

institute

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**Including:**  
The latest  
news on our  
plans for a  
purpose-built  
HQ

# Update

The free UK-wide newsletter of The Christian Institute



## New hate laws could silence Christians

# Gagged

**PLUS: 'Gay marriage'**  
A Civil Partnership Bill was announced by  
the Government in the Queen's Speech



# inside

## Gagging Christians

Police quiz Bishop who said gays could 'reorientate', plus news on new hate crimes ...p4,5

## Future building

Latest news on our Building Appeal, including plans to develop a purpose-built HQ ...p6

## Dope vote

Reclassification of cannabis goes ahead, Conservatives sink any chance of stopping it ...p7

## Queen's Speech

A 'gay marriage' Bill was announced by the Government in November's Queen's Speech ...p8,9

## Gender recognition

Plans to allow transsexuals to change their birth certificates to reflect their assumed sex ...p12

## Smacking

Backbenchers may try and change the law to ban smacking ...p14

## Employment

Changing the status of clergy ...p13  
EU directive now in force ...p16

## Around the nation

Staff from The Christian Institute have continued to travel around the nation holding meetings about our work. These meetings give supporters an opportunity to meet staff members and learn more about our work and our campaigns. For people who are unfamiliar with the Institute, the meetings serve as a good introduction. We work hard to make our meetings professional, encouraging and informative.

If you would like The Christian Institute to visit your area, please get in touch. We cannot guarantee to accept every invitation, but we will consider each one carefully.



Some recent meetings are marked on the map.



CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD

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# Resistance is crucial

Many Christians I meet are stunned by the pace at which our Nation has declined over this past year. There has indeed been a torrent of iniquitous legislation. Section 28 has been repealed, the cannabis laws downgraded, and all three main political parties have backed legislation to establish 'gay marriage'. Regulations have been introduced to end the absolute right of Churches and religious organisations to employ only believers on their staff. Cheshire Police took it upon themselves to interview a Church of England Bishop because a 'gay-rights' sympathiser was upset by his orthodox Christian beliefs on homosexuality. The Chief Constable berated the Bishop in the media and said he should be giving "clear leadership" on issues of "diversity". All this in just one year.

Given the shocking nature of what has happened, many Christians are tempted to despair. Our culture now looks as though it is in a moral freefall. So what are we to say in response to all these things?

First, though what has happened recently may seem sudden, in fact we are reaping the consequences of decades of changes which have chipped away at the Christian basis of our public policy. Sometimes these changes have been massive – such as the legalisation of abortion – but most often the changes have been small and gradual. It took several years to eliminate the married couples allowance and to dilute Christian teaching in schools. Each reform of the divorce law led to more and more divorces which in turn was then used to justify even easier divorce by further reform. Looking back we can see the ratcheting effect in so many areas.

It is no longer possible, if indeed it ever was, to view all these changes as unrelated. There has been a progressive rejection of the Christian world-view in favour of a secular one. Secular public policy is not neutral. It is actively hostile to godly standards. To spread its influence secularism does not need to turn people into atheists. All that needs to happen is that people buy into the idea that faith must be relegated to the private sphere, whilst the tenets of secularism are

adopted as the ground rules for public policy.

We know that many people do not agree with what is going on. But we also know that most of them are not willing to stand up and fight for their beliefs. Bit by bit with each moral compromise and each ungodly law most keep silent and so evil prospers. So often Christians have taken the lead to appease the forces of secularism.

Second, difficult as it may be to believe, things could get far worse. We still have a huge measure of religious freedom which many of our fellow believers in other parts of the world can only dream of. Christians are not yet being imprisoned for their faith. It may come to this if some gay-rights campaigners have their way. Christian parents are not having their children taken away from them by the State, as happened in the former Soviet Union. It may come to this if the children's rights lobby succeeds in its plans.

Third, it follows from the two previous points that resistance is crucial. Christians must maintain their Christian distinctiveness.

We must not lose our saltiness.

Neither must we give up. Our labour is not in vain – every time we speak the truth we bring glory to God. We may not be able to do everything, but we can do something to oppose a further round of godless legislation. We must oppose those who want to equate homosexual liaisons with marriage or those who want to lower the age of consent. We must oppose further downgrading of our drugs laws or interference in religious liberty or the family.

At the end of the day we cannot rely on secular politicians to provide opposition to secularism. That is our job. We must pray and do all we can to block and resist every secular advance. If we do not use our freedom, we will lose it.

Colin Hart, Director



# Bishop hounded by police for

## Gay groups defend the Bishop

Britain's leading 'gay-rights' group defended the Bishop of Chester's right to freedom of speech.

Referring to the Bishop's comments on homosexuality, Stonewall's Alan Wardle said, "He has the right to free speech just as we do."<sup>1</sup>

A separate 'gay-rights' group, Outrage, pointed out that the Bishop had not acted illegally. Spokesman David Allison said, "I doubt that he has broken any laws."<sup>2</sup>

However, the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement welcomed the Police investigation. LGCM accused the Bishop of putting forward an "offensive" argument from a bygone age.<sup>3</sup>

Not many Christian groups publicly defended the Bishop. Christian Institute Director Colin Hart said, "Even Stonewall – the leading 'gay-rights' group – recognises that the Bishop has a right to freedom of speech. Don't you think Christians ought to be speaking up for the Bishop too?"

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 November 2003

<sup>2</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 10 November 2003

<sup>3</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 2003

■ By Simon Calvert

Cheshire Police have caused outrage after threatening to prosecute the Bishop of Chester over statements about homosexuality. The Bishop, the Rt Rev Dr Peter Forster, was also personally attacked in the media by Cheshire's Chief Constable.

On Friday 7th November his local newspaper quoted the Bishop as saying, "Some people who are primarily homosexual can reorientate themselves. I would encourage them to consider that as an option, but I would not set myself up as a medical specialist on the subject – that's in the area of psychiatric health. We want to help them but I don't offer it as a panacea. I am about giving honour to marriage."<sup>1</sup>

A gay-rights sympathiser complained to the police. On the Sunday, Cheshire Police announced they were considering a prosecution. The article was passed to the Crown Prosecution Service.<sup>2</sup> On the Monday the Chief

Constable of Cheshire Police, Peter Fahy, rebuked the Bishop in an astonishing public attack. "All public leaders in Cheshire need to give clear leadership on the issue of diversity", he said.<sup>3</sup> He attempted to link the Bishop's remarks with crimes against homosexuals "generated by hate and prejudice".<sup>4</sup>

Criticising homosexual practice is not against the law. Cheshire Police finally admitted this on the Monday evening, saying: "The Crown Prosecution Service has been consulted with at length, and Cheshire Police are satisfied that no criminal offences have been committed, as *current* public order legislation does not provide specific offences based on sexuality" [*emphasis added*].<sup>5</sup>

Clearly Cheshire Police feel that such conduct may be criminalised under *future* legislation. This is especially worrying now that Parliament has added 'sexual orientation' to the categories under which criminal offences can be regarded as 'aggravated' (see adjoining article).

Police have already proved willing to stretch the law to catch Christian opposition to homosexuality. In an alarming 2002 case an autistic pensioner from Bournemouth was convicted of harassment for holding up a sign saying "Jesus is Lord... Stop homosexuality..."

The Bishop's statements reflect Christian teaching. Whilst talk of medical help should not obscure the sinfulness of homosexual activity, medical professionals can help some people turn away from such activity. A significant body of research supports the Bishop's comments that some homosexuals can change through therapy. Over 1000 studies were published between 1966 and 1974 alone.

A recent study at Columbia University found that homosexuals could become "predominantly" heterosexual through psychotherapy. This study was significant because it was carried out by Professor Robert Spitzer, a psychiatrist with a long track record of supporting gay rights.

Professor Spitzer was



# saying gays can 'reorientate'

instrumental in getting homosexuality declassified as a psychiatric illness in the United States in the 70s, yet he now believes that some homosexuals can be successfully 'reorientated'.

Even some 'gay-rights' activists admit their lifestyle is a choice. Four years ago Peter Tatchell criticised the 'gay gene' theory, saying "I'm amazed that it's taken this long to destroy what is obviously a totally implausible theory. It is a choice, and we should be glad it's that way and celebrate it for ourselves."<sup>6</sup>

Christians are warned in the Bible that telling the truth can get them into trouble.<sup>7</sup> We should pray for the Bishop of Chester that he would know God's strength and continue to speak out

regardless, and that the church as a whole would show similar courage.

- <sup>1</sup> *The Chester Chronicle*, 7 November 2003
- <sup>2</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 November 2003; *The Independent*, 10 November 2003
- <sup>3</sup> *The Times*, 11 November 2003
- <sup>4</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/merseyside/3257623.stm> as at 27 November 2003
- <sup>5</sup> <http://www.cheshire.police.uk/> - click on 'news' as at 24 November 2003
- <sup>6</sup> *The Observer*, 25 April 1999
- <sup>7</sup> Romans 12:14, 1 Corinthians 4:12, 2 Corinthians 4:9, 2 Timothy 3:12

## Evidence of 'reorientation'

In 1973, under pressure from gay-rights advocates, the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from the officially approved list of psychiatric illnesses. Instrumental in the campaign which led to the change in policy was Professor Robert Spitzer. In Spitzer's recently published research, 83% of the homosexuals/lesbians in the study became heterosexual and a majority were married by the end of the study.<sup>1</sup>

Many Psychiatrists still provide therapy to help homosexuals become heterosexual. A professional association for this therapy has a web site at [www.narth.com](http://www.narth.com). This contains details of a vast body of studies showing evidence that homosexuals can change their orientation.

- <sup>1</sup> *The Independent*, 6 October 2003; *The Guardian*, 2 October 2003; *Columbia Daily Spectator*, 13 October 2003. The research was published in the Archives of Sexual Behaviour.

## New homosexual 'hate crimes' could gag Christians

■ By Mike Judge

Christians could be criminalised for saying homosexual practice is wrong, following new 'hate crimes' passed by Parliament.

The current law on aggravated offences has been extended in England and Wales to cover 'sexual orientation'. This means stiffer penalties can be applied for crimes motivated by hostility towards 'sexuality'.

It is feared this new offence could be used in conjunction with the law on harassment to gag Christians who publicly oppose homosexual practice.

The Police have already investigated comments made by the Bishop of Chester (see article above). In that case, the authorities decided not to press ahead with charges because "...current public order legislation does not provide specific offences based on sexuality".<sup>1</sup>

However, this will now change with the introduction of these new aggravated

offences for sexual orientation.

The new law is only supposed to add stiffer penalties to behaviour which is already criminal. But, in practice, the new offence could widen the criminal law to outlaw behaviour which was not previously illegal.

It is important to stress that Christians completely oppose criminal acts against anyone – regardless of 'sexual orientation'.

Nevertheless, there is a well-grounded fear that this law will be used against anyone who publicly opposes homosexual practice.

When the new law was being debated in the House of Lords, the former Home Secretary, Lord Waddington, raised exactly these concerns.<sup>2</sup>

In response, the Government minister admitted that individuals might try to use the law to gag Christians.

The minister argued that the "...good sense of the judiciary and the way in which the legislation has been framed" would filter out such attempts.<sup>3</sup>

However, that will be little comfort to Christians who recognise that the judiciary is increasingly becoming politically correct.

One Christian has already been found guilty of 'harassment' for merely holding a sign that said "Jesus is Lord... Stop homosexuality". Thankfully, the High Court recently gave leave to appeal against this conviction.

It is important that Christians do not 'keep their heads down' over this issue. Christian liberties are being stripped away because of past silence.

The Christian Institute advises Christians to put their heads far above the parapet – it's the safest place to be.

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.cheshire.police.uk/scripts/search2.cgi?news> as at 24 November 2003
- <sup>2</sup> House of Lords, Hansard, 5 November 2003, col. 808
- <sup>3</sup> House of Lords, Hansard, 5 November 2003, col. 818

# Plans for the Institute's new home

■ By Jon Errington

The Institute's building appeal has so far raised over £500,000 and negotiations have begun with a developer to provide purpose-built headquarters.

The advantages of a purpose-built headquarters include being able to influence the design of the building from an early stage, and being able to build a larger space than the funds would otherwise allow. There is also an opportunity to think about the future growth of the Institute and plan for it accordingly.

The Trustees have taken

the decision that it is better to own a building than continue to rent – it gives the Institute a permanent base and an asset, and expenditure on improvements will benefit the Institute rather than a landlord.

The Institute is currently in temporary accommodation after the lease ended on our previous home – 26 Jesmond Road.

Apart from the lease ending, the Institute had to move because there was no longer enough space. The Institute has expanded significantly and there was insufficient space for filing, equipment and, not least, the staff.

The new temporary office is a larger and more modern space. It will meet the requirements for the coming year while plans are made for a permanent home.

An appeal was launched a little over a year ago. We thank God that, so far, over £500,000 has been raised.

Please pray that the negotiations with the developer would go smoothly. Pray also that the outstanding funds for the purchase will be provided. Based on 2002 figures our initial target was a fund of £800,000. A final assessment of the 2004 cost will be made soon.

# New staff at the Institute

■ By Chris Prest

If you have rung The Christian Institute's office recently you may well have been greeted by one of two new voices.

Rachel Rodham and Rhoda Anderson joined the Institute recently as Administrative Assistants. Rachel (24) from Washington previously worked in customer relations. Rhoda (20) from Newcastle was previously in the retail industry. It has taken many months to fill the two vacant posts.

The administrative workload has increased substantially over the last few years as our support base has grown. Opening a substantial amount of post, processing transactions, dealing with donations, maintaining the database and answering telephone queries are just part of the daily routine in the office.

Each day the administrative staff deal with all the correspondence coming in and out of the office. They ensure that the right letters get to the right people and that supporters who help the work financially are thanked and have their donations acknowledged as quickly as possible.

Because of this valuable "behind the scenes" work the rest of the staff are free to get on with the many issues that need a Christian response.

The Christian Institute sets great store by good calibre staff who are also committed Christians. It is hoped that the number of staff will increase further. Please pray for Rachel and Rhoda as they settle in to their new roles.



The Christian Institute has begun negotiations with a developer to provide a purpose-built headquarters

# Theology books for our office

■ By Chris Prest

Christian Institute staff can now benefit from a range of Bible commentaries which have been bought over recent months.

The Institute has bought over 300 Christian reference books and Bible commentaries, including the works of men like John Owen, Jonathan Edwards and John Calvin. Commentaries such as the Geneva Bible Commentaries and the Welwyn Series have also been added to the Library.

The Institute is grateful to publishers who have given special deals. The books will be used both to help staff in their own spiritual growth and to help the Institute bring a clear biblical perspective in all that is written.

At a time of much confusion in the church today, it is vital that biblical truth is defended and upheld.



# Plans for weaker cannabis laws get the go-ahead, but Christians succeed in watering down the proposals

■ By Mike Judge

In November Parliament approved the reclassification of cannabis from a class B to a class C drug. This is very sad and is a backward step in the fight against drugs. Reclassification applies to the whole of the UK.

But the weakening of the cannabis laws is not as bad as it could have been, thanks to Christian Institute supporters.

Significant Government climb-downs were secured after The Christian Institute asked supporters to write to Tony Blair last year.

The Government backed down on proposals to lower the sentences for cannabis smugglers.

Under original plans, sentences for smugglers and dealers of cannabis were to be reduced from 14 years imprisonment to just five years.

However, just days after The

Christian Institute brought the matter to light the Government announced a U-turn.

It said sentences would be reduced to ten years instead of five. Then a couple of days later, it announced that sentences would not be reduced at all.

At that time there was no other Christian organisation publicly speaking out about the sentences for cannabis smugglers. There is little doubt that this climb-down was the result of action by Christian Institute supporters.

The failure of the Brixton experiment – where police operated a ‘softly, softly’ approach to cannabis – also put a great deal of pressure on the Government to water-down its proposals.

The Government decided to allow police to keep their power of arrest in certain ‘aggravated circumstances’

– such as smoking cannabis outside school gates. The Government had previously proposed to give the police no power of arrest whatsoever.

The Government says reclassification will allow the authorities to concentrate on harder drugs. But cannabis is a gateway drug. The obvious concern is that, as a result of the changes, more people will take cannabis and so more people will go on to harder drugs.

Cannabis itself is a harmful mind-altering drug and, in addition, there are already calls to reclassify class A drugs – such as ecstasy.

There is no doubt that Christian opposition to the Government’s plans secured some vital safeguards which would otherwise have not been there.



## Howard sinks any chance of stopping cannabis plans

■ By Colin Hart

Michael Howard, the new Conservative Party leader, had the opportunity to block the reclassification of cannabis – but chose not to do so.

In an extraordinary move, he decided that his party should not vote against the Government plans when they were debated in the House of Lords. This was despite the fact that the party voted against the proposals in the Commons when under the leadership of Iain Duncan Smith.

Many Christians were shocked at the House of Lords vote – which supported reclassification by 63 votes to 37. The Conservative front bench abstained.

Instead of blocking reclassification Peers voted to support a separate Conservative motion that allowed reclassification to pass, while merely expressing concern that the plans could increase cannabis use among young people.

An analysis of the vote, together with indications from many Peers, shows that the Lords could have blocked reclassification. But the decision by Michael Howard sank that.

The change in the Conservative Party’s position on cannabis is an indication of the influence that social libertarians now have within the party.

An Opposition that becomes weak on drugs is of particular concern at the moment. There are now attempts to downgrade other drugs laws. Some leading MPs from all parties are already calling for the reclassification of ecstasy.

It is important that Christians continue to argue for firm drugs laws to protect us all and particularly young people.



## Calls to dismantle age of consent law

■ By Chris Prest

There have been serious calls to weaken the age of consent laws. Both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats have called for the law to be amended.

Conservative spokesman, Oliver Letwin, tabled an amendment that would have legalised masturbatory sexual acts between consenting children aged between 13 and 18 if there was less than two years age difference.

A separate amendment by the Liberal Democrats would have legalised sexual intercourse between a 17 and a 13 year old.

The Christian Institute issued a press release opposing both amendments and alerted Institute supporters by e-mail.

The Conservative Party never pushed its amendment to a vote. The Government successfully resisted the Liberal Democrat amendment.

These developments came at the same time as a series of programmes broadcast by Channel 4 which effectively called for the age of consent to be scrapped.

Channel 4 broadcaster, Miranda Sawyer, argued in an accompanying newspaper article that, "...it seems wrong to criminalise teenagers for consensual sexual experimentation, for doing what comes naturally... They have a right to enjoy sexual experimentation, if that's what they really want."<sup>1</sup>

The current age of consent law dates back to 1885 when it was raised from 12 to 16 following a hard-fought campaign by an evangelical Christian, Josephine Butler, and a journalist, W T Stead. They wanted it raised after they discovered cases of young girls being sold in to prostitution.

<sup>1</sup> *The Observer*, 2 November 2003

# 'Gay marriage' Bill announced

■ By Jonathan Phillips

Plans to legalise 'civil partnerships' have been announced in the Queen's Speech.

The proposals are 'gay marriage' in all but name. It is a radical change to family law, effectively destroying the special legal status of marriage.

Though the Government denies the proposals undermine marriage, civil partnerships give legal recognition and virtually all the privileges and benefits of marriage to same-sex couples.

Registration will be at a registry office and there is a formal court-based process for dissolution. Rights will also include joint state pension benefits and tenancy inheritance rights.

Significantly, the proposals do not include heterosexual couples. The Government argues that heterosexual couples already have the option of legal recognition through marriage but same-sex couples do not.

Many believe the real reason behind the Government's decision to exclude heterosexuals is that it would cost the Treasury too much



The Queen's Speech included 'gay marriage' plans

money in lost tax revenue.

When the plans were first announced, Barbara Roche, then Minister for Social Exclusion, stated that civil partnerships "...would send a powerful message about the acceptability of same-sex relationships and about the unacceptability of the homophobia still far too prevalent in our society"<sup>1</sup>

According to the Bible, marriage is a special union between one man and one woman.

Gay marriage is a direct attack

on the status of marriage. If the law gives the same status to sexual liaisons then it no longer understands marriage as special. The status of marriage will be profoundly devalued.

For example, disabled parking spaces are a privilege for disabled people. Extending the privilege of free parking in disabled spaces to able-bodied people takes away the privilege from those it should belong to. Allowing other people to use disabled parking does not extend a benefit, it erodes a status.

## 'Marital status' may be removed from all Government forms

■ By Mike Judge

A Government body has proposed that the word 'marriage' should be stripped out of official Government documents. Official forms would no longer ask for your 'marital status'. Instead, you would be asked for your 'civil status'.

This would let gays who have registered a 'civil partnership' tick the same box as married couples – allowing them to avoid revelations about their sexual orientation. Some homosexuals are worried that if they were in a 'civil partnership' they would have to state their sexual orientation every time they filled out a form.

A policy document produced by the Government's Women and Equality Unit states that the new wording "...would then include both marriage and civil partnership and there would be no automatic presumption of someone's sexual

orientation." The document also says, "Other requests for personal details would be amended, wherever possible, to ensure that references specific to marriages or civil partnerships were replaced with neutral terms."<sup>1</sup>

For the past year, the Women and Equality Unit has been headed by Angela Mason, formerly Director of Britain's leading gay-rights group, Stonewall.

The proposal may be introduced alongside the Civil Partnership Bill, which was announced in the Queen's Speech in November. This Bill gives all the legal privileges of marriage to gay couples that register a 'civil partnership'.

<sup>1</sup> *Responses to Civil Partnership: A framework for the legal recognition of same-sex couples*, Women and Equality Unit, Department of Trade and Industry, November 2003, page 41

# Announced in Queen's Speech

Marriage has a privileged legal status because of the unique social benefits it offers. Marriage is the proven best for bringing up children. In 2000, Jack Straw, then Home Secretary stated "[Marriage is] about a union for the procreation of children, which by definition can only happen between a heterosexual couple. So I see no circumstances in which we would ever bring forward proposals for so-called gay marriages"<sup>2</sup>.

The Government has now brought forward such proposals. It has adopted the 'injustice' argument gay-rights activists have been advancing for years. The proposals address perceived inequalities relating to those

who have lived together in a homosexual relationship.

But what about non-sexual relationships where there are exactly the same hardships? What about two sisters who have lived together all their lives? If one sister dies, the other will have far less rights than a lesbian couple under the proposals.

By only addressing the 'gay-rights' agenda the Government is making rights available to one hundred thousand or so people in same-sex households but ignoring almost three million people who live in these other types of households.<sup>3</sup>

All people have the right to marriage and its privileges, so long as they meet the requirements.

Civil partnerships are not about injustices resulting from not being able to marry. They are about redefining marriage to something it has never been and legally recognising and rewarding sexual relationships that are morally wrong.

Civil partnerships also pose significant religious liberty concerns. What will be the implication for Christian registrars? Will they be forced to register same-sex partnerships or risk losing their job? Under Government plans to remove the position of 'office holder' from registrars, making them an employee of the council, this may well be a possibility.

*The proposals apply to England, Wales and Scotland. The full registration scheme will not apply to Northern Ireland, though the Province will have to recognise partnerships registered in other parts of the UK for certain purposes. There will be enormous pressure to bring in a full registration scheme in Northern Ireland if civil partnerships are established in the rest of the UK.*

<sup>1</sup> [www.labour.org.uk/gaypartnerships](http://www.labour.org.uk/gaypartnerships) as at 15 January 2003

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 2 October 2000

<sup>3</sup> *Social Trends*, 32, Office of National Statistics, 2002, Table 2.3 0.05 x 57.2 = 2.86 million and House of Commons, Hansard, 11 May 2000, col. 471wa

## Marriage certificates to be scrapped?

■ By Mike Judge

Marriage certificates will be a thing of the past in England and Wales, if Government plans are approved by Parliament.

The Government wants to phase out the legal status of marriage certificates. It proposes to replace certificates with records held on a centrally-controlled computer database.

It is also proposed that the sex of the bride and groom be no longer recorded. It can only be supposed that this is paving the way for same-sex marriage.

The plans are part of a package of measures which will change the law on the registration of births, deaths and marriages.

Other proposals include allowing novelty weddings and stripping marriage vows of any legally-prescribed content.

The proposals to allow novelty weddings involve ending the licensing of particular locations and, instead, licensing individuals to conduct weddings anywhere. Such individuals will be known as 'celebrants'.

The Government envisages that denominations will appoint their own 'celebrants'. That raises a question over

whether a small independent church would qualify to appoint religious celebrants. Even if they were, they may be burdened with significant extra responsibilities and bureaucratic burdens

The legal content of wedding vows will also be removed. The Government proposes to only require that the couple "make a declaration... that they accept each other as husband and wife"<sup>1</sup>.

Separate proposals include changing the employment status of registrars to make them employees of a local authority. This will make it easier to dismiss a registrar who, for example, has a conscientious objection to same-sex marriage (should that become legal).

The Government has held a public consultation on the proposals. The Christian Institute informed church ministers of their opportunity to respond, and also put in its own response.

The Christian Institute opposes these plans because they trivialise and undermine the importance of marriage.

<sup>1</sup> *Civil Registration: Delivering Vital Change*, General Register Office, HMSO, 2003, paragraph 3.4.74



# New head of church school is a Muslim

■ By Chris Prest

For the first time, a Muslim has been appointed as a head teacher of an Anglican aided school.

Mrs Rehana Shiraj-Allan has been chosen to be Head of Easton Church of England Primary School in Bristol. She has a Muslim father and a Roman Catholic mother.

She convinced the governors that she would maintain the school's Christian ethos.<sup>1</sup> Richard Winn, chairman of the governors,

defended the decision to appoint Mrs Shiraj-Allan, saying: "Her past experience and depth of knowledge of Christian culture have given her a firm understanding of the faith."<sup>2</sup>

The Bishop of Bristol, the Rt Revd Michael Hill, said: "We feel the need...to work in partnership with our local Muslim community."<sup>3</sup>

The Revd George Curry, Trustee of The Christian Institute, said: "The decision beggars belief. You cannot tell me that at a Muslim school they would appoint a Christian to

teach Muslim values. It's obviously a clash between world views. My worry is that this decision could set a precedent." He added: "The only way to uphold the Christian ethos is to appoint a Christian."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Church Times*, 14 November 2003

<sup>2</sup> *The Church of England Newspaper*, 13 November 2003

<sup>3</sup> *Church Times*, 14 November 2003

<sup>4</sup> *The Express*, 7 November 2003

# Independent Christian schools can continue to choose teaching staff on the basis of religion

■ By Mike Judge

Independent Christian schools in England have been protected from new laws which could have forced them to appoint non-Christian teaching staff.

The Government has decided to allow such schools to take advantage of existing rules for state-sector church schools. These rules allow church schools to select teaching staff on the basis of religion.

Church schools remain incredibly popular with parents who value their high standards and consistent success.

Independent Christian schools had been threatened by troublesome new regulations that outlaw work-place discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. These new regulations were the result of an EU directive on employment and came into force in Great Britain on 2 December 2003.

There has previously been no law banning an independent Christian school from selecting teaching staff on the basis of religion. The protection recently announced by the Government therefore preserves existing practice.



Schools like Emmanuel College in Gateshead will be able to preserve their Christian ethos.

State-sector church schools have long had the right to ensure that teaching staff are adherents of the denomination to which the school belongs (though in practice it is rare for such schools to have a totally Christian teaching staff).

This legal right is designed to help church schools preserve their

ethos and is enshrined in Section 60 of the Schools Standards and Frameworks Act 1998.

New regulations issued by the Government in September allow independent Christian schools to take advantage of the same legal right. In order to do this, such schools must specially

register their religious ethos with the government using the new procedure.

It is vital that independent schools with a Christian ethos are allowed to select teaching staff on the basis of religious adherence. This allows such schools to maintain their distinctive ethos.

# Kent's own 'Section 28' under fire

■ By Chris Prest

Kent County Council is resisting calls to overturn its own "Section 28" – the Council's policy protecting schoolchildren from the promotion of homosexuality.

Since July 2000, Kent has had a policy that the authority "...shall not publish, purchase or distribute material with the intention of promoting homosexuality."<sup>1</sup>

But the Council is now coming under attack from various 'gay-rights' organisations, which claim the policy silences discussion in schools and even linking it to the suicide of young men.<sup>2</sup>

These activists are concentrating on Kent following Parliament's repeal of the nationwide Section 28 for England and Wales earlier this year. Section

28 banned local authorities from promoting homosexuality in schools and elsewhere. Kent is the only local authority known to have introduced its own version of the law.

So far Kent has refused to back down. Responding to recent press reports a spokesman for Kent said: "We have had tremendous backing from parents and schools, who, while wanting to encourage tolerance, are also clear they want to see family, Christian and other religious and traditional values emphasised."<sup>3</sup>

Over the last six years the Institute and its supporters continually frustrated attempts to repeal Section 28 and millions of schoolchildren will have benefited as a result.

Christian opposition to

repeal secured some important safeguards. Control of sex education has been taken away from Local Education Authorities and given to school governors; there is a statutory requirement that pupils are taught the importance of marriage; and governors are required to consider the appropriateness of teaching materials from health authorities (some of the worst offenders in terms of explicit resources).

However, despite successful opposition to the repeal of Section 28 in the past, this year's battle had some important differences.

The Conservative Party dropped its official opposition to repeal; the media was no longer interested in the issue; and a number of Peers who did not support Section 28 had been

appointed to the House of Lords.

It was clear that a straight vote to keep Section 28 could not be won. So Lady Blatch proposed an amendment supported by The Christian Institute which would have given parents even more control over sex education. Sadly this amendment was defeated.

The Christian Institute advises parents to remain vigilant about their children's sex education, to find out what is proposed, to look at materials, and to make any concerns known.

<sup>1</sup> *The Guardian*, 17 November 2003

<sup>2</sup> *Sevenoaks Chronicle*, 28 November 2003

<sup>3</sup> *Loc cit*

## Bid to re-write 'homophobic' Welsh language

■ By Mike Judge

A 'gay-rights' organisation wants to change the word for homosexual in the Welsh Bible, because the English translation literally means "man-grabber".

Stonewall Cymru – the Welsh wing of Britain's leading 'gay-rights' campaign group – said it was looking at the "root of homophobia" in the Welsh language.

Stonewall Cymru claimed it was set to meet with the Welsh Language Board, education officials and Welsh Assembly representatives to "address the problem".<sup>1</sup>

The gay campaign group has also called for the Welsh Assembly to fund a "homophobic hate crime officer". It wants to create the publicly-funded post to "provide support and advice to police forces and local community safety partnerships".

On top of that, Stonewall Cymru is also calling for continued "...Assembly funding to groups that represent and support lesbian, gay and bisexual people."<sup>2</sup>

Homosexual militants have, in the past, hijacked language to further their cause. The word "gay" has completely altered in meaning from the original and the word "homophobia" is an invented word – though it seems to have so much influence on public policy.

It is important that Christians in Wales are ready to actively and publicly oppose any moves that promote the acceptability of homosexual practice.

<sup>1</sup> Stonewall e-bulletin, 15 August 2003

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.stonewall.org.uk/stonewall/news/welsh\\_lgb\\_survey.html](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/stonewall/news/welsh_lgb_survey.html) as at 27 November 2003



# Transsexuals to be allowed to change birth certificates

## Transsexualism: mind over matter

■ By Humphrey Dobson

Transsexuals are men or women who are biologically normal, but who believe themselves to be members of the opposite sex.<sup>1</sup> The temptation to feel that you would rather be a member of the opposite sex is not in itself wrong. Acting on that temptation is.

It is a rare condition. It has been estimated that 0.003% of males and 0.001% of females are transsexuals.<sup>2</sup> This feeling of being 'trapped in the wrong body' may lead to a transsexual demanding what is often called a 'sex change' (also known as 'gender reassignment'). This involves the use of hormones and surgery to change their appearance and outward sexual characteristics.

The problem, however, is psychological: the evidence supports this view overwhelmingly.<sup>3</sup> Unlike a true hermaphrodite who has genuine physical problems, a transsexual's body is healthy. A painful operation on a healthy person is wrong and cannot solve a mental dysfunction. It is also unreasonable to assume that other biological factors, e.g. brain structure, cause transsexualism. There is little evidence for this. The plea 'I was made this way' was abandoned by biologists long ago.<sup>4</sup>

The reason that there are two, and only two, sexes is that God created mankind such that to be human means to be either human male or human female (Genesis 1:27). The human body is therefore a good gift of God and essential to the human person. But the transsexual sees their body as an accident, as denying their 'true self' which resides in their mind and emotions. This is opposed to the Bible, which teaches a positive view of the body: the supreme expression of this being that Jesus became flesh (John 1:14).

The Christian response to a transsexual, as with any other person, should be prayer, care and counsel as for any with psychological difficulties and where necessary repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

<sup>1</sup> 'Transsexualism' in Atkinson, D J and Field, D H (Eds.) *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology*, IVP, 1995, page 863

<sup>2</sup> *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Third Edition - Revised)*, The American Psychiatric Association, 1987, page 75

<sup>3</sup> *Transsexuality - a report by the Evangelical Alliance Policy Commission*, Evangelical Alliance, 2000, page 22

<sup>4</sup> Whitehead, N, 'Are Transsexuals Born that Way?', *Triple Helix*, Autumn 2000, Christian Medical Fellowship, page 7

■ By Jonathan Phillips

Transsexuals will be allowed to change the sex recorded on their birth certificates under a Bill introduced by the Government.

The Gender Recognition Bill will effectively allow transsexuals to re-write history. It will allow transsexuals to obtain new birth certificates identical to their old ones, but which state their assumed sex, not their sex by birth. Original birth certificates will be kept but will remain confidential within the Registrar General's Office.

Transsexuals would gain all the rights and benefits of their assumed sex, including the right to marry someone who is, in reality, genetically the same sex. This means someone born a man, who has an operation to assume the identity of a woman, could legally marry another man.

Under the Bill, a person need not even have a 'sex change' operation to be deemed a transsexual. The decision would be made by a 'gender recognition panel'. If a panel's vote were tied, the Chairman would have the casting vote. An applicant would have to have "lived in the acquired gender for two years" and "[intend] to continue to live in the acquired gender until death."

The Bill was not announced in the Queen's Speech. Nevertheless, the Government introduced it in the House of Lords the following day.

The proposals directly challenge the fact that God distinctly created people male and female, and that people's sex is not a matter of choice.

The sex that a person is born with is an historical fact. Allowing transsexuals to change their birth certificates creates 'legal fiction'.

Yet the Government, obsessed

The sex that a person is born with is an historical fact. Allowing transsexuals to change their birth certificates creates 'legal fiction'.

with 'equality' issues, is committed to delivering these reforms, arguing "In a civilised society individuals and groups must be able to exercise rights they are legitimately entitled to..."<sup>1</sup>

The proposals have several potential religious liberty implications. What if a transsexual wanted to marry in a church? One clause in the Bill appears to allow a clergyman in England or Wales not to be compelled to conduct a marriage involving a transsexual. But would the church be able to see the original birth certificates of people it marries? If not, a minister may not even know that one of the two people is a transsexual.

Christian organisations that employ staff on the basis of religious adherence may also face difficulties. It is not clear whether such employers will be able to see the original birth certificate of interviewees.

The Bill applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Government expects the Scottish Executive to pass a motion in the Scottish Parliament to allow the Bill to include Scotland.

The Christian Institute opposes the Bill and will argue for protections for churches and religious organisations.

<sup>1</sup> Press Release, 464/03, Department for Constitutional Affairs, 28 November 2003

## Government denies right of conscience for social workers

■ By Simon Calvert

Social workers who oppose same-sex adoption risk losing their jobs unless they are willing to place children with homosexual couples.

The Government has refused to protect social workers who believe same-sex adoption is not in the best interests of children.

Earlier this year The Christian Institute reported the case of Dawn Jackson and Norah Ellis, Christian social workers who were pushed out of their jobs with Sefton Social Services for refusing to support homosexual adoptions.

Baroness Blatch raised their cases during the passage of the Local Government Bill. She sought to amend the Bill to provide a conscience clause for social workers who did not agree with homosexual adoption.

Comparison was made with the Abortion Act 1967, which allows medical professionals a right not to participate in abortions. In education too there is a right of conscience

for teachers concerning their taking part in religious assemblies.

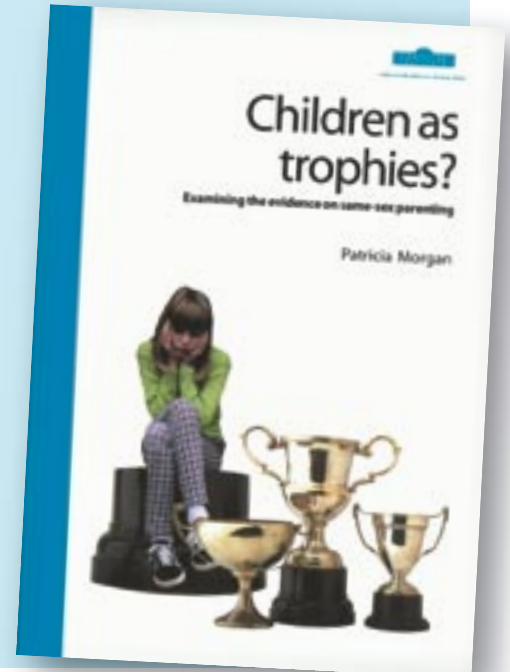
However, the amendment, and Lady Blatch herself, were treated with shocking contempt by some of her fellow peers and even by Government Ministers. Lady Barker, a Liberal Democrat, compared social workers who disagree with homosexual adoption with the social workers whose actions resulted in the death of Victoria Climbié.<sup>1</sup>

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath said the amendment would set "a worrying precedent".<sup>2</sup> The Minister, Lord Rooker, accused those who disagreed with homosexual adoptions of putting themselves first and said they should not be involved in adoption.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> House of Lords, Hansard, 10 September 2003, col. 353

<sup>2</sup> House of Lords, Hansard, 10 September 2003, col. 351

<sup>3</sup> House of Lords, Hansard, 23 June 2003, col. GC46-47



## Clergy job status change would be bad news for churches

■ By Simon Calvert

Church ministers may be treated as employees under Government proposals expected to be announced this winter. For centuries UK law has recognised that church ministry is a vocation, not a job. This allows freedom of conscience both for clergymen and the churches and denominations who pay them.

Trade unions are pressing for this to be scrapped. They want to see churches forced to comply with a panoply of new employment rights. Ministers would no longer be paid a stipend to enable them to fulfil their calling. Instead they would be deemed to be employees and would be entitled to sue under

laws on unfair dismissal amongst others.

If the Government accedes to trade union demands churches might find it difficult to dismiss a minister from office if he changes his beliefs. Employment tribunals may be asked to adjudicate on issues such as whether a minister believes in the inerrancy of scripture and whether failure to do so justifies dismissal.

Treating ministers like ordinary employees puts ministry on a contractual basis like secular employees. This is not a biblical view of ministry. Although the Apostle Paul laboured for the church at Corinth and received money from them, he would never have considered himself their employee.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) invited The Christian Institute to attend seminars for religious groups where the proposals were discussed. As well as arguing the case in person, Institute staff made a formal written submission to the DTI. The Institute also wrote to church ministers on its mailing list encouraging them to make their own submissions.

In November a 'DTI insider' was quoted as saying the trade unions had got their way and the Government intends to press ahead with the plans.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Sunday Times*, 9 November 2003



## Draft Bill allows euthanasia

■ By Mike Judge

The Government has published a draft Bill that would allow euthanasia by neglect in England and Wales. The draft 'Mental Incapacity Bill' allows doctors to kill incapacitated patients by starvation and dehydration.

In the draft Bill, decisions about medical treatment will include the ascertainable "wishes and feelings" of the incapacitated patient – rather than just clinical need.

The Bill is also expected to allow people to make 'living wills' – legally binding advanced decisions about medical treatment, including withdrawal of treatment deliberately to end life.

The draft Bill also allows people to give lasting power of attorney to a trusted friend or relative. This will allow the trusted friend or relative to make decisions about the withdrawal of treatment on behalf of a patient

who becomes mentally incapacitated. A 'court of protection' will be set up to adjudicate over disputes.

The Government has consistently stated its opposition to euthanasia. But it has a narrow definition of euthanasia that does not recognise starvation or dehydration.

Commenting on the draft Bill, Dominica Roberts of the ProLife Alliance said, "...it should be made clear that deliberately ending a life, either actively or by withdrawing artificially provided nutrition and hydration, can never be in the patient's best interests."<sup>1</sup>

Although the Mental Incapacity Bill was not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, the Government intends to legislate on this in the future.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prolife.org.uk/document.asp?id=mibcomment03.htm&se=3&st=4> as at 27 November 2003

## Backbenchers will try to ban smacking

■ By Jonathan Phillips

Parents in England and Wales may lose the freedom to smack their children under proposals from an influential group of MPs.

Labour MP David Hinchcliffe, Chairman of the Health Select Committee, has said he plans to table a back-bench amendment to the Child Protection Bill to ban smacking.<sup>1</sup>

The amendment, believed to have support among many backbenchers, would criminalise all parental smacking by removing the existing defence of 'reasonable chastisement'.

Anti-smacking MPs and 'child-rights' groups say that all smacking is child abuse. However most people disagree. Most reasonable people see there is a world of difference between abuse and a loving smack.

When the Government last consulted on the issue in England and Wales in 2000, 70% were in favour of keeping the existing law. Speaking after the consultation, the Government stated: "...we do not believe that any further change to the law at this time would be appropriate – it would neither command widespread public support nor be

capable of consistent enforcement."<sup>2</sup>

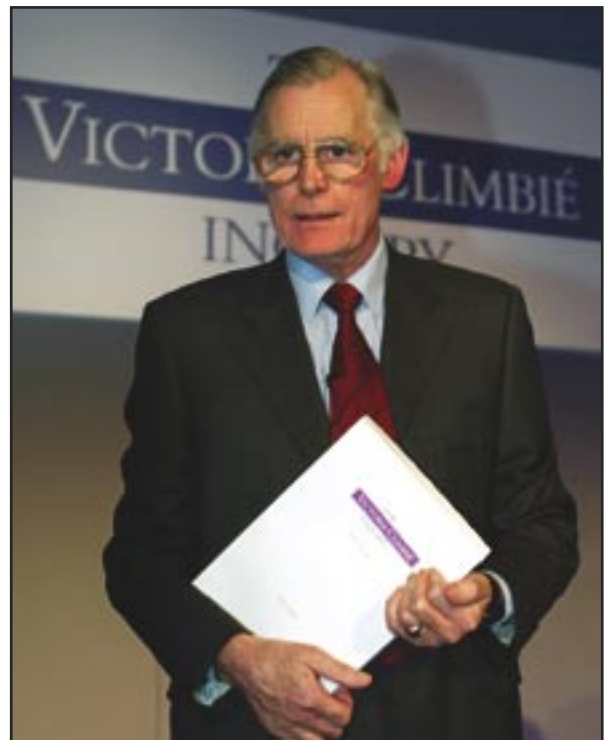
Last year, an attempt by the Scottish Executive to ban the smacking of children under three was rejected following a public outcry. Widespread concern was raised by police, legal bodies and Members of the Scottish Parliament that a ban would inevitably criminalise ordinary parents for trivial smacks and be impossible to enforce.

Banning smacking is unnecessary to prevent abuse, as abuse is already illegal. During scrutiny of the Scottish legislation the Scottish Executive was unable to state a single case where the existing law of assault failed to protect children.

While the Government has rejected all previous attempts to criminalise parental smacking, with a growing number of MPs and organisations in favour of a ban, public opposition to the move will be all the more important.

<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 November 2003; *The Observer*, 16 November 2003

<sup>2</sup> Press Release, 2001/0524, Department of Health, 8 November 2001



Emotive extreme examples of serious child abuse, like that uncovered by the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, will be used to justify a smacking ban.

# Church needs to get back on track and declare that life begins at conception



■ By Jon Errington

The Bible is clear that God is our Creator and our significance as human beings (and therefore the protection given to human beings) is not derived from our quality of life, nor from our gifts and abilities, but from our status as being made in God's image.<sup>1</sup>

The secular world gives virtually no status to the embryo – human life at its earliest stages. What is more concerning, however, is that this lack of concern has spilled over into the church.

If life begins at conception then Christian attitudes to issues such as IVF, embryo experiments, the morning-after pill, and even

certain types of contraception must change. But sadly much Christian writing on these subjects is typified by an uncritical acceptance of these techniques.

The Bible speaks of the formation of the human life in the womb<sup>2</sup> and what is significant is that the writers of these passages use the words "I" and "me". There is a continuity from before and after birth, through to adulthood.<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, we see in the incarnation of Jesus that the humanity of Christ was from conception. In Matthew's Gospel the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream saying that "what is *conceived* in her is from the Holy Spirit".<sup>4</sup> It is clear that the

incarnation began at conception not at some later point.

There is a vast body of material within the Bible which teaches that life begins at conception. The Christian Institute hopes to outline this in a book next year and to tackle in a direct way the arguments of those who believe life begins at some later time.

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 139:5; Job 10:9-11

<sup>3</sup> Stott, J R W, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, Marshall Pickering, 1990, pages 315-316

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 1:20, emphasis added.

## Institute prepares morning-after pill booklet

■ By Jon Errington

The Christian Institute is working on a new booklet about the morning-after pill, taking an in-depth look at the issues raised.

This pill is more widely available in the UK than ever before. Since January 2001 the morning-after pill has been available without prescription over the counter from chemists.<sup>1</sup>

The morning-after pill is now being directly targeted at teenage girls whilst in school. In 2002 the Government announced its support for the provision of "full

contraception and sexual health services" for schools in England and Wales.<sup>2</sup>

The morning-after pill is clearly being thought of as a quick-fix solution to teenage pregnancy.

In March 2003, official statistics showed that 20 percent of girls aged 16-17 had used the morning after pill.<sup>3</sup> Even girls under 16 can legally obtain it from a number of sources.

This is not an issue that Christians can ignore. The morning-after pill erodes the sanctity of marriage and violates the sanctity of life from conception.

<sup>1</sup> The Prescription Only Medicines (Human Use) Amendment (No.3) Order 2000, 8 December 2000

<sup>2</sup> *Government Response to the First Annual Report of the Independent Advisory Group on Teenage Pregnancy*, June 2002, page 25; see also *The Independent*, 28 June 2002

<sup>3</sup> *Contraception and Sexual Health, 2001*, ONS, HMSO, 2003, page 16



**Levonelle 2:**  
The morning-after pill

## Outstanding lectures on The Ten Commandments

■ By Humphrey Dobson

The 2003 Christian Institute Autumn Lectures began the series *The Ten Commandments for today*. The five lectures were a tremendous success. Supporters and staff had their eyes opened to the breathtaking holiness of God. Many testify to understanding for the first time the vast scope of the commandments and their enduring importance.

Professor John L. Mackay opened the series by illuminating the unique and hugely significant status of The Ten Commandments. In his second lecture he explained how the law leads us to Christ and Christ leads us to the law; how the holy God saves us by grace and then gives his law to show us how to be holy.

Professor Robert McCollum began the lectures on individual commandments. He laid bare the rampant idolatry of our society and showed how all mankind is under an obligation to worship God, in his way. The Third Commandment exposed the great blasphemy committed in society and even by Christians. The Revd Philip Hacking spoke on the Sabbath – teaching that rest one day in seven is both our duty and our joy.

Tapes of the lectures can be ordered from the Institute's office. Lord willing, the series will be completed in November 2004.

**Tapes of all five lectures cost £14.50 for a presentation set or £3.00 ordered individually. Telephone 0191 281 5664 to order.**

## EU employment directive now in force

### The ups and downs of The Christian Institute's three-year campaign:



■ By Mike Judge

Employment regulations that could force churches to employ non-believers and practising homosexuals came into force in December.

The regulations ban work-place discrimination on grounds of religion, belief or sexual orientation. The controversial regulations implement an EU employment directive which the Government signed in 2000.

There are some limited protections for religious organisations. However, these protections are complex and require Christian employers to be prepared to prove their case before an employment tribunal.

The Christian Institute ran a three-year campaign to minimise the impact of these laws on the freedom of Christian employers to employ Christian staff.

The Institute's campaign included producing more than 70,000 briefings, meeting the Home Secretary and government officials, holding seminars for large Christian employers, and speaking out in the national media.

Other Christian groups also opposed the new laws. In 2000, the campaign succeeded in watering-

down the original EU directive so that it offered more protection for religious employers.

However the Government's draft regulations – which proposed how to implement the directive into UK law – did not make maximum use of these protections. The Christian Institute called on the Government to re-think the regulations.

After pressure from The Christian Institute and others, and after the reported intervention of the Prime Minister,<sup>1</sup> the final regulations offered more protections for religious groups.

Christian employers will be allowed to refuse to employ or dismiss a practising homosexual or a non-believer. However, this is only on certain conditions.

This angered 'gay-rights' groups who launched a last-minute attempt to scupper the final regulations. However, they failed and the regulations were passed by Parliament in the summer.

There is no doubt that Christian employers would be better off if these laws had never been introduced in the first place. However, Christian action has made things better than they might otherwise have been.

<sup>1</sup> *Independent on Sunday*, 11 May 2003

### info Protect your ethos

1. Christian employers should be very clear, open and detailed about their Christian basis and about what they expect of staff in terms of belief and conduct.
2. These matters should be explicitly dealt with in trust deeds and other founding documents.
3. Employment contracts and staff policies must make clear that staff are required to live out the faith.
4. Job descriptions must detail the 'religious' requirements of each job.

### info Non-believers

- Religious employers will be able to refuse to employ a non-believer or dismiss an employee who abandons his faith. However, in order to do this:
1. Religious organisations will have to *prove* that they have a religious ethos
  2. And *prove* that there is a 'genuine occupational requirement' to have a believer in *that particular post*.

### info 'Sexual orientation'

- Religious employers will be able to refuse to employ or to dismiss an employee who is a practising homosexual. However:
1. This only applies to posts that are for the purposes of *organised religion*.
  2. And the employer must prove that there is doctrinal requirement not to employ a practising homosexual or that employing a practising homosexual will offend a significant number of followers of the particular faith.