MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP (SCOTLAND) BILL
SUBMISSION FROM PUBLIC QUESTIONS, RELIGION & MORALS COMMITTEE,
FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (CONTINUING)

How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?
In opposition

It is a sad day for Scotland when the Scottish government is prepared to introduce a Bill which is in direct opposition to the teaching of the Bible and so obviously at variance with our Christian heritage. Same sex 'marriage' is contrary to nature, history and even reason. The average person will continue to regard marriage as between a man and a woman and will view same sex marriage as a sort of pretend marriage. The proposed legislation will have a demeaning and weakening effect upon an institution which contributes so much to society and is vital for its stability. Marriage is already under attack on many fronts and the last thing it needs is for government to deal it another blow by attempting to redefine it completely. The politicians who are behind this Bill or who give it their support will ultimately bear the main responsibility for the evil consequences which will undoubtedly follow if it is finally passed.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?
In opposition

On every moral issue we must be guided by the Bible for as the inspired and infallible Word of God it is the only rule to direct us in what we believe and how we behave. According to the Bible's teaching marriage is a divine institution and by definition is always and only between a man and a woman. Same sex marriage is a contradiction in terms. It is a transgression of the moral law and a sinful perversion of God's order for mankind.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?
In opposition

Scotland, in common with the rest of the United Kingdom, is constitutionally a Christian country with the Protestant reformed religion being established by law. In the light of that fact we think it is wrong for the state to effectively countenance each a

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?
In opposition
As same sex marriage is forbidden by God the state has no right to authorise anyone to conduct it. If the Bill is passed in its present form then the state will be authorising people to solemnise something which God has cursed.

**How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?**

In opposition

According to the law of the land civil partnerships are only available for two people of the same sex. Therefore civil partnerships cannot be changed to marriages as marriage according to its divine author is always and only between two people of opposite sex.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?**

In opposition

The Marriage (Scotland) Act 2002 requires that in ordinary circumstances civil marriages are to be performed in “approved places” and not simply anywhere that the couple may choose for whatever reason. When a couple marry they make serious promises to one

**How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?**

In opposition

As noted in our response to Q.8, according to the law of the land civil partnerships are always between two people of the same sex. Same sex unions are contrary to the law of God and therefore they should not be registered by anyone.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?**

In support

Our sex is fixed from our conception to our death and cannot be changed by any means, least of all by obtaining a certificate. Rather than trying to alter their God-given gender people should live according to it. Those who are married should stay married to their wife or husband and continue to fulfil the role in that marriage which is appropriate to their sex.

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?**

Safeguards for those who object to same sex marriage are found in Section 14 of the Bill (â€œSame sex marriage: protection of freedom of expression etc.â€™). They amount to just seven lines of text and contain nothing specific. The Policy
Memorandum in Section 93 refers to protection against discrimination claims generally for marriage celebrants, others who play an integral part in the religious or belief aspects of the marriage ceremony and persons controlling the use of religious or belief premises. The protection is dependent upon an amendment to the 2010 Equality Act relating to Scotland being passed in the UK Parliament. In no way is this protection to be regarded as an act of generosity or a concession. The Scottish government has no authorisation to interfere with the beliefs, practices, work and witness of the Christian church, especially given the fact that the Protestant reformed religion is established by law in our country: rather the government should recognise, support and nourish the Christian faith. Protection for other individuals is dealt with in Sections 119-126 of the Memorandum. Again there is little specific detail. The government plans no changes to section 9 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which allows parents to withdraw any pupil from any instruction in religious subjects. The government is committed to maintaining the right of parents to withdraw children from specific programmes of sexual health education yet it does not consider that it would be appropriate to allow parents to withdraw children from any lesson where same sex marriage, civil partnerships or homosexuality might be mentioned. The inequity of the present state education system is evident when we read that the government is committed to maintaining the arrangement whereby the faith content of the curriculum in Roman Catholic state-funded schools is decided by the Roman Catholic Church. By contrast if the Bill is passed Protestants, who have no state-funded schools, will have to put up with a curriculum which will include an unbiblical and indeed antichristian approach to marriage. In one case the Memorandum actually specifies that there will be no protection for people opposed to same sex marriage. Section 125 informs us that the Bill contains no provision that civil registrars do not have to solemnise same sex marriage. The one (possible) exemption from the obligations of the new orthodoxy which is specified is fosterers, as seen in Section 126: the Government is considering if it would be helpful to amend existing guidance on fostering to make it clear that a would-be fosterer should not be rejected just because of his or her views on same sex marriage. We regard these safeguards as wholly insufficient and do not believe for a moment that they will be adequate to protect those who believe in real marriage from the efforts which the homosexual lobby will continue to make to suppress all opposition to the normalisation of their perverse and destructive lifestyle.

Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?

Going by past experience we have no confidence that those who oppose same sex ‘marriage’ out of their Christian or other convictions will escape penalties in the workplace or in wider society if this legislation is passed. We believe that it will be only a matter of time before such people find themselves charged with a ‘hate’ crime or something similar and brought before the courts when all they have sought to do is follow the teaching of the Bible, maintain the faith of their fathers and uphold the established religion of our land.

Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?
The content of the Bill demonstrates our national descent into immorality and a government completely out of touch with reality. The government may think that it is creating a more ‘tolerant’ society but no government should tolerate a moral evil which God so clearly hates. God judges nations during time according to whether they have served and honoured Him or not. The Bible issues this plain warning: "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee [i.e. God] shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isaiah 60:12). We implore the government to take note and to abandon this wicked Bill.

Are you responding as...

a faith/belief-based organisation

Rev David M Blunt
Convener
Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee
Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)
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