



THE CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE

Report from Scott Kirkland – 6 May 2023

Christian Institute: Conversion Therapy

A number of us from Maxwell joined with over one hundred other believers from across Glasgow at Newton Mearns Baptist Church to hear from The Christian Institute. The significance of what was presented cannot be in any way over exaggerated. It was scary. But it was not scaremongering because we have the evidence in black and white.

The Institute focused on alarming advice being given to the Government in a paper called “Expert Advisory Group On Ending Conversion Practices: report and recommendations”. You can read the full paper [here](#). Please take time to read the document and realize that when appropriate we must take up whatever peaceful opposition we can against this advice becoming law in Scotland.

The aim is to criminalise “conversion practices”. **'Conversion practices'**: refers to any treatment, practice or effort that aims to change, suppress and/or eliminate a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. *A person cannot consent to conversion practices being carried out against them.*

All can imagine pressures and physical threat which should be outlawed. However, the legislation being suggested is so broad that it could include simple prayer (that has been requested), any general pastoral conversation about sexuality and gender, preaching and even the criminalising of parents who resist entering a conversation or the practical process of gender reassignment for even the youngest of their children.

Even if a person seeks to move from feelings associated with LGBTQi+ that desire is not considered legitimate. A person cannot consent to “conversion practices” being carried out against them (prayer/discussion?) because, *“...as they constitute a human rights violation, it is not possible for individuals to genuinely consent to conversion practices being carried out against them.”* Incredibly the advice is that, *“the inability to consent should also be reflected in the proposed criminal offence.”*

There is a section on ethnic and faith groups and the potential for legislation to reshape what these groups may and may not believe/teach on matters of sexuality and gender.

The paper suggests that “conversion practices” are not normally carried out by lone individuals but usually with the support of others, whether that be *family* or community members, *faith organisations...*

The paper identifies controlling or coercive behaviours which might include curfews for young people, restricting access to transport or spaces, gatekeeping access to healthcare, discouraging disclosure or discussion – all done with the intention of suppression, change or inhibition of the person's sexual orientation, expression of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. This can be compared to coercive control in a domestic abuse context. This is so broad it is alarming.

A parent could be prosecuted for not taking a child to the doctor to discuss their feelings of gender confusion. In fact, the advice being offered specifically says, *“Where parents or guardians have engaged in conversion practices, the modification or even withdrawal of their parental or guardianship rights is envisaged as an option.”* This would be an alarming intrusion into family life.

In regard to our own church context, the paper states that groups which may have alternate views on sexuality and gender fluidity not be allowed access to public spaces and have their charitable status removed.

From my own personal perspective as a minister I would be faced with this potential; *“...where the perpetrator of any of the criminalised acts is a faith leader or a member of a religious institution, the legal consequences may include the withdrawal of the perpetrator's professional licence as a faith leader or removal of ability to work*

within Scotland in said institution, or withdrawal of the institution's charity status where the institution is not otherwise regulated.”

A healthcare provider who is simply not “affirming” of a particular presentation in regard to sexuality or gender, could have their licence to practice medicine removed.

Conclusion

The above simply skims the surface of the implications of this potential legislation. It is incredibly serious!

This legislation may come to the Scottish Parliament during the present calendar year. I include this brief excurses into the matter as a flare alerting us to this potential legislation which will change the face of Scottish life and potentially criminalise ordinary mothers and fathers, friends, family and faith groups. We will no doubt return to this as the matter progresses through the system at Holyrood.

Scott