



A Statement on the 2019 GA Remits

I. Recommendation

The recommendation to the congregations in our Presbytery is that they vote “No” to the remits handed down by GA 2019. The following are both the rationales for a “No” vote, and the implications of a “Yes” vote should the remits pass.

II. Rationales & Implications

A. An Introduced Definition of Marriage in Contradiction to Scripture

Should the remits pass an alternative definition of marriage that is in contradiction to the scriptures will be introduced. The general implication is as a result we fear being regarded as those who do not uphold to the teaching and authority of Scripture. One direct implication to our churches is the loss of our credibility to witness and do ministry amongst the various people groups, of which Koreans are just one. Han-Ca churches take very seriously the work of missions, and already we are experiencing the refusal from outside organizations to partner with our churches because of the nature of the debate we are having in our denomination over the topic of human sexuality. Another direct implication is the projected large exodus of members leaving our churches for churches that adhere to biblical teaching, which coheres with longstanding historical interpretations, rooted in our tradition and creeds. The Korean people hold our scriptures in high regard, and there are plenty of alternative churches where this can be found.

B. Two “Parallel” Definitions: Problems of Coherence & Contradiction

There is a lack of coherence, and the presence of contradiction between the current definition of marriage, “as that between a man and a woman,” with the newly introduced definition of marriage, “as that between two adult persons.” These two definitions are not in parallel. The traditional understanding of marriage is in direct contradiction to two of the three permutations of the latter definition. Both cannot possibly be true at the same time (Law of Non-Contradiction), meaning that when one definition is taught, the other definition is simultaneously being negated. Are we allowed to do this? We are concerned about both our credibility when it comes to teaching our children, and also our integrity when it comes to being an effective witness. As we teach the children of our churches our credibility needs to be supported by our denomination, for the very reasons that we already live in a cultural milieu which in many ways attempts to undermine the authority and the content of our teaching. Moreover, to have integrity, we believe that what we teach needs to be in-line with the teaching of the denomination to which we belong. When the outside is not in alignment with the inside, we cannot be authentic, and our witness will prove ineffective.

C. A Denial of Our Subordinate Standards?

This introduced, alternative definition of marriage goes against our subordinate standards, to which every Minister & Elder in the PCC affirmed in their ordination vows. The vows that we affirmed and made promise to at our ordinations once reflected the nature of the denomination to which we were entering into covenant. We fear that the PCC now no longer reflects these subordinate standards, and this made blatantly evident in the statement of the convener of the special committee formed to discuss the implications of Option B at GA 2019:

...it seems that our differences are insurmountable. In truth we differ theologically on many things; *the role of scripture, the virgin birth, the resurrection*, the place of children, of women and the priorities of the church.
(GA 2019, 9th Sederunt: Pg.3, emphasis added)

Does this statement reflect the true nature of our current denomination? The denomination as it identifies and expresses itself today is not the same denomination to which our churches first entered into covenant with over 50 years ago—and this breaks our hearts.

D. The Trajectory Forward if the Remits Pass

The trajectory of this way forward, if the remits are passed, is one in which those who hold to the traditional view of marriage will likely lose their liberty of conscience and also their place and space in this denomination.

III. Liberty of Conscience & Liberty of Action: A Myth

The piece written by the Rev. Stephen Kendall and Rev. Don Muir (respectively, Principal Clerk and Deputy Clerk) on the topic of Liberty of Conscience and Liberty of Action in the *Presbyterian Connection, Fall Issue, 2019* is a highly interpretive discussion of the topic. It is observed that there was no title given to the written piece, but perhaps an apt one would be something along the lines of “Defining the Limits of Liberty of Conscience and Liberty of Action.” The repeated emphases of specific phrases are highly suggestive of the real limits of how “Liberty of Conscience” and “Liberty of Action” will play out in our current struggle related to human sexuality in the PCC. The following is a list of such phrases in their immediate context (emphasis added):

(1) “This [liberty of conscience] does *not mean we can believe whatever we want*”

(2) “There is a *limit to our liberty of conscience*, especially when it leads to what is *damaging or contrary to God’s will*”

(3) “How can we be certain to know what is correct? While this is an individual task, it is *also the task of the church* . . . in addition to our liberty of conscience being subordinate to God, God’s will and God’s word, it should also be *subordinate to ‘lawfully appointed powers, either ecclesiastical or civil.’* We understand that the *church has a role in dictating, or at least guiding, our liberty of conscience...*”

(4) “this liberty is intended by God as a means for us to uphold and preserve one another in the faith, *not to destroy one another*. This section ([WCF], XX.IV) places upon the church the *obligation to put limits* on practices or even opinions that might be *destructive to the peace and order* that Christ intends for the church.”

(5) “The guidance it [WCF] gives with respect to action is that *no action should lead to division* in the church, or to the *destruction of peace* within the church.”

Moreover, the example of women’s ordination is provided to discuss how the topics of “Liberty of Conscience” and “Liberty of Action” played out in our denominational history. With the end result in 1989 being the addition of a final Declaratory Act which states that “freedom of action regarding ordinations was removed, and freedom of conscience, while still acknowledged, is *conditioned* by the obligation of presbyteries to obey church law and doctrine” (emphasis added).

The following is a summary of how we understand the written piece: there are limits to Liberty of Conscience, which in end is dictated by the church. Similarly, Liberty of Action is determined not by the individual, but by the larger governing body of the church. Furthermore, Liberty of Conscience, and especially Liberty of Action, cannot be upheld if the position being advocated for works against the primary concern of upholding the peace and unity of the church. Therefore, Liberty of Conscience and Liberty of Action will NOT serve as a safeguard.

IV. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms vis-a-vis Religious Freedom

The Charter in 1982 was formed to protect the political and civil rights of individuals in Canada. In the preamble to the charter the following words are found: “Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law.” How does this statement fare in light of our current milieu and the many adjudications over controversial issues which appear to be questioning the reality of religious freedom? The following are some of the many current examples that appear to shed light on the current state of religious freedom:

- i. Government Summer Job Grants given to those who comply with their listed criteria, of which includes the matter of “sexual orientation”
- ii. Human rights tribunals and the challenging of freedom of expression
- iii. Quebec’s laws banning religious symbols (passed: formerly known as Bill 21) and the prohibition of face coverings (Bill 62)

- iv. Trinity Western University and the Supreme Court’s denial of accreditation to become a law school because Trinity promotes “abstinence from sex outside of heterosexual marriage.”

In our day and age it is impossible to argue that religious freedom will continue unchallenged, and without serious pushback. Also what happens when the freedom of one party infringes on the freedom of another? In many cases freedom of expression predicated on religious belief or practice cannot stand up against the demands of other non-religiously related forms of freedom. Yes, currently we cannot be forced to officiate the marriages of same-sex individuals, but let us not be so naïve into thinking this will always be the case. However, what is of greater concern—especially when there is another change to the definition of marriage which excises the clause “as that between a man and a woman”—is the slow handing over of leadership and power to those in our churches who claim to adhere to this “progressive” view of marriage and sexuality.

V. Statements of the Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca

1. For the reasons listed above, the Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca will be recommending a “No” vote to the 2019 GA Remits being handed down
2. Our churches seek a safeguarded, guaranteed and permanent place in the PCC where we can continue to do ministry in this denomination in a manner which reflects the same character, identity, ethos, and core teachings that were present in this denomination when we first chose to enter into covenant with it, over 50 years ago. We desire this safeguarded, guaranteed and permanent place not only to be promised by the courts of our church, but also ratified and upheld by Canadian law.
3. If this space cannot be provided, congregations in the Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca will be forced to seek next steps into finding a place where we can be faithful to our gospel call.
4. Congregations in the Presbytery of Eastern Han-Ca will continue to do faithful ministry, unabatedly, here at home in Canada, as well as abroad in the world. We will continue to love everyone, especially those belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. We will open our doors to all who want to know Christ. And we will call all towards holy living as indicated in our scriptures.