

Archbishop of York criticised for “homophobic rhetoric”



By [Rose Troup Buchanan](#), Deputy Editor (2011/12)
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York Minster

YUSU have published an open letter condemning Dr. John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, after he stated that ministers should not overrule tradition on the issue of same-sex marriages. In the open letter, YUSU stated the views of Sentamu were “extremely disappointing.”

Dr. Sentamu, who is the second most senior cleric in the Church of England, gave an interview to The Daily Telegraph in which he said that marriage should only be between a man and a woman.

YUSU have outlined their support of same-sex marriages, in the open letter, and expressed disapproval over Sentamu’s views. The letter went on to state that: “It is not the place of the church to use outdated and homophobic rhetoric to deny citizens of their right to marry.”

Cem Turhan, LGBT Officer, said that he was “extremely disappointed” by Sentamu’s “both reactionary and out of touch” views.

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“It is not the place of the church to use outdated and homophobic rhetoric to deny citizens of their right to marry.”
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YUSU Open Letter

He was supported by Tim Ellis, YUSU President, who commented that he: “would hope the Archbishop of York and the Church of England recognise that they are behind the times when it comes to their stance on same-sex marriage.”

Ellis also expressed his concern that Sentamu used arguments of tradition and language in attempting to legitimise illegal discrimination.

Sentamu equated ministers’ move to legalise gay marriage as that of decisions taken by dictators.

Turhan further stated that: “I feel that calling the consultation that the Government is begging in March

‘dictatorial’ is just wrong and offensive to all those who have suffered under brutal dictatorships of the past.”

YUSU LGBT are planning on holding a protest outside of York Minster. The Facebook group states the protests will “show our anger in the comments made, and the unified belief in equal marriage for all people.”

Same-sex marriage is not currently legal in the UK. In 2010 the Liberal Democrats became the first major political party to endorse gay marriage, and the government expressed its intention in 2011 to consult on legalising both religious same-sex ceremonies and civil marriage for same-sex couples.

Last September the government announced its decision to introduce same-sex civil marriage by the next general election.



16 comments

Sean Anderson

1 Feb '12 at 12:01 am

Okay, here we go.

The important thing to state firstly is that I do not judge homosexuals. I do not believe they have a choice and there should be no discrimination against them.

However, John Sentamu has a good point and he is right to stand up for his views and for unity as one flesh between a man and a woman.

Even for those who disagree with him, why do they get so angry and call him a bigot? You have the right to disagree with him: no one would deny you that. That's the beauty of our democracy. But let John Sentamu have his opinion and don't resort to calling him outdated. (He even said he agrees with civil partnership, just highlighting that it isn't the same as marriage and shouldn't be.)

Still, let's remember to promote the good things about Christianity. We're not here to hate. Jesus didn't judge people. He loved everyone. But that doesn't mean we can't peacefully object to matters with which we disagree. As long as objection doesn't turn hatred.

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Rebecca

1 Feb '12 at 7:25 pm

Jesus didn't judge, and loved everybody? So presumably we should do the same, promote equality, condemn Sentamu's comments and petition the government for the legalization of same-sex marriages.

[Report](#)

Dan

2 Feb '12 at 6:27 pm

Jesus did judge people. He judged the pharasees who made up their own rules as to what was right and wrong. He called them vipers. He said that they were trying to make their own rules preventing them from actually being obedient t God. Mark 7:1-13.

His love was expressed by dying on a cross to bear the punishment for those who were disobedient to him. Romans 5:8-9.

As Christians we are called to love everybody. But that does not mean we have to agree with everything

people do. And it is still, last time I checked (but increasingly changing), legal for people in this country to disagree, even if (shock horror) you disagree with the liberal elite. Disagreeing with someone’s lifestyle does not make you a “phobe”. I am not a “drunkaphobe” because I disagree with the practice of getting drunk, a “premaritalsexaphobe” because I disagree with premarital sex.

And so labelling Sentamu a “homophobe”, i.e. someone who hates homosexuals, just because he disagrees with you is just plain silly.

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padadadadas

2 Feb '12 at 7:54 pm

I believe homosexual couples should be entitled to a civil partnership, if they want to. Because a civil partnership has no religious connections and is made by the state as a way for gay couples to be partnered together, and feel more secure in their relationship.

I do not, however, believe homosexuals should ever be entitled to anything approaching a Christian marriage. As marriage is specifically designed as an institution for a man and woman to get married. Seeing as the C of E is christian, christians should decide what is aloud within their religion. As the bible says “A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife” christians clearly believe a marriage is between a man and woman.

One last comment is is that i dont believe Sentamu is being homophobic. He is simply saying he doesnt think homosexuals should be able to get married in the C of E.

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Glove

2 Feb '12 at 9:56 pm

But Dan, you don’t go around refusing to let people get drunk or have premarital sex because you don’t think God would like it...

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so much hypocracy

2 Feb '12 at 10:37 pm

“It is not the place of the church to use outdated and homophobic rhetoric to deny citizens of their right to marry”. As we live in a religious state, I think it is entirely the right of the church to define marriage as whatever pleases them.

There is no true discrimination here, civil partnerships carry the same legal consequences as marriage. The only thing (as far as I can see) that marriage might bring is a feeling of tradition? However, by changing the definition of marriage you undermine that tradition. Furthermore, Sentamu is just expressing his views, and that of his religion. To say that his views are “outdated” is bigoted and hypocritical.

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@Dan

2 Feb '12 at 10:44 pm

You’re clearly an intelligent man.

I am a gay man but my opinion on what Sentamu said isn’t yet fully-formed.

What I would like to ask you though is this: I am not a Christian, and yet I like to think I live my life by the Golden Rule. Treat other people like you want to be treated. Didn’t Jesus say ‘There are many rooms in my father’s house’?

What makes you believe you have the authority to judge other people for the way in which they lead their life? I don't think any less of you for being Christian, and yet you 'disagree with my lifestyle'. What gives you the right?

Are you able to take a step backwards and appreciate this? Person A claims to follow a set of beliefs that preach love, togetherness and morality. Person B claims to follow no set beliefs.

Person A judges Person B, Person B does not judge Person A.

Who is more loving? Who is more caring? I just don't get it.

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Dan

3 Feb '12 at 9:15 am

@ Dan

Hello.

When you say judge, what do you mean? If you mean I stand and say “I shall go to heaven because I live a more moral life”, then you misunderstand the Christian gospel. The gospel is thus: even my best efforts do not warrant my salvation, I am a sinner who has fallen short of God's perfect law and himself deserves to be judged.

But Christ died for me on a cross so that I wouldn't have to. My heart was transformed from hatred against God to loving God and wanting to obey him.

If you mean judge as relating to deciding on morality: I do not decide on my morality. My moral code comes from God, who sets it down in the Bible, which is his word. So when I read passages such as 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, I have to take it seriously when Paul writes that those who are unrepentantly sinful will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus himself said “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me”. And that requires a repentant life.

The golden rule does guide how I live. I must treat all people with love and kindness, because the love and kindness given to me by God was undeserved and unwarranted. So I treat people with kindness. It doesn't mean I affirm their lifestyles.

I have no problems with civil partnerships. Why? Because it is a secular institution. But it would be against my conscience if I had to refer to a homosexual couple as a married couple.

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Sean Anderson

3 Feb '12 at 12:34 pm

I realise now my comment was inaccurate. Dan corrected me. What I should have said is that Jesus loved and was not worried to associate with sinners (something he was criticised for), but we are all sinners.

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Rebus

4 Feb '12 at 12:47 am

Is there even much of a difference these days between a Civil Partnership and a Marriage, other than the terminology? They're both statements of love and commitment, carrying equal legal rights.

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Glove

4 Feb '12 at 12:18 pm

But isn't that the indication that we should stop calling one a 'civil partnership' and one a 'marriage', rebus? Difference in terminology is just squeamishness on the part of those who don't want to associate *their* lives and religion with anyone who isn't straight.

' Ok, guys, you can get married...but it's not a marriage, right? It's a civil partnership. Remember that. It's different. Cos you're gay.'

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David

6 Feb '12 at 1:47 pm

I agree with 'Glove', the difference in terms is relevant because that in itself means that CPs will never be viewed in the same way as marriage, and will instead be seen as second-class. And the difference is particularly relevant for homosexual Christians, who want to declare their love and commitment before God.

How can it make sense from either a religious or secular point of view (and priests are invested with legal as well as religious responsibilities, and so have a duty to follow the law as regards discrimination, just as any other wedding registrar would) that heterosexual atheists can get married in church, as happens all the time, with the tacit knowledge of the minister, but that gay Christians, who would have a genuine religious interest in having a marriage rather than CP are barred? Not only does the prohibition exist, but certain clergy like the Archbishop of York feel the need to publicly express their support for it.

This, ultimately, is why the rhetoric suggests homophobia, I can't recall a single word being said in recent times against atheists (whatever their sexuality) marrying in church, whereas the very idea of gay marriage is regularly condemned. And there are, of course, far more important issues in the world ministers to be talking about. Hence Desmond Tutu's despondent reflection that the church has become obsessed with questions of human sexuality.

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Chris

7 Feb '12 at 2:55 pm

Implying that Christians came up with the notion of marriage and therefore their definition is absolute, unwavering fact is a bit silly. It's also worth noting that not recognising same-sex marriage in this country implies prejudice against any visitors (we don't treat same-sex marriages from outside the UK as civil partnerships; we just don't recognise any gay married couples from abroad in any legal sense). The current system also levies massive prejudice against partners where one member changes gender - if you're married to someone and transition so you're both legally the same gender, you have to annul your marriage (again, you're not just shifted over to a civil partnership.)

Don't try and defend his idiotic comments by defending the so-called sanctity of marriage. Learn some cultural anthropology.

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Ben

10 Feb '12 at 2:48 am

I infer from my experience (whilst remaining open to conflicting experience) that most gay people are not Christian and thus would not want to be married in 'God's eyes'.

However, the issue remains that there are still gay people who do want this. Moreover, many atheist heterosexuals are married by the Church. So it obviously is an issue of sexuality. But is it persecution? The Church of England began with Henry the VIII and its belief system originated much earlier. The tradition of that belief system is that marriage is for man and woman. So long as this tradition is part of the institution's belief system, I think it should be respected. Not necessarily supported or admired, but

respected.

Religions are not stagnant, especially in a democracy such as ours. They evolve, as can be seen by the relaxing of attitudes towards gay ministers and the relaxing of Catholic attitudes towards contraception. The debate over gay marriage is young; even the attitude of liberal secular society towards homosexuality is still evolving. If the Church of England is to approve same sex marriage in the future and modify its traditions in doing so, those in support of this must not be aggressive and label people like the Archbishop of York as ‘hateful’ or ‘phobic’-this is projecting things that are not entailed by his words/actions on to them. Rather, both sides should respect the other’s views, and engage in rational debate about the role of the Church in our society, and the rights of homosexuals within it. Otherwise, the issue only becomes more contentious and bridges are burned. In particular, I think homosexuals who do express irrational outrage at these issues run the risk of being seen as reinforcing the negative stereotype of ‘gays with a persecution complex’.

By the by, I am a gay, atheist male. I thus do not want to get married by the Church, but respect others if they do.

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Glove

10 Feb '12 at 5:32 pm

No one should ever abstain from reacting angrily or in frustration to an issue which affects them dearly, simply because they might reinforce stereotypes...of ‘gays with a persecution complex’? I’m pretty sure it ain’t a complex. LGBTQ people are persecuted. Fact

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Ben

10 Feb '12 at 11:15 pm

Firstly, i never denied the persecution of LGBTQ. I merely stated that in this case, the issue does not amount to persecution. It amounts to a clash of values, which both sides are entitled to. Perhaps i should have stated the stereotype as an ‘irrational persecution complex’. Reacting angrily is something I accept in cases of persecution, and i accept that doing so does not amount to a persecution complex. I don’t think that with respect to this issue, angrily labelling someone in the way you promote will achieve your ends. Rather, I think rational dialogue (including peaceful protest) which respects the views of others will, and that it will take time Carry plaques that say ‘we want change’, ‘we’re as Christian as you are and are entitled to marriage’ by all means-just don’t carry ones saying ‘homophobes out’ or ‘hate be gone’ when neither hate or homophobia are the issue.

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