

JOURNAL

[text of Overture 16 begins below]

12. That Overture 16, from Potomac Presbytery be answered in the affirmative as amended:

Adopted

OVERTURE 16 From Potomac Presbytery

"A Declaration of Conscience Addressed to the President of the United States of America"

Whereas, Potomac Presbytery finds an urgent need for a clear and unambiguous public affirmation of the teaching of God's Word concerning homosexuality addressing the fundamental moral principles relevant to the national debate concerning this matter, and

Whereas, such an affirmation is properly a part of the calling of this Assembly (Confession of Faith, XXXI.IV.);

Therefore, Potomac Presbytery overtures the 21st General Assembly to adopt and forward to the President of the United States of America (with copies to the leadership of the United States House of Representatives and Senate and to the governors of the several states and any other interested parties) the attached Declaration of Conscience.

Adopted at the February Stated Meeting of Potomac Presbytery, February 13, 1992.

Attested by: /s/ Richard R. Larson
Stated Clerk

TO: The President of the United States of America

FROM: The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America **RE:**

A Declaration of Conscience

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Mr. President, in this Declaration the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America humbly declares its conscience concerning the moral legitimacy of homosexuality. God has spoken without equivocation through His Word declaring homosexuality to be a perversion of His created order, His moral law, and the foundations of society.

This General Assembly is the highest governmental unit of the Presbyterian Church in America, a denomination representing 242,560 members and 2,239 ministers. Though founded by 250 congregations in 1973, the PCA traces its ancestry to the first American Presbyterians who organized themselves on these shores in 1789, and it now has some 1,086 congregations throughout the United States and Canada. It is not the regular practice of the General Assembly to address matters before the civil government. Our silence is not for lack of concern; on the contrary, we instruct and support our members in the God-given duties of civic responsibility. Nevertheless, we do not believe that the Church, as the Church, ought to engage in essentially political activity. Our Church constitution states, in accordance with Holy Scripture, that "Synods and councils are to handle, or conclude nothing, but that which is ecclesiastical; and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary...." (*Confession of Faith*, PCA, 31.4). And yet we now find before us what we take to be a case extraordinary.

In particular, we feel compelled of conscience to speak because of the slanderous way in which truth has been portrayed, as if opposition to homosexual practice is merely a matter of prejudice against a minority. Please be informed that to act on this basis is to misjudge the issue entirely. This is a question of moral principle, striking at the very root of God's authority, man's created nature, and the structure and preservation of human society. We do not act out of a hateful prejudice which rejects the rights of minority peoples and seeks to exclude them from our communities. On the contrary, we affirm and rejoice in the God-created differences among the peoples of the world and we condemn prejudice as contrary to the heart of the gospel by which we live: that Jesus Christ is by His grace making of various Peoples one community of love and fellowship. As His disciples we are called to judge, not by appearances, but to judge righteous, judgment (John 7:24). The God we serve has made it plain that with Him there is no partiality, and that in this we must be like Him (Romans 2:11, James 2:1-9). As citizens we support the recognition and protection of the civil rights of all peoples.

And yet in perfect consistency with this commitment we stand resolutely opposed to homosexual practice as incompatible with the temporal good of our nation and the eternal good of its people. As a part of the Church of Jesus Christ, the Presbyterian Church in America has a primary concern for the spiritual well-being of women and men created in the image of God. Responsibility to such a calling will thrust us into irreconcilable conflict with any government policy ostensibly approving a way of life under its sphere of responsibility which is contrary to the eternal good of its citizens. Further, such approval would be a grievous violation of the government's own God-ordained calling (Romans 13:1-4).

Mr. President, frequent references in your speeches give evidence that you hold the Bible in high esteem as an authority to be cited in favor of your views, and as a source of wisdom in guiding our country. The Bible teaches that sexual distinction and

union are created by God and are to be expressed in marriage according to His purpose and ordinance.

And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. "...For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 1:27-28; 2:24

Together a man and a woman, united outwardly in the institution of marriage, united inwardly in love and affection, and united physically in sexual relations, are the means of transmitting and nurturing life, and that life, growing and flourishing in families, is the necessary foundation of all society. Homosexuality is a violation of these creation ordinances: it is a perversion of human nature, the gift of sexuality and the social order. The Bible makes this plain when in the Old Testament God's law for the people of Israel clearly forbids this violation of His created purposes.

You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination... Do not defile yourselves by any of these things so that the land may not spew you out, should you defile it.... Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you.... I am the Lord your God.

Lev. 18:22,24,28,30; cf. Lev. 20:13.

Here nature itself, the land personified, is portrayed as revolted by homosexuality as a perversion of God's purposes. Lest this be thought of as an outmoded and unenlightened perspective, the New Testament affirms this same truth with even greater clarity when it excludes, not merely from the land of Israel, but from the eternal Kingdom of God, those who pursue homosexual practice.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor homosexuals shall inherit the kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

Please note: in condemning homosexual practice we claim no self-righteousness. The Bible we cite also teaches that all particular sins flow from one rebellious disposition of heart, a disposition of heart that belongs to all (Ephesians 2:1-3). If we have been preserved from this perversion, it is only by God's mercy. And that mercy in Jesus Christ is so broad and free that may extend even to those caught up in homosexual practice, freeing them from its bondage. In the same passage we cited above the Apostle reminds the Corinthian believers, "And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

In fact, in many of our own churches we have people who have left that lifestyle behind out of loyalty to Jesus Christ. In addition, one of our presbyteries supports a very active ministry of truth and compassion to the homosexual community in Philadelphia. Our categorical rejection of homosexual behavior as wrong and destructive cannot fairly be taken to mean that we have not extended ourselves or are unable to extend ourselves in compassion and courage to men and women in our society who are homosexual.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Nevertheless, the New Testament is quite graphic in its warning that the prevalence and approval of homosexual practice in a culture is a sign of the judgment of God upon those who reject His rule.

For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burning in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. Romans 1:26-27.

In the understanding of the New Testament, moral darkness has descended over a people who, though perhaps not given to such perversions themselves, nevertheless, "give approval to those who practice them" (v. 32).

In addition, we would bring to your attention the disregard for the family implicit in any public sanction of homosexual practice. Such policy will generate confusion and contradiction as parents seek to foster and nurture the God-given sexual identity of their children. The delicacy of the formative experiences of children in relation to what is publicly approved by our national leadership is incompatible with a "value-neutral" approach which necessarily distorts the value-laden realities of sexuality as created by God. Our American civil government has historically respected the family's primacy in such matters, and has sought to nurture it. Any policy which legitimizes homosexual practice abandons this time-honored tradition.

To conclude, while condemning homosexual practice, we affirm our duty to love and do good to all, even those who are pursuing this perversion. But for us such love includes the responsibility to speak the truth in love. The truth is that our nation will suffer grievously if accommodated to this perversion. More profoundly, however, the truth is that those given over to homosexual practice will face the judgment of God. We understand the gospel to teach that there is no hope for such persons until they see this truth, embrace it, and turn away from their perversion through the power of Jesus Christ. Thus love requires that we bear witness to their hopeless condition in order that they might find hope. Love forbids our silence in the face of the eternal consequences of believing a lie.

As citizens of the United States we share with others in our community the blessings or curses that follow from the acts of our civil government. God Himself is the Author of sexual distinctions and the complementarity that finds its fulfillment in the loving union of a man and woman in marriage, and which is designed to produce that new life which is the natural and blessed fruit of that union. You should understand that the God Who created the world and Who rules it even now is neither ignorant of nor indifferent to what the government of the United States of America will do with regard to His institutions. The people of our country and their elected leaders must give account of themselves to God. Our prayer is that you will stand against any and every pressure that would be brought to bear on your Administration by those who would legitimize homosexual practices.

JOURNAL

12b. That Communication #4 from North Georgia Presbytery be answered by reference to Overture 16.

NOTE: The Committee on Bills and Overtures adopted this recommendation by a vote of 24 – 0 – 1 as noted in their minutes. Unfortunately it was not reported to the 21st General Assembly.

COMMUNICATION 4 From North Georgia Presbytery "Resolution on Ban on Homosexuality in the Military"

The following resolution to be communicated to President Bill Clinton and Senator Sam Nunn was unanimously adopted by the Presbytery of North Georgia of the Presbyterian Church in America at its Stated Spring Meeting in Marietta, GA, on April 20, 1993:

Whereas, the Bible is clear that sodomy is not a civil right but is rather an abominable sin and crime in God's sight, (see e.g. Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9), and

Whereas, the Bible is also clear that cultures that allow this heinous evil to go unchecked put themselves in the way of God's judgment, (e.g. Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:24ff; Romans 1:26-32), and

Whereas, military service requires discipline and interaction of such a nature that toleration of homosexuality will have a detrimental impact on the morale and effectiveness of the military, and

Whereas, professional military leaders appear predominantly opposed to lifting the ban on homosexuality in the military,

Therefore Be It Resolved that the ministers, elders, and churches of the North Georgia Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in America are strongly and solidly opposed to the lifting of the ban on homosexuality in the military for reasons of both a moral and a prudential nature; and that we hereby request our civil leaders to resist every effort to lift this ban.

North Georgia Presbytery ordered that this resolution be sent to the General Assembly also.

Attested by: /s/ Bob Valentine
Stated Clerk