in school.

School plays are a reality in most schools. Will such plays now have to reflect the new law? Will school plays have to include a scene with a same-sex couple just as virtually every television drama and soap does? We believe the parents of Scotland should be made aware of these things. They have a right to know the consequences for their children should this become law.

The people of Scotland are well aware that homosexuality is a sin. The Bible says so. An examination of history confirms it. Conscience cries out within as an echo of God's truth. However, men hold such truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). There are, therefore, really only two ways in which this truth can be readily suppressed. The first is to normalise homosexuality and to try to make it the same as marriage. This is why there is such a vociferous campaign on the part of many homosexuals for same-sex marriage. The

second way of suppressing the truth is to close the mouth of anyone who expresses any counter opinion. The germ of this has already been witnessed in our land. Is it yet to get worse?

We would caution the Scottish Government that the passing of such legislation would be the means of introducing persecution against the Lord's people. The small but belligerent homosexual lobby will not be satisfied until all opposition to their way of life is snuffed out. We do not imply that this is what is intended by the Scottish Parliament in considering these proposals, but we fear that this will almost certainly be the unwelcome outcome. We would therefore plead with the parliamentarians of our day not to succumb to the idea that the introduction of this legislation is all about equality. In reality, equality has, in our humble opinion, got very little to do with it.

### **To The Homosexual**

Our final cry is to homosexuals themselves. To them we say, Christians are not your enemies. We in the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) are not your enemies. I believe I can speak authoritatively on behalf of every member of the General Assembly gathered here today in stating that we seek nothing but your spiritual good. We recognise that there are those within society who employ gratuitous and abusive language against you. Sadly, there are even some who use physical violence against you. Christians are not such people. On the contrary, we deplore such behaviour.

However, in seeking your spiritual welfare we are duty-bound to speak the truth to you. Were you to see someone heading for a precipice and certain death, would it be a kindness on your part to just walk past and not to cry out a warning? For the love of your souls we must cry out a warning. That warning is not simply our warning, it is the Bible's warning: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

You may feel it is offensive to be challenged by us about homosexuality being a sin. After all, are Christians perfect? I address the first point by disabusing you of any notion of a positive answer to the second. We are not perfect. Indeed, many Christians were just as annoyed and offended when they were challenged about their particular sins before coming to know the Lord.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:8-10, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.". This is indeed a formidable list. Yet the full potency of this list is really only seen when you read on into verse 11, where it says "And such were some of you:..". It is obvious that there were

Christians at Corinth who had been thieves, fornicators, extortioners and, yes, homosexuals. Yet the Gospel of Jesus Christ changed their lives. This is what they had been, but now they were different. Paul continues, "...but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

The Gospel or good news of Jesus Christ is for sinners. It is for homosexuals just as it is for every other sinner. It is this Gospel that meets the needs of every kind of sinner. In Christ there is forgiveness of sin; there is a righteousness that is perfect; there is the power to overcome sin and to live for His glory. All this is in Christ and nowhere else.

It is for this reason that this General Assembly invites you to come humbly to Jesus Christ today. We would exhort you to repent and to believe the Gospel. It is a call to faith in Jesus Christ alone for all your righteousness. We know that if you come to him, he will in no wise cast you away. He will receive you to himself, and he will bless you with the blessings of salvation.

We would finally say to you, true marriage typifies the relationship between Christ and his Church. It shows the wondrous love of Christ who gave himself for the Church. We pray that you may come to personally know this wondrous love of Christ in your own lives. We today commend it to you, with the exhortation "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55:6)

Amen