



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on December 6, 2011

## Church of Scotland, Evangelicals, Say No to Same-sex Marriage

In its statement the church pointed out that it “has always viewed marriage as being between one man and one woman. Scriptural references to marriage, whether literal or metaphorical, all operate under this understanding.” It warned that a redefinition of marriage to include same-sex partnerships “may have significant and, as yet, inadequately considered repercussions for our country, for the well-being of families, communities and individuals.”



While on its face the statement appeared to affirm a strong commitment by the Church of Scotland for traditional marriage, it nonetheless seemed to leave open the possibility that the church’s position could evolve over time. “The Church of Scotland is concerned about the speed with which the Scottish Government is proceeding on this issue,” the statement clarified. Noting that the government proposal was an effort to accommodate the wishes of same-sex couples, the church said that “much more measured consideration is required before the understanding of marriage which is entrenched and valued within the culture of Scotland, both secular and religious, is surrendered to accommodate this wish.”

The church also rejected the government’s proposal to change the law so that same-sex civil partnerships could be validated through religious ceremonies, noting that it had not had a chance to analyze the future impact of such legislation on religious bodies who wished to opt out.

Nonetheless, the Church of Scotland declared its belief in the sinfulness of “homophobia,” and affirmed its spiritual duty “to welcome, reach out to and minister to all, regardless of sexual orientation and practice.”

Currently, reported the [BBC](#), same-sex couples in Scotland can enter into civil partnerships that give them full legal rights, but such ceremonies cannot be conducted in a church. “A recent [Scottish Social Attitudes](#) survey found more than 60% of people believe same-sex couples should have the right to marry, compared with 19% who disagree,” the BBC noted.

The U.K.’s [Guardian](#) newspaper reported that the church’s announcement represented a significant



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blow to the efforts of the government, led by the Scottish National Party, to move ahead with legalizing homosexual marriage, and coincided with the launch of a conservative group called Scotland for Marriage, led in part by Cardinal Keith O'Brien, a leader in Scotland's Catholic Church.

According to the [Scottish Daily Record](#), Cardinal O'Brien delivered a "strongly worded" exhortation against same-sex marriage at the formal launch of the pro-marriage group in front of the Scottish Parliament. Calling the government's proposal a "grotesque subversion of a universally accepted human right," the Cardinal chided Scottish society for becoming "blasé about the importance of marriage as a stabilizing influence and less inclined to prize it as a very, very worthwhile institution."

Should the government "attempt to demolish" traditional marriage, he warned, "they will have forfeited the trust which the nation, including peoples of all faith and no faith, have placed in them, and their intolerance will shame Scotland in the eyes of the world."

In addition to the Catholic Church, a group of Scottish evangelical pastors has taken a public stand for marriage, calling on the country's government leader, First Minister Alex Salmond, to back out of efforts to legalize same-sex "marriage." According to Scotland's [Herald](#) newspaper, in an open letter to Salmond the pastors warned that legalizing homosexual "marriage" would have "significant implications across society" and could be just the first step toward accepting other destructive changes in the traditional understanding of marriage.

"Marriage — although it has been undermined in recent decades — remains a vital universal institution that has benefited Scottish society for centuries," the pastors explained. "The marriage of one man to one woman, for life, for the rearing of children in a stable environment, is a cornerstone of society. It is embedded in history and in cultures around the world."

The evangelical churches said that it was "astonishing" that the Scottish government was seeking such a all-encompassing change to the understanding of marriage "at the behest of a small minority. What is to stop it being redefined further? There is a very real risk of definition-creep. If marriage is redefined, who is to say that, for example, polygamy should not be legalized?"

The Rev. Paul Rees, a Baptist pastor and one of the letter's signers, said that the church leaders had joined together "to show our support for marriage and our steadfast opposition to redefining it in law. The Scottish government has miscalculated the strength of feeling on this matter."

Added another signer, the Rev. Dominic Smart, a Church of Scotland pastor in Aberdeen: "Our sincere concern is for the wellbeing of Scotland.... If marriage is redefined in law then that new definition will be the one promoted in schools. Children will be taught that when they grow up they can marry someone of the same sex. Any parents who object will be labeled as intolerant and narrow minded."

In related news, as Scottish churches battle the imposition of homosexual "marriage," a new law has been implemented in neighboring England and Wales that allows same-sex partnerships to be registered at churches and other religious facilities. According to the U.K. group [Christian Concern](#), while the new law, which went into effect December 5, "is intended to be voluntary ... critics of the move believe that what is being portrayed as optional for churches will quickly become an expectation and then a duty."

Significantly, noted the Christian group, "Prime Minister David Cameron promised in October to introduce full homosexual marriage by 2015, ending the legal definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman." It added that, according to a Church of England report, "If that happens, then equality laws may apply, which would open the Church of England to legal action if it did not provide



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for homosexual marriage on its properties.”

Concluded the group: “If homosexual marriage is legislated for, and if churches were not protected from being sued if they refused to marry homosexuals, then the vast majority of pastors and clergy may be forced to choose between their conscience and their jobs, triggering the biggest threat to religious liberty in generations.”



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