

Anglican Archbishop says “Cameron is a dictator if he says yes to gay marriage”



The Anglican Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, attacks the English Premier’s views on gay marriages.

In March the British government will start an in depth consultation on gay marriage and PM David Cameron has already declared he wants it to be an important part of his mandate. But now it is not just the Catholic Church protesting to the English government against gay marriage. The Anglican Archbishop of York John Sentamu also warned David Cameron: “Do not legalize gay marriage.”

The influential archbishop publicly attacked the prime minister, saying “marriage must remain a union between a man and a woman and David Cameron will be acting like a dictator if he allows gay couples to marry.” In an interview with the Daily Telegraph John Sentamu warned the government not to overrule the Bible and forsake tradition by allowing same-sex marriage. He added that “The rebellion is going to come not only from the bishops. You’re going to get it from across the benches and in the Commons.” Furthermore Sentamu emphasized that “The Church has always stood out – Jesus actually was the odd man out. I’d rather stick with Jesus than be popular because it looks odd.”

But during the annual Tory conference in Manchester, the British PM, David Cameron, was very clear and encouraged his countrymen to “fight the crisis head on, look to the future with optimism, and support all families, even gay ones.” He stressed he wants to guide a government which is close and committed to families “whether heterosexual or of the same sex”. Cameron said: “To anyone who has reservations, I say: Yes, it’s about equality, but it’s also about something else: commitment. Conservatives believe in the ties that bind us; that society is stronger when we make vows to each other and support each other. So I don’t support gay marriage despite being a Conservative. I support gay marriage because I’m a Conservative.”

The Catholic Church has reiterated its opposition to gay marriage, even when a few months back the Waldensians started authorizing weddings between people of the same sex. In the magazine *Famiglia cristiana* (Christian family) the theologian Giordano Muraro wonders why “homosexuals want their relationships to be defined as a marriage. The etymology of marriage indicates a way of life in which a woman becomes a mother (“matris munium”). How is it conceivable that the emotional relationship between two men could be called this way? If we go beyond the etymology and look into what marriage essentially means in everyday life, we discover that for marriage, people mean an intimate relationship between a man and a woman, a relationship of reciprocal care and procreation. In homosexual relationship there can be love and care, but no procreation. Therefore why call the same way experiences that are so different? It’s as if we felt we needed to call any and every grape juice ‘Barolo’ because they are all wines and they should not be discriminated against or as if a FIAT Seicento was allowed to race in a Formula 1 competition because after all they are all cars. This way we create confusion, not only through words, but in reality.”

And yet, homosexual people ask that their relationships be legally recognized and to have the same rights as wedded couples. “Citizens have the right to form all the relationships they see fit for their life and personal growth” said Muraro to the weekly paper of the order of St Paul “but they cannot demand that any relationship they enter should be legally recognized and should automatically give them rights. One can think that the foundation for such demand might be affection and the reciprocal care, but then any relationship based on love and subsequent care should be recognized likewise, the relationship between friends, mother and son, grandparents and nephews, brothers and sisters, carer and patient.”

One may object that, according to what has been said so far, the Church should not be opposed to gay marriage so long as the relationship isn’t incestuous and appears stable and long term. Muraro however explained, “This is not enough. Let us not forget that aside from legal and commutative justice there is also a distributive justice. According to this justice, aside from granting each citizen the basics to live and develop, society also needs to guarantee new rights according to each person’s contribution to the good of the community.”

According to Catholic ethics, the contribution that a relationship between two gay people, however loving and caring it may be, gives to society is very different from the one offered by a man and a woman in a stable loving partnership. “There are many differences, but especially the procreation-education of children which is an incomparable contribution to life and the development of society,” said Muraro “This is why the possible recognition of a loving and caring relationship between gay people cannot be on the same level as that given to a heterosexual relationship. It is unfair to deal in the same way with situations and people who are different.”

In any case, Muraro explained, “if two gay people forge a caring friendship, they can ask for that relationship to be officially blessed. But if they establish between them a ‘more uxorio’ relationship, in other words a sexual partnership, then they have to explain how it would possible to bless a relationship which is explicitly condemned by the Lord.”

It’s not right to say that the Word of God in the Old and New Testament should not have absolute authority and it’s simply an expression of the culture of the time. “It’s a simplistic view that doesn’t explain anything” emphasized the theologian “Distinctions can be made and it’s possible to say, for example, that when there is an official blessing, we do not just bless a way of living, but actually we bless the people in that relationship because they may, with God’s help, carry on living in accordance to the Word.”

But in this instance it is difficult to see why such distinction should call for a public recognition of gay marriage within the community. Muraro believes that “homosexual people should put aside that indolence which is making them want to equate their partnerships to heterosexual relationships in contents and terminology, demands which are not applicable to their emotional experience. They should create their own language and make proposals regarding the description of their status and contributions. In each human experience one must begin from the way things are, not the way we would like them to be.”

Giacomo Galeazzi