



Marriage

Rt Rev David Cook

On my recent trip to Malaysia, I was asked to expound Romans 13:1-7, the attitude of the Christian to the civil ruler.

The Bible makes it clear that all “superior” authority, like that of Government, is derived from the supreme authority, God Himself, who establishes and institutes such authority.

For the Christian, the State will have a limited jurisdiction, like Moses’ mother, the midwives of Egypt, Daniel, the apostles and the Lord Jesus, we will respectfully submit to the State until it oversteps the boundary set by God. “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

There are many issues which may be “disputable” in our relationship with governments, but the proposed change to the Marriage Act is not one of them.

The Marriage Act of 1961, amended in 2004 defines marriage as “the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others, voluntarily entered into for life”.

This is a perfectly good reflection of Genesis 2:24, “a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”.

The Lord Jesus ratifies this definition of marriage in Matthew 19:5 – 6 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together let not man separate.”

Everything which the apostle Paul says of marriage in 1 Corinthians 7 is based on the premise that marriage is between a man and a woman. Some may say that this is just the writing of Paul, a mere man, but remember, just as the resurrection of Jesus declares His deity (Romans 1:4) so the resurrection of Jesus ratifies Paul’s authentic apostleship (Galatians 1:1).

The question of same sex marriage will not go away, I suspect that our politicians will treat the issue as unresolved until the Marriage Act is amended. Such amendment will not foster stronger family life, children will be denied both a mother and a father, surrogate parenting will become more common, inevitably those who hold a contrary position will be treated with intolerance, being accused of being homophobic, simply for having a moral conviction that homosexual practise is contrary to God’s will.

We don't have to follow Ireland's poor example.

The fact that the Republic of Ireland has recently voted for same sex marriage, does not mean that our nation’s leaders have to unquestioningly follow such a poor example.

On such a fundamental change to the foundation of our society, why shouldn’t the people have the opportunity to express their mind in a referendum?

The question that Presbyterian ministers must face is, as registered marriage celebrants, are

we prepared to continue to operate under an Act which unacceptably redefines marriage?

The Church and Nation Committee has discussed this issue, our political leaders need to face the reality that a redefining of the Marriage Act will be seen by many Christian celebrants as an affront to the supreme authority of God and will lead to a massive reduction in celebrants' availability to operate under such a compromised Act.

None of us expected that in our lives we would have to stand solidly with the apostles and declare, "We must obey God rather than men".

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