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“An Enforced Secularism” — A Threat to the Pulpit

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The Church of England has issued an unusual statement expressing its concern that a proposed anti-discrimination law could lead to legal action against churches and Christians who uphold biblical standards of sexual morality.

As reported in today's edition of *The Telegraph* [London]:

Church leaders expressed fears last night that Christians could be sued under proposed new laws to protect gays from harassment.

The Government is proposing to introduce the laws to protect individuals from hostile or humiliating “environments” as part of an overhaul of discrimination legislation. But Christian lawyers and the Church of England warned that Christians could face legal action if they offended gays by expressing the traditional teaching that homosexual sex was immoral.

As the paper explains, the proposed law could allow homosexuals to sue if they heard a sermon that declared homosexuality to be sinful. A homosexual might also sue if denied membership in a church and felt they had been put in a “humiliating position.”

In its submission to Parliament, the Church of England also argued that any legislation in this area must respect the right of individual Christians — not only pastors and other ministers — to live according to their Christian faith. Similarly, Christian schools must be able to teach in accordance with Christian conviction and principles.

More:

Government plans to extend the same harassment laws to religion and belief were also criticised.

The Church said it could lead to people objecting to religious symbols such as crosses on hospital walls on the grounds that they were an affront to atheists.

It added that the proposals were in danger of undermining religious freedom.

“We have been concerned at what has seemed in some recent debates to be a trend towards regarding religion and belief as deserving of a lesser priority in discrimination legislation than the other strands where the law seeks to bring protection,” it said.

Religion and belief seemed to be treated as subordinate to other rights because they were deemed to be a personal choice, but this was “a false analysis”, it continued.

As the church's statement concluded: “This does not amount to, or achieve, equal respect for different religious groups and those of no religion; rather it amounts to an enforced secularism that fails to respect religious belief at all.”

This kind of head-on collision occurs when anti-discrimination laws include sexual orientation and behavioral issues.

This is where the inevitable collision occurs — when religious liberty is sacrificed on the altar of political correctness. This is what the Church of England sees when it speaks of “a trend towards regarding religion and belief as deserving of a lesser priority in discrimination legislation.”

Religious liberty is meaningless if the pulpit is not free to preach the Word of God, if churches cannot determine their own membership, and if Christians are silenced in their Christian testimony.

The full text of the [Church of England's statement](#) can be read [here](#).

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