

1. Introduction

My ministry is in the Dutch Reformed Church in the little village of Philadelphia, off the N7 about half-way between the N1 and Malmesbury, where I have served the congregation for the past thirteen years. My first time to really become aware of the issue of homosexuality, was during the meeting of our church's regional Synod in 1995. Approximately in 1997 I started to serve on the Synod's Committee for Doctrine and Actual Affairs. I soon realised that the issue of homosexuality had the potential to bring about a rift, not only in our denomination, but in churches all over the world. On top of that the matter of the authority of the Word of God was now at stake. So I started to read intensely about the issue and experienced the growing confusion and uncertainty about it in the church. Various sessions of the regional and the General Synod have spent a lot of time in considering this matter. A very serious debate have developed and fellow believers seem to be deeply divided. A colleague and friend of mine was invited to join an inter-church group that goes by the name "Defend Marriage" and when he and others from the group were not able to attend this hearing, I was asked to attend and, if possible, make a presentation. I wish to thank you sincerely for the opportunity.

2. I have to confess to you that this occasion is quite tremendous to me and has put me in a state of awe and wonderment. For here I am in the company of people who have been entrusted with power and authority over the peoples of our beloved country. Christians believe that there is no authority except from God (Romans 13:1 – 6) and Christ Jesus Himself said to Pilate, the Roman Governor, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above." (John 19:11). In 1 Timothy 2:2 Christians are admonished to pray "for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life." Thus Christians pray for kings and other people in authority, but we do not pray to the king, as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, once so aptly put it. And Christians submit to these authorities, except when actions are demanded that would bring us into conflict with the will of the Almighty.
3. Many years ago, Enoch Sontonga wrote the beautiful words that became a favourite hymn in thousands of homes. Today it is our national anthem: "Nkosi sikekeli Africa...". Lord, bless Africa, that is our solemn prayer.
4. When I have to evaluate this Bill, I cannot do it better than in the words of Robert A J Gagnon, who wrote in 2001: "there is clear, strong, and credible evidence that the Bible unequivocally defines same-sex intercourse as sin" and "there exist no valid hermeneutical arguments, derived from either general principles of biblical interpretation or contemporary scientific knowledge and experience, for overriding the Bible's authority on this matter. In sum, the Bible presents the anatomical, sexual, and procreative complementarity of male and female as clear and convincing proof of God's will for sexual unions." (In *The Bible and homosexual practice: texts and hermeneutics*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, p 37). Or, in the words of the famous Swiss theologian, Karl Barth, (in his *Church Dogmatics, III/4, § 54.1 on Man and Woman, p 166 in the middle of the previous century*). (See Appendix A).

5. Of course I am quite aware with Gagnon of the risk that one takes when you put up your argument like this. Also I am conscious of the labels that I will attract, such as homophobic, intolerant, exclusive and resistant to diversity or being uncritical in the use of Scripture.
6. It has already been mentioned that one should carefully distinguish between the homosexual person and homosexual practices. We also have to see the difference between the demand for pastoral concern and ethical proscription of conduct.
7. It is often said that love will solve all problems. Christ, however, loved the world, but He did not tolerate sin. One would do well to go and read 2 Corinthians 7:8 – 10 and Leviticus 19:17 – 18 in this regard. The so called Golden Rule should not be construed to mean that to love is to tolerate and accept. True love rejoices with the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6).
8. In the light of the above, Christians could never accept that the constitution is the supreme authority in any, and especially in our country. Therefore, in as far as the proposed Bill, that have been drawn up at the injunction of the Constitutional Court, transgresses the clear commandments of the Almighty, it imperils the future of our country and all its peoples, not only those who insist that their indulgence be legalised. The insistence that church and state should be kept separate may only be maintained for as long as we realise that the Almighty will not be mocked.
9. If we were to read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, we would realise that the principles there still holds today for all who would consider themselves His people. Depending on if and how we obey His will and commands, there will be blessings or punishment. It is my sincere conviction that our obstinacy in this regard have already resulted in the deterioration of the moral fibre of our land. What does a better life for all or the common good for the most people mean, when we daily call down the just wrath of the Almighty.
10. Therefore I plead with the committee to not send this Bill to parliament for approval and to urge both parliament and the constitutional court to reconsider every single article thereof that might make it impossible for peace and justice to embrace and that will leave us with no hope in eternity.

I thank you for the opportunity.

APPENDIX A

woman to be awake to this polar relationship, ripe for it and active in it, to remain true to it. To this extent our second principle corresponds with the first, and the first can be properly grasped only in the light of the second. It is the equivalence of the being of both sexes with this relationship which legitimately replaces the many typologies which have been attempted, and makes them completely superfluous.

It cannot be objected that this relationship differs on the two sides. This is, of course, true, for man's relationship to and from woman is different from the corresponding relationship of woman. He is ordered, related and directed to her very differently from what she is to him. We shall return to this point in a third principle in which it will be a question of the order within the relationship. The relationship, and therefore the being of man and of woman, does not subsist apart from this order. But it is not this order which creates the relationship and makes the man man and the woman woman. It is where there is this relationship, where the man is man and the woman woman, that the order is operative and revealed. We shall have to concern ourselves with it as a *conditio sine qua non*, but only when we have recognised the relationship itself and therefore the being and distinctive difference of the sexes as determined by it, i.e., as they are ordered, related and directed the one to the other. And in this recognition the reciprocity of the sexes, and therefore that which they have in common, must take absolute precedence of the difference in their modes of interrelation. In other words, the similarity in their interrelationship must be more important in the first instance than the illuminating and fundamental dissimilarity in which it is realised. Or, to put it in yet another way, we must first consider their mutual co-ordination, for it is only on this basis that we can properly understand the order which obtains within it.

↙ We have here a nodal point in our whole investigation and representation of "freedom in community" generally, and particularly of the typical freedom in the community of man and woman. The truth which we have to enunciate is that in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3²⁸), which means that like Jew and Gentile or slave and free they are one in Him, and stand upon an equal footing. But if they are one in Him, standing upon an equal footing, this means that they are what they are for themselves as they are ordered, related and directed to each other. The Jew is a Jew in the Lord only, but precisely, to the extent that he confronts and is confronted by the Greek. The free man is free in the Lord only, but precisely, to the extent that the slave is associated with him and he with the slave. Similarly the male is a male in the Lord only, but precisely, to the extent that he is with the female, and the female likewise. That they are one in the Lord holds them together. It allows and commands them to be together. And it is the basis of their distinction, which is rooted in the fact wherein they have their

essence, namely, that they are directed to be in fellowship. Because their freedom is that which they have from and before and for God, therefore it can take shape only in their fellowship with each other, and their humanity can consist concretely only in the fact that they live in fellow-humanity, male with female, and female with male. Every right of man and woman stands or falls with the observance and maintenance of this rule, and every wrong consists in its contravention.

This rule is from this standpoint the command of God. If we are to be obedient to the divine command we cannot regard ourselves as dispensed from its observance. It is clear that in it we have to do with the fundamental law of love and marriage in so far as it must be in particular the law of the being and attitude of a particular man in relation to a particular woman and *vice versa*. But the woman is the partner of the single man too, not woman in general, not an idea of woman, certainly not the Virgin Mary, but the concrete and definite form of woman encountering him in a particular way. She does actually encounter him too, being unmistakably present for him at varying distances and in many different ways, even though she does not come into question as a companion in love or marriage. She is woman for him too, whether as mother, sister, acquaintance, friend or fellow-worker, just as she is also present in all these and other forms—and always as woman—for the man who is bound by love and marriage. Similarly, the man is undoubtedly partner of the single woman, not (it is to be hoped!) as an epitome or ideal form of manhood, as the heavenly bridegroom and such like, but as the real man who encounters her in concrete and definite form, not as a companion in love and marriage, but no less truly as a man in kinship, acquaintance, friendship and vocation than he is in relation to the woman to whom he is specially and individually bound. That the man is and should be with the woman, and the woman with the man, applies to the whole sphere of relationships now under consideration, and in this regard the primary and fundamental formulation of the relevant command should be as follows—that whether in love and marriage or outside this bond, every woman and every man should realise that he is committed to live consciously and willingly in this interrelationship, not regarding his being abstractly as his own but as being in fellowship, and shaping it accordingly.

As against this, everything which points in the direction of male or female seclusion, or of religious or secular orders or communities, or of male or female segregation—if it is undertaken in principle and not consciously and temporarily as an emergency measure—is obviously disobedience. All due respect to the comradeship of a company of soldiers! But neither men nor women can seriously wish to be alone, as in clubs and ladies' circles. Who commands or permits them to run away from each other? That such an attitude is all wrong is shown symptomatically in the fact that every artificially induced and maintained isolation of the sexes tends as such—usually very quickly and certainly morosely and

blindly—to become philistinish in the case of men and precious in that of women, and in both cases more or less inhuman. It is well to pay heed even to the first steps in this direction.

These first steps may well be symptoms of the malady called homosexuality. This is the physical, psychological and social sickness, the phenomenon of perversion, decadence and decay, which can emerge when man refuses to admit the validity of the divine command in the sense in which we are now considering it. In Rom. 1 Paul connected it with idolatry, with changing the truth of God into a lie, with the adoration of the creature instead of the Creator (v. 25). "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the man, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompence of their error which was meet" (vv. 26-27). From the refusal to recognise God there follows the failure to appreciate man, and thus humanity without the fellow-man (*C.D.*, III, 2, p. 229 ff.). And since humanity as fellow-humanity is to be understood in its root as the togetherness of man and woman, as the root of this inhumanity there follows the ideal of a masculinity free from woman and a femininity free from man. And because nature or the Creator of nature will not be trifled with, because the despised fellow-man is still there, because the natural orientation on him is still in force, there follows the corrupt emotional and finally physical desire in which—in a sexual union which is not and cannot be genuine—man thinks that he must seek and can find in man, and woman in woman, a substitute for the despised partner. But there is no sense in reminding man of the command of God only when he is face to face with this ultimate consequence, or pointing to the fact of human disobedience only when this malady breaks out openly in these unnatural courses. Naturally the command of God is opposed to these courses. This is almost too obvious to need stating. It is to be hoped that, in awareness of God's command as also of His forgiving grace, the doctor, the pastor trained in psycho-therapy, and the legislator and judge—for the protection of threatened youth—will put forth their best efforts. But the decisive word of Christian ethics must consist in a warning against entering upon the whole way of life which can only end in the tragedy of concrete homosexuality. We know that in its early stages it may have an appearance of particular beauty and spirituality, and even be redolent of sanctity. Often it has not been the worst people who have discovered and to some extent practised it as a sort of wonderful esoteric of personal life. Nor does this malady always manifest itself openly, or, when it does so, in obvious or indictable forms. Fear of ultimate consequences can give as little protection in this case, and condemnation may be as feeble a deterrent, as the thought of painful consequences in the case of fornication. What is needed is that the recognition of the divine command should cut sharply across the attractive beginnings. The real perversion takes place, the original decadence and disintegration begins, where man will not see his partner of the opposite sex and therefore the primal form of fellow-man, refusing to hear his question and to make a responsible answer, but trying to be human in himself as sovereign man or woman, rejoicing in himself in self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency. The command of God is opposed to the wonderful esoteric of this *beata solitudo*. For in this supposed discovery of the genuinely human man and woman give themselves up to the worship of a false god. It is here, therefore, that for himself and then in relation to others each must be brought to fear, recollection and understanding. This is the place for protest, warning and conversion. The command of God shows him irrefutably—in clear contradiction to his own theories—that as a man he can only be genuinely human with woman, or as a woman with man. In proportion as he accepts this insight, homosexuality can have no place in his life, whether in its more refined or cruder forms.

The commanded orientation of the sexes on one another, which constitutes the essence of each, can be summed up under three heads. They are to consider one another, to hear the question which each puts to the other and to make responsible answer to one another.

To consider one another means to know, or more precisely to want to know, about one another: not, then, as if they already knew about one another; not on the basis of a preconceived general or even personal judgment of men about women or of women about men; but with unprejudiced eyes and generous hearts, always ready to learn something new, to turn the corner and see something better. Among the immediate data of existence there is certainly no greater riddle for man than the fact of the existence of woman and the question as to her nature. And on the other hand the same applies to women. We need not think that a man can exist without encountering this riddle and being occupied with it, nor need we think that he has already solved it. To live humanly means never to escape the astonishment of one's own sex at the other, and the desire of one's sex to understand the other.

But each sex has also to realise that it is questioned by the other. The puzzle which the opposite sex implies for it is not theoretical but practical, not optional but obligatory, not factual but human. It is the great human puzzle which as man and woman they put to one another in their mutual confrontation. As man and woman are human in their co-existence and mutual confrontation, neither the one nor the other can be content with his own sexuality or heedlessly work out his sexually conditioned capacities, needs, interests, tendencies, joys and sorrows. Man is unsettled by woman and woman by man. There is always this unsettlement by the opposite sex where there is the encounter of man and woman. Each is asked by the opposite sex: Why, *quo iure*, are you *de facto* so utterly different from myself? Can and will you guarantee that your mode of life which disconcerts me is also human? Can you show me this in such a way that I can understand it? There is such a thing as a silent but severe criticism which tacitly but persistently and in all conceivable forms passes between man and woman in their mutual relationships. The woman stands always in a certain tension to the man, and the man to the woman. No one can escape this unsettlement, this criticism and tension. To live humanly means to hear and face this question at the expense on both sides of self-glorification or simply of self-satisfaction.

And the question challenges both man and woman to act in responsibility to each other. As they consider one another and necessarily realise that they question each other, they become mutually, not the law of each other's being (for each must be true to his particularity), but the measure or criterion of their inner right to live in their sexual distinctiveness. Man can be and speak and act as a true man only