



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 14, 2012

Church of England, Catholic Bishops, Declare Opposition to Britain's Same-Sex Marriage Plan

Officials with Great Britain's two major Christian denominations have expressed their opposition to a government proposal that would legalize same-sex marriage in the country. The [Associated Press](#) reported that the Church of England, as well as the Roman Catholic bishops of England and Wales, formally objected June 12 to a government proposal to officially legalize homosexual marriage, declaring that the Christian position on marriage only permits the union of a man and a woman.



The official opposition from the churches came on the same day that a pro-family group, the [Coalition for Marriage](#), delivered to the office of Prime Minister David Cameron more than a half-million petition signatures opposing the move. The Coalition for Marriage noted that "throughout history and in virtually all human societies marriage has always been the union of a man and a woman. Marriage reflects the complementary natures of men and women. Although death and divorce may prevent it, the evidence shows that children do best with a married mother and a father."

The AP noted that Prime Minister Cameron "is backing a proposal to permit civil marriages for gay couples, despite the strong opposition of some lawmakers in his Conservative Party. Gay couples are already allowed to have civil partnerships, with the first such ceremony in 2005."

In its statement of opposition the Catholic bishops said that the "uniqueness of the institution of marriage is based on the fact that the human person exists as both male and female and that their union for the purpose of procreation, mutual support, and love has, over the centuries of human history, formed a stable unit which we call the family."

In its [official response](#), the Church of England said the proposed move "would alter the intrinsic nature of marriage as the union of a man and a woman, as enshrined in human institutions throughout history. Marriage benefits society in many ways, not only by promoting mutuality and fidelity, but also by acknowledging an underlying biological complementarity which, for many, includes the possibility of procreation." The document delivered to the government added that a change in "the nature of marriage for everyone will be divisive and deliver no obvious legal gains given the rights already conferred by civil partnerships. We also believe that imposing for essentially ideological reasons a new meaning on a term as familiar and fundamental as marriage would be deeply unwise."

According to the UK-based pro-family organization [Christian Concern](#), the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and the Archbishop of York John Sentamu sent a letter to Britain's Home Secretary, Theresa May, charging that the government proposal would create an "open season" in the courts for legal challenges to the part of the law banning same-sex wedding ceremonies from churches. That mirrored the Church of England's prediction that "it must be very doubtful whether limiting same-sex couples to non-religious forms and ceremonies could withstand a challenge under the European



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Convention on Human Rights.” In their letter to May the archbishop’s wrote: “Assurances that the freedom of the churches and other religious organizations would be safeguarded are of limited value given that once the law was changed the key decisions would be for domestic and European courts.”

For her part, May insisted that the government would honor the rights of religious organizations to bar same-sex ceremonies. “We won’t be asking anybody to do anything that goes against their conscience,” she said.

But as reported by Britain’s [Daily Mail](#) newspaper, a British Justice Minister conceded that the government’s promise to defend Britain’s churches against same-sex marriage laws may mean little in a European court. “Crispin Blunt said it would be hard to guarantee that clergy would not face court challenges if they refused to preside over same-sex unions,” reported the *Daily Mail*. The paper quoted Blunt, who announced two years ago that he is homosexual, as saying that “we’re seeking to protect, indeed, proscribe religious organizations from offering gay marriage.” But, he added, “that may be problematic legally.”

AP noted that approximately a quarter of all marriage ceremonies in England occur in Church of England facilities, which are legally bound to provide a wedding ceremony for any resident of a local parish who wishes it. Such a requirement would appear to prime Church of England churches for a challenge from homosexual couples once a same-sex marriage law is passed.

Meanwhile, the Catholic bishops charged that the government is barreling ahead with its proposal despite widespread opposition by conservative and Christian individuals and groups and with very little study of the possible consequences. “This proposal, which has the potential to impact so immensely on the social stability of our society and which has significant implications for the unique institution of marriage and of family life, appears not to have been subject to such careful study and analysis,” the Catholic bishops said.

The AP report noted that Muslims in Britain have, predictably, come down on the side of traditional marriage, with the Muslim Council of Britain declaring in a statement that “our creator, Allah, has elevated this institution and conferred upon it blessings unique to it alone.”



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