

No 'straight talk' from Cliff Richard

For many years, the issue of pop-legend and professing Christian Cliff Richard's 'sexual orientation' has been a matter of much speculation. This article will not concern itself directly with that particular issue but will rather focus on Cliff Richard's views on one of today's 'hot' topics namely the attitude of the Church towards those in same-sex relationships. He has been making various public comments on this issue over recent years.

Going back to December 2005 the Irish Examiner in a short article reported as follows

Christian pop legend Cliff Richard has urged the Church to **"learn to deal"** with homosexuality, and accept the world is very different from when Jesus Christ was alive. The Saviour's Day singer, 65, is saddened by conservative religious figures' attitude to gay priests and has urged for tolerance of homosexuality. Speaking on the Sky Report on British TV channel Sky News, Richard says: **"I'm sad because we have to learn to deal with everything. Everything has changed. The church has got to come to terms with the fact that things have changed since even Jesus has died. It's only a mere 2,000 years. I mean slavery was an in-thing at one time. We were told to deal with it. And we've dealt with it. And we've got to deal with every aspect of life. There are gay people in this world. Some of them are very talented. Some of them could be great priests."**

I don't quite follow Cliff Richard's line of thought when he first says **'I mean slavery was an in-thing at one time. We were told to deal with it. And we've dealt with it'** and then goes on to say **'we've got to deal with every aspect of life. There are gay people in this world. Some of them are very talented. Some of them could be great priests'**.

No true Christian would deny that 'slavery' was wrong and sinful and it was right for someone like William Wilberforce, motivated by his Christian faith, to campaign for its abolition. However, whilst 'slavery' was morally sinful, the 'repudiation of homosexuality' that presumably Cliff Richard views as another **'in-thing'** is most certainly not in the light of the teaching God's Word. True Christians have no need **'to deal'** with their 'repudiation' of this type of

immoral behaviour except in the sense of resolutely defending their opposition to it.

Clearly Cliff Richard would like to see true Christians setting aside their Biblical objections to this type of immoral lifestyle and instead embracing it as being perfectly acceptable in the light of his claim that **‘things have changed since even Jesus has died’**. In one sense, he is probably correct as we see the increasing wickedness and sinfulness that is engulfing the world as prophesied in passages such as 1st Timothy 4:1-2 and 2nd Timothy 3:1-5. How apt that Paul identified that in the midst of the predicted coming immorality and wickedness those engaged in such would have **“a form of godliness but denying the power of it” [2nd Timothy 3:5]**.

The **“power”** of all true **“godliness”** is of course God the HOLY Spirit, but clearly these prophesied immoral religious people will be and are totally devoid of HIS presence and influence. The biblical command to true Christians in relation to these false professing religious people is **“from such turn away”** but in contrast Cliff Richard urges an embracing of such – is this a Holy Spirit inspired response by Cliff Richard – not in the light of the clear teaching of God’s inspired Word.

Moving on to May 2008 the Times Online reported as follows –

‘Sir Cliff Richard marked the 50th anniversary of his start in show business yesterday with the publication of a book containing his top 50 Bible stories for children. The pop star, a devout Anglican, said that the Church of England could overcome its present difficulties over gays and declining attendance by letting go of the intellectual approach to faith and learning to keep it simple... **“The Church has to remain relevant ... I often admire America, they have a spirituality that we seem to have lost... Maybe we have lost that simple touch...”**

He was also critical of the Anglican Church's approach to the debate over homosexuality, currently driving it to schism. Sir Cliff, who is on the Church's evangelical wing, said it was not up to the Church to judge homosexuals. He said: **“It seems to me that the Church is going to have to start seeing people as people and have God be the judge.”** He said he had many gay friends, some who had been in committed relationships for 50 years. The Church moved on from condoning slavery, and there had to be a way for it

to move on from its impasse over gays. The answer was to **“just take away the intellect”** and let the heart deal with it, he said. Describing how he is writing his autobiography, he said he had no regrets about not having children of his own. His nieces, nephews and now great-nieces and great-nephews kept him busy’

Once again, we see Cliff Richard resorting to his false analogy of comparing supposed Christian acceptance in times past of slavery with current Christian repudiation of homosexual behaviour. He then reportedly makes the astounding statement that **‘it was not up to the church to judge homosexuals’**. The Church is very much commanded to judge sin within its professing ranks as these scriptures show –

“Them that sin REBUKE before all, that others also may fear” [1st Timothy 5:20]

“Preach the word; be diligent in season, out of season; reprove, REBUKE...” [2nd Timothy 4:2]

“Hymenaeus and Alexander whom I HAVE DELIVERED UNTO SATAN that they may learn not to blaspheme” [1st Timothy 1:20]

“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you...and ye are puffed up and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed MIGHT BE TAKEN AWAY FROM AMONG YOU, For I...HAVE JUDGED already...in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...to DELIVER SUCH AN ONE UNTO SATAN for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus...PURGE OUT therefore the old leaven” [1st Corinthians 5:1-7].

Commenting on **1st Timothy 1:20** Pastor John MacArthur wrote **‘Paul put both men [Hymenaeus and Alexander] out of the church thus ending their influence and removing them from the protection and insulation of God’s people. They were no longer in the environment of God’s blessing but under Satan’s control. ...God hands some people over to Satan for judgment such as King Saul and the sinning member of the Corinthian church (1st Corinthians 5:1-5)’** and in his comments on these verses in 1st Corinthians Pastor MacArthur writes **“This sin was so vile [incest] that even the**

church's pagan neighbours were doubtless scandalised by it. [No doubt the same applies today in how Muslims view the lax supposed 'Christian' attitude towards homosexuality within much of the professing 'church'] **The Corinthians had rationalised or minimised this sin** (and were) **so arrogant and carnal as to excuse even that extreme wickedness...Paul had passed judgment on the sinner** (excommunication) **and the church also needed to**'. Cliff Richard is totally wrong when he states **'it is not up to the church to judge homosexuals'**.

Before moving to another report on utterances by Cliff Richard on this subject can I just mention that in the Times Online report they made reference to how at that stage Cliff was **'writing his autobiography'** and I'll make further comment on this shortly.

Moving now to his most recent public pronouncements on this issue again we turn to a report on the Times Online of 4 September 2008 and there we read –

Once he was the bachelor boy, now he's the oldest swinger in town. But Sir Cliff Richard has rarely courted the degree of controversy likely to be provoked by a chapter in his new autobiography, in which he calls on the Church to give its blessing to same-sex marriage. Sir Cliff, famously unbetrothed after six decades in show business, claims same-sex marriages are a modern example of how the world has moved on. **"I think the Church must come round and see people as they are now,"** he says. **"Gone are the days when we assumed loving relationships would be solely between men and women."**

The singer, who is a well-known pin-up for the Christian faith, has long been dogged by speculation about his sexuality. In his book, he says he is sick of such rumors and defends homosexuality as a way of life. **"In the end, I believe, people are going to be judged for what they are. It seems to me that commitment is the issue, and if anyone comes to me and says: 'This is my partner - we are committed to each other,' then I don't care what their sexuality is. I'm not going to judge - I'll leave that to God."**

Sir Cliff, 67, also spoke publicly for the first time about his friendship with the former Roman Catholic priest with whom he shares his many homes. He describes Father John McElynn, whom

he met seven years ago, as his “companion” ... **“John and I have over time struck up a close friendship. He has also become a companion, which is great because I don’t like living alone, even now,”** he says.

“People often make the mistake of thinking that only marriage equals happiness. I may suddenly meet someone and feel differently, but right now I am not sure marriage would enhance my happiness. As for my sexuality, I am sick to death of the media’s speculation about it. What business is it of anyone else’s what any of us are as individuals? I don’t think my fans would care either way.”

This report claims that Cliff Richard has called’ **on the Church to give its blessing to same-sex marriage’**. In the recent article posted to our website **‘Welcome to the Church of Ireland: Diocese of Sodom and Gomorrah’** I dealt with the **‘What we Believe’** statement posted on the website of the pro-gay group **‘Changing Attitude Ireland’**. Amongst a number of portions, I quoted was the following [underlined] and I gave God’s answer to it with the quotations in red –

- **gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people are called by God to express their sexuality in loving, faithful and committed relationships.** **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” [Genesis 2:24-25]. “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” [Hebrews 13:4].**

It is clear from God’s Word that **“marriage”** is only honourable in the sight of God when it is between a man and a woman and that is the only setting in which sexual intimacy is viewed by God as being pure and free from any sinful defilement. This report also made reference to Cliff’s ‘companion’ - former Roman Catholic priest, John McElynn. Again, I am not going to speculate as to the full nature of their friendship but it is interesting that on the **‘Changing Attitude Ireland’** website <http://changingattitudeireland.org/> you can see a posting of the comments made by Cliff Richard in the Times Online report. ***[The link to the comments of Cliff**

Richard no longer works and has either been changed or removed. The dead link has been replaced with a link to the homepage of 'Changing Attitude Ireland']*

In this report, Cliff Richard asserted – **“It seems to me that commitment is the issue, and if anyone comes to me and says: 'This is my partner - we are committed to each other,' then I don't care what their sexuality is. I'm not going to judge - I'll leave that to God.”** I'm not saying that people of the same-sex couldn't or shouldn't live together simply as friends and for companionship but this is not what this whole debate is about – it is about such relationships that include a sexual dimension and Cliff's view is **“I'm not going to judge - I'll leave that to God.”**

That flies in the face of the Lord's command to His people that they are to be **“the salt of the earth”** and that they are to **“let your light so shine before men”** [Matthew 5: 13& 6]. True Christians are to be God's agents in helping to stem and hold back the tide of sinful immorality that would seek to engulf the whole world and likewise they are to be beacons of spiritual light in a world that **‘loves darkness rather than light because its deed are evil’ [Jon 3:19]**. True Christians are not to remain neutral or silent when confronted by those who would seek to introduce and portray sinful immoral concepts as being acceptable standards within the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

One really does have to wonder what 'spirit' is driving Cliff Richard to come out with such publicly-expressed anti-biblical sentiments. By way of conclusion I made reference earlier to the Times Online report of May 2008 that mentioned that Cliff was **‘writing his autobiography’**. In this more recent report of 4th September 2008 we learn that the book is now printed and published.

The Belfast Telegraph of Saturday 20th September under a heading of **‘Gloria [Hunniford] and Cliff in a battle of the books’** wrote **‘Cliff's book “My Life, My Way” is top of the literary charts and with the launch of Gloria's new book, “Always With You” she would love to leapfrog over Cliff to the number one spot. “But having said that I want Cliff's new single “Thank You For a Lifetime” to make it to number one and fulfil his dream of a chart-topper for six successive decades”** said Gloria’.

Clearly the advance publicity concerning Cliff's autobiography such as that reported in the Times Online article of 4th September stimulated buying interest amongst the general public so much so that by 20th September it was **'top of the literary charts'**.

In an article published by The Guardian on 23rd January 2006 on the subject of the spending ability of 'gay' people we read –

'The true power of the pink pound was revealed today with the publication of a survey of gay men and women's earnings suggesting they outstrip the straight salary by up to £10,000 a year...Gay men in full-time jobs earn on average £34,200 a year, compared with the national average for men of £24,800. Lesbians earn £6,000 more than the national average for women, take two more holidays a year and spend £400 a month on credit cards, according to the survey of 1,118 readers of Diva and Gay Times by the marketing consultancy Out Now. Last year's government figures, which put the number of gay people in the UK at more than 3 million - or 6% of the population - has enabled companies to make clearer estimates of the potential of the pink pound and led to huge interest among some of Britain's biggest brands. Based on those numbers, gay men and women in the UK spent more than £800m on CDs, even more - £843m - on DVDs and as much again on books and magazines...Ian Johnson, managing director of Out Now, said: **"Now that the market is able to be accurately measured, more companies can develop marketing plans to better position their brands to attract gay and lesbian customers"**.

It would be interesting to be able to gauge if the 'pro-gay, pro-same-sex marriage' views expressed by Cliff Richard in the run-up to the publication of his autobiography led to an increase in the number of **'pink pounds'** being spent on copies of his book than might otherwise have been expected but that is something we could never be certain about. However, I think it would be fair to say that his comments would not have harmed the potential **'pink pound'** market and that is a market that any faithful Christian would not want to be actively courting.

The **'Changing Attitude Ireland'** website, under a heading of **'Prejudice is unacceptable'** stated **'the church should stop colluding with cultural repression and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in all parts of the world'**.

Cliff Richard is doing his best to promote that unscriptural agenda and my response to him is the same as the one posted in our earlier website article - **“it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret” [Ephesians 5:12]**. It would appear that Cliff Richard has no Holy-Spirit-inspired **“shame”** when it comes to this issue and that perhaps might explain why he does not come out with biblically based ‘straight talk’ when commenting on it.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 22nd October 2008