

Church of England beliefs on sex and morality

Sir, On February 28 the General Synod of the Church of England will be debating two Private Member's Motions, one promoting tolerance of same-sex partnerships within the Church, proposed by the Rev Mary Gilbert, the other promoting traditional marriage, proposed by the Rev Paul Perkin.

We call on all members of the General Synod to support the motion being put forward by Mr Perkin and to oppose that put forward by Ms Gilbert.

Over recent months, a spotlight has been shone on the Church's position in relation to homosexuality, with the public watching and waiting for the Church's response to the ever-increasing parity with which homosexual relationships, and marriage, are being treated by politicians and the legal system. The question is whether the Church will shift its stance on homosexuality, swayed by the changes created by the Civil Partnerships Act and the forthcoming Sexual Orientation Regulations, or whether it will

stand firmly in its reliance on the unchanging Word of God.

Recent discussions about gay adoption, faith schools, the rights of cohabitants and freedom of conscience and religion in 21st-century Britain mean that there is an unprecedented platform for the Church to speak boldly about God's creation plan for humanity and His desire to reconcile sinful man to Him through Jesus Christ.

There is a battle for truth in this nation relating to the meaning of family, the meaning of marriage, the welfare of children, and what sort of family and upbringing are in their best interests.

Mr Perkin's motion calls for clarity of the Church's witness to the Bible's teaching on sexual morality, but Ms Gilbert's motion would be unhelpful and could lead to further confusion and misunderstanding about the Bible's teaching on homosexuality. In particular, the motion could give the impression that all forms of relationship are equally

acceptable and that the Bible has nothing to say about the rights and wrongs of extra-marital relationships.

Marriage is the bedrock of society. The Church is called not to reflect society's standards but rather to show society how God has taught us to live. We ignore God's biblical model for society at our peril.

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Cohesive and Coherent Voice
JONATHAN STEPHEN
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Sir, Three cheers for Libby Purves (Comment, Feb 20).

Anglicanism is struggling to hold together new differences as it has held together old ones over the centuries. Unity has been held but only at the cost of putting a brake on any further developments in consecrating gay bishops or recognising official blessings of gay and lesbian unions.

The cost is being borne by those at the margins. In my reading of the gospels Jesus spent his time on the margins and was brought to trial for attacking authority. I believe that He is especially present today with the rejected and the struggling.

The heart of the gospel is the good news of the authentic, unconditional love of God. The Anglican Church will indeed fail in its mission if it cannot find ways to release itself to show that love today. We cannot accept a covenant which preserves unity at the expense of fossilisation and failure to live out love.
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