



The Costs of Keeping the Faith

Foreword by Nick Fletcher MP



The Costs of Keeping the Faith

A Report from Voice for Justice UK

First published June 2024

Voice for Justice
7 Windward House
Square Rigger Row
Plantation Wharf
London SW11 3TU

info@vfjuk.org
press@vfjuk.org

Copyright © 2024 Voice for Justice UK
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photography, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from VfJUK.





Voice for Justice UK would like to give their thanks to all the people, who willingly gave of their time and of themselves to share their experiences with us. This report is dedicated to them.



Foreword

A very timely report.

Almost every day we hear of another Christian losing their job simply for expressing what they believe. Are these individuals the tip of the iceberg? This report shows us unfortunately they are not. The 1,562 Christians who responded to Voice for Justice UK's survey feel under attack. Aware they have no control over what their children are taught at school, they feel powerless within their own families. Having to adhere to progressive ideologies which they do not agree with, they are prevented from practising 'freedom of conscience.' This is the most precious and foundational of all human rights.

Christians feel unable to 'voice their voice,' as one of the respondents explained, in businesses, schools, hospitals, even sometimes in their own families. Perhaps most alarming of all, some have been pulled up for expressing Christian belief even within their own church.

Christianity is the cornerstone for so many of the values we take for granted. If it were not for Christianity our tolerance, our diversity, freedom of conscience and love for our neighbour would become a thing of the past.

This report needs to be circulated widely among those working in human resources, those responsible for education, as well as employers, Church leaders, civil servants and those responsible for policy making.

We all need to wake up to the attack on Christianity in our society, before it turns into something even more sinister. This report is a vital step in sounding the alarm.

Nick Fletcher MP

CONTENTS

Chapter Summaries	1
Introduction	9
Chapter One	
Freedom of Religion	12
The legal framework for freedom of religion and belief are sound	14
In practice people do not have freedom of speech	16
Chapter Two	
Exploring Harassment	18
Intolerance appears to be increasing	20
Christians do not feel free to say what they think	21
Ridicule of Christians appears to be widespread	22
Qualitative research showed that bullying was widespread	23
Christians are the victims of harassment	24
Anti-Christian blasphemy is ubiquitous	25
Chapter Three	
Discrimination	27
The quantitative data suggested that discrimination is widespread	27
Job interviews and promotions were classic trigger points of discrimination	28
Identifying indirect discrimination	30
Indirect discrimination was widespread	31

Discrimination on account of religion and belief is not taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination	35
---	----

Chapter Four

The Place of Prayer in the NHS	36
Preventing prayer	37
Prayer is important to patients	38
Inadequate guidance around prayer	41
Prayer is important to nurses	42

Chapter Five

The Social Attitudes of Christians	44
Christians have views at odds with mainstream society	45
The workplace is becoming repressive for Christians	48

Chapter Six

LGBT+ and the Power of a New Belief System	51
Damage caused by the widespread ignorance of Christianity	52
How the LGBT+ movement acquired cultural capital	53
LGBT+: a belief system with a disproportionate amount of influence	55
How social attitudes shape experiences of discrimination	59

Chapter Seven

Protected?	66
Protecting the LGBT+ movement	67
Some faiths are more equal than others	68

Ethnic minority arguments	76
A fear of Muslims	78
The silence of the Christians	81

Chapter Eight

How Schools are Undermining Christian Faith	85
Parents' rights with regards to their children's education are enshrined in law	86
Parents no longer felt able to raise children in accordance with their religious faith	86
Children are being exposed to Comprehensive Sexuality Education	88
Pupils could be exposed to bullying and ridicule by both teachers and pupils	91
Many teachers have been severely penalised	93
Schools appear to be breaking the law by teaching a one-sided narrative	94
Teachers compromise their beliefs or risk losing their jobs	96
Christian schools appear even worse	99
Does the secularisation of schools explain the decline in Christian faith?	101

Chapter Nine

Where are the Shepherds?	103
A large group of Christians outside denominational structures	104
Churches with clear institutional structures had a higher proportion of males	105
The age distribution of different denominations	106
Christians of no denomination were highly likely to have traditional, biblical beliefs	107
As Churches become increasingly secularised Christians are leaving them	108
The absence of leadership	113

Chapter Ten	
Why are Christians Discriminated Against?	116
Christianity stands for everything LGBT+ would like to destroy	122
Appendix 1	127
Appendix 2	128
Appendix 3	129

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

INTRODUCTION

The UK has been identified by the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in Europe (OIDAC) as being one of the five most intolerant countries in Europe. Our high levels of prosecution for 'hate speech' most let us down. Voice For Justice UK carried out research in order to find out whether discrimination against Christians is exceptional or the tip of an iceberg. We created a survey with multiple choice responses as well as open ended questions about experiences of discrimination and disadvantage on account of religion. The aim was to collect both data and real-life experiences which were analysed together. The qualitative data ran to several hundred pages. The final analysis was based on 1,562 survey questionnaires being filled in.

Chapter One: FREEDOM OF RELIGION

There do appear to be significant legal safeguards in place to protect freedom of religion and belief (FoRB). This includes a broad definition of religious freedom as well as rights to manifest these beliefs. Freedom of expression of religion and belief is to be allowed even where these beliefs are unpopular or unpleasant. The definition of religion and belief is also explored.

This chapter gives a brief overview of some of the legal protections for freedom of religion and belief, how this is defined, why it is so important and how it is maintained.

Despite legal protections the qualitative evidence showed that people do not feel free to speak about their beliefs. The qualitative data showed that many Christians are self-censoring and freedom of belief and expression is significantly compromised.

Chapter Two: EXPLORING HARASSMENT

Quantitative data showed that 56% of respondents had experienced hostility and ridicule. Experiences of this were higher among younger respondents and lower among the older generation. The older generation consisted of a high proportion of people who were retired and who were referring to their experiences when they had been in the workplace. Despite experiences of hostility and ridicule, respondents did not appear to feel the need to hide their faith. Reassuringly the quantitative data suggested that people also felt comfortable talking about their faith and beliefs at work. However, the

younger generation was less likely to feel comfortable talking about their faith and beliefs, suggesting the situation is becoming worse.

Christians do not feel free to say what they think, with only 36% of the younger generation feeling free to express their views at work. A lack of freedom of expression is experienced generally, not just in the workplace.

The qualitative data showed widespread examples of hostility and ridicule occurring in the workplace as well as serious examples of bullying. The examples respondents provided clearly met the criteria of harassment as defined by ACAS. One of the issues which particularly concerned Christians was widespread blasphemy against the Christian God. This did not appear to be regarded as problematic by ACAS.

Chapter Three: DISCRIMINATION

The quantitative data showed that 18% of people had experienced discrimination, with experiences of discrimination rising in the younger age group. This was reflected in the qualitative data mainly in the form of discrimination during interviews. Many felt that discrimination had also occurred in the process of promotion.

What constitutes indirect discrimination is also explored. Among Christians indirect discrimination was most likely to occur where workplace practices clashed with practising religious belief. For example, we repeatedly saw examples where employers were unwilling to recognise the difficulties a Christian might have with working on a Sunday as well as an expectation to celebrate Halloween. Problems also arose in teaching where teachers were expected to teach ideologies which went against Christian belief, and in healthcare where nurses were expected to engage in medical practices which went against their faith.

Despite this younger people were more likely to see the work environment as welcoming for people of faith than older people. However, what becomes apparent is that while the work environment may have become more welcoming to people of faith in general, it is not actually more welcoming to people of the Christian faith. As we will go on to see later, the work environment appears to be more welcoming of some faiths than others.

Chapter Four: THE PLACE OF PRAYER IN THE NHS

We heard in the last chapter about how people were unable to live out their consciences freely while working in the NHS. There have been reports of nurses being prevented from wearing crosses. Respondents in our own research reported how

prayer was prevented by the NHS. There was no rational explanation for this. What appeared to be going on was a hostility towards Christianity itself.

There was an irony in this for if one looks at the development of health services in the UK (and indeed all over the world), Christians had a key role to play. For many Christians their nursing work is a witness to their Christian faith.

Yet nurses have in the past been suspended for praying with patients, and though they have been reinstated this has sent shock waves through nurses and doctors in the NHS who believe that they would get trouble if they prayed with their patients. Some staff have risked their livelihoods by carrying on praying and others have been disciplined or lost their jobs as a result. There does not appear to be any reason for preventing or penalising prayer since the cases mentioned involve requests for prayer from the patients themselves.

The *Nursing Times* carried out research in this area and found that a full 91% of nurses believed they should be allowed to pray with patients where they requested it and 40% had had patients who had asked them for prayer. There was a strong feeling that they needed better guidance around prayer.

A look at the research suggests prayer is not just something many patients would like but it is good for the well-being of nurses, and therefore the retention of nurses themselves. The well-being of nurses has an important impact on patient outcome. Therefore, interventions to improve patient outcomes could explore the potential for allowing nurses, where appropriate, to pray with patients.

Chapter Five: THE SOCIAL ATTITUDES OF CHRISTIANS

As social attitudes appeared to be a trigger point for discrimination we decided to research them more closely. We assessed the social attitudes of respondents by asking them their level of agreement with four statements:

- Real marriage is between a man and a woman
- We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage
- It is always wrong to have an abortion
- We are all born male or female

We found a remarkable level of strength and consistency in the responses. Furthermore, the views of Christians differed significantly from non-Christians.

For example, a YouGov report suggested 78% of Britons support same-sex marriage. The Ozanne Foundation suggested that 55% of Anglicans accepted same-sex marriage. However, our own research suggested only 13% of Anglicans agreed with same-sex marriage, while among Christians overall the figure was 6%.

When it came to sex before marriage 86% of our respondents believed this was to be avoided. British Social Attitudes showed that as far back as 2012 only 28% of the population believed this was mostly or always wrong, although there is other evidence emerging to suggest that more traditional ways of thinking are on the rise when it comes to sexual activity.

A surprising discovery was the extent to which views did not become more conservative with age, with the younger generation expressing more conservative views on some topics.

Expressing conservative social attitudes resulted in Christians being vilified or even losing their jobs. Some respondents had lost employment on account of their views and some had experienced discrimination in other ways. One respondent had taken early retirement and others had self-censored in order to keep their job or avoid other penalties. Christians were clear that their views were a consequence of their faith and that difficulties arose because their beliefs were at odds with the dominant LGBT+ ideology. This resulted in a serious lack of freedom of speech.

Chapter Six: LGBT+ AND THE POWER OF A NEW BELIEF SYSTEM

The qualitative interviews showed that the LGBT+ belief system has a great deal of power, which this chapter tries to explain. This is partly because in the Equality Act harassment depends on the perception of the victim. As those who identify as LGBT+ have persistently been told they are victims, they are most likely to perceive themselves as victims, and therefore to claim that they have been discriminated against and to demand protective measures.

This has a particular impact on Christians as their views are less likely to align with the LGBT+ belief system than those in the secular population. This puts Christians at a particular risk of being accused of harassment and discrimination, a process which ironically results in harassment and discrimination against Christians. This is worsened by a great deal of ignorance about Christianity, surprising for a once-Christian country.

When Christians are allowed to explain themselves, it becomes apparent that they are not discriminating. The examples of King Lawal and Felix Ngole are given. However, a great deal of harm occurs before a Christian is allowed to clear their name.

The process whereby adherence to LGBT+ ideology becomes institutionalised is explained. Various schemes, such as the Diversity Champions Scheme and the Workplace Equalities Index, were launched through which an organisation could show that it was 'LGBT+ inclusive'. This became a key way of demonstrating 'corporate responsibility', which has also become an important social concept. All of this has had a significant impact on freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom from discrimination for Christians. Such changes have also enabled authority figures to impose their own views on others, even though this goes against discrimination law.

It would appear that LGBT+ ideology constitutes a significant belief system and should therefore be subject not only to the same protections, but also the same restrictions, as other belief systems. However, instead the LGBT+ belief system receives a huge amount of government support and funding. There has been significant investment at all levels in the LGBT+ movement and there is enormous pressure to adhere to these beliefs. The result is that LGBT+ views are imposed on others. This goes against the requirements of the Equalities Act. The qualitative data showed that Christians felt under considerable pressure to go along with LGBT+ ideology and self-censor or otherwise be penalised in some way or lose their jobs.

An examination of the quantitative research showed that the more a person adhered to traditional orthodox Christian beliefs, the more likely they were to experience discrimination. An individual's perception of the level of freedom of society is likely to be influenced by the extent to which their beliefs fit in with mainstream dogma. If your views are the same as those propagated by state-run organisations, you are likely to believe that you live in a free and democratic society. If your views differ from those found in the mainstream, you will be more likely to perceive society as lacking freedom of expression because that will be your own personal experience. The result of this is likely to form a social divide.

Chapter Seven: PROTECTED?

One of the strongest findings emerging from the research was that respondents did not feel that the protection of religion and belief were taken as seriously as the protection of other characteristics. Those who should have been protecting employees were persistently discriminating against them. As already seen, alleged discrimination on account of sexuality received far more attention than discrimination on account of religious belief.

However, there was a feeling that other religions were being treated far more favourably than Christianity, in particular Islam. Christians felt upset by the fact that they were much more likely to be accused of homophobia, although Christians have neither a fear nor a hatred of homosexuals. Muslims by contrast appeared to be exempt from accusations of homophobia, although Islam takes a far more punitive and condemnatory stance towards those who practice homosexuality.

Many other examples were given where Islam appeared to have been given a privileged status in relation to Christianity.

Various explanations were given for what appeared to be Islam's privileged position. The media were held partly responsible for promoting a negative view of Christianity. Also, Muslims were associated with an ethnic minority which meant that they benefitted from belonging to the protected characteristic of ethnicity. Further, Muslims were seen as being victims of Islamophobia. Christians by contrast were often seen as being 'part of the establishment'. Therefore, by mocking Christians one could be seen in a sense as aligning oneself with the 'victims'.

Finally, there appeared to be a widespread fear of Muslims which meant that they could 'get away with' much more than Christians. Christians by contrast were seen as rather docile and weak at defending their faith.

What emerged was a hierarchy of protected characteristics with marriage and civil partnerships and gender reassignment taking first place, then race, and then religion and belief. Because faiths like Islam were also perceived to have an ethnic identity, they were perceived as higher in the list of protected characteristics. In effect the Equalities Act has set up a system where protected characteristics compete against each other and the one with the most sponsorship dominates.

Chapter Eight: HOW SCHOOLS ARE UNDERMINING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Non-religious parents are far more likely to pass on their secular beliefs to their children than Christians are likely to pass their Christian beliefs to their children, and this is probably a result of our firmly secular education system.

Although a parent's right to have a say in the education of their children is securely enshrined in law, and schools are supposed to take account of a parent's religious beliefs and consult with parents, none of this is being done. While parents whose children had been in the education system some decades ago had felt able to bring up their children according to their faith, this was no longer the case. Today's children were being exposed to what is technically known as Comprehensive Sexuality Education, which promotes LGBT+ beliefs and parents felt that they had little influence.

The result was that children who had traditional biblical beliefs could be bullied and ridiculed both by pupils and teachers, and therefore parents encouraged children to keep quiet about their beliefs. What appeared to be going on was a process of indoctrination, although this goes against the law.

Christian teachers were really struggling, sometimes choosing to leave their jobs rather than teach against their conscience. For some years now teachers have been losing their jobs, or have been punished in other ways for not adhering to LGBT+

ideology. Respondents gave examples of teachers they knew who had lost their jobs, suggesting that those whose stories make the headlines may be the tip of the iceberg.

Christian schools were just as bad as state schools.

Chapter Nine: WHERE ARE THE SHEPHERDS?

The survey looked at people's denominations and the process through which this was quantitatively analysed is briefly described. The category *Christian no denomination* had the largest number of respondents, with 30 percent being in this category. This appeared to be because so many people were becoming disillusioned with the ways in which their church had capitulated to secular ideology.

The data was analysed according to sex and it was interesting to note that more traditional organised denominations tended to have a preponderance of males while the more charismatic, free-floating styles of worship were slightly more likely to attract women.

Denomination was also correlated with age, with the Roman Catholics and Pentecostals being more likely to have an even age distribution.

We also explored how social attitudes and orthodoxy of belief were affected by the denomination to which one belonged. Those who were Roman Catholic, Pentecostal or Christian no denomination were more likely to have traditional biblical beliefs. The large number of Christians with biblical beliefs who belonged to the category *Christian no denomination* suggests that many are not finding sufficient nourishment within traditional organised religion and are looking elsewhere. This emerged clearly in the qualitative data, with many respondents complaining about the increasing prevalence of secular beliefs within the Church and even finding themselves discriminated against within their church. Most worryingly, there were ministers and clergy who appeared to have experienced discrimination within their Church.

That the largest group of Christians are choosing to practice their faith outside the confines of organised religion suggests that the approaches of institutions such as the Church of England to adopt secular ideologies is backfiring. People expressed particular disappointment with the leadership of the Church of England. This lack of leadership left Christians unprotected by the very people who should be defending their interests in mainstream society and left them exposed to discrimination and attack.

Chapter Ten: WHY ARE CHRISTIANS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?

The media had had a particular role perpetuating a negative stereotype of Christians and Christians appeared to be singled out for attack by the media more than any other religious group. This was felt by many.

In addition, Christians were believed by many to be a majority and part of the establishment and therefore it was believed to be impossible to discriminate against them. As outlined in Chapter Three, those who held traditional beliefs were more likely to be discriminated against whereas those who held mainstream views were not. This may explain why some Christians felt that Christians were not discriminated against. Christians with orthodox biblical beliefs constitute a minority although they are perceived to be a majority. This produces a double whammy whereby it is seen as fair game to discriminate against Christians as they are seen to be part of the establishment, but in fact those discriminated against receive no support from the Christian leadership who may discriminate against them. Christianity is also particularly attacked by the LGBT+ movement.

However, despite these attacks a new and strong grassroots form of Christianity is emerging.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past couple of decades, it has become increasingly difficult for Christians to practice their faith. These difficulties have been ratcheting up over time. Wearing crosses, praying with patients, tweeting the wrong thing, asking the wrong questions, praying silently on street corners, these actions and many others have had Christians cancelled, arrested, lose careers, positions, and jobs. The situation has become so bad that between 2019 and 2020 the UK was identified by the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in Europe (OIDAC) as being one of the five most intolerant countries for Christians in Europe.¹ Our high levels of prosecution for hate speech most let us down. *Voice for Justice UK* set out to explore whether the incidents we saw were exceptions or the tip of the iceberg, and to try to understand the circumstances in which discrimination took place. We wanted to find out if it was really so difficult to be a Christian and if so, why?

To find out, we created a survey (Appendix 3) which was circulated throughout July and August 2023 using a range of methods to gather respondents. Initially we used the snowball method circulating the survey through the mailing list of *Voice for Justice UK*. We supplemented this by purchasing a list of over 10,000 Christian Churches and organisations to broaden the range of respondents filling in the survey. Separate online searches were done to find Christian organisations which had not been previously included. These organisations were asked if they could circulate the survey to their mailing lists. Attempts were made to contact young people through Christian and Catholic Unions but owing to it being the university summer break this did not yield many replies. This is reflected in the serious shortfall of young people in the data set which will be remedied at a future date.

We then used the IBM SPSS statistical platform to analyse the data as this provides greater flexibility than Excel. The final analysis was conducted on 1,562 responses.

Most of the questions were multiple choice and amenable to statistical analysis. Basic questions on age, sex and employment status were asked. Respondents were also asked questions on their beliefs about same-sex marriage, sex before marriage, abortion and gender identity to uncover their social attitudes (covered in Chapter Five). In addition, respondents were asked to state whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were not sure, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements:

- Generally, I feel comfortable talking about my faith and beliefs.

¹ https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/files/Under_Pressure_Top_Five_Report_2020_01.pdf

- Generally, I feel I can be true to myself.
- When it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think.
- I often feel the need to hide my faith and beliefs.
- If I share or discuss my religious beliefs, I sometimes feel hostility or ridicule from those around me.

Respondents were also asked whether they felt free to discuss their religious beliefs on social media.

We also asked respondents to say the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements about their place of work or study. The statements were:

- I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith.
- I feel there are negative stereotypes about people of my faith background at my place of work or study.
- Religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics such as race or sex.

The questionnaire also provided many opportunities for respondents to step out of the strict grid of questions and write down their own experiences, observations, opinions and points of view. The following questions allowed for this:

- If you have ever experienced disadvantage or believe that you have been discriminated against in some way on account of your religious beliefs, could you tell us about it in the space below.
- If you don't think discrimination against people of your religion is treated just as seriously as discrimination against other people of other religions, please can you tell us more about why you feel like this.
- Have you felt able to raise your children in line with your religious beliefs? If you have not felt able to do so, please explain why in the comment box below.
- If you or anyone you know personally has been disadvantaged on account of their religious belief, please feel free to tell us more about it here.

These questions resulted in extensive qualitative data which is presented in tandem with the hard data which emerged from the research.

They were also asked about their Christian denomination. The options provided were:

- Church of England Anglican
- Roman Catholic
- Presbyterian
- Methodist
- Baptist
- Christian no denomination
- Other

The 'Other' option elicited a wide range of descriptions and these have been used when providing information about a respondent following each quotation. Further information on how denomination was analysed is provided in Chapter Nine.

A number of stories emerge throughout the report, including the extent to which the Christian population differs from the secular population in terms of its beliefs, the extent of discrimination against Christians not just compared to other protected characteristics but also compared to other religious groups, and finally the ubiquitousness and influence of the LGBT+ movement. Three areas emerged which require further exploration. One was the place of prayer in the NHS. There seems to be a significant difference between nurses and even patients who feel prayer is a part of healthcare, and the administration who allow a place for 'spirituality' while appearing to frown upon religion and prayer. Secondly, there appears to be a disparity between what is taught to children in schools and parental views and beliefs. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there appears to be a rift opening up between the Church hierarchy and the faithful. While the former appear to be seeking to secularise Christian worship, the laity want to hear the word of God.

These themes emerged from both the quantitative and qualitative data which have been considered together and presented in tandem throughout the report.

Chapter One

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

There are significant legal safeguards to protect freedom of religion and belief (FoRB). One of the aims of the research will be to discover why discrimination and restrictions on religious practice exist when the legal framework appears sound.

At the international level there is the UN's International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) which states that:

*'Freedom of religion or belief is far-reaching and profound. It encompasses not just the freedom to hold personal thoughts and convictions, but also being able to manifest them individually or with others, publicly or in private.'*²

Further, it is seen as:

*'a bellwether human right. It is a fundamental freedom which underpins many other human rights and where FoRB is under attack, often other basic rights are threatened too. In societies where freedom of religion or belief is respected, it is much harder for extremist views to take root.'*³

For this reason, the ICCPR are very clear that FoRB is something which cannot be deviated from under any circumstances. Even, they explain, in times of public emergency.

The importance of religion to other freedoms is discussed in depth in Grim and Finke's book *The Price of Freedom Denied*. Building on expansive theoretical literature they explain how:

*'...when religious freedoms are denied through the regulation of religious profession or practice, violent religious persecution and conflict will increase. Conversely, the lifting of restrictions on religious profession or practice should result in less persecution and conflict and consequently more peace and security.'*⁴

² Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office., 2016.

³*Ibid*

⁴ Grim, B.J. and Finke, R., 2010. *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious persecution and conflict in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge University Press, p.6.

The ICCPR explains what religious freedom includes:

*'It encompasses not just the freedom to hold personal thoughts and convictions, but also being able to manifest them individually or with others, publicly or in private. It also includes the freedom to subscribe to different schools of thought within a religion, and to change one's religion or beliefs, including to leave or abandon religions, or to hold non-religious convictions. It forbids discrimination against individuals who have, or wish to have, different beliefs. It prohibits the use of coercion to make someone hold or change their religion or belief. It also protects the individual from being compelled to state an affiliation with any particular religion or belief. The right of an individual to hold religious or other beliefs is absolute. No one can be compelled to disclose or adopt religious or other beliefs.'*⁵

The right to manifest one's religion or belief can sometimes be curtailed but only for the limited reasons given in the human rights treaties. Such limitations should be prescribed by law and are there to protect public safety, order, health, or morals, or the freedoms of others.

A key aspect of defending freedom of religion or belief of course depends on the definition of religion or belief. While this is complex, a few key points will be outlined here.

Firstly, the ICCPR explains that:

'The word "religion" is commonly, but not always, associated with belief in a transcendent deity or deities, i.e. a superhuman power or powers with an interest in human destiny. The term "belief" does not necessarily involve a divine being; it denotes a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance. So not all beliefs are covered by this protection. For example, if someone believed that the moon was made of cheese, this belief would not be likely to meet the test above. But in general, a very wide meaning is given to this term. The following are examples of beliefs considered to fall within the protection of this freedom: druidism, veganism, pacifism, the divine light mission, Krishna Consciousness Movement, humanism, atheism and agnosticism. In 1993, the UN Human Rights Committee ... described religion or belief as "theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the

⁵ *Ibid*

right not to profess any religion or “belief”. However, the issue is complex and contentious, and involves political and other sensitivities.⁶

The legal frameworks for freedom of religion and belief are sound

The *Equality and Human Rights Commission* (EHRC) also regard freedom of thought, conscience, and religion as essential to human dignity; these freedoms enable people to live according to the demands of their faith. They are enshrined in Article 9:

‘Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.’⁷

And Article 10 which deals with freedom of expression, states that:

‘Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.’⁸

OIDAC (the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in Europe) explain that freedom of expression includes the right to publicly make declarations even if they are unpopular or unpleasant. One has the right to publicly acknowledge one’s faith and to express the truth according to one’s faith, as long as these statements are not direct instigations to violence. Apparently, the European Court of Human Rights even speaks of the right to shock. The recent emergence of hate speech legislation is often contradictory to the fundamental right of freedom of expression.⁹

The ICCPR outlines a list of activities which are seen as necessary to ensure freedom of religion or belief and one of these is *‘To express one’s beliefs and to criticise the beliefs of others in a non-threatening manner.’*

⁶ *Ibid*

⁷ UK Public General Acts, Human Rights Act, 1998, Schedule 1. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/schedule/1>

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ OIDAC EUROPE, 2021. *Annual Report*

https://www.intoleranceagainstchristians.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/files/Annual_Report_2022_-_ONLINE_Web_View_Final.pdf (last accessed 28/11/2023)

Our Equalities Act reflects these same understandings. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and Citizen's Advice (National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux) both explain that rules and regulations on discrimination against religion and belief not only pertain to organised religion, but also apply to profound beliefs that affect a person's way of life or view of the world. This includes religious and philosophical beliefs.^{10,11}

Key points for the workplace explains that a philosophical belief must fulfil all of the following requirements: It must be genuinely held. It must not be just an opinion or point of view based on current information. It must be a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour. It must also be 'clear, logical, convincing, serious, important,' as well as 'worthy of respect in a democratic society, compatible with human dignity and not conflicting with the fundamental rights of others.'

They give humanism, atheism and agnosticism as examples of genuinely held beliefs, but supporting a football team or loyalty to your native country are not. Of key importance is that fact that:

*'no one religion or branch of a religion overrides another – so an employee is protected against discrimination by someone of another religion, or of the same religion or of a different branch or practice of their religion. For example, it would be discriminatory for an employee to treat a colleague of the same religion unfairly because they regard them as less orthodox in their belief.'*¹²

ACAS also explains that an employer is responsible for:

'preventing a figure of authority forcing their personal views on others – for example, an executive on a junior employee, a teacher on a pupil or doctor on a patient.'

The employer appears to be responsible for ensuring that no one belief system overrides another.¹³

These laws have significant implications for Christians, as the Evangelical Alliance explains:

¹⁰ ACAS, 2019. *Guidance: religion or belief discrimination; key points for the workplace*

¹¹ <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/discrimination-because-of-race-religion-or-belief/discrimination-because-of-religion-or-belief/> (last accessed 28/11/2023)

¹² ACAS *op cit* pp. 4-6

¹³ *Op cit.* p.18

*'The strength of the legal protection to speak freely about Jesus Christ and all topics affecting freedom of conscience and belief is very considerable indeed.'*¹⁴

The ACAS report explains this in practical terms:

'An employer should try to make its workplace 'inclusive', so employees do not put at a disadvantage a colleague who may be different from them because, for example, of their religion or belief... This means an employer should not try to ban outright discussion of religion or belief at work.'

It is also recognised that some restrictions are justified, for example an authority figure should not be allowed to force their personal view on others. This seems fair and right.

In practice people do not have freedom of speech

However, for many of our respondents, workplaces are clearly not inclusive; people are self-censoring and keeping their thoughts to themselves all the time.

'I cannot share my faith with anyone unless I can describe them as a personal friend or family member.' (Male, over 65, retired, Church of England)

'People with traditional Christian beliefs such as mine are often automatically assumed to be aberrant and falling outside of social norms. I am often very uncomfortable sharing my beliefs in public discourse.' (Male, 35-44, disabled, Baptist)

'A staff belonging survey was filled in and I stated that Christians and Jews and others do not feel they can voice opinions or be themselves and my comments were not taken into account when the results were shared – we were just told that everyone is very happy and feels they belong.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I do not know anyone who has been discriminated against but I know of several who like myself will not mention their faith or beliefs because, even before you say anything, there is always someone who will make it clear they are antagonistic to any views that run counter to their own (usually

¹⁴ <https://www.eauk.org/what-we-do/initiatives/speak-up> (last accessed 28/11/2023)

atheist) views or who find it necessary to often make Christianity the butt of their jokes.’ (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

‘I have never been disadvantaged but this is because I self-censor at work. I know some of my beliefs are not welcome in my work place and so while I am working there I have decided to keep them to myself, otherwise I think I would probably have to resign. I have also noticed that in recent years I tend to self-censor more, full stop - and I think this is partly due to the chilling effect of seeing how prominent Christians like MPs are treated in public life and by mainstream media.’ (Female, 25-34, employed, Christian no denomination)

The experiences reported by the respondents are clearly not compatible with freedom of speech.

Chapter Two

EXPLORING HARASSMENT

The difficulties with freedom of religion, expression and belief emerged in the quantitative data although the patterns were complex and sometimes difficult to discern. This was compounded by the fact that over half of our respondents (52%) were already retired. 23% were between the ages of 55 and 64.

Respondents by age

	Number of respondents in each age group	Percent
Under 35	93	6%
35-54	304	20%
55-64	357	23%
65 or older	808	52%
Total	1,562	100%

This age profile had a significant effect on the reporting. In order to get a clearer picture, respondents were asked:

'Could you say whether you agree or disagree that the following statements provide an accurate description of your place of work or study. If you are now retired please feel free to reply based on your experiences when you were at work.'

'Do you feel you have been disadvantaged in any way at your place of work/study on account of your faith? If you are not currently working please reply based on your experiences.'

This meant the experiences reported often referred to a few decades ago when things were likely to have been different. Therefore, when exploring questions of freedom of expression or freedom from discrimination, it was necessary to cross-tabulate questions with age.

How freedom of expression varies according to age

Age	When it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think.	At work when it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think.	I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs.	At work I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs.
Under 35	38%	36%	34%	33%
35-54	40%	37%	29%	30%
55-64	46%	37%	32%	30%
65 and older	63%	52%	24%	21%
Overall percentage of agreement to each question (percentage of disagreement not shown)	53% (830)	45% (704)	28% (430)	25% (393)

How experiences of discrimination or disadvantage vary according to age

Age	Generally, I feel comfortable talking about my faith and beliefs.	Generally, I feel I can be true to myself.	If I share or discuss my religious beliefs, I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me.	At work I feel that there are negative stereotypes about people of my faith background at my place of work/study.
Under 35	68%	81%	61%	53%
35-54	69%	75%	57%	49%
55-64	75%	81%	56%	53%
65 and older	84%	88%	56%	49%
Overall percentage of agreement to each question (percentage of disagreement not shown)	78% (1220)	84% (1304)	56% (869)	50% (782)

Intolerance appears to be increasing

A striking finding of the data was that over half of our respondents (56%) experienced hostility from those around them. Only 25% of respondents disagreed with this question, suggesting that the proportion who experience hostility and ridicule in some form was even higher.¹⁵ What was also notable was that the numbers who felt this hostility and ridicule appeared to increase the younger the respondents were. Half of the respondents felt that there were negative stereotypes about people of their faith background at their place of work or study. This also had a slight tendency to increase among younger respondents.

What was surprising was that, despite this, only 26% of people felt the need to hide their faith, while 53% were quite clear that they did not.¹⁶ This may reflect the fact that most Christians take seriously Christ's assurance that:

'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven...' (Matthew 10.32)

and are applying it to their everyday life. There is no doubt that when one experiences hostility and ridicule and is the butt of negative stereotypes, the temptation to hide one's faith must be strong. However, it is one that many Christians are resisting. However, again the number of people feeling that they need to hide their faith and beliefs increases among the younger generation, with 34% feeling the need to hide their faith, while this declines to 24% among those who are over 65. This suggests that levels of intolerance are inexorably on the rise.

An encouraging finding was that the majority (75%) of people felt comfortable talking about their faith and beliefs. This is as it should be. The Evangelical Alliance explains that:

*'Freedom to share, discuss and debate religious beliefs has benefited from legal protection for many centuries. The protection that exists today covers the spoken word and written publications, including online content. It ranges from protecting a street preacher, to allowing a billboard displaying Bible verses, to ensuring a conversation in a home can occur without inhibition.'*¹⁷

¹⁵ See Appendix 1

¹⁶ This table will be in the appendix.

¹⁷ <https://www.eauk.org/what-we-do/initiatives/speak-up> p.6 (last accessed 30/11/2023)

It is reassuring to know that this is still available at work. However, again we saw the age gradient, with 84% of those over 65 saying that they feel comfortable talking about their faith, while this declines to 68% for those under 35. This suggests that intolerance is on the rise. It should also be noted that this finding contrasts favourably with the findings of the Catholic Union which found that 48% of their respondents did not feel comfortable talking about their faith and beliefs. However, their question referred specifically to the workplace, which might explain the more negative results.¹⁸

The most positive finding was that 84% of people felt that they could be true to themselves, although this was clearly on the decline.

The Evangelical Alliance explains that:

*'The strength of the legal protection to speak freely about Jesus Christ and all topics affecting freedom of conscience and belief is very considerable indeed.'*¹⁹

However, things are not as positive as they may on first sight appear.

Christians do not feel free to say what they think

While the statistics suggested most Christians felt comfortable talking about their faith, they also showed they did not feel free to say what they thought. For example, only 53% of respondents felt that they were free to say what they thought when it came to social issues. At work this declined to 45%. And again, if we accounted for age, the findings were more alarming. While 63% of those aged 65 and older felt 'free to say what I think', this declined to 38% for those under 35. The number of young people who felt free to express their views at work was even less, at 36%.

What is interesting here is that the decline appears to be greater in the more general question than in the question which asks specifically about work. This suggests that constraints on social attitudes have moved out of the workplace and are starting to take root in the home. While restrictions in the workplace are alarming, it is only the most severe forms of authoritarianism which enforce their doctrine in the home. Some signs of this also emerged in the qualitative research:

'I lost many of my friends after I became a Christian.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

¹⁸ <https://catholicunion.org.uk/2023/04/catholic-union-highlights-blind-spot-on-religious-freedom-at-work/> (last accessed 28/11/2023)

¹⁹ *Op cit.*

'Friends think it's acceptable to make fun of Christianity and my beliefs but wouldn't dream of doing so with any other religious belief.' (Female, under 18, student, Christian no denomination)

'I have been ostracised by most of my university friends for holding pro-life views - when they found out they began to question 'whether it was moral to stay friends with me' and a lot of them decided against it.' (Male, 18-24, student, Roman Catholic)

Ridicule of Christians appears to be widespread

It is perhaps more galling to be ridiculed by family. Fortunately, it seldom occurs:

'My parents (atheist/humanists) and their friends ridiculed and criticised me so much for becoming a Christian (in my teens) that I mostly had to keep my experiences to myself. They still silence me to stop me speaking about my faith and opinions and manifest hostility and intolerance towards Christians.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I don't do social media, I don't work because I am retired, but I feel very frustrated when I am with family as I feel restricted to speak about my faith freely at home.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

Respondents did not always say where the negative experience occurred.

'There is an overwhelming feeling of ridicule and condescension that I get whenever I interact with anyone middle class and upwards, and religion comes up.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Orthodox)

'Not discrimination, just ridicule, making me feel uncomfortable.' (Female, 65 or older, employed, Scottish Episcopal Church)

In our qualitative data these experiences of hostility and ridicule were more widespread at work:

'I have been ridiculed by colleagues on account of my faith.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'I was mocked for my views on abortion and pre-natal genetic testing. I am a medical doctor. I was laughed at for not ever having "lived with someone" when I was 30-35 years old etc.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

'I experienced a lot of sneering and mockery when I worked for my local council ten years ago, but my current volunteer placement is more inclusive.' (Female, 45-54, volunteer, Church of England)

'Yes, in previous roles working within the health service. As a Christian I would often be ignored (shunned) or ridiculed for my beliefs.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Presbyterian)

'Indirect discrimination at my university for not joining in gossips, being excluded in meetings and decisions and being invited after decisions are made to look like I am included.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

Qualitative research showed that bullying was widespread

Some respondents gave detailed accounts of bullying and it was apparent that there was no recognition by the perpetrators of how unacceptable this behaviour was.

'I was bullied at my work place, made to feel less than, despite being very successful at my job in other settings, until I left. It affected my mental health to a point where I left the profession. A Christian sister who was bullied out of her job for her beliefs and refusing to do shifts on Sundays so she could attend church. The management treated her badly until she left. We believe it was because of her faith.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

'Mocking Christianity, Jesus and Christians is seen as an acceptable joke, this would not be the same for other religions. In the UK when someone without faith disagrees with another person on issues that have their foundations in the person's faith, it is seen as a cultural difference and not something that can be challenged, except with Christianity, which seems to be seen as acceptable not just to disagree with and criticise, but ridicule and treat as though Christians are bigoted for beliefs that are quite common both within and outside of religion.' (Female, 35-44, housewife, Christian no denomination)

'At university, I was studying an 'arts' course at a Christian university but one of my lecturers would often pick on me if she wanted to cause an argument in class. The vast majority (if not all) of my

course mates were very liberal, left-leaning and so in conversations about gender, pro-life etc, she would always say, “[name], what do you think about that? I'm sure as a Catholic you won't agree, tell us what you think”. Although I am happy to share my faith with others, I prefer to do so in a setting of my choice and in one that is more conducive to a healthy discussion, rather than in an environment where I know no one else will agree. I didn't appreciate being the 'token Christian!'. (Female, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I left fulltime employment in the early 2000s to work with a charity and then retrain as a counsellor, so my experience was sufficiently long ago that there was little open hostility to Christians. I would only talk about my faith if someone asked about a particular issue. I was targeted to get a reaction from on numerous occasions. Some, by no means all, would use foul language and blaspheme, just to see if they could upset me. My last fulltime job was in the City and it was an interesting mix of cultural Christianity and hostility towards anything Christian. There were a number of Americans in senior positions who brought their own cultural assumptions, particularly about it being bad to talk about Christmas cards, parties etc, who got a very hostile reaction from most of the staff I talked to about it. The Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs thought it was very silly and all had Christmas trees at home, the rest just objected to being dictated to for no good reason.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

Christians are the victims of harassment

These comments show clear features of harassment which, as ACAS explains, should be protected against by law:

'Harassment is defined as 'unwanted conduct' and must be related to a relevant protected characteristic – in this case, religion or belief. The harassment must have the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. This can include bullying, nicknames, threats, intrusive or inappropriate questions, excluding someone (ignoring, not inviting someone to meetings or events etc) or insults...'

To say the behaviour was not meant to be harassment or that the comments were 'banter' is no defence. The impact of unwanted conduct as perceived by the victim is more important than the perception of the harasser and their intent. Whether it is reasonable for the victim to feel the way they do is also considered.²⁰

²⁰ ACAS *op cit.* p.8-9

Managers should be careful not to let their own views influence a situation or dismiss a concern because they don't deem the behaviour offensive themselves. What is more important is how the employee feels, as ACAS explains:

*'It is important to remember that if an employee feels strongly enough to raise a concern or make a complaint, the employer should take it seriously, and deal with it appropriately and correctly.'*²¹

Anti-Christian blasphemy is ubiquitous

A great many of the respondents talked about the discomfort they experienced in environments in which there were high levels of blasphemy. For Christians, *'not taking the Lord's name in vain'* is one of the commandments. Christians are taught that it is the moral equivalent of stealing, lying and adultery. Hearing God's name taken in vain insults our Lord. If harassment includes creating a hostile or offensive environment, and this is assessed according to the perceptions of the victim, putting up with blasphemy is not something Christians should have to do. While of course we would not want to promote censorship, these experiences suggest that better information and greater sensitivity are required.

This was a frequent theme in the qualitative data:

'Blasphemy against our Lord was a regular occurrence. No other religion was spoken out against or mocked as that would be dealt with seriously.' (Male, 55-64, semi-retired, Roman Catholic)

'People would never blaspheme openly the name of Mohammed. I can't access e.g. a sauna or a public situation, especially with males, because the level of blasphemy linked to the Lord is quite shocking. I saw a man wearing a tee shirt the other day which read Jesus is a C... Even in the workplace blasphemy is shocking.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Christian no denomination)

'Christianity, at best has become ridiculed by many, dismissed by most and demonised by some. Our core beliefs, i.e. blasphemy, have been trampled on.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'Because blasphemy against Jesus Christ is commonplace, but no-one dares offend a Muslim.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

²¹ *Op cit.*

'People seem quite happy to use the name of Jesus in blasphemy or ridicule the Bible - but would never do the same for, say, the Muslim faith.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Even something as simple as blasphemy is not understood as offensive for Christians which is in stark contrast to how we ensure no offence for other viewpoints. I think it's so familiar and nondescript that it has ceased to be a consideration.' (Female, 45-54, self-employed, Baptist)

Unfortunately, our respondents were right. Using the name of God, or Jesus, or Christ or other members of the Holy Family is so common that non-Christians do not even notice it. But Christians do. Blasphemy against the Christian God has become so commonplace that even ACAS says:

'In such situations, there can be a need for tolerance to avoid over-sensitivity about expressions commonly used, but not to cause offence. For example, 'Oh My God' might be one.'

At the same time, it is hard to imagine ACAS saying the same thing about the Muslim Allah or the God who Jews worship, the writing or speaking of whose Name is forbidden by modern rabbinical culture. Similarly, blasphemy is forbidden in the Koran and those who do so may be severely punished. In other matters ACAS is very clear that religions should receive the same level of consideration:

'In considering requests, an employer must not favour the needs of one religious group over another so colleagues of a different religion, or no religion or belief, are at a disadvantage.'

As Christians we also hold our God in great reverence. It is not clear why ACAS chooses to leave Christians so exposed. This suggests a lack of understanding, education and concern about the Christian faith.

Chapter Three

DISCRIMINATION

Our survey questions were aimed at finding out about discrimination, although we sometimes asked about this in roundabout ways. Direct discrimination is the most basic form and it means *‘to be treated unfairly compared to someone else, because of your religion or belief’*. The Equality Act says that direct discrimination is when you are treated differently or worse than someone else for reasons related to your protected characteristic and are worse off because of it. *‘Do you feel you have been disadvantaged at your place of work/study on account of your faith?’* was the question we used. A number of other questions were also used to uncover discriminatory practices, as shown in the table below.

How age affects feelings of disadvantage or discrimination

Age	Do you feel you have been disadvantaged at your place of work/study on account of your faith?	At work religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics	My place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith	At work I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith
Under 35	17%	23%	50%	68%
35-54	22%	26%	48%	66%
55-64	22%	23%	45%	71%
65 and older	16%	20%	44%	77%
Overall % of agreement to each question (% of disagreement not shown)	18% (282)	22% (344)	45% (704)	73% (1141)

The quantitative data suggested that discrimination is widespread

As we saw earlier, 18% of people felt that they had been disadvantaged at their place of work on account of their religious belief. This rose to 22% among those between the ages of 35 and 54. Altogether 282 people felt that they had been disadvantaged on account of their religion. This figure is based on individual perceptions and impressions; it has not been

subject to the rigours of our Commission. However, even if only half this number were victims of direct discrimination, the numbers would be much too high. Decisions about employment and promotion are classic trigger points for discrimination based on belief, and these and others were reported in our research.

Job interviews and promotions were classic trigger points of discrimination

For example, hostility towards Christians had clearly prejudiced the outcomes of job interviews.

'I know a person who had a job interview, they were asked if they agreed with homosexuality and what their reaction would be to it, and when this person answered that they disagree with it (because they are a Christian) the interviewer started shouting and saying all sorts of things, 'that you'll never get a job with this type of thinking', 'how could you think such a thing' etc etc. After which the person who was being interviewed intervened and very respectfully said, 'you know what? I'm not even your employee, you have no right to shout at me like this and treat me in this way' (Female, 18-24, student, Pentecostal)

'I applied for a job. In the interview the question of religion was raised by an interviewer in relation to outside work activities. I did admit I was a churchgoer. He was very scathing of 'People who believe in fairies in the sky' and would be Bible bashing all the time. I had said nothing that should suggest his thinking this. I have never been a 'Bible basher' type. I didn't get the job. This may have been because I was not well enough qualified (I doubt it, I was to my knowledge amongst the best qualified applicant) or that I simply did not fit the role in the interviewer's eyes). However, given what was said, I suspect it was my admitting I was a Christian and went to Church.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I applied for a job as case worker... for Scottish government, I went to the interview, one of the questions was: 'Do you agree that LGBTQ community have the same rights with rest of the population, I mean to be a family to have children... etc' and I said promptly, no, I explained why (because of my orthodox values) and they said: 'ok, we don't need people like you in our team. Good luck.' And this was the end of the interview. I've not been violent or rude when I answered, I just told them my opinion about this LGBTQ.' (Male 25-34, employed, Orthodox)

There were other examples of direct discrimination although these did not appear to directly involve a place of work:

'I applied for several writership programs, one of which even stated that if you struggled with depression and mentioned it in your application they would guarantee that they would contact you for at least the next round of interviews. I made the mistake of mentioning that my faith often helped me through the worst points of my depression, and even though they claimed they would 100% interview everyone who talked about it, they rejected my application out of hand with no second interview. The only reason I can think of, since they also claimed to prioritize women, was that they rejected me because I was a Christian and said so. That is not the only time a similar situation has occurred since I moved to the UK.' (Female, 35-44, freelancer, Christian no denomination)

'Christian Union was unable to book a venue for events week 6 months in advance while other societies were prioritised and able to do so for events 9 months in advance. We were not permitted to hire a marquee even though other societies did so. In the end we had to hold the week over a variety of locations including one day off campus.' (Female, 18-24, student, Christian no denomination)

I lost out on an important art prize because my piece was influenced by the Bible. (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

Several respondents believed that they had missed out on promotions because of their faith beliefs. For example, *'I know I am being passed over for promotion because of my religious beliefs'* was an unambiguous response. Another explained that:

'Any mention of faith in a cv precludes one from an interview. My yearly assessment was lowered because I spoke of Christ.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

If references to faith beliefs were replaced by references to sex or skin colour, I believe we would have a far more immediate sense of indignation. Religious belief is in many ways a more integral part of a person's identity than skin colour, but Christian beliefs have been so driven out of our society that, when discrimination occurs, it no longer provokes a response.

'The person I worked with hated and I mean hated Evangelicals and Jews and would give me a very, very, hard time. He kept a log on me without my knowledge and eventually pushed me out of my job. I am an Anglican not a fundamentalist. No one should have been put through the abuse I was put through. And he did the same to two other employees one an Anglican and one Seven Day Adventist. He should have lost his job, not the three of us. He would get so angry, that he had to take sick days off to deal with his rage.' (Male 65 or older, employed, Church of England)

'I applied for a higher position which a great many of my colleagues wanted me to get. However, I was passed over even though I was highly qualified. The promotion would have meant moving to another team whose leader was a homosexual and was aware of my views which are rooted in Scripture. Nothing was spelt out but I suspect that the team leader's hostility to my views was the reason I was turned down for the promotion.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

Identifying indirect discrimination

Another form of discrimination was indirect discrimination. This refers to a rule, policy or practice which someone of a particular religion or belief is less likely to be able to meet than other people and this places them at a disadvantage. A practice, policy or rule can be formal or informal. It can be a one-off decision or a decision to do something in the future. It includes things like arrangements, criteria, conditions, qualifications, or provisions.

You can only challenge a practice, policy or rule which you think is indirectly discriminatory if it affects you personally. It should apply to everyone in the same way, but has a worse effect on some people than others. The Equality Act says it puts you at a particular disadvantage.

There are exceptions to this and, in some circumstances, it might be possible for your employer to show that there were genuine business or health and safety reasons for the way you have been treated which have nothing to do with your religion or belief. If this is the case, it won't count as discrimination.

The more discriminatory the effect, the more difficult it will be to justify. It can be very difficult to justify discrimination where the same aim could have been achieved without discrimination. The employer is expected to look for and explore any alternatives.

Examples of disadvantage could include forcing staff to work on a Sunday, when we know this could put Christians at a particular disadvantage. The importance of holy days is recognised by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, as the ACAS guidance explains:

'An employer is under no obligation to automatically give staff time off for religious holidays or festivals ... However, it should consider requests carefully and sympathetically, be reasonable and

*flexible where possible, and discuss the request and explore any concerns with the employee. Refusing a request without a good business reason could amount to discrimination.'*²²

Employees are also expected to be flexible and sympathetic and take into consideration the demands of their job and the needs of their employer. ACAS suggests that:

*'An agreement between employer and employee for time off for religious reasons could be written into a contract of employment. However, as times for religious holidays, festivals and to pray often vary, as may the organisation's needs, addressing these changes in a contract might prove challenging. For these reasons, it is often best to have a general term in the contract saying that requests for time off for religious reasons will be considered on an individual basis.'*²³

Indirect discrimination was widespread

However, it became clear from our respondents that some of their employers had not taken the requirements of the Equality Act very seriously:

'Some years ago, I was working for several businesses in a sales and marketing capacity. One of these asked me to drive 250+ miles to a meeting to be there on a Sunday evening. I declined citing my church activities and offered to get up at 4 am to be there early Monday morning. I was told not to bother and a little time later my contract was cancelled and my failure to attend given as one of the reasons. I was able to get some compensation for this.' (Male, 65 or older, Christian no denomination)

'We had to leave the Army because we began to accept the Sabbath as Holy. My husband therefore was discharged with no Reserve liability. Throughout our life since then, we experienced employment difficulties but never wavered in our belief. Christ never promised an easy road!!' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Adventist)

'Turned down for employment because of not wanting to work on Sundays, even though the job was not an essential public service.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

²² *Op cit.* p.13

²³ *Op cit.*

'Many soldiers can't get to Mass for Easter Sunday, for example. The MOD don't provide enough Catholic chaplains for us to get access to confession on exercise or operations.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Roman Catholic)

'Husband lost his job because he refused to work on Sunday. That was almost 40 years ago but he never found another job because he was said to be too old at 53.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'Forced to work Sundays when others in the same position were not.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Have to work on a Sunday or will lose their job even when they made it clear at time of employment that they were a practicing Christian.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Evangelical, Pentecostal)

Other examples of indirect discrimination emerged throughout the data. One of these was in the practice of Halloween. Halloween celebrations appeared to provide a central focus for socialising and jollity in some workplaces. However, for some celebrating Halloween went against their beliefs and therefore they would choose not to participate in the celebration. Halloween has the potential to indirectly discriminate against those who do not go along with it by setting up a situation in which they will be excluded from the socialising which it occasions. While this perhaps cannot be avoided, efforts should be made to ensure the employee does not feel uncomfortable if this occurs.

'I was made to feel awkward because I didn't want to attend some training that went against my beliefs. We also had a Halloween social which I felt uncomfortable attending but I was made to attend because they made me feel very awkward and someone who was just complaining for the sake of it. A teacher also asked not to teach a lesson on the zodiac, I backed him up but he was ridiculed by the staff members.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Baptist)

'It can be a challenge as we (as believers) are not united to make a stand. During the Halloween season, we were asked by our boss to come dressed as witches/wizards/drag queens etc to participate in the season - if not, take out a day (from your leave) and do not come to work - another Christian and a Muslim who does not celebrate Halloween took their day off but I came dressed as normal as I had already told my secretary and others in the office that I do not celebrate Halloween in any shape or form and I refuse to take my day off from my holiday leave, that they should deal with it as they are encroaching on my rights as a Christian and because of all the evil associated with

the season. No-one asked me any questions or disturbed me on the day (though I was asked to be a judge for who is the worst/best dresser - I refused, citing the same reasons). But my colleague (who explained the same and works a receptionist in the office) who is a Jehovah's Witness (so not a Christian per se, but has a faith) was called aside, shouted at by my boss for not participating and she said she was driven to tears and then said she compromised by having to be the judge to choose the worst/best dresser of the day. I believe that is unfair -why should one do something that their conscience does not permit or be forced to take a day off their holiday leave? I told the others who did take the day off - that we really should have stood together, rather than bow to such pressure - you give in and more keeps being taken.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Pentecostal)

'We were told to dress up in Halloween garb as witches or wizards or take a day off (from your personal annual leave) - my fellow Christian and another person with a faith/Muslim did so, I did not and I respectfully voiced the fact that this was against my faith to align with what I consider sin/aligning with darkness - I believe it raised antagonism later on - with people reporting on me for the quality of my work, etc and was put on 'probation'- the Lord turned it around though - I got reinstated and got an increase in salary.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Pentecostal)

Not working on a Sunday or attending Halloween events is an expression of an individual's freedom of conscience. This appears to be increasingly curtailed although the law doesn't change. One nurse explained how she would no longer be able to become a nurse because the NHS now refuses to accommodate those who have different beliefs:

'When I trained to be a nurse, I was able to sign a form to say I would not take part in abortion. This is no longer an option for student nurses, and as such, this profession would now have been shut to me. I feel this is highly discriminatory against my Christian faith. I believe out of the 1000 people who were training with me, I was the only one who requested the form. Even so, there should still be a possibility for those that would choose to sign.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Pentecostal)

Other examples were given which suggested that those who like to live by what might be seen as a more finely tuned conscience are no longer welcome in the NHS. This is an area of discrimination which does not appear to be recognised in a cursory glance at equality laws. One retired nurse claimed that this went back all the way to the seventies:

'Back in the 70's when I was a nurse in the RAF, I was regularly dragged in front of my superiors for following my Christian faith and refusing to partake in anything which went contrary to my beliefs.

Abortion, giving out the contraceptive pill, admitting patients for a vasectomy etc!’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

Although they appear to have been getting worse:

‘Many nursing acquaintances felt that their beliefs were ignored by private and NHS employers, particularly when their right to opt-out of helping/ working at certain surgical or non-surgical procedures was withdrawn (particularly regarding abortion/ IVF/ vaccination clinics) and their offers to opt-in to pre-natal / post-natal / geriatric care were not considered feasible’. (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

With the result that job opportunities were affected:

‘I am opposed to contraception administration for patients in my role as a health professional and have therefore had job opportunities affected.’ (Male, 35-44, employed, Roman Catholic)

Gender ideology had also adversely impacted on Christians. As we will go on to see, it has the status of a dogma which trumps all else:

‘I worked in the NHS for many years before retiring in 2019. It's clear that the NHS has been busy promoting things like LGBT rights under the banner of diversity and inclusion which can marginalise Christian thought. I feel things have intensified since I left the service. For example, the experience of a Christian mental health nurse who as I understand, was removed from her psychotherapy course because of her views and is now seeking legal redress.’ (Male, 55-64, retired, Christian no denomination)

‘I have a friend who is a psychiatrist currently facing disciplinary charges from the GMC for her continuous objection to refer a patient suffering from gender dysphoria for reassignment. She outlined that for personal reasons, an objection backed by the GMC Code of Conduct, she could not refer the patient and since then has been met with false allegations about using “bigoted” religious language and ideologies in her emails and conversations with other colleagues.’ (Female, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

Discrimination on account of religion or belief is not taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination

Although 'only' a fifth reported disadvantage on account of their faith, the impact of this should not be underestimated. However underestimated it is. Only about a fifth of respondents felt that discrimination on account of faith is taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination.

What was also interesting about the response to this question and to the statement 'My place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith' was that the age gradient contradicted the other findings. Where most of the other findings suggested that restrictions on religious expression had increased in recent times, these two findings suggested that younger people believed religious tolerance was improving. A quarter of the younger respondents (those under 54) felt that religious discrimination was taken seriously, whereas for those over 65 this dropped to a fifth. Similarly, 50% of those under 35 felt that the place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith, whereas this dropped to 44% among those over 65.

There are two possible things which could be going on. The Equality Act was established in 2010 and this meant that religion and belief became a protected characteristic. Awareness of this is likely to influence the responses of those who have been employed since that time.

However, the fact that a place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith does not necessarily mean that it is a welcoming environment for people of *all* faiths. If this is the case, the fact that the workplace is a more welcoming environment for people of faith than it used to be is not incompatible with discrimination against Christians. This will be further explored in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Place of Prayer in the NHS

One work environment where Christian belief appeared to be particularly unwelcome was nursing. There is a certain irony in this as Christianity has played a key role in the establishment of nursing and hospitals. Christian doctors and nurses, following the example and teaching of Jesus have, as Rosie Knowles explains, been at the *'forefront of efforts to alleviate human suffering, cure disease, and advance knowledge and understanding.'*²⁴ Much of the Graeco-Roman world was often cruel and inhumane and – while the Hippocratic band of physicians had a different attitude, swearing an oath to heal and not to harm, and to carry out their duty of care to the sick – Christians caring for the sick demonstrated a new ethos and had an enormous impact. For example, when the plague hit the city of Carthage and pagan households threw sufferers onto the streets, it was the Christian community which responded by offering them comfort and taking them into their homes. When a Roman emperor tried to reinstitute paganism, he used the Christians as a yardstick for what the pagans had to achieve in terms of caring for people if they wanted their religion to succeed.

In the so-called Dark Ages, rulers influenced by Christian principles encouraged the building of hospitals. Monastic infirmaries were expanded to accommodate more of the local population. As the Church banned monks from practising outside their monasteries, this gave impetus to the training of lay physicians. With the support of the city fathers, cathedral cities began to provide large public hospitals moving medical care towards the secular domain. The expansion of healthcare was stimulated by the Church's example, with the onus for healthcare placed firmly on the city fathers.

Much later in the 18th century a Christian hospital movement re-emerged, sparked in England by the preaching of John Wesley and George Whitefield, which, as Knowles explains, unleashed Christian energy throughout the Enlightenment of Western Europe. A new 'age of hospitals' began, mainly built by devout Christians, supported by voluntary contributions. The dispensary movement, which was the prototype of GP practices, provided medical care to the urban poor. When cholera and fever epidemics appeared, wealthy physicians would leave the cities for their own safety, while the doctors and staff of these small dispensaries continued to care for the sick and dying. Identifying what the specific needs were, Christians would

²⁴ <https://www.cmf.org.uk/resources/publications/content/?context=article&id=26520>

open specialist units such as maternity and gynaecology hospitals. The history of professional nursing as we know it today began with Florence Nightingale, who felt called by God to be a nurse.

It was the work of Christians which in many ways provided the prototype for what became the NHS.²⁵

A great deal more could be said about the role of Christianity in the healthcare movement, especially here in the UK, however hopefully these examples suffice.

Preventing prayer

For many working in healthcare their desire to nurse is part of their Christian witness. Prayer is another way of caring for the person's health. We see this, for example, in the case of Sarah Kuteh, who was sacked in 2016 after fifteen years of nursing experience. Her job involved doing a pre-op assessment questionnaire with 30-40 patients per week and this questionnaire sensibly included questions of faith. Sometimes in these situations, when she gauged it as being appropriate, she would, without intending to impose her beliefs on others, tell them about her own faith and the hope and joy it had given her. However, in one case, by her own admission, she went too far by offering a patient a personal copy of the Bible. When this was reported she was sacked for gross misconduct. Two years later the Nursing and Midwifery Council unanimously ruled that Sarah was fully fit to practice nursing and that it was '*in the public interest to return an otherwise experienced and competent nurse into practice.*' The heavy restrictions which had been imposed on her in the intervening two years were revoked with immediate effect.

In 2009 Ms Petrie, a community nurse, and Baptist from Weston-super Mare, was also suspended for offering to pray for a 79-year-old patient on a home visit. The patient reported the incident to another healthcare worker, saying she had been 'taken aback', but not offended. Ms Petrie was accused by the North Somerset PCT of breaching the Nursing and Midwifery Council's code of conduct by using her professional status to 'promote causes that are not related to health.' Like Kuteh, she was later reinstated to her post. However, losing one's work and being accused of gross misconduct is enormously stressful. As can be seen in many other cases where Christians are punished for what is essentially Christian witness, the punishment is in the process and enormous harm is done.

²⁵ *Op cit.*

These were two examples over a period of seven years. There were others, but were such suspensions widespread or were these examples one-offs? How did they affect the thinking of other healthcare professionals? These were questions we wanted to answer through our research.

Firstly, if the intention of those who chose to punish these nurses had been to stop prayer happening within a health context, their actions were effective. Several respondents spoke about how they, or those they knew, did not engage in prayer for fear of repercussions:

'I know doctors who can no longer pray with or for their patients.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Presbyterian)

'I worked for the NHS as a Nurse and Health Visitor. I felt that Christianity and prayers were a complete no no.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Evangelical)

'I was told not to pray for the health of people in my care.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Orthodox)

'Working in healthcare I feel unable to offer to pray for patients for fear of reprisal if a patient decides to complain.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Methodist)

Others are still praying with patients, knowing that they may risk their jobs as a result.

'I know many professional nurses who do pray for their patients, but would lose their jobs if they told them, or shared their faith at all.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

Other respondents knew of people who had been disciplined or lost their jobs as a result of prayer:

'My close friend lost his job as a paediatric consultant for sharing a prayer with colleagues on an e-mail.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Methodist New Frontiers)

'A nurse friend was suspended for praying with a patient.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'One of my friends who was a hospital chaplain faced disciplinary action for praying with a patient.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Pentecostal/Evangelical)

'I am a nurse and have previously been investigated when I prayed for a patient, and also when I have witnessed to them.' (Female, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

Prayer is important to patients

One can understand that visibly and audibly praying over a patient who does not have a say in the matter, who may well be of another religion or irreligious, is intrusive and could constitute harassment. However, research has shown that this is not what nurses do. While they are aware of the potential for harm in presenting their Christian beliefs and practices, nurses observe patient cues before raising religious discourse and maintain caution to respect patient autonomy.²⁶ In the case of the examples given by our respondents, it emerged that it was the patient who wanted and requested the prayer.

'A friend was asked to pray for a client, which she did. As a result, she got dragged into a disciplinary meeting - which suddenly decided that they had nothing to "charge" her with. But the stress was enormous.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, New Church)

'I knew a midwife who was investigated, bullied and nearly lost her job simply because she prayed with a patient (who had requested this).' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'A carer was disciplined for praying for a client who had requested prayer. Complaint was from a family member not the client.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

In one example, the respondent was not actually a Christian. Rather as a non-religious mental health nurse she was chastised for reading the Bible to a woman who had requested it:

'Although I have no religion, I was disciplined at work for reading passages from the Bible to an elderly patient. I am a mental health nurse and I was working on a ward with elderly patients with dementia when one lady asked if I would read to her from the Bible as she had poor eyesight and very poor concentration. I was overheard by a senior member of staff who accused me of promoting religion inappropriately, despite my protest that I had done this to help a patient, and I have no religious views myself.' (Female, 45-54, employed, no religion)

In another example, Christian fellowship was regularly interrupted in a care home for the elderly:

²⁶ Taylor EJ, Park CG, Pfeiffer JB. Nurse religiosity and spiritual care. J Adv Nurs. 2014 Nov;70(11):2612-21.

'Some people in the elderly home where we meet for an hour for Christian fellowship will regularly interrupt our meetings and have said things like we don't want religion here. They have no respect for our space and some of our members feel intimidated and sometimes don't want to come to fellowship as a result.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

Such examples appear devoid of internal logic or any form of rationality. Recently we have seen people arrested in the streets for praying silently because they are in the vicinity of an abortion clinic. We also have constant pressure to push laws through which would forbid any kind of prayer to help people overcome their same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria. Prayer is attacked at precisely those points at which it threatens mainstream ideology. Ironically, this insistence on banning prayer is a backhanded compliment to the power of prayer. Ultimately such determination to get rid of prayer appears simply to be an expression of hostility to Christian faith.

These examples suggest the two cases mentioned at the outset are far from isolated incidences. Being disciplined, suspended, and losing your job as a result of prayer while nursing is not uncommon. Part of this may be because a disproportionate number of nurses may be Christian compared to the proportion of Christians found in other jobs and professions. Any search engine enquiry will show that Christian faith and nursing often seem to go hand in hand. Steven Fouch in his article on *Nursing as Christian Ministry* dives into his topic by explaining:

*'Of all the professions, nursing has one of the strongest claims to being rooted almost uniquely in the gospel of Jesus Christ.'*²⁷

There is even a *Journal of Christian Nursing*.²⁸ And although it is difficult to find statistics on the proportion of nurses who are Christian, research conducted by the *Nursing Times* in response to the case of Ms Petrie suggests there is widespread sympathy within the nursing profession towards the Christian faith.

The survey, conducted in 2009, received 2,500 responses within three days. 91% of the respondents believed that it could be appropriate to pray with a patient and that Ms Petrie should not have been suspended. More than 40% of the nurses said that patients had asked to pray with them. Some of them gave the following responses:

'Some patients are hopeless and they need hope. And as a believer we know prayer brings hope.'

²⁷ <https://www.cmf.org.uk/resources/publications/content/?context=article&id=26522>

²⁸ <https://journals.lww.com/journalofchristiannursing/pages/default.aspx>

'Provided the patient gives uncoerced consent, what's wrong with prayer? As far as I know the basic rule is do no harm. I do not think prayer harms anyone.'

'I do it all the time, however I do not offer it directly. Providing the initiative comes from the patient, personally I can't see the reason why I should refuse.'

'We offer paracetamol, one could offer prayer – the patient always has the right to say no. The patient can always say no, what's wrong with an offer?'

Inadequate guidance around prayer

The *Nursing Times* survey also showed that while the NHS might provide guidance around spiritual matters, the guidance around prayer is inadequate. A practical guide by the NHS devoted an entire section to 'protecting' patients from proselytization, however there is no evidence to suggest that this has ever gone on. The guidance did not state anywhere that a nurse is not allowed to offer prayer.²⁹ 85% of the nurses who responded to the survey felt that there was not enough guidance around prayer. In reply to the following question:

Is there sufficient guidance for nurses on dealing with religion at work in general?

They received the following responses:

'No one wants to talk about religion and only God knows why'

'In my workplace we received information on all religions except Christianity. A sign of our times?'

'Religion and belief guidelines are still too vague, superficial and open to diverse interpretation'

'More information on different faiths in education would be helpful. As would being able to discuss the topic without fear of suspension'

²⁹ <https://www.nursingtimes.net/archive/a-christian-nurse-suspended-for-offering-to-pray-has-sparked-health-care-and-religion-debate-24-02-2009/>

A closer look at the documents suggests that providers are happy to recognise the importance of spirituality to patients as long as religion is not involved.³⁰ However it is unlikely that ‘spiritual guidance’, will meet the needs of anyone unless it appreciates the importance of religious faith.

Prayer is important to nurses

Finally, while policy guidance usually and correctly focuses on the health and wellbeing of patients, this will be maximised by focussing on the wellbeing and physical and mental health of the nurses themselves. Recent research has shown that religious identity is important to psychological wellbeing, happiness, resilience, optimism and life satisfaction for people in general. But the findings from research carried out among nurses were even more clear. Research conducted by Harris and Tao explored the links between religion/spirituality (specifically Christianity), mental health and burnout among 207 nurses in the USA, and found that religion/spirituality had a significant effect on mental health and therefore reduced burnout among nurses. They concluded that interventions which promoted religion/spirituality among nurses would be a worthwhile investment as this would improve patient outcomes by increasing nurses’ mental wellbeing and nurse retention.

The current NHS strategy which seeks to restrict all prayer to designated persons as well as possibly restrict the content of prayer is likely to be detrimental to both patients and those caring for them.³¹ Those undergoing serious illness or in the last stages of life are likely to be more interested in prayer than they have been at any other point in their lives. For Christian nurses, prayer is likely to be integral to the process of healing and wellbeing. Christ most frequently and graphically demonstrated his divinity by spontaneously healing the sick and afflicted, which may explain why it is not possible for Christians to separate out, as the NHS does, health from prayer. Being able to pray is likely to be empowering for the nurses. Being able to call on the healing powers of God is likely to help reduce the burden of responsibility for the nurse and therefore also stress. Reminding the patient and oneself of the life hereafter may provide comfort for a situation which seems hopeless

³⁰ For example, a recent report from Scotland explains that spiritual care should not be religious or make assumptions about personal conviction.

But religious care should always be spiritual.

Spiritual care is usually given in a one-to-one relationship, is completely person-centred and makes no assumptions about personal conviction or life orientation.

Religious care is given in the context of the shared religious beliefs, values, liturgies and lifestyle of a faith community.

Spiritual care is not necessarily religious.

Religious care at its best, should always be spiritual.

³¹ *Op cit.*

in so many other ways. For a Christian, prayer is engagement in a profoundly positive and efficacious activity and will therefore make a job more meaningful, whatever that job might be.

Chapter Five

THE SOCIAL ATTITUDES OF CHRISTIANS

Our exploration of harassment and direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace, and more specifically in nursing, shows that Christians are frequently in the firing line for their practices and beliefs. As reflected in their answers to the questions looking at freedom of expression, many Christians appreciate that they have different attitudes. As we saw, the findings on freedom of expression showed that only around half of the respondents felt comfortable expressing their social views. This declined significantly among the younger respondents, who more accurately reflect contemporary work experiences. We therefore set out to find out more about the social attitudes of Christians and how this related to their experiences of discrimination and freedom of faith and belief.

Four statements were selected where it is known that Christian and secular views differ considerably:

- *Real marriage is between a man and a woman*
- *We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage*
- *It is always wrong to have an abortion*
- *We are all born male or female*

Participants were asked to select whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were not sure, disagreed or strongly disagreed. The results are set out below.

Statements	Percentage who agree	Percentage who are not sure	Percentage who disagree	Sample size
Real marriage is between a man and a woman	92%	2%	6%	100% (1562)
We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage	86%	7%	6%	100% (1562)
It is always wrong to have an abortion	67%	17%	16%	100% (1562)
We are all born male or female	93%	3%	4%	100% (1562)

Christians have views at odds with mainstream society

What was most striking was the strength and consistency of the responses. The highest level of agreement was that we are all born male or female. This is not surprising. Right at the beginning of the Bible it is a non-negotiable belief:

'So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.' (Genesis 1:27)

And Jesus also reminds us of this:

'However, from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'" (Mark 10:6)

Jesus is also clear about marriage:

'Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' he said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' (Matthew 19:4)

Which, with a 92% rate of agreement, it is also apparent that the Christians understand. These are very different from the results one would find in a more secular population. For example, a YouGov report suggested that 78% of Britons support same sex-marriage.³² The Ozanne Foundation, an LGBT+ advocacy group, reported in 2022 that 55% of self-identified Anglicans believed that same-sex marriage was right.³³ Our own research found very different results. When we broke down our social attitude findings by denomination, we found that 87% of Anglicans agreed with the statement that 'real marriage is between a man and a woman', suggesting that support for same-sex marriage among our Church of England respondents would have been a maximum of 13%.³⁴ The support for the statement amongst other Christian denominations was even higher. Only 6% of our Christian respondents appeared to support same-sex marriage.

³² https://yougov.co.uk/society/articles/45868-record-number-britons-support-same-sex-marriage-10?redirect_from=%2Ftopics%2Fsociety%2Farticles-reports%2F2023%2F07%2F03%2Frecord-number-britons-support-same-sex-marriage-10

³³ <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/4-march/news/uk/yougov-poll-more-than-half-of-anglicans-believe-same-sex-marriage-to-be-right>

³⁴See Appendix 1

At 86% there was marginally less agreement about avoiding having sex before marriage. Perhaps this is an area where ideals are more likely to clash with real life. However, this was again extremely high compared to the overall population. In 1983, when British Social Attitudes asked the population for their views on premarital sex, only 28% believed it was ‘always’ or ‘mostly’ wrong.³⁵ By 2012 this had declined to 11%. However, surprisingly since that time social attitudes appear to be returning to a more traditional position. Research conducted by the Marriage Foundation found that among those in their 30s, those who thought ‘sex outside marriage is wrong’ had risen to 29%, similar to the 27% proportion among those in their 70s. It was those in their sixties, the baby boomer generation who were the most liberal. This pattern of the younger generation becoming more traditional also emerged in our own research and will be explored later. It is a cause for hope.³⁶

The final question was on abortion and the response was slightly weaker at 67%. When British Social Attitudes conducted research on this question in 2013, they found almost unanimous support for a woman having an abortion when her health was seriously endangered by the pregnancy. Only 62% supported abortion when a mother decided on her own that she did not wish to have the child.³⁷ Amongst our Christian population 67% agreed that abortion was always wrong. Of this 67% who agreed that abortion was always wrong, only 41% strongly agreed (not shown in these tables), suggesting that pro-life arguments are tempered for the woman in an extremely difficult plight. It also seems likely that had the question on abortion been formulated in a way which allowed for these profoundly difficult situations, it may have received more support. One of our respondents helpfully outlined some of the difficulties with this question:

‘Your question re abortion requires clarification as I suspect some people will answer that some abortions can be justified. An abortion is a procedure whose sole purpose is to end a pregnancy by killing a child. There are some situations, most notably an ectopic pregnancy, where in order to save the mother the child is killed and the pregnancy is ended. That is not an abortion but essential medical care. Supporters of abortion claim that abortion is essential for the safety of women, but this is not true. Urgent life saving care for a pregnant woman will always take precedence since to not take action both mother and child will die. A late term abortion is never the best solution to a maternal medical emergency as it takes too long. Delivery by caesarean section will always be quicker and,

³⁵ <https://bsa.natcen.ac.uk/latest-report/british-social-attitudes-30/personal-relationships/marriage-matters.aspx> (last accessed 28/11/2023)

³⁶ <https://marriagefoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/MF-research-Attitudes-to-marriage-and-commitment.pdf>

³⁷ NatCen Social Research, 2013. British Social Attitudes 30th Report.

depending on the term of the baby, give the possibility of survival.’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

What was perhaps most surprising about our findings is that they did not follow the expected pattern, described by British Social Attitudes, where people become more conservative with age. For example, those under 35 had more traditional views about both abortion and sex before marriage than the oldest generation. In fact, what may be going on is that the extreme liberal views which we see in society are most dominant among particular generations (such as baby boomers) as a result of cultural forces, rather than among particular age groups. As the pendulum inexorably swings the other way, we can hope that before long we will see a return to more traditional points of view.

Agreement with orthodox Christian social attitudes by age group

	Percentage of sample who agree that we are all born male or female	Percentage who agrees that real marriage is between a man and a woman	Percentage who agrees that it is always wrong to have an abortion	The percentage who agrees that we should avoid having sexual relations before marriage	The percentage holding the most traditional views
Under 35 (93)	94% (87)	88% (82)	82% (76)	91% (85)	80% (74)
35-54 (304)	90% (274)	87% (265)	67% (204)	82% (248)	66 % (199)
55-64 (357)	92% (327)	90% (320)	63% (224)	84% (300)	58% (208)
Older than 64 (808)	95% (770)	96% (775)	67% (538)	89% (717)	64 (519)
Sample size	1458	1442	1042	1350	1000

Another notable point is the extent of difference between attitudes among Christians as reported by the Ozanne Foundation, for example, and our own research. This may be because both the tone of our survey and its subject suggest a sympathy for the Christian position. As we will see, Christians know that their views are at odds with mainstream society and often engage in self-censorship. It may be that in the context of our survey they felt freer to express their genuinely held views.

Thanks to the work of various Christian organisations, it is clear that Christians are on the receiving end of various repressive measures. For example:

'All the recent instances of UK bank closing the accounts of those Christians who do not agree with the bank's promotion of LGBT etc values.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Many Christians are being sacked from jobs or councils because of their beliefs and stand against LGBTQ+.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

The workplace is becoming repressive for Christians

Respondents had themselves been discriminated against for their views even to the point of losing their jobs. Another had retired before he was 'pushed'. Others had had aspersions cast on their character for not holding the 'correct views'. Some had felt that other employees had deliberately tried to trap them so that they would be punished for their views. Another approach was to self-censor in order to avoid the punishment they knew would have ensued. Overall, there was a sense that the workplace was becoming increasingly repressive for those who do not toe the mainstream line:

'As a volunteer member of the Equality & Diversity Steering Group in domiciliary care I expressed a lack of support to teaching adults with learning disabilities about LGBT. I was sacked for gross misconduct.' (Male, 65 or older, chaplain, Christian no denomination)

'I haven't been, but it could easily happen. My employer is extremely 'woke' and has made it known that 'misgendering a trans colleague' is a sackable offence. There are some vociferous LGBT activists in my department and it's clear that anyone expressing contrary views would not be supported by management. The CEO of this multinational company has said that LGBT issues are 'close to his heart'. Last year I volunteered to help produce a departmental newsletter, only to find that the two most prominent LGBT activists were in charge. I saw trouble ahead (this newsletter would clearly be full of propaganda) and extricated myself immediately. Thankfully the newsletter never went ahead. But I know I could lose my job in future if I get involved in a direct confrontation.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I believe it's a matter of concern that employers are now able to class the expression of Christian views on LGBT and transgender issues as harassment (i.e. a sackable offence). My employer does this and at the same time is recruiting more and more employees from these groups. Over time, the position of Christians in such an environment will become more and more precarious. It's also apparent that LGBT activists sometimes try to entrap people with other views into saying things that can be used against them. About ten years ago, an LGBT activist in my job asked me a very odd,

made-up-sounding question that he claimed had been asked by a customer on the phone about how lesbians were accommodated in some materials for which I was responsible. Thankfully, the basis of his question was unsound (the materials had absolutely nothing to do with what he was asking) and I was able to push back in a diplomatic way that did not expose me to risk. But I did feel that I was being targeted.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'A colleague reported me for my views on gay marriage even though we had agreed that we should be able to discuss it given that we had different attitudes to it.' (Female, 65-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I was investigated for stating on an internal message board that I could not support a Pride event. This was part of a wider investigation about an online internal debate about LGBTQ and the Christian faith. My trade union representative accompanied me to the meeting. After that meeting, my representative said to me in private that the Union would support my freedom to state traditional Christian teaching. I was investigated no further.' (Male, 55-64, retired, Baptist)

'Took early retirement (was 'middle management' leading team of 50) when HR began a diversity 'push' – those of us in managerial roles were told we had to subjugate production requirements to make our workplace 'more tolerant' of multi-cultural and diversity 'needs'. I gave up and took the retirement when HR told me my religious beliefs were 'getting in the way).' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Anglo-Catholic)

'Asked directly during my lunch break by a colleague as to whether or not I believed in same-sex marriage. When I said no, she said it was lucky I was talking to her, as she had friends who would have reported me for this response. She was a practising lesbian.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Pentecostal)

'My orthodox convictions were treated as 'inconvenient' and I was left to stand alone, whilst those who were unorthodox were 'affirmed' and allowed to say what they wanted and given lots of support and space. Additionally, when they complained or made wild allegations, they were always automatically believed whereas I was always cast as the 'homophobic bigot' lacking compassion.' (Male, 55-64, retired, Church of England)

'Bank account closed of a friend and his family members because he complained about Pride PR on the bank's website, rather than because he is a Christian per se.' (Female, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

For these respondents their social views are an integral part of their Christian faith. This seemed to be recognised both by them and by those who disagreed with them:

'Christians are afraid to express their faith even when asked a question, because the LGBTQ faction will shout "Discrimination". Christians are no longer able to express what God himself says on a subject if other people want to justify their ungodly lifestyles.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Christians are vilified when they express their views on LGBTQ.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Baptist)

'It was made clear that no comment was permitted that disagreed with what is now referred to as LGBTQ+ matters. Christianity was considered narrow minded, bigoted, old fashioned and out of touch.' (Male, 55-64, disability benefits, Methodist)

For Christians there are clear limitations on their freedom of speech and most of this is because Christian views and beliefs are not in keeping with mainstream society which is dominated by LGBT+ practice and belief. The relationship between Christian belief and LGBT+ belief will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

LGBT+ AND THE POWER OF A NEW BELIEF SYSTEM

Public Sector Equality Duty, which establishes the safeguards for those of various protected characteristics, is key to understanding the formidable influence which the LGBT+ lobby has been able to lever in the workplace and elsewhere.³⁸ A key feature of protecting against harassment and discrimination is being able to identify it. According to the PSED, identifying harassment (as defined in Chapter One) depends on the perception of the victim, as well as whether it is reasonable for the conduct to have that effect. As ACAS explains:

*'In discrimination, how the recipient perceives words and action matters more than the intention of the person delivering them.'*³⁹

However, how a recipient perceives words and actions and whether the feelings of the recipient are justified are moving goalposts. For example, if trans people are persistently told that they need to be affirmed, and that their identity and wellbeing depend on it, they are more likely to feel alarmed and upset if this doesn't happen. Having been told that their identity is dependent on affirmation of other people, if they do not receive this affirmation, their identity may well be under threat. Similarly, if those making our laws are told that trans people are the victims of abuse and a maligned group in society, and that their identity requires affirmation, they are more likely to think that they are justified in getting upset. None of this is objective but depends on those forces through which our culture is formed.

The result is that those groups most able to allege a victim status and demand a protection are going to be more likely to assert their ideology and identity. The group with the greatest cultural capital calls the shots, whether this is done by insisting that everyone demonstrate support for them, or punishing those who don't subscribe to their point of view. As Christians have beliefs which go against LGBT+ ideology, and as they are unafraid to express those beliefs (because they mean no harm by them), LGBT+ people are likely to perceive Christian words and actions as discrimination. The result is that it is Christians who are most likely to be attacked.

³⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/26>

³⁹ ACAS *op cit.* p.19

Damage caused by the widespread ignorance of Christianity

Attacking Christians for their views on marriage and sexuality is a consequence of the huge amount of ignorance about Christianity in mainstream society which results in a lack of literacy and understanding of Christian faith. People assume, when Christians say that they don't believe two people of the same sex can or should get married, that the Christian hates such people or in some way wishes them harm. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Or if a Christian thinks it is inherently sinful to have sexual relations with a person of the same sex, it is assumed by non-Christians that the Christian also thinks the person in question is somehow more flawed, or 'less than' themselves.

Because of these misunderstandings people feel easily offended by what Christians say, and can end up accusing them of harassment. Often this is cleared up once the Christian has been allowed to clarify their beliefs, but in the meantime the Christian is a victim of an awful lot of harm. For example, King Lawal was dealt with extremely harshly, when, having seen that children were at risk of being exposed to lewd material as a result of the Pride festival, he tweeted that pride was a sin. Fortunately, he was able to clarify his position, but not before he had gone through a great deal of stress and hurt:

'When Christians refer to 'sin' or 'sinners' we are speaking of ourselves. We are not singling out specific people or groups of people as sinners. Sin according to the bible includes, lying, stealing, gossip and hatred, not just things like homosexuality, adultery and sex outside of the marriage. Jesus said that even to have unholy thoughts that we never act on is sinful. Therefore, every single one of us is sinful by this standard, including myself.'

'For there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God.' (Romans 3:23)

'So when Christians say 'repent' and believe in Jesus or refer to something you associate with as 'sin', it's not because they hate you. it is because they love you and want to see you saved from punishment the same way they have been saved.'

*'I therefore do not come against those celebrating Pride to attack who they are, my intention was to say that I would not celebrate this any more than I would celebrate a month of gossip or anything else the Bible calls sin.'*⁴⁰

⁴⁰ <https://christianconcern.com/news/king-lawal-reinstated-as-conservative-councillor-after-cancellation/> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

Another problem occurs when it is assumed that because a Christian thinks that same-sex practices are sinful, this will cause him or her to discriminate against a person with same-sex attraction in some way. This happened to Felix Ngole when he was expelled from his social work course because he expressed the Christian view of marriage (i.e. that marriage is between a man and a woman and sexual relations should be reserved for marriage only) on his private Facebook page. Fortunately, the judge recognised that believing this did not cause Ngole to discriminate against those who lived in a different way:

*'The University wrongly confused the expression of religious views with the notion of discrimination. The mere expression of views on theological grounds (e.g. that 'homosexuality is a sin') does not necessarily connote that the person expressing such views [the Claimant] will discriminate on such grounds. In the present case, there was positive evidence to suggest that [Mr Ngole] had never discriminated on such grounds in the past and was not likely to do so in the future (because, as he explained, the Bible prohibited him from discriminating against anybody).'*⁴¹

This was a vitally important ruling because it recognises that a person can have views and opinions about a particular behaviour but this does not determine how they act.

How the LGBT+ movement acquired cultural capital

Perhaps most importantly, to understand why Christians are at the receiving end of so much harassment and discrimination we need to understand the extent to which a very wide range of services, businesses and public bodies have bought into the LGBT+ industry. Most of this is a result of Stonewall, which formed in 1989 in response to *Section 28*, which it was successful in getting repealed. In 2001 Stonewall set up the *Diversity Champions Scheme* which measured the extent to which an organisation, business or public body had achieved equality in terms of LGB (and now TQ+) progress. This coincided with a lot of attention being given to corporate responsibility, and companies realised that the promotion of LGBT+ issues was a way in which corporate responsibility credentials could be gained. Many large companies, including John Lewis, Aviva, Barclays, Lloyds Credit Suisse and IBM, paid Stonewall for these services through which corporate responsibility goals could be achieved.⁴²

In 2005, the charity launched its Workplace Equality Index (WEI) which ranks employers based on their LGB (and now TQ+) inclusion in the workplace. Winners include MI5, Staffordshire Police and the Home Office. They also launched the School &

⁴¹ <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/felix-ngole/> (last accessed 28/11/2023)

⁴² <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/asleep-at-the-wheel/> p.66 (last accessed 28/11/2023)

College Champion Awards, in which schools can benchmark themselves on their LGB (and now TQ+) inclusion, by reaching certain criteria in order to achieve Gold, Silver or Bronze awards. As we will see in subsequent chapters, this has been very influential as well. Also in 2005, the charity launched an 'Education for All' (EfA) programme, in partnership with the NSPCC and Barnardo's, to help fight homophobic bullying in schools. A wide range of MPs would speak at their conferences showing cross-party support.⁴³

This process of LGBT+ promotion is ongoing. The recent redefining of the short-lived and much-reviled Roman Emperor Elagabalus as a trans person can be traced back to guidance presumably produced by a trans advocacy group at the University of Leicestershire.⁴⁴ The University of Leicestershire is itself a recipient of numerous Stonewall accolades and awards.⁴⁵

In a short space of time, practical and symbolic support for LGBT+ people and issues became a way of signalling kindness, virtue and high moral standing. The sorts of things which would have been signalled by care for the sick and for orphans and widows, by fights against slavery and by campaigns for decent labour laws in an earlier, more Christian age.

This extensive promotion of the LGBT+ belief system will have increased the likelihood that anything which could be perceived as unsupportive of the LGBT+ agenda will be restricted. Being able to prove themselves LGBT+ friendly companies is likely to have increased access to funding, contracts and services and improved the reputation of the companies and other enterprises involved. It is therefore likely to have been enforced.

LGBT+: a belief system with a disproportionate amount of influence

This will have had significant implications for freedom of conscience, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of speech for the Christian respondents in our research. ACAS explains that while places of employment should not ban outright discussion of religion or belief, it is acknowledged that there may at times be a need to ensure certain restrictions, *particularly to protect the rights of others and in particular to prevent a figure of authority forcing their personal views on others*. However, where the LGBT+ belief system has priority over other belief systems, figures of authority do enforce their

⁴³ *Op cit.*

⁴⁴ <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/11/21/uk-museum-reclassifies-roman-emperor-as-transgender> (last accessed 30/11/2023)

⁴⁵ <https://le.ac.uk/search?q=stonewall&site-search-select=All> (last accessed 30/11/2023)

views on others, without apparent awareness that they are doing so, and this will have serious implications for the ability to express any other form of belief.

If the Miriam Webster definition of religion as ‘a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardour and faith’ is anything to go by, it would not be inaccurate to see LGBT+ ideology as having the status of a dogma or faith.⁴⁶ LGBT+ does, by any metric, constitute a significant belief system. It has clearly outlined dogmas, for example queer theory as expounded by Judith Butler and others. Supporters of the LGBT+ ideology believe in fixed sexual orientation, gay suicidality, that a person can choose their own gender, or that same-sex marriage is not significantly different from other marriages. All these are beliefs; they are not supported by fact. In addition to this, LGBT+ has its own holidays and festivals. It has practices which it encourages people to engage in. It has propaganda, clothing, symbols and colours. It has its own blasphemy laws and it has its own degrees of belonging. Perhaps the clearest evidence that it constitutes a belief system is the fact that it is taught in religious education in schools. Further, LGBT+ dogma appears to be permitted a level of proselytization not permitted to other beliefs:

‘I have recently retired and worked 25 years for a generally excellent large company. In the month of June Pride was I think disproportionately promoted. Why is there not a Family Month or Mothers’ Month (not just a day) promoted across the country?’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

As LGBT+ meets the criteria of a belief system it should be subject to the same restrictions as any other belief system. However, this is currently not the case. In fact, the LGBT+ belief system receives a huge amount of funding from the government to be promoted in every corner of the workplace. The LGBT+ lobby also appear to have sufficient funding to monopolise the RSE curriculum in most of our schools.

The fact that the LGBT+ belief system has a disproportionate amount of influence compared to any other belief system was very conspicuous in our research. Some of this emerged as a form of passive discrimination: Christians are not allowed to speak or disagree freely or are having to go along with ideologies which contradict the beliefs which Christians hold most dear.

‘Staff are forced to wear rainbow badge declaring my name is ... and ‘my pronoun is’ I refuse to wear it.’ (Female, 55-64, employed, born again)

⁴⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion>

'Although I think Christians have been marginalized in British society today it is really in the area of LGBT issues where persecution comes and the militancy, bullying of the LGBT advocates which brook no opposition or challenge to their view's.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Evangelical)

'My main concern at the moment is not being able to express my faith, but what happens as "woke" ideology gradually creeps into the workplace. Pronouns in email signature is not mandatory - yet, there's a group by LGBT employees, none white employees, and a conversation has begun about "Equity of Outcome" - which could give a job to not the best person for it - which I would strongly object to. And I guess, it's only a matter of time before I say something in all innocence and get complained about.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I believe that my husband has been repeatedly held back at work in part because he is often vocal about unfairness in the workplace about this issue. He wasn't allowed to write about Christmas but Pride was forced onto everyone's computers for a whole month with no ability to remove or reject the content they quite literally forced onto his computer to market it.' (Female, 25-34, freelancer, Christian no denomination)

'The main issue I'm struggling with at work is a very pro-lgbtq+ agenda which I have raised a couple of times, once quite directly and once a bit more indirectly and nothing has changed. There is still a push for lanyards and logos under signatures and backgrounds on our zoom. These make me feel uncomfortable and whilst in the past these have been more optional, they're becoming more compulsory.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

'Beginning to feel compelled to actively voice opinions that are not my own. For example, that people can be any gender they want or that gay people can marry however and wherever they like. Staff have been asked to wear a rainbow pin if they want with the implication being you stand out if you choose not to. Luckily, lots of staff do not bother so I don't feel as conspicuous as I thought I would.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

'LGBTQIA+++ is the prime directive in society now, anyone who challenges this narrative is labelled a bigot. Traditional Christian values are outdated and ridiculed.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

'With regards to LGBT... etc. I often receive hostility when I refuse to accept this ideology. This group seems to have all the legal rights to enforce their beliefs and policies on everyone with nothing said

yet when a Christian rejects their beliefs and policies they face much criticism and threats from this group with no support or protection from our police or government powers.’ (Male, 45-54, employer, Christian no denomination)

‘This is not re work, but have had just a few cases of conflict/hostility on social media, including when sharing articles etc on LGBT or Pro-Life issues, so I think very carefully now about whether a particular post might do more harm than good, and am more cautious about what I post. It's sad that there is a prevailing culture online that means people can feel afraid of saying what they think, as these days it's not just that people might disagree, which is fine, but that they can be aggressive and labelling and engage in hate speech themselves whilst accusing others of being xyz-phobic, all highly ironic.’ (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

‘Constant pushing of LGBTQ issues by work, no consideration for people of faith in the discussions. Would be very unwise to speak against it.’ (Male, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

‘Disabled people I work with sometimes repeat negative stereotypes against Christians that they must have heard from others either in workplace, their social circles or social media. Also, omnipresent manifestation and promotion of 'rainbow values' gives impression that anything of the worldview among workforce that does not embrace those values is not tolerated’. (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

‘Pressure to endorse promotion of LGBT ideology in the workplace. Removal of celebration of Christian festivals in the workplace e.g. ending traditional Christian carol singing at Christmas.’ (Male, 55-64, retired, Vineyard Churches)

‘The LGBT lobby is very strong, militant even, and has managed to convince corporates internationally to listen and agree with their agenda. Christians need to respond, in a loving way, but without fear especially to politicians and corporate leaders, e.g. ask in the Bank (I did in Santander) why they have a rainbow flag in the window. The response was to show we are inclusive. Next question to them - why don't you also have a crucifix to show you are inclusive of Christians?’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

‘I am not disadvantaged at work and I am free to talk about religion and wear religious symbols. However, one area I am uncomfortable with is LGBTQ issues. I share an office with a gay woman who knows all about my faith and she is fantastic. We are free to discuss anything. The problem is the

company. The company does include religion and belief as part of its DEI initiative (I am part of the religion working group) there is a strong focus on LGBTQ pride. There are frequent Teams presentations and all of the comments are strongly supportive of LGBTQ viewpoint. I feel that if I made a negative but non-hateful comment it would not go down well.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

'To be honest, in everywhere I have worked I have hid my religious beliefs. On the rare occasions that I would be vocal about a belief, or a proposition about a potentially religiously motivated story (I work in journalism) it is rejected. In one of my workplaces, we weren't allowed to use the term 'Christian name' when describing someone's first name. There was also a measured push from the hierarchy to promote LGBT issues.' (Male, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

As the LGBT+ belief system is imposed so widely, this can have an indirectly discriminatory effect on Christians.

'There are many jobs in my sector (arts and heritage) that I feel unable to apply for as they would require signing up to policies that go against my beliefs. I avoid attending training courses and conferences that would help further my career because of the hostile atmosphere. I am considering leaving the sector I have worked on for over 30 years as key funders such as the Arts Council and National Lottery are now openly anti-Christian.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I wouldn't say that I have been discriminated against, however, when I have tried to explain that I feel uncomfortable in taking part or leading activities that are related to LGBTQ+ pride month, it was suggested to me that my feelings of discomfort are not that important in regards to my role as an Activity Coordinator, and I should put them aside for that particular time as I was there for the residents, and not for myself.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Baptist)

'Especially during June/July, the so-called Pride Month, Christians are made to feel that their beliefs are not acceptable and that you must comply or leave. Most inclusion and diversity policies are the WOKE way of excluding Christians from applying for roles in public sector and third sector organisations. Many financial institutions will not hire Christians any more as they do not fit their WOKE culture. There seems to be no place for Christians in British Society as it is dominated by the LGBTQ+ / WOKE agenda.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

Christians who do not conform to radical gender ideologies experience oppression to the point that they feel it necessary to hide their faith and beliefs.

I have not seen actual clear impact as per question 18, however I believe that most Christians live in fear of all those things and therefore are forced to hide their beliefs and their faith to protect their livelihood. Some I am sure are fearful of colleagues or employers finding out. At work we are all “expected/forced” to complete and agree to “Diversity and Inclusion” training which can promote different ideologies from what Christians believe. The consequences suggested in Q18 therefore cause many Christians to live under constant oppression both at work and in society generally. (Male, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

The pervasiveness of the LGBT+ system can lead to self-exclusion in order to avoid having to participate in an alternative set of beliefs:

I retired early because I didn't want to comply with all the 'woke' requirements coming in. (Female, 55-64, retired, Christian no denomination)

How social attitudes shape experiences of discrimination

The experiences which emerged in our qualitative data were also reflected in the statistical research. We examined how Christian social attitudes impacted on experiences of discrimination, social acceptance, or freedom of expression. Variables for social attitudes were cross-tabulated with all the variables which were used to make assessments about discrimination. The pattern was clear, consistent, and strong all the way through. The more biblical or orthodox your religious beliefs, the more likely you were to experience a lack of acceptance and the less likely you were to experience a welcoming environment.

How traditional beliefs about marriage shape experiences of discrimination

Real marriage is between a man and a woman	If I share or discuss my religious beliefs, I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me	I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs	Do you feel you have been disadvantaged at your place of work/ study on account of your faith?	At work I feel that there are negative stereotypes about people from my faith background at my place of work/study	At work I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs
Agree	58%	29%	19%	52%	26%
I'm not sure	29%	8%	4%	25%	13%
Disagree	26%	10%	5%	26%	9%
Average/total	56% (869)	28% (430)	18% (282)	50 % (782)	25% (393)

How traditional beliefs about marriage shape freedom of expression

Real marriage is between a man and a woman	Generally, I feel comfortable talking about my faith and beliefs	Generally, I feel I can be true to myself	When it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think	At work I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith	At work religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics	My place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith	At work when it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think
Agree	77%	83%	51%	72%	20%	42%	42%
I'm not sure	75%	92%	54%	75%	29%	71%	54%
Disagree	93%	94%	89%	85%	58%	88%	83%
Average/total	78% (1220)	84% (1305)	53% (830)	73% (1141)	22% (344)	45% (704)	45% (695)

How traditional beliefs about sexual relationships affect experiences of discrimination

We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage	If I share or discuss my religious beliefs I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me	I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs	Do you feel you have been disadvantaged at your place of work/ study on account of your faith?	At work I feel that there are negative stereotypes about people from my faith background at my place of work/study	At work I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs
Agree	58%	29%	20%	53%	26%
I'm not sure	47%	27%	7%	43%	23%
Disagree	33%	13%	4%	24%	12%
Average/total	56% (869)	28% (430)	18% (282)	50% (782)	25% (393)

How traditional beliefs about sexual relationships affect freedom of expression

We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage	Generally, I feel comfortable talking about my faith and beliefs	Generally, I feel I can be true to myself	When it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think	At work I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith	At work religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics	My place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith	At work when it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think
Agree	77%	83%	52%	73%	20%	43%	42%
I'm not sure	81%	89%	58%	74%	28%	50%	51%
Disagree	85%	89%	69%	76%	41%	68%	69%
Average/total	78 (1220)	84%	53% (830)	73% (1141)	22% (344)	45% (704)	45% (695)

How not adopting ideological gender beliefs affects experiences of discrimination

We are all born male or female	If I share or discuss my religious beliefs, I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me	I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs	Do you feel you have been disadvantaged at your place of work/ study on account of your faith?	At work I feel that there are negative stereotypes about people from my faith background at my place of work/study	At work I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs
Agree	58%	29%	19%	51%	26%
I'm not sure	39%	18%	5%	44%	15%
Disagree	23%	8%	9%	23%	6%
Average/total	56% (869)	28% (430)	18% (282)	50% (782)	25% (393)

How not adopting ideological gender beliefs affects experiences of freedom of expression

We are all born male or female	Generally, I feel comfortable talking about my faith and beliefs	Generally, I feel I can be true to myself	When it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think	At work I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith	At work religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics	My place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith	At work when it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think
Agree	77%	83%	51%	72%	20%	43%	42%
I'm not sure	85%	97%	72%	85%	49%	69%	59%
Disagree	95%	92%	92%	82%	55%	89%	86%
Average total	78% (1220)	84% (1304)	53% (830)	73% (1141)	22% (344)	45% (704)	45% (695)

How pro-life views affect experiences of discrimination

It is always wrong to have an abortion	If I share or discuss my religious beliefs I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me	I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs	Do you feel you have been disadvantaged t your place of work/study on account of your faith?	At work I feel that there are negative stereotypes about people from my faith background at my place of work/study	At work I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs
Agree	62%	31%	21%	55%	28%
I'm not sure	48%	24%	13%	43%	23%
Disagree	36%	17%	11%	36%	15%
Average/ total	56% (869)	28% (430)	18% (282)	50% (782)	25% (393)

How pro-life views affect experiences of freedom of expression

It is always wrong to have an abortion	Generally, I feel comfortable talking about my faith and beliefs	Generally, I feel I can be true to myself	When it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think	At work I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith	At work religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics	My place of work is a welcoming environment for people of faith	At work when it comes to social issues, I feel free to say what I think
Agree	77%	82%	51%	71%	20%	41%	40%
I'm not sure	78%	88%	48%	73%	19%	46%	42%
Disagree	86%	88%	68%	80%	35%	63%	65%
Average/ total	78% (1220)	84% (1304)	53% (830)	73% (1141)	22% (344)	45% (704)	45% (695)

For example, of those who agreed that marriage was between a man and a woman, only 51% agreed that they felt free to say what they thought. But 90% of those who disagreed with this statement felt free to say what they thought. If a respondent disagreed with one of the statements, they would be much more likely to believe that they would feel comfortable wearing religious symbols, they were more likely to believe that religious discrimination was treated as seriously as other discrimination, they would believe that their workplace was a more welcoming environment for people of faith, and they believed that they were free to say what they thought.

By contrast, if you agreed with one of the social attitude questions, you were much more likely to report experiencing hostility and ridicule, you were more likely to feel the need to hide your faith (albeit at a much lower rate than your experience of hostility and ridicule), you were much more likely to feel that you had been disadvantaged on account of your faith, and you were much more likely to feel that there were negative stereotypes of Christians.

The conclusion is that a person's perception of the level of freedom of society is directly determined by the extent to which they hold views which are in keeping with the mainstream dogma. If your views are the same as those propagated by state-run organisations such as schools, hospitals, government departments and the mass media, as well as gyms and supermarkets, you are likely to believe that you live in a free and democratic society. If your views differ from those found in the mainstream, you will be more likely to perceive society as lacking freedom of expression because that will be your own personal experience. The result of this is likely to form a social divide. Those whose views do not challenge the status quo will not be on the receiving end of hostility and restrictions and therefore will believe that we live in a free and healthy democracy. Those who experience restrictions know that we do not. But because the former have not experienced the intolerance and lack of acceptance which the latter have, they are likely to disbelieve it.

Having different social attitudes puts Christians in a position where they are indirectly discriminated against. They can be punished, excluded, or lose their jobs because of their essentially Christian beliefs and views.

Steps can be taken to prevent this. On one hand there needs to be increased knowledge, understanding and awareness of the beliefs of Christianity, which would hopefully help to reduce existing misunderstandings. Issues created by the Public Sector Equality Duty also need to be addressed. When the measure of offence is determined by a person's perception, this can be very easily manipulated and weaponised. Perception is particularly risky because it is shaped by the knowledge and

information which the subject holds. So, for example, if someone believes that Christians hate LGBT+ people, they are likely to perceive something that a Christian says in the most negative way possible. As one of our respondents explained:

To be a Christian today is to be hated and accused of being one who hates yet the hatred that comes against Christians appears to be welcomed today in our culture. (Male, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

Trying to reduce misunderstandings through education and introducing laws with a more objective framework would partially help address these problems.

However, the current all-pervasive dominance of one particular belief system, the LGBT+ belief system, also needs to be regulated. The following passage effectively makes the case.

When a religious group achieves a monopoly and holds access to the temporal power and privileges of the state, including placing restrictions on other religions, the ever-present temptation is to openly persecute religious competitors and any in society that oppose their interpretations. In contrast, when the state offers identical privileges to all religions and power to none, no single religion can claim the authority of the state. Thus, we propose that to the degree that governments and societies ensure religious freedoms for all, there will be less conflict between religions and less violent religious persecution.⁴⁷

In order to do this, LGBT+ needs to be recognised as a belief system and treated in the same way as other belief systems and religions.

⁴⁷ Grim, B.J. and Finke, R., 2010. *The price of freedom denied: Religious persecution and conflict in the twenty-first century*. Cambridge University Press, p.8.

Chapter Seven

PROTECTED?

One of the strongest findings of the survey was that 56% of our respondents did not believe that religious discrimination was taken as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics. This was even higher than the Catholic Union survey, where the figure was 41%. An exploration of the qualitative data suggested that it was not just employers who did not take religious discrimination seriously. Those who should be protecting against discrimination often seemed to be guilty of discriminating themselves.

Levels of agreement with the proposition that religious discrimination is taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination

	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree	Total
At work religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics	22%	22%	56%	100% 1562

'I know of people whose employers have made discussion about faith a sackable offence.' (Female, 45-54, housewife, Christian no denomination)

'More than three decades ago I asked specifically to worship on Good Friday - I worked the whole day, and needed to be at mass by 15:00. This was refused. I offered to make the time up, but again this was refused. So I went to mass, unsure if I was going to be fired. Nothing came of it, but this was a clear marker. The issue of worshipping at 15:00 on Good Friday has arisen a few times, but now - although I run a company - I am sure an employer would not regard Roman Catholic as a faith, or allow time off even as holiday.' (Male, 55-64, employer, Roman Catholic)

'I hear about Christians being sacked for expressing biblical points of view in the news and then months later being reinstated. That is clear discrimination being practised by employers.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Employers seem to feel quite happy to discriminate against Christians calling them bigots for example, but are careful not to discriminate against those of other beliefs.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Yes, at work at a previous employer, my role was ended because of my beliefs.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'Religious belief is seen as a personal choice and so many employers think that if it's a choice, you can choose to leave it at home.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Methodist)

'I was made redundant after several angry confrontations by an employer over my activities in my "own time".' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Nobody ever challenges the faith of employees who are of the Muslim faith and Sikhs. For some odd reason the majority of the U.K. and in Europe (as I work in the international community) seem to think that it is okay to question the intelligence of native white Brit Christians if they take their religion seriously and/or hold conservative values.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

While Christianity was disregarded, the LGBT+ movement received a disproportionate amount of attention. What seemed to be going on was that employers were so worried about upsetting the LGBT+ movement that they often ended up promoting it. This went against the stipulation by ACAS that employers should *'prevent a figure of authority forcing their personal views on others'*, discussed earlier. ACAS makes it clear that this is something employers are not supposed to do. As we saw earlier this put Christians in the position of having to collude with a belief system which was not their own and which they did not agree with.

Protecting the LGBT+ movement

It became clear from the responses that the main focus of employers seems to be about protecting the LGBT+ grouping:

'In Aberdeen City Council permits to process on the streets for Catholic Feast are very hard to get straight away and are not granted for just about any public area or street whereas one can see LGBTQ+ having public gatherings in any public space and/or on main roads.' (Female, 45-54, self-employed, Roman Catholic)

'When working at a local authority the organisation was very LGBT supportive but had no support for alternative positions.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I think the LGBTQi+F groups are the loudest voice when it comes to discrimination as far as that group is concerned.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'I personally feel most of the recent laws are skewed towards protecting the LGBT community to the detriment of the Christian community.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Roman Catholic)

'Anecdotally, from news articles, etc it would appear that the views of the LGBT+ community are given precedence over those of people of faith.' (Male, 45-54, employed, New Frontiers International)

'It is socially acceptable to make offensive jokes about Christians at my workplace. However, a colleague who joked about homosexuality got fired.' (Male, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

'My school's CCF this year has put on an important residential from Good Friday to Easter Sunday which is not possible for me. But they made concessions for pride parades.' (Female, under 18, student, Evangelical)

Some faiths are more equal than others

However, the question about whether discrimination against the protected characteristic of religion is taken as seriously as other protected characteristics is a complex one. Often respondents felt that discrimination against other religions was given attention; what was ignored was discrimination against the Christian faith. This was seen recently in the calendar which the National Trust produced for its volunteers. Eid, Ramadan, Diwali, even LGBT+ history month were included. But Christmas and Easter were not. Many of our respondents had noticed that efforts were made to accommodate the beliefs of people from other religious backgrounds and avoid offending them, while the same consideration was not given to those of Christian faith.

'I have raised the issue of other faiths, Muslim, even Jewish faith and Diwali festivals being promoted with no mention of Christian faith even at the main celebrations of Easter & Christmas. My concerns have been ignored.' (Female, 65 or older, part-time teacher, Church of England)

'Society seems to go out of its way to accommodate Islam, particularly, allowing activities which are against the law here and ignoring cultural aspects which would not be accepted by others. Christian holidays are being pushed to the background, whilst other faith celebrations, etc. are feted and promoted. Christians are now losing their jobs, whilst every effort is made to recruit minority groups. Christians are called bigots, etc. for holding biblical beliefs, yet Muslims and Jews, who often hold similar views, are not mentioned.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Assemblies of God)

'For example, during Advent 2022, Aberdeen City Council posted a photo of a nativity scene displayed in the town centre. It received many hostile and unpleasant comments. I have never seen or heard people speaking that way about other religion's festivals and if they did, I believe more would be done about it.' (Female, 25-34, housewife, Roman Catholic)

'It isn't really a matter I have directly experienced often but one that I have observed. It is socially (at least in my workplace) completely unacceptable to even mention something about Jews or Muslims (even a comment, not necessarily negative) however jokes, ridicule, insults and arguments are had about Christians all the time, sometimes even with teachers taking part. There are even tv shows and skits made and shown about e.g. nuns and priests, the Messiah but there will never ever ever be one made or discussed in school about a rabbi or an imam - Christian mockery has become mainstream in my surroundings. (Female, under 18, student, Evangelical)

So far I have had my daughter with me up until now (3yrs old). She starts nursery in September and I am so stressed about what she will be taught. I do not think our religious beliefs will be respected, not in the same way as if I was Muslim or Hindu.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Baptist)

'There are a lot of positive steps being taken to ensure minority religions are included and accepted but this doesn't always extend to Christianity. An example is that a senior manager emailed a Chinese colleague of mine about Chinese New Year and similar emails go out for Eid and Diwali but there was nothing for Easter.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

In particular, there was a strong feeling that Muslims had a protected status in a way that Christians did not. As mentioned earlier, people would blaspheme against our Christian God, and take the name of Jesus in vain, which they would never have done to Allah.

'Everyone swears and uses God's name in vain – if you object or complain about it you are labelled as a religious fanatic and not taken seriously. However, if anyone says anything bad about Islam or LGBT it is immediately treated as a serious issue and discipline is often dealt swiftly.' (Male, 55-64, self-employed, Pentecostal)

'People feel free to blaspheme Jesus (see latest issue of "blasphemous Barbie," on a crucifix). I feel that they'd have neither the courage or contempt to do that with other religions practiced in the UK.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Christian no denomination)

'Social media, news outlets etc. seem to often caricature Christians in a negative light. A balanced set of opinions is not given. It seems to me that Muslims are much more favourably treated and the character of Muhammed is never disrespected, whereas Jesus Christ is a frequent swear word and Christians are despised and belittled.' (Female, 55-64, carer church worker, Free Church Evangelical)

'There is more emphasis on not offending e.g. Muslims or Humanists. It seems as if Christians' opinions don't matter.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

'I believe there is a cultural fear of speaking against Mohammad, but the Name of Jesus is freely blasphemed.' (Male, 65 or older, chaplain, Christian no denomination)

'I've heard comments mocking my religion and our traditions, but I have never seen the same type of comments towards our Muslim brothers and sisters. When it comes to issues like same-sex unions, abortion, and transgenderism, people challenge our beliefs about this with a lot of pressure. I have been challenged repeatedly and bullied into changing my beliefs just to "fit-in" but I have never seen it happen to someone from other religious backgrounds even when their stance on these popular issues is the same as in Christianity.' (Female, 25-34, student, Roman Catholic)

'People continually take God's name in vain and laugh when I speak of my faith. No one would dare make fun of Muslim or other religions.' (Female, 45-54, housewife, Baptist)

'The name of Christ is used daily in the media as an expression of frustration, disgust, with little fear of response, but the name of Mohammad is never used in this context, never in literature, theatre, film etc. When any publication appears to be portraying the prophet in an unacceptable manner it is followed by loud protests from the Muslim community.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

What is particularly galling for Christians is that they are more likely to be accused of homophobia while Islam, which has significantly less tolerant views on homosexuality, is left alone. While Christians condemn homosexual behaviour as a sin, for Muslims homosexual activity is strongly condemned and punishable. In many Muslim countries it is even punishable by death. Yet Christians who are taught to love and care for their same-sex- attracted neighbours are the ones who are judged and punished for homophobia:

'Christians have been sacked for not wishing to support e.g. gay marriage but I am not aware of a Muslim being similarly forced to do so.' (Female, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I agree strongly that Christians are being marginalised and singled out for retribution when stating their beliefs. Ironically Muslims have some of the same beliefs but generally they keep to themselves and don't put their heads above the parapet.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Calvary Chapel)

'Christians are deliberately provoked - eg. No LGBT group have asked a Muslim baker to bake a celebration cake for them and then prosecuted when they refused. Yet Islam condemns homosexuality.' (Female, 55-64, employer, Church of England)

'I think we are particularly judged because of our belief regarding LGBT issues. People from Islamic faith who also don't agree with it are accepted and not judged for it.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Baptist)

'On many issues today the Muslim faith holds the same position as the Christian faith but Muslims seem invisible/protected/ untouchable and the Christian is arrested/ charged with an offence.' (Female, 65 or older, housewife, Christian no denomination)

'Muslims don't agree with same sex marriage or homosexuality and recourse in that religion would be brutal unlike the Christian response.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

'The general move to force Christian churches to carry out same-sex marriage is not extended to other faiths.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Assemblies of God)

One of the most public examples of the different treatment of Christians and Muslims was the different treatment meted out by the BBC to Humza Yousaf and Kate Forbes. Respondents gave this as an example of the favourable way in which Muslims are treated, compared to Christians:

'Take Kate Forbes, for example: When she ran for the position of First Minister of the SNP, she as a Christian held normal Christian views on marriage. Her main opponent, Humza Yousaf, a Muslim, would have exactly the same view on marriage, if he faithfully held to Islam's teachings, but it was Kate, the Christian, who suffered from the attacks and probes, and not the Muslim, and she, as a result, was narrowly kept out of power. This typifies the situation nowadays, where lovey dovey inclusivism and so-called tolerance seem to be open to any other group or minority but not to Christians.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

This was blamed on the media which had treated Kate Forbes far more harshly than Humza Yousaf:

'Christian would be queried/interviewed by the mainstream media (BBC) a lot more and harsher than they would interview a Muslim person, i.e./ I am not sure I ever heard of a Muslim queried about his view on abortion or same sex marriage.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Baptist)

'The recent SNP leadership race in Scotland saw the Christian candidate roasted by the media while the Muslim candidate's views were brushed over. This I believe shows the particular negative views that Christianity is facing.' (Male, 55-64, disabled, Christian no denomination)

'Just reading the reports in the media of the treatment of those with Christian views. For example, Kate Forbes was attacked for her biblical beliefs, but there was no attack on Humza Yousaf who belongs to a faith that prescribes the death penalty for homosexuals.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Anglican Convocation in Europe GAFCON)

There does appear to be evidence to suggest that there are media restrictions around how newspapers and others are to report events which concern the Muslim faith.⁴⁸

There were other ways in which people felt Muslims were being given favourable treatment. For example, where the Muslims' desire to pray was respected and accommodated, as ACAS explains it should be, but the Christian desire to pray was not taken seriously.

'Christians are considered to be the bigoted ones. Even where Muslims are concerned, Christians are treated less favourably. Christian observances are no longer taken seriously and so Christians would not get time to pray or religious observances.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

'In England, if a Christian wants time-out to observe the Daily Ordinances during 'office hours', it is denied - Muslims are routinely allowed their time out.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

'I work with a lot of Muslim people and have been delayed during the working day because of their "pray time" which can be up to 5 times a day...Christians are never given this time to go to pray if wanted.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

⁴⁸ <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/14906/britain-guidance-journalists>

'I see Muslims being given preference in terms of use of facilities for praying, but as a Christian - they wonder why I need a room to pray (I saw that in one of the offices I worked in).' (Female, 45-54, employed, Pentecostal)

Similarly, Christians felt that less accommodation was made for their holy days.

'If Muslim, it is easier to be true to your faith as adaptations are made to accommodate this. As a Christian, not so. I remember one Christmas, when I asked for the day off, stating I was happy to work any other day over Christmas and New Year just not Christmas day. So I was put on nightshift finishing at 8 am on Christmas Day, meaning the whole day was wrecked from my perspective.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Pentecostal)

'I work with civil service and was told to use my lunch break to attend the last Ash Wednesday service before Easter unlike the Muslim colleagues who went on several events at different times while my manager looked away.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Pentecostal)

'School extracurricular activities are often planned to happen on Sundays, or even on some other Catholic precept day. My child got told off by missing her rehearsal when she notified we were attending a Catholic precept day whereas, in general, there is more tolerance and respect for Muslim precept days and belief.' (Female, 45-54, self-employed, Roman Catholic)

Even the Muslims' holy book appears to be respected more than the Christian Bible.

'Whilst in prison, a friend of mine was not allowed to receive a brand new, shrink-wrapped copy of the 400th year celebratory King James Version of the Bible as a present from me, yet Muslims in the prison received Islamic texts / books regularly.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'I would like to give an example, described to me by a lady in my church who is now retired. When she was working in a school, there was a big incident when the Koran was perceived to have been disrespected. At the same time, the Bible was stashed away in an old cupboard and treated as something of no importance. To me, this feels like discrimination at worst and unfairness at best.' (Female, 55-64, housewife, Church of England)

Our respondents felt that there were privileges available to Muslims or members of other religions which were not available to Christians. Clothing and jewellery were one example. Although as we saw earlier 73% of people said they felt comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with their faith, we know that in fact there have been a number of high-profile cases, some lost and some won, where Christians have not been allowed to wear even a simple cross.⁴⁹ Similar cases also emerged in our research.

'Although I try to raise my daughter in the Christian faith, there have been many barriers e.g. my daughter being told she could not wear her cross at school even though it was hidden under her shirt while provision was made for her Muslim friends to wear head coverings. They did not learn about the Christian faith on an equal basis as other religions. There was also an emphasis on the LGBTQ+ community and same sex relations.' (Female, 45-54, volunteer, Christian no denomination)

'As a third order Franciscan I was forbidden to wear my head covering at work. I was treated as if I was a strange and unreasonable person when mentioning my faith related to my work, even though the school where I was teaching was classed as a Church of England school. The leadership were not Christian and reacted negatively when they found out I was a third order Franciscan and asked for details of how that would affect my job. They said they were disappointed I hadn't explained it all to them at interview. I had to remove my head covering once I was in the building and refrained from discussing my faith at work as a result. I left within 6 months. My experience affected the way I expressed my faith at my next places of work and I refrained from expressing my Franciscan practice at work and didn't wear my head covering at all. I ended up with PTSD and I am unable to work for someone else as a result. I'm now a church leader and run my own business part time. I feel free to talk about my faith but not social issues. I do believe that if I had been a Muslim I would not have been discriminated against in this way. I may have not been employed at all at that place, in the first place, if I had described my membership of the Franciscan order at interview.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

Other situations where Islam was privileged also emerged in our research.

'On the contrary, a Muslim doctor was allowed to have nothing to do with abortion because of his religion - even when necessary to save the life of a patient - in the Gynaecological Department of a local hospital (where I worked as a locum medical secretary). Christian staff had no such

⁴⁹ https://archive.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/Appendix-CLC-Cases_0.pdf (last accessed 29/11/2023)

consideration. This was many years ago, and obviously I will not specify where this was.’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Evangelical Fellowship)

‘One example. I worked for a sport broadcaster for a number of years. They made an effort to highlight football players who were fasting during Ramadan. There were various news segments about this, and interviews with players etc. On Easter weekend, we received a tongue in cheek email from a member of management, mocking the resurrection. I appreciate that it wasn't done maliciously, however I think this shows the overall view of the Christian faith. It's treated with derision, and no reverence. In no work environment would an email mocking an Islamic belief ever be shared, and if it was, that staff member would be dismissed.’ (Male, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

The media were also blamed for giving more attention to the persecution of Muslims which fosters the impression that they are a vulnerable minority, when in fact Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world.

‘The mainstream media are a major problem. I have sent the papers several items about persecution (including rape and murder) of Christians globally. Silence. But, persecution of Muslims in, say, China gets a 2-page spread.’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Catholic Evangelical hybrid)

‘There's far more publicity about discrimination against Muslims than there is against Christians in the UK. There's a popular belief in the UK that Christians aren't subjected to persecution and Muslims are. I believe Christians suffer just as much persecution in the UK as Muslims. Christian persecution just doesn't get any media coverage.’ (Male, 55-64, unemployed, Christian no denomination)

‘A Christian friend stood for election and the local press reported his Christian views in a very negative way. A way in which they would not do if he was a Muslim.’ (Male, 55-64, retired, Reformed Baptist)

These flaws in media reporting were attributed to cowardice on the part of the media:

‘...quite simply the media are afraid to say anything about the Muslim faith, (and it is plainly obvious) as they may get attacked, or accused of discrimination, but it is normally open house on the Christian faith.’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

However, as we have recently seen, this deference is much more widespread. We recently heard that the police are giving Muslims in Newham talks about their action to counteract hate crime. The implication is that Muslims are the primary victims. In fact, Jews experience well over five times as much hate crime as the Muslims, and this was before the recent pogrom in Israel. Since then antisemitic hate crime has risen by 1,350%.⁵⁰

Ethnic minority arguments

Various explanations were given about why Muslims were treated more favourably than Christians. Some of the respondents felt that Muslims were more likely to be regarded as an ethnic minority and as an ethnic minority more vulnerable to racism. This does appear to be borne out by the data which shows Muslims as the targets of 42% of religion-based hate crimes while only making up 6.5% of the population. Christians were targets of only 8% of religion-based hate crimes while making up 46.2% of the population. This association of Muslims with an ethnic identity places Muslims higher in the hierarchy of protected characteristics, compared to Christians who only have a religious identity. Of course, all protected characteristics are supposed to be equal, although this does not seem to be how it works.

'Islamophobia and antisemitism are closely tied with racism and ethnic minority groups, and so I feel that they are taken more seriously as race is seen as more of a protected characteristic than religion, in my opinion. I don't know if there is even a specific term for discrimination against Christians.'
(Female, 25-35, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I work closely with schools and community organisations who are very big on recognising rights of 'protected characteristics' - including Muslim/Hindu/Jain/Rastafari/ZoroAstrian religions which are seen predominantly as important non-British cultures to be protected. By contrast, Christianity is seen either as traditional British religion (i.e. somewhat out of touch and certainly not needing protection), or fanatical religion (which people need protection from).' (Male, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

'Muslims get off lightly, people are afraid to be called racist.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

⁵⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/oct/20/antisemitic-hate-crimes-in-london-rise-1350-since-israel-hamas-war-met-says> (last accessed 01/12/2023)

'I feel that Christians are almost ridiculed, whereas no one would dare make a criticism of someone of the Muslim faith as that could also be considered racist - a far greater crime.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Christian no denomination)

By contrast Christians were seen as part of the establishment, and in a society that idolises equality the establishment is a bad place to be. By mocking Christianity and humiliating Christians, you are aligning yourself with the minority 'victims.' Discriminating against Christians is part of the woke narrative and requires no defence.

'I feel that discrimination against Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs etc. is recognised more than discrimination against Christians as the latter is seen to be 'the establishment'. (Female, 55-64, retired, Church of England)

'I have also been told that Christians aren't persecuted/discriminated and it is impossible for them to experience this as they are the majority and have been long term "oppressors" in the past.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Roman Catholic)

Further, Muslims were seen not just as victims of racism but also of 'Islamophobia'. 'Phobia' refers to irrational feelings of fear, the alleged existence of which makes it difficult to discuss different religious beliefs and practices and chills discussion or debate.⁵¹

'Muslims are considered sacrosanct and protected by the threat of being called Islamophobic (not necessarily by Muslims).' (Female, 55-64, housewife, Christian no denomination)

'As Christianity is the norm I don't feel people are at all dissuaded about being negative towards it. However, as negativity towards certain other religions is highlighted regularly in the media, they are afraid to be deemed anti-Semitic or Islamophobic.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Seventh Day Adventist)

'My son's CofE school, for his 'enrichment day' did a day on Islamophobia. They had discussion, and an Imam on an online teaching. When I pointed out it was Christianity that is the world's most persecuted religion, they were surprised and promised to look at that in the future. We will see.' (Female, 55-64, housewife, Christian no denomination)

'Because in effect it would be Christophobia to use that term, and Islamophobia for instance is viewed as a far worse thing. This is based I feel on a sociological viewpoint of historic "victims" but in the

⁵¹ <https://christianconcern.com/comment/why-not-to-use-christophobia/> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

long lens of history Christians have been persecuted since they began, and are at present the most persecuted religious group on earth (Pew Research).’ (Male, 65 or older, employed, Roman Catholic)

‘Other religions are probably more "protected". A big deal is made over Islamophobia. Never hear anything about "Christianophobia"’. (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

‘Other faiths appear to be treated better than Christians especially Muslims who claim Islamophobia at the drop of a hat.’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

Unfortunately, there appears to be little discussion or debate around Islam. Rather, what was frequently expressed was fear.

A fear of Muslims

Many respondents suggested that people were more afraid of Muslims.

‘People from different religions such as Muslims and Jews are more feared in our society today. They can’t have cross word said against them. Christian are treated like they are nobodies, as if they don’t exist.’ (Male, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

‘There appears to be more deference and fear of offending those of the Muslim faith, than those who are Jewish or Christian.’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

‘Do not upset the Muslims. Christians are an easy target.’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

‘It appears that minority groups are protected out of fear of backlash.’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

‘Christians and Jews are not aggressive about their faith like Muslims so they are easy targets while Muslims get away with all sorts of stuff that would not otherwise be tolerated.’ (Female, 45-54, employed, Baptist)

‘Christians are made fun of, whereas I think other religions aren’t because there would be more of an outcry. It seems okay to mock the Christian but not the Muslim etc.’ (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Woke bureaucrats and politicians steeped in diversity dogma are terrified of offending Muslims but never hesitate to marginalise Christians.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'People appear to be frightened to discriminate against Muslims, and Christianity has become the target for the majority of the population.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'People in the Government and in the NHS are terrified of saying anything against Muslims.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

'I think there is a fear of upsetting people who are Muslim.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Methodist New Frontiers)

'Christians are pilloried for voicing common sense opinions about gender whereas most people seem to be frightened of upsetting Muslims.' (Female, 65 or older, supply teacher, Pentecostal)

This fear may have been partly because Muslims were more vociferous about defending their rights or fighting back against perceived injustices. For example, when Muslims discovered that highly inappropriate sex education was being taught to their children, they took a far more robust and perhaps effective approach to the serious infringements of their parental rights and abuses against their children than the mainstream white British population.

'Christians are too passive which is why they are discriminated against more than other religious groups, such as Muslims. If Muslims disagree with something taught in a school or shown in a cinema, they protest in a militant way which scares the authority or company.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Muslims at my place of work are allowed to say or do anything, even illegal things, and are never held to account. My employers are afraid that Muslims will bring legal action or call for community boycotts, protests, and / or violence against my employers, if Muslim employees are punished for wrongdoing.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Persecution against people, especially in the workplace, is on the increase. When Muslims raise their voice notice is taken at higher levels.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

'Christians appear to be a 'soft target' compared to say Muslims as I believe often they can spout hate speech etc. and little or nothing appears to be done.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Reformed Independent)

'Cases I have heard about of other people's experiences. It seems there is a higher sensitivity particularly to the potential of offending Muslims than of discriminating against or verbally attacking Christians, who perhaps seem a softer target.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

This fear of Muslims may be because, when Muslims feel discontented or would like to protest something, this often appears to be accompanied by threats of violence. For example, in the recent case of a secondary school trying to prevent Muslim pupils praying during school hours, we heard the school faced harassment and bomb hoaxes.⁵² It would appear that these threats of violence are leading to a kind of institutional protection which many of the respondents referred to. This is described below:

'Police maltreatment of Christian preachers and identification with LGBTQ 'Pride' values shows institutional discrimination against Christian values. Whereas Police failure to act against Muslim violence towards those who oppose Islamic values (e.g. the attacks on Hatun Tash) reveal institutional deference to Islam.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'There are numerous Christians who have been dismissed from their jobs for saying something on social media. This does not happen to Muslims who seem to be highly protected e.g. Midlands grooming gangs have been almost untouchable.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, FIEC loosely Baptist)

'The Church of England seems bent on destroying the traditional British way of life, the Pope is no longer a Catholic it seems and Muslims are protected by the establishment like no other sect.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, no religion)

'Muslims are protected more. No one questions anything that they disagree with...' (Female, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'We are seriously worried about the UK future, as the Muslim minority have power within the country.' (Female, 65 or older, looking for new work, Evangelical)

⁵² <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/reversing-prayer-ban-would-expose-school-to-risk/ar-AA1n807F>

'A Christian will be arrested for silently praying in the street, while hundreds of Muslims can block roads to pray with no arrests or rape tens of thousands of white girls and the police will turn a blind eye.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Methodist)

The possibility that Muslims are allowed to get away with a lot more than Christians has been graphically demonstrated recently by the different treatments which Isabel Vaughan-Spruce received when praying silently outside an abortion clinic, compared to Muslims demonstrating on streets, often shouting antisemitic abuse. Vaughan-Spruce was arrested while the Muslims were not, presumably because there were so many of them and they were often aggressive, which may have put the police off taking further action. We have also witnessed the police actively defending and supporting the Muslim position, for example, by removing posters of Jewish hostages from walls because Muslims objected to these posters. We also saw a man arrested for grumbling about Palestinian flags on Facebook. Recently the idea that there is support and protection for the Muslim community in the British establishment no longer seems so far-fetched.

The silence of the Christians

Many of the respondents felt that one of the reasons Christianity is mocked and derided is because, in their view, Christians can be weak in defending their beliefs.

'I believe that we as Christians have allowed the UK to become a country where there is little respect and even less acceptance of our faith and beliefs. Since the 60s, the church has sought to become worldly to be accepted by other faiths, and the outcome has been that they lost respect for us. The plan for Muslims was to be dominant in the UK, and we have allowed that process to be implemented by not standing up and speaking out our fundamental beliefs, in those early years and throughout the decades.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'If a Muslim is discriminated against all hell breaks out. If a Christian is discriminated against, silence. Unless they themselves speak up. We need to speak up more.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'We Christians are too slow to defend our faith publicly, i.e. not vocal enough.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England/Anglican)

'Because the peaceful nature of Christians is seen as weak. Muslims are feared, Christians are not.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'People would be quick to say Christianity is a lot of nonsense in front of a Christian before they would say the same thing to a Muslim about their religion for example.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Just an observation that people don't seem to bother about offending Christians.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Christian no denomination)

'It seems the woke ideology takes priority over everything and seems to trump any Christian belief. But they would not dare upset Muslims because of the backlash that they would receive. They attack Christians because they are forgiving and do not retaliate.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

The docility with which Christians appeared to defer to other religions even within their own countries was contrasted with the reality of Muslim countries which would not have allowed Christians to practice their faith:

'For instance, when Christians visit Saudi Arabia, they are expected to respect certain norms and the fact that the place is an Islamic state whereas in England, Christians are expected to defer to people of other religions and to practice their faith in silence. Muslims now raise their call to prayers noise and disturb the neighbourhood in the name of religion but it is all normal for police men to arrest someone preaching on the street at times.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Pentecostal)

An issue to be borne in mind is that our research set out to explore discrimination against Christians. That is the focus of our organisation. We did not explore how discrimination against Christians compares to discrimination against other religious groups. We did not collect experiences of discrimination among those of other faiths. However, one employer had observed experience of discrimination against Muslims and had taken action against the discrimination to ensure that the Muslim, whom she believed to be the best applicant, was given the job.

'I once attended a selection process where every application with a Muslim name had been placed on the rejection pile, despite being well qualified for the job. I challenged this and eventually one of the rejected applicants was employed as the most suitable candidate.' (Female, 65 or older, employer, United Reformed Church)

What may be happening is that when it comes to Christians and Muslims, there are different types of discrimination going on. For example, when Muslims stood up to LGBT+ propaganda they were immediately portrayed as extremists, which seems

to be the establishment's 'go to' trope when they don't like something Muslims do. Furthermore, the portrayal of Muslims as extremists with regard to sex education was used as a trope to colour any kind of resistance concerning sex education and the concomitant sexualisation of our children.

On the other hand, when Muslims occupy our streets to loudly protest their support for the most heinous terrorist activities and death of Jews, this is not labelled as discrimination. Rather it is not only permitted but supported by our police forces, who are more likely to arrest those who do not agree with the protestors. Part of this may be to do with Muslims being seen as an ethnic minority. The rest may be to do with a tendency to capitulate to those who are most intimidating.⁵³

While there should be no hierarchy in the list of protected characteristics, this appears to be contradicted by the reality. It appears that there is a hierarchy of protected characteristics, with all things LGBT+ at the top and ethnicity slightly below that. This meant that Muslims appeared to be less subject to discrimination than Christians because their 'ethnic' identity provided protection. At the bottom of the heap of protected characteristics were those of faith.

'I am convinced that being a Christian is never viewed the same as being a Muslim for example. Political correctness has relegated Christianity to the bottom of the pile with every other protected characteristic in Equality Law holding more weight.' (Female, 55-64, self-employed, Christian no denomination)

'Christianity is treated as if it is worst of all religions and it is fair game to mock it in work and say anything you like against it. Woe betide you if you were to say similar things against Islam though - you would soon find yourself before HR. The company I work at is signed up to the Stonewall charter so we are bombarded with LGBT+ initiatives every other day (I joke not). In that climate the message is very clear that only DEI initiatives are important, but the 'equality' in DEI doesn't encompass equality for Christians, only other faiths.' (Female, 45-54, employed, female, Methodist)

'Muslims, Hindus and some sections of the Jewish community hold strong traditional views on marriage being between a man and a woman. A politician visiting these places will never issue any statement of regret after visiting them. But politicians like Keir Starmer apologise for visiting Jesus

⁵³ This has been recently evidenced by the case of Gideon Falter where the police, rather than dealing with the threat of violence by Muslim protestors, threatened to arrest a Jewish passer-by, because he was in danger of being attacked.
<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/04/23/metropolitan-police-gideon-falter-mob-rule/>

House. Other faiths' traditional views are always accepted by society but not if such views are held by Christians.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Baptist)

LGBT+ intolerance of any questioning of LGBT+ beliefs may particularly affect Christians who not only have an alternative belief system, but are required by their faith to witness to their beliefs. Therefore, they are more likely to come head-to-head with what could arguably be described as the state religion. However, there are a great many other non-Christian people who also challenge the status quo and are subject to the same oppression. The findings of our report go well beyond the Christian community and speak for all of those who believe in freedom of speech.

Most of our discrimination laws focus on protected characteristics which revolve around our identity, such as our age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic identity and so forth. Islam is bound up with a believer's identity in a way that Christianity is not. For example, recent research conducted by The Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL) found that 66% of Muslims said that their religious background was 'very important' to their personal identity. In contrast the equivalent figure for Christians was only 31%. Christians are taught to downplay distinctions of identity:

'There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' Galatians 3:28

This may mean that discrimination laws which place more emphasis on facets of identity do not deal so well with discrimination which occurs on the grounds of belief.

The Public Sector Equality Duty Laws were intended to arbitrate between the various protected characteristics. However, the reality is that each protected characteristic has its sponsors and activists whether these are people in the media, the seats of government, or somewhere in between. Rather than a process of arbitration occurring between different protected characteristics with the help of an overseeing body, there is a process of competition: the one with the most sponsors and resources comes out on top. Christians have no desire to compete for dominance. We are in the business of saving souls. To protect Christians, the failures of the Public Sector Equality Duty need to be addressed.

Chapter Eight

HOW SCHOOLS ARE UNDERMINING CHRISTIAN FAITH

Christians have a problem. Two non-religious parents will successfully pass on their lack of religion but, where both parents are Christian, only half of their children will inherit their faith. Where only one parent is Christian this will be reduced by half again. As British Social Attitudes explains:

'To borrow the terminology of radioactive decay, institutional religion in Britain now has a half-life of one generation.'⁵⁴

Part of the reason for this is likely to be the education system. This has been becoming increasingly secular and ideological and it is the place where children spend a great deal of time. Schools might be the mediating variable which prevents Christian parents from passing on their religion while enabling non-religious parents to pass on their lack of faith.

This was our background knowledge; however we didn't want to anticipate a response. Parents were asked:

'Have you felt able to raise your children in line with your religious beliefs? If you have not felt able to do so please explain why in the comment box below.'

Additional information came from the two questions below.

'If you or anyone you know personally has been disadvantaged on account of their religious belief, please feel free to tell us more about it here.'

'If there is anything else you would like to tell us please do so here.'

⁵⁴ Curtice, J., Clery, E., Perry, J., Phillips M. and Rahim, N. (eds.) (2019), British Social Attitudes: The 36th Report, London: The National Centre for Social Research), p.21.

Parents' rights with regards to their children's education are enshrined in law

Responses to this question are important, as the right of parents to have a say over the education of their children is embedded in law. For example:

'Regard must be given to the principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with their parents' wishes'⁵⁵

It is particularly important that education has regard for the parent's religious faith:

'The process in which the material is chosen and taught must respect the manner in which parents wish to raise their children in accordance with their own religious and philosophical convictions'⁵⁶

'The material must have due regard for the religious background of the pupils'⁵⁷

In addition, schools are expected to consult parents:

'Schools must consult with parents when drafting and amending their RSE policies.'⁵⁸

Parents no longer felt able to raise children in accordance with their religious faith

The reality is that absolutely none of this is being done. In fact, if we look at the actions of government, we find that parents are systematically excluded from having a say over the education of their children and the impact of this was reflected in their responses. However, there was significant variation. A great many of our respondents were older; 52% of our respondents were 65 or older and 23% were between 55 and 64. Their references were to a time when their children were young.

⁵⁵ Education Act 1996, section 9; European Convention on Human Rights, Protocol 1, Article 2; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 18

⁵⁶ *Op cit.*

⁵⁷ Section 80A of the Education Act 2002 as amended in September 2020 by the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019, Schedule, para. 8

⁵⁸ [Section 80B(3) Education Act 2002; Section 2A(f) Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014]

'I raised my children in the Christian faith over 50 years ago--it was different then!' (Female, 65 or older, retired, independent Church)

'I raised my children in the 1980's and 90's. Schools were not so radicalised by LGBTQ+ politicised organisations and school teachers were not so exposed to extreme liberalism. I would say because of these factors I was able to raise my children in accordance with my faith.' (Male, 65 or older, retired Baptist)

'Yes, we have - but our children are now in their 30s. Even in those days, we had to 'swim upstream' regarding their education and upbringing.' (Female, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

However, they knew through watching their children's families that there had been a very serious change:

'At 72 and my wife at 69, have two children and had no problems raising them in line with our Christian faith but that was before all this nonsense going on the schools. Our eldest daughter's children left school some years ago and likewise did not have any problems. Our youngest daughter and husband home school to prevent indoctrination by the schools.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

'When my kids were growing up, I felt I could raise them according to my beliefs and values. But I don't feel that way anymore. With Christian schools under attack and the very inappropriate sex education in public schools they are trying to take control away from parents and the state is trying to indoctrinate them with their own ideas. They are forcing their lack of values onto me and my children and grandchildren. I would never recommend anyone send their kids into universities as it destroyed my son, his faith and his life. They are teaching them what to think not how to think.' (Female, 55-64, housewife, Christian no denomination)

'Generally, no problems but it would be totally different today because of children being exposed to being questioned about their sexuality by teachers, as well as some schools allowing transgender people to perform what can only be described as a strip show.' (Male, retired, 65 or older, although a Baptist I regard myself as belonging to the Church of Christ because Jesus said I will build my church. But before then I am Baptist but share fellowship with other denominations)

'I did feel I could raise my children according to my faith, but the system is now hostile to parents with outside agencies corrupting children with explicit LGBTQ++ ideology. Teachers are forced to teach anti-Christian sexual experimentation with pornographic materials passed as "education". Shocking to abuse children in this way especially when it is funded by our taxes. Parents have been silenced by the state. My MP has led the way and promotes the LGBT ideology and drag queen links.'
(Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

Children are being exposed to Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Things were reported as very different for today's parents. Their children are exposed to what is technically known as Comprehensive Sexuality Education which is strongly shaped by the LGBT+ agenda. Both are radically at odds with the tenets of Christian belief.

'How can I be able to raise my children in line with our faith if the education in Scotland is forcing young children to know about LGBT community? This should be optional.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

'None! LGBTQ + driving educational agenda. Fear for them and what they will face if they talk about their faith at school.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Evangelical)

'Not at all. I Believe I am being undermined in some areas but thank God, we still try our best and with God helping my husband and I our children shall serve the Lord. I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I acknowledge people can be different and have the freedom to live their life the way they want. What I find unacceptable is forcing that way of life down my throat and foisting it on the young minds of my children. I want to have the choice of teaching my children my Christian values without the state taking that away.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Pentecostal)

'We are trying to raise our children in line with the Christian faith but the UK government is hindering that by exposing our children to sexual content that is not necessary for their ages and taking away parental rights which is destructive to their natural human development and growth. Children can no longer use the rainbow which they mostly associate with natural or magical creations.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Methodist)

'No I never felt like my children are being raised according to my religious beliefs. In spite my best efforts. The state of our education system is so broken the woke culture has taken over. It is horrible as a parent to watch from outside when teachers get to decide what is best for my children.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

'We've had issues with the children's primary school identifying our daughter as non-binary at 11 years old. They normalise a worldview that is in conflict with ours and I believe some teachers covertly discredit our beliefs. If we present a challenge to their assessment we will be categorised as unsupportive parents.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Presbyterian)

'My daughter went to Secondary school and was indoctrinated with LGBTQ agenda. She then began telling me I was homophobic and oppressive. She refused to go to Church and said that her teacher said she should be able to make her own view of whether she wanted to be a Christian or not.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

Another issue that Christian parents objected to was teaching evolution without providing the scientific arguments which exist on both sides. Teaching children that they had evolved from animals influenced how sex was understood:

'Teachers taught evolution as fact. That we evolved from apes therefore sex is just an activity to be enjoyed between consenting adults. Love, respect, care for others didn't matter. Whatever makes you feel good is ok.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

It seemed to be getting worse with the younger children.

'We raised our children in line with the Christian faith and were/are regular church members. We had several run ins with the school over the years regarding the inappropriate reading material our children were given as homework. With our youngest it was worse as he had run ins of his own with abusive and highly secular teachers... to the extent that we actually withdrew him and sent him to a wholesome old-fashioned Christian based private school for his A-levels. We realise that this option is not open to many and we were fortunate enough to be able to afford this.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

Some parents appeared to have really fought to ensure that to some extent they were able to pass on their beliefs.

'It's a battle raising my children in line with my beliefs. They often come home and told me about discussions they have had with teachers who have often left them doubting and insecure about their beliefs.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Baptist)

'I have felt that I raise my children in line with biblical truths, often against the school, the teachers, the other parents and other pupils. It's been a real battle. Society gives really anti-biblical messages about tolerating evil.' (Female, 45-54, employer, Christian no denomination)

'Yes, although they have struggled to hold to a faith in the context of their school teachers' and friends' lack of belief.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Methodist)

However, it was difficult to overcome the extent of LGBT+ infiltration in schools:

'To some extent I feel able however the challenge is or remains complicated since there have been mandatory laws placed in schools that the children can't run away from for example reading materials placed in school libraries for them to read. Early child sex education disguised as enlightenment.' (Female, 25-34, housewife, Christian no denomination)

Occasionally there appeared to have been a respectful teacher, although this was rather the exception.

'I have because I do it in my own home and I teach them to know their own minds. I do feel afraid to challenge some things taught at school. In general though school is more inclusive of Christians than my workplace. My son's teacher is an atheist but extremely respectful to us.' (Female, 25-34, employed, Baptist)

Those parents who had somehow managed to pass on their beliefs to their children encouraged their children to self-censor:

'Yes, at home but constantly fighting against what they are thought in school about sex and gender issues. I am fighting the system, schools, and teachers. And the kids are afraid to voice our voice.' (Female, 45-54, housewife, born Lutheran, married Methodist but now go to any church which still teaches the truth. Usually no denomination free churches)

'I have raised my daughter in the Christian faith. However, I have also taught her to be quiet about what she believes when at school or out with friends. In my experience people are not very supportive

if you mention anything about being a Church goer or having faith and I do not want her meeting this at a young age. She does go to a Church youth group but she does not mention this either when at school. Too many teachers are nasty and express anti-Christian sentiments if this is found out. (Funny that they are always positive to other faiths though.)' (Female, 45-54, employed, Christian no denomination)

Pupils could be exposed to bullying and ridicule by both teachers and pupils

Where parents had passed on their faith and beliefs and the children did not self-censor they were exposed to bullying and ridicule by both the other pupils and, most shockingly, by the teachers as well:

'Child bullied and harassed by teacher and students for voicing their opinion that life begins at conception and citing the Bible as the reason for this belief. A student was made to stand on one side of the room and debate his classmates on the other side of the room with the teacher who then asked for his opinions on homosexuality, mocked him and sent him out the class when he said wasn't sexist or homophobic. Student was then verbally attacked on the playground and when raised with school staff no action was taken. Students asked not to hand out flyers or put-up posters as it breaks the environmental policy but no action taken against the LGBTQ society for doing the same thing.' (Female, 18-24, student, Christian no denomination)

'My children also face opposition and blanket statements contrary to their faith and so feel like they cannot share their opinions or their faith easily, they have been ridiculed for their faith even by friends and teachers who mockingly talked about Christianity as archaic and outdated, suggesting it to be obvious that Christianity is of the past and was for the slow and unenlightened.' (Female, housewife, 35-44, Christian no denomination)

'Yes, I believe we have [been able to raise our children in accordance with our faith]. However there have been incidents of bullying of Christian young people at their school. They have been called homophobic and transphobes.' (Female, housewife, 55-64, Christian no denomination)

'No, the school teachers have told my children their faith is probably not true.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Baptist)

'My teenagers have been ridiculed by RE teacher and other teenagers at state secondary school.'
(Female, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'I know a secondary school pupil who was given a difficult time by a teacher when expressing her Christian faith.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

The way in which teachers will use their power to bully and humiliate pupils who do not agree with the progressive agenda was graphically described by a pupil at a Roman Catholic secondary school in Scotland:

We were told to stand up or sit down. Unfortunately, I had to sit down to a question I was told to stand up to if I agreed to it....the question was 'can a four year old change their sex?'. Now that is a four-year-old. Now unfortunately the majority of the class stood up. I couldn't in my conscience stand up. I had to stand down. That was my responsibility. Now more questions were given. Now to my embarrassment, and I was really embarrassed, the teacher humiliated me in the class ...she confronted me in the class, telling me that my opinions were criminal. That to disagree is criminal. To not be 'for' [the idea that four-year-olds can change sex] is criminal. I was panicking. I immediately after the class couldn't bear it. To be called a criminal in front of all the people in the class.⁵⁹

What parents are reporting goes directly against the law:

'The material cannot indoctrinate as to sensitive moral issues; i.e. any material chosen and the manner in which it is taught must be critical, objective and pluralistic.'⁶⁰

'The material, and the way it is selected must have due regard to the school's public sector equality duty to promote good relations among those with different protected characteristics, meaning that the school must have due regard not to cause offense or discord to parents of a faith background.'⁶¹

⁵⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zMzdhFYCW6c&list=UU7FYQ0yiqBqDZ_Cc5W0oI0g&index=13&t=808s&ab_channel=ScottishFamilyParty
(last accessed 16/01/2024)

⁶⁰ [Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v Denmark, Judgment, Merits, App No 5095/71 (A/23), [1976] ECHR 6, IHRL 15 (ECHR 1976), 7th December 1976, European Court of Human Rights [ECHR]]

⁶¹ [Section 149(1)(c) Equality Act 2010]

This was explained by one of the respondents who had until recently, been a safeguarding trainer:

'Up until a year ago, I was a safeguarding trainer for the diocese of St. Andrews and Edinburgh. I am well-versed on the subject of the various forms of abuse. Recently, the Scottish Education authorities voted (by a narrow margin) to remove parental representatives from Catholic schools in Fife. This move clearly undermines the rights of parents and grandparents to be the primary educators of their children as previously guaranteed by the United Nation Rights of the Child in order to privilege the demands of sexual radicals. In effect, this move robs ordinary families of the right of self-exclusion. As a Christian, I reserve the right to exclude myself from the company of people whose life-style choices I regard as inimical to Christian teaching on common decency: for example, people addicted to violence, gambling, pornography and promiscuity. I further reserve this right to exclude my under-aged children and grandchildren from such influences. Any government initiative which denies an individual the right of self-exclusion is guilty of violating basic human rights. In particular, recent LGBT+ influenced legislation represents an illegitimate attempt to indoctrinate innocent children with dangerous ideologies that would make them susceptible to sexual grooming. This isn't about "inclusion" and "diversity", it's about a power grab by people who have a vested interest in prematurely sexualising the young. If this isn't child abuse, I don't know what is.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

Many teachers have been severely penalised

Many teachers have tried to do something about what is happening in schools. Glawdys Leger, who has recently appeared in the Christian media, is a good example. A specialist Modern Foreign Languages teacher for 12 years at Bishop Justus Church of England secondary school in Bromley, she became concerned after witnessing a continuous increase in the promotion of the LGBT+ agenda and other issues over a period of years. She believed the parents sending their children to a Christian school were being deceived about what their children were being taught. She considered it her responsibility to tell them about Christian biblical beliefs on human sexuality and marriage. This led to her sacking. Leger has since been found guilty of unacceptable professional misconduct, but a prohibition order was not imposed.⁶²

Leger is the most recent in a line of Christian teachers and school staff who have lost their jobs because they would not fully collaborate with the LGBT+ programme being rolled out in schools.

⁶² <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/glawdys-leger/> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

Back in 2009 Kwabena Peat was suspended for complaining that a staff training day was used to promote gay rights and marginalise those who disagreed with homosexual practice. He was charged with gross misconduct and suspended on full pay. Fortunately, the charge was seen as disproportionate and he was able to return to work.⁶³ In the same year a Christian supply teacher, Olive Jones, who taught sick children in their homes, was suspended for offering to pray with a child.⁶⁴ In 2016 Vicky Allen was disciplined for sharing her views on gay marriage.⁶⁵ Joshua Sutcliffe was banned from teaching in 2017, essentially for referring to a girl who identified as a boy, as a girl.⁶⁶ In June 2019 Keith Waters was forced out of his job for tweeting a reminder that Christians should not support or attend LGBTQ+ 'Pride month' events held in June. He explained that Pride events:

'...promote a culture and encourage activities that are contrary to Christian faith and morals. They are especially harmful to children.'

Fortunately, in April 2022 the Employment Tribunal ruled that the school had discriminated against Keith.⁶⁷ Bernard Randall was dismissed from his job as school chaplain when he gave a sermon explaining that Christianity was incompatible with LGBTQ+ ideologies. He lost his case of unfair dismissal.⁶⁸ 'Hannah' lost her job in 2022 for raising safeguarding concerns for a pupil who had chosen to identify as a girl. She is currently awaiting employment tribunal.⁶⁹ A teaching assistant, Kristie Higgs, was dismissed in 2019 for gross misconduct because of posts on her private Facebook page criticising sex education in her son's primary school. This year she won her appeal.⁷⁰

Schools appear to be breaking the law by teaching a one-sided narrative

Fortunately, most of these Christians have won their cases, and so they should. Law suggests not only that teachers should have freedom of speech but that teachers, especially in the current context, have a responsibility to teach alternative Christian positions. As we saw earlier, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 1976 that the material chosen and the

⁶³ <https://www.christian.org.uk/news/suspended-christian-teacher-back-at-work/> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

⁶⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/bristol/8423265.stm> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

⁶⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cornwall-38130074>

⁶⁶ <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/joshua-sutcliffe/>

⁶⁷ <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/keith-waters/>

⁶⁸ <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/rev-dr-bernard-randall/>

⁶⁹ <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/hannah/>

⁷⁰ <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/kristie-higgs/>

manner in which it is taught should be critical, objective and pluralistic. As there is no pluralism in the current curriculum, it seems appropriate that teachers try to ensure other viewpoints are represented.

There are also other legal requirements which are not being met. For example, the Equality Act 2010 states:

'The material, and the way it is selected must have due regard to the school's public sector equality duty to promote good relations among those with different protected characteristics, meaning that the school must have due regard not to cause offence or discord to parents of a faith background.'

And the 1996 Education Act also explains:

*'The pursuit or promotion of partisan political views in the teaching of any subject is forbidden [Section 406, Education Act 1996].'*⁷¹

Also, many schools don't seem to realise that:

'LGBT elements are not required to be taught as part of Primary school Relationships Education'

As Nick Gibb, Minister for School Standards explained.⁷² This suggests that those who allow the pupils to be taught a one-sided narrative as presented by, for example, *No Outsiders, Educate and Celebrate*, and *Schools Out*, are the ones who are at fault.

None of the above programmes teach children and young people about man-woman marriage, chastity, the moral implications of abortion or the whole raft of psychological, emotional and physical problems which abortion can cause. Nor do they teach children and young people about the wonders of fertility, the gift of children, or parenthood. They are utterly at odds with Christian and other religious points of view. It would not be unreasonable to suggest that those who are ensuring that pupils are given materials which directly contradict the guidelines are the ones who should be going to court.

⁷¹ Education Act 1996 (legislation.gov.uk) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/section/406/enacted>

⁷² Nick Gibb, Minister for School Standards, Parliamentary Question Period 25 June 2019 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-06-25/debates/8F61FF43-BA5E-401D-A3AD-3B742236F757/ParentalInvolvementInTeachingEqualityAct>

Teachers compromise their beliefs or risk losing their jobs

One of the questions we wanted to answer when embarking on this research was whether the cases above were the total sum of cases where Christians had encountered difficulties for expressing their faith, or whether these were the tip of the iceberg. We found out from the statistical data that while a third of people felt that they needed to hide their Christian faith, two thirds of our respondents did not feel that they could express their views. And as we saw in Chapter Six, it was the desire to uphold LGBT+ ideology which presented a particular challenge to freedom of speech.

Schools lie at the heart of this process of indoctrination. One respondent explained how, since the introduction of the LGBT+ programme, there were no longer Bibles distributed in schools:

'The block on the distribution of the Bible to our school children through the infiltration of LGBTQ agencies into OFSTED and Teacher Training has damaged their schooling, and our churches. Pray for renewed hunger for the LORD Jesus and His Word.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

This one-sided teaching means Christian teachers are likely, on a regular basis, to be making decisions about how to deal with the demands of affirming LGBT+ ideology. We found that a great many teachers felt extremely uncomfortable about what they were having to do.

'I am a teacher. I am required to deliver a sex ed curriculum that I am deeply opposed to and have to covertly avoid aspects that compromise my faith.' (Female, employed, 45-54, Church of England)

'However, as a teacher I am very concerned about the values which are being introduced in the national curriculum in Wales, and horrified by what I see happening in schools in Scotland where I have friends who are Christian parents and friends who are teachers.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Roman Catholic)

'Currently I am in a collective grievance in my workplace. I am experiencing a backlash from the school including contrived 'gross misconduct' complaints. Getting support from my union. Workers of England Union.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

'Outright blatant victimisation of Christians. Educate and Celebrate teach that Christian views are unacceptable and discriminatory...' (Female, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

'My son attends a special school. The staff are given Pride lanyards to wear - whether they support or do not support Pride. They have to celebrate LGBT and Pride months. I have used the formal complaints procedure and been accused in writing of 'hate' by the school. No D of E do nothing. Ofsted do nothing. I was reported to the police and threatened with arrest for simply asking staff politely about their lanyards. Staff told me they were not given a choice and some have said they do not agree.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I know now, as a teacher, I would have difficulty teaching what I would be required to teach and would have to refuse teaching that which went against my values. I dread to think what the consequences of that would be now and I'm glad to be out of the workplace where I work for someone else.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

Compelling Christian teachers to teach an LGBT+ ideology which goes against their consciences could be seen as indirect discrimination in that it amounts to:

'a rule, policy or practice which someone of a particular religion or belief is less likely to be able to meet than other people and this places them at a disadvantage.'

This was very much the problem for our Christian teachers who were having to teach LGBT+ ideology as if it were 'the truth' and were unable to supplement it with other information or beliefs. As a result of these policies, some teachers felt compelled to leave their jobs:

'At my church we have a male and a female teacher. The female about 2 to 3 months ago handed in her notice because she refused to teach on transgenderism that it was ok etc. She is single looking for a job now. The male is still struggling and although has refused to teach it at present other teachers are doing it for him. How long this will last is debatable. Both are single and young.' (Female, 65 or older, housewife, Evangelical)

There are occasions where indirect discrimination can sometimes be lawful if the person applying the practice, policy or rule, can show there is a good enough reason for it. However, this seems very unlikely when teaching a one-sided ideology is, as we saw earlier, clearly breaking the law.

While the law appears to suggest that teachers should be within their rights either for refusing to teach LGBT+ ideology or for supplementing it with an alternative viewpoint, teachers who do this are treated as if they are at fault. The examples of teachers losing their jobs appear to be part of something much more widespread. If teachers didn't toe the line either they felt threatened:

'For me, if I were to express traditional views about marriage and it was reported to the headteacher of the school where I work, I would likely be disciplined and potentially lose my job.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Baptist)

'I am a teacher. I have raised issues of another teacher at my school behaving inappropriately when teaching sex education and teaching her own ideologies to young children. The headteacher insinuated that my problem with this was due to my faith, later I was accused of upsetting the other teacher. I have since felt an atmosphere change at work and have been overlooked for various career advancement opportunities.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I am a teacher and work in a school where the Headteacher is English like me but an atheist who strongly promotes the LGBT agenda among the pupils. I have challenged her on this in her office and was threatened with suspension.' (Male, 25-34, employed, Church of England)

Or else they would lose their jobs:

'Teachers and Teaching Assistants who in good conscience cannot teach aspects of modern RSE as it goes against their faith have suffered. I know personally of at least 4 cases where they have either lost their job or had to leave it. In each case it is because they cannot think as required, and in effect have been penalised for their beliefs.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Roman Catholic)

'A colleague was banned from going to the local school to take RE lessons as a student asked if her church practiced gay marriage. She said no and explained politely and lovingly. She got banned.' (Male, 35-44, employed, Baptist)

'A teacher friend was reprimanded and 'managed out' of his school when he expressed his Christian beliefs on homosexuality to Ofsted inspectors.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Roman Catholic)

Christian schools appear even worse

What was most worrying was that the Christian schools appeared to be possibly worse than state schools without a faith designation. It was almost as if they felt ashamed of their Christianity and had to compensate in some way. This is despite the fact that we still have laws in place which mean that local authority schools must:

*'in future reflect the fact that religious traditions in the country are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teaching and practices of other principal religions. Syllabuses must be periodically reviewed.'*⁷³

The document goes on to explain that:

'Collective worship in county schools and equivalent grant-maintained schools must be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, though not distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.'

Similarly, academies with a religious designation must provide collective worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of the academy's designated faith.

One respondent who was a governor in a Church of England school explained how his school was teaching children in line with guidance from Stonewall and parents were in fact receiving a sanitised version of what was being taught:

'Although retired, I was until a few years ago a secondary state school teacher with over 40 years' experience with middle and senior management experience. I am presently a C.of E. School Governor in a local Primary school. I am alarmed by the promotion of sexualised material endorsed by the Church of England in their publication 'Valuing All God's Children'. This Stonewall inspired publication contradicts biblical truth and compromises Children's innocence. The lack of transparency for parents is also of concern as they receive a sanitised version of what their children could be taught. I am also extremely concerned that our secondary school children are increasingly being taught in a Liberal left wing ideological setting and not allowed to think critically about important issues. Having very politically extreme Teaching Unions who are feeding teachers these ideas as fact is also very

⁷³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cd8f740f0b6629523c2b7/Collective_worship_in_schools.pdf (last accessed 29/11/2023)

*damaging and encouraging teachers to take up politicised positions, rather than remain neutral as it was in healthier days.*⁷⁴

Another school governor mentioned how she was not allowed to mention God in school meetings:

'As a school governor I was told not to mention God in meetings - this at a Christian School.'
(Female, 65 or older, self-employed, Christian no denomination)

Christian teachers similarly suffered when they tried to hold true to their faith while teaching in a Christian school:

'I was a Christian teacher who had deliberately sought employment in a school which professed itself Christian. In fact, it was rigorously but tacitly evangelically secular. I was hauled before the governors for saying the 'Our Father' with my form group and the head after trying unsuccessfully to have me sacked alleging incompetence (which he could not prove despite best efforts) eventually found a reason to include me in a redundancy program. It was only due to my Union Rep that I managed to avoid him refusing to pay me the usual compensation. This was in 1994-96.' (Female, 55-64, housewife, Roman Catholic)

'I was hounded out of a C of E aided secondary school for expressing a moral objection to the gay/supposedly Christian head of drama giving out condoms liberally throughout the day having already been surprised in the drama studio in the sexual act with a sixth former.' (Female, 55 to 64, supply teacher, Christian no denomination)

Teachers in Catholic schools suffered just as much:

'A friend lost his job as a Religious Education teacher in a Catholic school for upholding Church teaching.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

'A Catholic teacher went through a disciplinary hearing and lost her job as she would not promote the LGBT ideology to her students in a Christian school.' (Female, 45-54, housewife, Roman Catholic)

⁷⁴ A critique of *Valuing All God's Children* can be found here: <https://anglicanmainstream.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Valuing-All-Gods-Children.pdf>)

'I remember my Catholic nursery school teacher being told not to wear a Cross - in a Catholic school! Apparently, the nursery despite having the same name and head was a separate entity. Either way it was not causing any harm and wasn't even Catholic just Christian.' (Male, 18-24, employed, Roman Catholic)

'I was sent to a Catholic School. Disaster. They teach exactly the same "wokery" using the backing of the Church thereby making it more difficult to argue with.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

Parents with children in Christian schools also complained:

'I felt I was able but I have a friend who has taken 3 of his children out of mainstream school because of the anti-Christian bias and that was in a Church of England school.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Pentecostal)

'I have to a certain extent as they attend church and they attend church schools. But even in those schools they are sometimes made to feel like the odd ones out.' (Female, 35-44, employed, Baptist)

'Nigel and Sally Rowe were accused of being bigots and removed their children from a Church of England primary school although they tried to communicate with the school and church authorities about their concerns. Christian Concern took up their case but this took 4 years for them to acquire justice.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'Both of them attend C of E schools where the teachers are rather lax in promoting Christian teachings.' (Male, 25-34, employed, Church of England)

'Treated with suspicion by Catholic clergy due to going public about explicit sex education in my children's Catholic schools.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

Does the secularisation of schools explain the decline in Christian faith?

This rejection of Christian teaching in schools may go some way to explaining dramatic decline in the number of Christians we have seen in recent years. The 2021 census revealed that only 46% of people identified as Christian. In 2011 it was

59%. The number of Christians had dropped by 5.5million in ten years.⁷⁵ However it has been argued that even 46% is an overestimate.⁷⁶ The census had asked: 'What is your religion?', which is a leading question. When British Social Attitudes in 2018 asked the rather different question, 'Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?' the number of 'Christians' dropped to 38%.⁷⁷

This decline in religious affiliation appears to be generational. It is not that adults are losing their religion or their inclination to practice. Rather, it is because older people with an attachment to the Church of England or other Christian denominations are being replaced by younger people who seem to be much less likely to inherit their Christian faith. This is not surprising; with Christianity mocked in the media and derided in schools, young people have little chance of acquiring Christian faith.

The decline of the Christian population needs to be taken very seriously. Although Christians are no longer a majority of the population, Christian faith has shaped our culture and society enormously, in ways which the majority of the population do not realise or know. The abolition of slavery and our whole understanding of justice, the indignation we feel at the suffering of those with whom we have nothing in common, the belief that we should be able to speak freely, the fact that we have hospitals and education systems, the belief that we should speak and seek the truth, even our tolerance of other religions, these and much else besides are all a product of Christianity.

Those who despise Christianity, and would be glad to see the back of it, may imagine that without it we would still have all those things which we value, minus what they see as the irrationality of Christian belief. This is not the case. Nature abhors a vacuum and it seems possible that as the number of Christians declines, another religion may take its place. Christianity does not have political aspirations; however, the state and religion are bound together in Islam. As the Muslim population increases relative to the Christian one, Muslims - supported by our rights-based political ideology - may have greater expectations about the place of the Muslim faith.

⁷⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/29/census-2021-in-charts-christianity-now-minority-religion-in-england-and-wales> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

⁷⁶ <https://humanists.uk/campaigns/religion-and-belief-some-surveys-and-statistics/> (last accessed 29/11/2023)

⁷⁷ https://natcen.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/BSA_36.pdf p.21 (last accessed 29/11/2023)

Chapter Nine

WHERE ARE THE SHEPHERDS?

In the last chapter we saw how Christianity is in almost terminal decline, with two Christian parents having a fifty-fifty chance of passing on their faith. Where only one parent is Christian the chance of one's offspring keeping the faith declines to one in four. In this Christians are doing infinitely worse than Muslims, among whom 93% inherit their parent's faith.⁷⁸

There is some slight variation between the Christian denominations. British Social Attitudes explains that of those brought up as Anglicans (24% of the total), around half (47%) still regard themselves as Anglican, with an almost equal number saying that they have no religion. Other specific Protestant denominations fare even worse: only 38% of those brought up as Presbyterians and 27% of those brought up as Methodists have kept these specific religious affiliations. Catholics manage to retain a slim majority, as do generic Christians identifying with no named denomination. For both, 55% have kept the religious affiliation they were brought up in.⁷⁹

While we did not collect the same data as the British Social Attitudes Survey, we did ask people about their denominations and by correlating this with various other emerging data it was possible to glean some insights into the 'stickiness' of our respondents' Christian faith.

A couple of methodological points should be noted. The questionnaire allowed respondents to choose from the following categories which were derived from British Social Attitudes research: Church of England/Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Christian no denomination, and other. In the tables these categories will be largely reliable. One slight change is that those who were Anglican but not Church of England (i.e. GAFCON) were grouped together with those who were Church of England, although they hold very different views. This means that the category 'Anglican' is more likely to reflect the orthodox views of its GAFCON respondents than it would be if it only included 'Church of England'.

Many of our respondents selected 'other' and went on to choose their own categories. These categories have been used when providing information about respondents giving particular quotes.

⁷⁸ Curtice, J., Clery, E., Perry, J., Phillips M. and Rahim, N. (eds.) (2019), *British Social Attitudes: The 36th Report*, London: The National Centre for Social Research), p.212.

⁷⁹ *Op cit.*

However, the data needed to be summarised in order to carry out the quantitative analysis. Summarising these categories further was perhaps more of an art than a science. People named a vast array of Churches, including worship groups as diverse as ‘Assemblies of God’, ‘Brethren’, ‘Gospel Hall’, ‘Inghamite’, ‘New Frontiers’, ‘The Vineyard’ and so forth. The author of the report has used the internet to try to group these diverse Churches and denominations into the categories listed in the tables. Most of those who chose the category ‘other’ ended up grouped with Evangelicals or Pentecostals, although some went to Presbyterian and Methodist. However, there is no doubt that some respondents will disagree with the categories they have been put into and this is an area for further development.

A large group of Christians outside denominational structures

The final column in the table below shows the proportions of each denomination. What was perhaps most interesting was that the largest group was ‘Christian no denomination’ which made up 30% of our respondents. This group may have been slightly inflated as some Christians who hadn’t chosen this option were added in at the discretion of the researcher. This would happen if they talked about attending a whole range of denominations, or stated that they were Bible-believing but with no affiliation. However, even if this had not happened this group would still have been the largest. Recent British Social Attitudes research on religion similarly found ‘Christian – no denomination’ was the largest group. Research conducted by the Gallup Editor-in-chief in the US, Frank Newport, also found that the most common pattern today is the development of the "no name" religious group, consisting of Americans who worship only under the banner of their own nondenominational predilections.⁸⁰

What emerged in our research was that those of no denomination often expressed dissatisfaction with the existing Churches and appeared to be actively seeking a Church to worship in, or were developing patterns of worship and grassroots churches which emerged out of the home.

‘Very careful about how I discuss my belief within the local C of E church. They label you a troublemaker if you do not go along with the woke and ‘progressive’ agenda.’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

⁸⁰ Newport, F., 2012. *God is alive and well: The future of religion in America*. Simon and Schuster.

'Expressing my disagreement with homosexual practice is suppressed in the Methodist church. There is pressure to accept this as normal and "loving". I also strongly disagree with pressure on children suggesting they may have been born in the wrong body.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Methodist, New Frontiers)

'Disconcerted at the weak (wishy washy) unbiblical doctrines being pursued many church leaders; particularly the C of E, the Methodists, the URC & some others.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Independent Brethren)

'I have been criticised and gossiped about at church, due to quoting scripture during a recent LLF course run in the church!' (Female, 55-64, employer, Church of England)

'It is distinct disadvantage in the Church of England and most mainstream denominations to hold traditional Christian stances on social and moral issues, while those who go with the flow are promoted to be intolerant of the former.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

Churches with clear institutional structures had a higher proportion of males

We also found through further exploration that there were some interesting patterns around styles of worship which appeared to differ slightly by sex.

The total sample of the survey had 47% females and 53% males. What was interesting was that every single institutional denomination, except the Baptists whose sex distributions reflected that of the sample precisely (i.e. the Baptists had an even sex distribution), had a preponderance of males.

However, the Christians without a denomination and their close relatives, the Pentecostals and the Evangelicals, had a slight over-representation of females compared to the proportion of female in the overall sample. The message of this is clear. Men are more comfortable in some kind of institutional structure which the Methodists, Anglicans, Catholics and so forth are able to provide. Females are perhaps better able to handle the amorphous free-floating worship styles of the Pentecostals and Evangelicals and they are slightly more likely to feel comfortable without a denomination than men.

The sex distribution of each denomination

Denomination and sex	Percentages of females	Percentage of males	Percentage of each denomination
Methodists	44%	56%	3%
Anglicans	46%	55%	21%
Baptists	47%	53%	12%
Presbyterians	41%	59%	4%
Evangelical	48%	52%	6%
Orthodox	37%	63%	1%
Christian no denomination	50%	50%	30%
Pentecostal	51%	50%	6%
Roman Catholic	42%	58%	16%
Average/ sample size	47% (726)	53% (826)	100% (1552)

This may be why women are slightly more conservative than men. Men need the structures provided by the Church, but apart from the Catholics and the Orthodox, most of these structures have become somewhat secularised.

The age distribution of different denominations

Denomination was then correlated with age. Where there is a higher proportion of younger respondents this may provide some indication of the success which a particular denomination is having in passing on the Christian faith. The Orthodox had the most even age distribution, followed closely by the Catholics, with the Pentecostals and the Baptists not far behind. At the other end of the scale were, surprisingly, the Evangelicals and the Presbyterians. However, these findings should be regarded as extremely tentative; they require further research.

The age distribution of each denomination

Denomination and age	Under 35	35-54	55-64	65 and older	Sample size
Methodists	6%	18%	22%	54%	50
Anglicans	3%	14%	25%	58%	332
Baptists	5%	22%	24%	49%	193
Presbyterians	2%	15%	15%	69%	54
Evangelical	6%	12%	17%	64%	98
Orthodox	11%	37%	21%	32%	19
Christian no denomination	5%	18%	24%	54%	466
Pentecostal	2%	23%	29%	46%	92
Roman Catholic	16%	28%	21%	36%	248
Average/ sample size	6 % (93)	19% (301)	23% (356)	52% (802)	100 (1,552)

Christians of no denomination were highly likely to have traditional, biblical beliefs

Next, denomination was correlated with social attitudes. The table below shows the proportion of each denomination who agree with the social attitude statements. For ease of analysis a composite variable was also created whereby respondents were grouped into the categories ‘most traditional’, ‘slightly less traditional’ and ‘least traditional’. This was done by scoring each respondent according to whether they had answered ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘I’m not sure’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’, to each question with each response having a scaled numerical value. These were then divided into three more or less even categories: most traditional, less traditional, least traditional. The percentage of each denomination who fall into the ‘most traditional’ category of belief is presented in the second to last column in the table below.

The proportion holding the most orthodox social attitudes within each denomination

Denomination/Style of Worship	Percentage who agree with the statement 'We are all born male or female'	Percentage who agree with the statement 'Real marriage is between a man and a woman'	Percentage who agree with the statement 'It is always wrong to have an abortion'	Percentage who agree with the statement 'We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage'	Percentage who fall into the 'most traditional' category of belief	Percentages of each denomination
Methodists	92%	86%	38%	70%	38%	3%
Anglicans	90%	87%	52%	79%	49%	21%
Baptists	81%	78%	55%	80%	53%	12%
Presbyterians	87%	89%	57%	80%	57%	4%
Evangelical	98%	97%	68%	95%	65%	6%
Orthodox	95%	100%	79%	90%	68%	1%
Christian no denomination	99%	99%	74%	94%	72%	30%
Pentecostal	100%	100%	74%	96%	73%	6%
Roman Catholic	96%	95%	86%	86%	81%	16%
Average/sample size	93% (1450)	93% (1435)	67% (1037)	87% (1344)	64% (995)	100% (1552)

As Churches become increasingly secularised, Christians are leaving them

In the process of categorising denominations, patterns did emerge. Respondents who selected from Methodists, Anglicans, or Baptists were *least likely* to be in the most traditional/orthodox categories. Those who selected Roman Catholic, Pentecostal or 'Christian no denomination' tended to be more likely to have traditional views. It is surprising to see Roman Catholicism, a highly organised form of Christianity, grouped with the Pentecostals and the 'Christians no denomination'. What the data on 'Christian no denomination' suggests is that a great many Christians who have the most orthodox beliefs are not finding sufficient nourishment within their denomination and are looking elsewhere, and this was indeed a common theme emerging in the qualitative data.

'I have stopped going to church because of the behaviour of senior clerics who have allowed fashionable politics to override the word of God.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

'Even in church I have not been allowed to express my Christian faith as it does not support the latest trends. Therefore, I left the church.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'I am now out of our church after being members for 23 years because of the change in doctrine, embracing same sex marriage. I miss fellowship and would like to be back in a church setting. As a large organisation, is it within your means to help folk to set up local cell groups, as I know that there are others similar to my husband and I?' (Female, 65 or older, author, Christian no denomination)

'When our now 17-year-old child was young (we adopted her as a family member from birth) it was easy. Now she is older it is impossible to find teaching of the required standard in any local church. We walked out of our final church two years ago, after enduring it for a mere 18 months, and now teach our child the Bible ourselves and conduct home services (we also removed her from the "education" system two years ago and home-educated her until she 'left' school this July). Thanks to God, her Bible belief remains strong.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, no denomination because very poor church standards leave me with no choice)

'I have stopped going to mainstream churches, and not only the Anglican church because the gospel that is being taught in them falls far short of the Gospel which is found in Scripture. Aspects not taught or even mentioned and what is shared is usually watered down to satisfy itching ears. But the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is still VERY MUCH ALIVE in this country, just not in the formal churches. We've all run away from false gospels.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

Often problems had arisen because respondents had found an increasing prevalence of secular beliefs within their church:

'I am a Pastor of an independent Pentecostal Church. We believe strongly in the Bible from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. My views on the truth of the Bible have had me "cancelled" from the network of churches in our town when I asked whether a denomination accepting same sex marriage would become an apostate denomination and if so, would they (as a denomination, not individuals within it) be treated in accordance with the teachings of Jesus.' (Male, 65 or older, employed, Christian no denomination)

'My Pro-Life Christian faith is not even understood by the Archbishop of Canterbury! My husband and I experienced a lot of vitriol over refusing the vaccines on ethical grounds.' (Female, 55-64, semi-retired, Christian no denomination)

'Personally, I have been criticised for posting anti-abortion material on my church's Facebook page. After being asked to remove it I explained I couldn't do so in good conscience. I have also recently experienced pushback within my church for stating that we should never affirm same-sex partnerships or lifestyles.' (Male, 35-44, disabled, Baptist but also hold with teachings of other reformed denominations)

'Within the C of E there is active discouragement of traditional views. Experienced a very dismissive attitude from our Bishop when challenging her last year re the appointment of Stephen Knott and the direction of travel being undertaken by the Living in Love and Faith initiative.' (Female, 65 or older, self-employed, was Anglican but now hold far more loosely to church membership despite being back on the PCC)

And they were being discriminated against within their church for their own orthodox Christian belief.

'In my case it is the church who are doing the discrimination.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Yes, but they struggle to feel comfortable in the church after seeing the discrimination I faced from the church we were part of.' (Female, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

'I know of no other faith where the Church Leaders stop a Parishioner sharing their faith.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Even the church discriminates against its flock - witness the exodus and falling attendances at churches over a certain bishop questioning the reference to our Father not to mention the past and present Archbishops espousing their political views. Politics is for politicians not for clergy.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

Most worryingly, church employees and potential clergy appeared to have been actively discriminated against *by their church* for their Christian belief:

'I have been persecuted for my religious belief by my employer: The Church.' (Male, 45-54, Church Minister, Baptist)

'My brother was studying at the Baptist college in Bristol and was told to keep quiet about his beliefs that the Bible is the word of God and other issues because the dean wanted to retire without any issues. There were plenty of people in the leadership who did not believe in the Bible, God or have a personal relationship with the Lord. The people who held more traditional beliefs were hounded out, disciplined and told to keep quiet! Even in secular university this would not happen. It should be investigated!' (Female, 25-34, employed, Baptist)

'As mentioned above. I am a Methodist Minister who has been suspended due to an accusation made against me on theological grounds.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Methodist)

'In the C of E I am told I was twice passed over from becoming a prebendary of Hereford Cathedral after opposing same sex blessings and also was thrown off the diocesan exorcism group for being retired when no others were excluded for being retired!' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'A Christian friend who was employed in high profile work for the Bishop couldn't continue in her role with a clear conscience because her disagreement with the Bishop's stance was so strong. Her departure was met with total disdain & arrogance.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

'A friend was dismissed from his job at a Church in Wales high school on account of expressing orthodox Christian beliefs about marriage and life preservation. He was considered too outspoken and a safeguarding risk.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Calvary Chapel)

These findings cast a different light on the state of Christian belief as understood by the Church of England. The Church of England appears intent on seeking human approval by buying into progressive and popular ideologies such as feminism and most recently LGBT+. But people know that human approval is cheap. We are far more impressed by those who are rising to the challenge of seeking approval from God. It would seem that the capitulation to secular values and lack of faithful leadership is what is causing the Church of England to lose its flock:

'Sadly, we are not as churches standing for what we believe. The Bible is being misinterpreted or watered down to accommodate the beliefs of the world.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Pentecostal)

'The Bible is considered outdated & offensive by today's woke generation especially by the LGBTQIP2SAA? community.

It does not help when the so-called Church-of-England is itself walking on the wide path and no longer follows or listens to Jesus via the Holy Spirit. Recently important members of the Church of England are considering making wording changes to the Bible.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Even the church discriminates against its flock - witness the exodus and falling attendances at churches over a certain bishop questioning the reference to our Father not to mention the past and present Archbishops espousing their political views. Politics is for politicians not for clergy.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'I have stopped going to church because of the behaviour of senior clerics who have allowed fashionable politics to override the word of God.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

'Tend to get laughed at, whereas concerns of Islam or Judaism will be listened to. Not helped by the C of E itself being utterly unwilling/incapable of standing up for Christian values.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

One of the tiny number of non-Christian respondents who filled in our questionnaire no longer called herself a Christian, because she could not agree with the woke ideology which her Church had presented to her as Christian faith:

'Although I was brought up Christian, there are aspects of Christianity which don't sit comfortably with me, which is why I didn't tick "Christian". However, I do believe in God and support the right of Christians to practise their beliefs. I go to church with the vicar aware of my views, and have spoken to him of my opposition to "gender" ideology. He seems to think God welcomes everyone just as they are, which has to include participating in a lie, while I insist that it is kinder to remind people of the truth that humans cannot change sex and "gender" is some misguided, nebulous belief like a pseudo-religion. We're still "friends" but I'm disappointed that the C of E does not take a lead on clamping down on this dangerous nonsense and I have been made to feel like some kind of bigot when I'm not one.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, other religion)

The absence of leadership

Ultimately responsibility was seen to lie with the Church leadership, in particular the leadership of the Church of England. It was felt that the complete failure of the leadership to defend and protect the Christian faith, let alone evangelise, left the laity exposed to the widespread contempt for Christianity. It is not surprising that Christians find themselves discriminated against by wider society, when, as we saw earlier, they are discriminated against within their very own church.

'I think Christians are thought of as soft, wishy, washy in their beliefs. And that Christian faith leaders from the majority denominations do not provide a strong backing to Christian and biblical beliefs and morals. Many are 'woke', and do not preach the full Gospel.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'The media appears to be less concerned about discrimination against Christians: it rarely mentions it. Comedy programmes blaspheme against Christians but never against Islam. Church leaders never seem to complain so there is a belief that Christians are fair game.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'On the whole, I don't think we as Christians tend to stand up for each other, and that the leaders of the established churches in UK are sadly lacking in this!' (Female, 55-64, employed, Messianic)

'Would other religions be treated in the same way as Christians for their beliefs? The Church of England need leaders not managers.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

'The Archbishop of Canterbury has done a marvellous job at watering down what the Bible teaches and can't recognise what a sun is. So, Christianity is being attacked from within and without.' (Female, 55-64, retired, Church of England)

'Pride started off, with a weekend, then pushed it to a week and now a month. What nonsense! Little children don't want to see grown men gyrating with their bottoms hanging out of their pants in cut outs. It's pure Evil that walks Britain's streets now. Where is the fight back from all the empty Christian churches? And as for the archbishop he would sell the whole of England down the river in a hand basket.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'The Bishops of the Anglican and Roman Catholic church have kept a stony silence and in some cases even capitulating to the gay and the woke movement. If the leaders are silent and weak, the Christians who speak out against these things are shunned.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

'It is easier to be gay in the UK than it is to be a Christian. Further, the Bishops do not stand up for Christian values. They are so busy trying to pander to the world and the LGBTQ+ agenda that they have lost their credibility as Church Leaders. Non-Christians don't even know where the church stands on issues of morality.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Church of England)

'There is more persecution against Christians today in Muslim countries than at any other time but the government and news people say nothing. Even the archbishop and church leaders are silent. Let's not pretend. Muslims are here to Islamise the west and the church has not done its job of evangelising. I believe the church not doing evangelism and turning its back on the gospel and accepting other gods this is God's judgement on our nation. The church should be calling for repentance and seeking God. Not watering down the Bible and compromising its teaching.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'What has not helped Christianity is the Church of England and its utter failure to be a beacon of the Christian faith and stand up (or be set apart) for the Gospel by not using its voice or influence it could have in Parliament.' (Male, 45-54, Christian no denomination)

'There seems little or no media interest in the atrocities committed against Christians in other countries. Churches in my locality seem to bury their heads in the sand which is one of the reasons I do not attend a church, although I am a confirmed C of E and Methodist member.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

'Basically, because Church leaders are 'jellyfish' = no back bone. So no support from them. Employers are too frightened to do anything which may be seen as controversial, however if there was backing from the likes of the head of C of E (Welby is that his name) or the King of England = head of the church, they may act differently.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

As we saw earlier, the quantitative data revealed the fascinating phenomenon of a group of Christians growing vigorously outside the confines of any institutional Church. A characteristic which distinguished these 'Christians no denomination' was

an adherence to traditional, orthodox Christian faith. They were not alone in this. The Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Christians no denomination all had very similar patterns of belief. What this suggests is that the main denominations are not providing the necessary conditions, of love of God and obedience to Holy Scripture, on which they feel they can build their faith. Unfortunately, even the Catholic Church, sometimes assumed to be a bastion of traditional faith, appears under the current leadership to be intent on following the Church of England by introducing secular values in place of Christian faith.

The result is that many Christians are forced into the position of building from the grassroots upwards in much the way which the early apostles had to do.

That they are disappointed and disillusioned with the Churches emerged clearly from the research. Several respondents talked about having to leave Churches because they no longer taught Christianity as revealed in the Bible. Worse than that, they even described being discriminated against within the Church, or pushed out from the Church, because they did not accept secular ideologies which were taking root within it. This must have been particularly galling for the church ministers who found themselves prevented from practising their calling, because they had been pushed out as a result of their faithfulness to God.

These experiences are key to explaining what we uncovered in the preceding chapters. There is a great deal of ignorance in our secular society about what Christianity is, and this has led to the lack of understanding and ubiquitous discrimination which we have seen directed against Christians. One of the main features which has emerged throughout the data is an almost mocking contempt for Christianity, where people blaspheme freely against Christians, and the media is derisive about Christian faith. The conclusion is perhaps inescapable that this has been allowed to happen because Christians who have power and authority to stand up for Christianity in the public forum are conspicuously failing to defend the faith.

Chapter Ten

WHY ARE CHRISTIANS DISCRIMINATED AGAINST?

Many respondents identified the media as having a central role in encouraging discrimination against Christians. This was either through creating foolish or unpleasant characters in television programmes, allowing anti-Christian blasphemy, or simply by perpetuating existing stereotypes. This helped to create the climate described in Chapter Six in which Christians are seen as fair game.

'Christianity has been misrepresented by all the media and especially the BBC. Films, soap operas, detective series, etc., usually portray Christians as stupid, intolerant, and indeed evil. (Exceptions: Fr Brown, Sister Boniface.) The great majority of the population know very little, if anything, about Christian principles. Not surprising, as few Christians themselves appear to know and understand a great deal either.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

'Christianity is scorned and mocked in so many ways - think of the way Christians are portrayed in films/ sitcoms like The Vicar of Dibley.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Pentecostal but I'm not any denomination - just Bible believing)

'The media has been enabled to give a negative platform of Christianity e.g., by allowing language ("God", "Jesus") to be used in everyday speech as swear words to those of no or little faith which is offensive to those of Christian faith. The same cannot be said of Islam.' (Male, 45-54, employed, Church of England)

The media is seen as portraying Christians negatively, but not other faiths or identity groups:

'The BBC often seems to portray Christianity in a negative way whereas it rarely provides the same stereotypes against Atheists, Agnostics or Muslims. This impacts how people feel whenever I bring up issues of faith in conversations. These caricatures are brought up in discussions.' (Male, 55-64, employed, Christian no denomination)

'Discrimination against Christians is often covertly supported by all forms of media; and in some cases not treated as discrimination but Christians are vilified instead and treated or tagged with negative adjectives. Whereas people of other faiths are not treated same. The media generally shy away from

speaking negatively about people of other faith, but finds it very easy to go against Christians for standing for the teachings of the bible.’ (Male, 55-64, employed, Pentecostal)

‘I think there is a lot of contempt about Christianity often caused by the mainstream media highlighting unacceptable behaviour by Christians because bad news sells. There is also fear in the same media to comment on similar behaviour among non-Christian faiths.’ (Male, 65 or older, retired, Baptist)

‘Have you ever noticed how often, in murder mystery TV programmes/films it is the Christian who did it. It is never the homosexual or any other group that claims discrimination. That’s because it is seen as okay to target Christians but not any other group.’ (Female, 55-64, retired, Christian no denomination)

Whereas other religious groups tended to get more positive publicity:

‘Christianity is not publicised in the media as much as other faiths. When it is it tends to come under criticism.’ (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

We saw earlier a parent with a child at a Church school who reported how her son was taught about the persecution of Muslims but the persecution of Christians was completely ignored.⁸¹ Respondents also commented on the fact that the persecution against Christians happening in other countries was not reported at all on television, despite the fact that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world.⁸²

‘Discrimination against, torture and genocide of Christians is never reported in the mainstream media. The Catholic Church is being destroyed in China. Churches are bulldozed, faithful and clergy are imprisoned (e.g Cardinal Zen). In Pakistan women in particular are sentenced to death for conversion. In Africa Muslims have abducted Christian girls, murdered clergy and destroyed Christian communities. None of this is reported.’ (Male, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

⁸¹ *‘My son’s CofE school, for his ‘enrichment day’ did a day on Islamophobia. They had discussion, and an Imam on an online teaching. When I pointed out it was Christianity that is the world’s most persecuted religion, they were surprised and promised to look at that in the future. We will see.’ (Female, 55-64, housewife, Christian no denomination). See page 72.*

⁸² Christianity Is the World’s Most Persecuted Religion, Confirms New Report. (last accessed 11/04/24)

'Discrimination against Christians is often ignored or hidden. e.g., Christian churches in many nations have been vandalised or destroyed but it is given no coverage in the media. Also, the persecution of Christians in Moslem nations is often not mentioned.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Christian no denomination)

This has been demonstrated most recently by the slaughter of over 300 Christians by Muslims in Nigeria over the Christmas period which does not appear to have received any attention in the mainstream media.⁸³

Earlier it was discussed how Christianity is associated with 'the establishment' and with power and dominance. This was reflected in the British Social Attitudes Survey which shows that 61% of the British population believe that religious organisations have too much power, or far too much power. They believe religious leaders try to influence voting behaviour although the vast majority of us do not think that they should.⁸⁴ Bishops sit in the House of Lords, we have church schools, the Church of England is the established Church and our King is at the head of it. As Christianity is associated with power and privilege, people feel justified in putting us down.

'Because Christianity is regarded by many as the "mainstream" or "Established" religion of the UK I think discrimination against Christians is tolerated, whereas for other religions (particularly Islam and Hinduism) this is not tolerated.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

'Christianity in the UK is seen as outdated and there is a backlash against it here. At times it feels as though there is over familiarity with the establishment and the history of the religion and the values have been rejected so people feel free to mock it or look upon it disdainfully.' (Female, 55-64, employed, Roman Catholic)

Christians were also seen as a majority:

'I have been told, quite bluntly by people, that it is impossible to discriminate against Christians because they're in the majority and control everything.' (Female, 35-44, freelancer, I have been with different denominations at different times, including, CoE, Baptist, Messianic Jewish, Pentecostal,

⁸³ <https://www.conservativewoman.co.uk/the-ongoing-genocide-the-world-ignores/> (last accessed 16/01/2024)

⁸⁴ *Op cit.* p.18

Calvinist, Spirit Contemporary and Mennonite. I don't really care what denomination it is so long as they actually follow the bible, so ultimately, I consider myself a "biblical Christian" if anything.)

'Discrimination is seen as targeting minorities and many people seem to think Christians are in the majority. (Female, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

We are assumed to be a majority group therefore not protected nor understood even.' (Female, 65 or older, retired, Roman Catholic)

'There is a general belief that it is not possible to discriminate against Christians as they are perceived as not being a minority group.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Methodist)

While the heads of the Church may have influence, they do not use their privilege to promote Christianity. We saw a recent example when Archbishop Welby released a video where he spent over two minutes discussing the virtues of the Hindus while wishing them a happy Diwali. He did not once mention that Jesus Christ is the Christian's example of light.⁸⁵ I do not recall him doing promotional videos for the Christian faith. Instead of promoting Christianity in the public sphere, or using their privileged access to it to educate people about Christianity, Church leaders almost seem to be ashamed of their faith. And as one respondent explained:

'Christian faith is seen as part of the problems that identity politics seeks to address. Hinduism, Islam and other faiths are seen as minorities, inevitably oppressed by the Christian majority, even though that perception both of Christianity and of Christianity's dominant power is erroneous.' (Male, 65 or older, retired, Church of England)

Many of the Christian respondents in the survey believe that we are part of the majority and part of the establishment, and therefore it is not possible to discriminate against us:

'I think there is a prevailing attitude in Christian circles that any justice for those of other faiths is a discrimination against Christianity. We who are Christians have enjoyed privileges over others for centuries so any attempt at equality and justice for others will automatically feel like discrimination

⁸⁵ <https://anglican.ink/2023/11/12/justin-welby-wishes-hindus-a-happy-diwali/> (last accessed 16/01/2024)

even when it's not. I hope this study looks at facts rather than feelings, impressions or opinions.'
(Female, 55-64, employed, Baptist)

'Because Christians are often unthinking in their words and actions, they think we are in a Christian country and therefore we have more rights than others. Discrimination and persecution...look at the countries where this is happening for real, where people are losing their life and being imprisoned, Start campaigning for them.' *(Female, 45-54, employed, Baptist)*

'We Christians should expect no more favours from the state than any other faith followers or, indeed, those of no faith.' *(Male, 65 or older, retired, Methodist/URC/Moravian)*

'Christianity has historically enjoyed too much privilege. The equalisations of rights has led many Christians to think they are being punished for being Christian, when in fact that is not the case.'
(Male, 45-54, employed, no religion)

'Christianity is still to an extent the state religion and it occupies a position of power (House of Lords etc). I think it makes sense that we should be more careful about discrimination against people of other religions which are not as represented in our political system.' *(Male, 18-24, employed, Roman Catholic)*

'I have never experienced discrimination due to my Christian faith. In fact, I feel strongly that my Christianity gives me privileged access to British society's riches and resources.' *(Male, 18-24, employed, Church of England)*

'Christians are very fortunate. We should look out for and protect those members of our community who really are discriminated against, or who have been the targets of discrimination by Christians historically.' *(Male, 45-54, employer, Church of England)*

'It amazes me that Christians, who have been persecuting people they disagree with for many hundreds of years, have made no effort to remove the log from their own eyes before they try to take the speck from the eyes of others.' *(Male, 55-64, househusband, Baptist)*

'I think Christians have had a huge voice in all areas of society and I believe that there is a balancing taking place to allow for other religions to have the same freedom of speech and influence.' *(Female, 25-34, employed, Christian no denomination)*

One respondent associated Bible believing, orthodox Christians with the establishment precisely because we are 'conservative'. In fact, the establishment all too often seems to be occupied by progressive liberals who would like to disown 'conservative' Christians. So it would appear that this young man could not be further from the truth:

'Shame on you, you vile bigots. You would turn Jesus away from your house and brand him a terrorist, or a homeless man. Do not forget that. Jesus was a dark-skinned Syrian Jew. He was born into a peasant family and lived a modest nomadic life. His disciples were peasants and workers. His friends were the poor, the sick and the elderly. Do not forget that Mary Magdalene was a sex worker. Jesus was not intolerant, he loved all, and sought to save the poor and oppressed peoples of the world, and was killed by the wealthy land-owning establishment as they feared his message. You conservatives stand on the side of that wealthy establishment. I have every confidence that, had you lived in Jesus' day, you would have cheered with the Romans as they crucified Jesus. Do not use his name in vain, do not pretend to be a Christian when you are clearly not. (Male 18-24, employed, Methodist)

These quotes reveal a significant difference between some Christians who regard us as privileged and others who regard us as discriminated against. This difference between these groups could be accounted for by social attitudes which we examined in Chapter Five, The Social Attitudes of Christians.

For example, we saw how 58% of those who agreed with the standard Christian belief that marriage is between a man and a woman felt hostility or ridicule from those around them. Less than half that number experienced hostility or discrimination if they did not share that belief. Nearly three times as many of those agreeing with this statement felt it necessary to hide their faith or belief. Twice as many felt that there were negative stereotypes about people from their faith background at their place of work or study. When it came to social issues, half as many who agreed that real marriage is between a man and a woman felt free to say what they thought at work. Only one third felt that religious discrimination was taken as seriously as other forms of discrimination. And so on.

The extent to which Christians experience discrimination and the extent to which they perceive Christianity as a privileged or persecuted religion is a function of the attitudes they hold.

The belief that Christians benefit from being part of the establishment, and that we are a majority in society, obscures what is really going on. As we saw earlier the number of Christians in this country has declined dramatically; particularly the number of Christians who believe that Jesus died for our sins and rose again and who actively practice our faith. Furthermore,

we have very few leaders, if any, to represent us. Both numerically and in terms of leadership, Christians are severely weakened. Yet we are perceived both from within and even more from without as belonging to a dominant majority faith.

Part of the problem may be that our discrimination laws protect people according to identity; identity as marked out by specific practices, clothing, foods or ethnicities. But this is not something Christians share in. Emphasizing our differences according to our identity is not really part of the Christian faith.

What is important in Christianity is being open about our faith in Jesus:

'Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven'. Matthew 10:32

And as our beliefs are formed from our faith, this also means being open and honest about what we believe. However, our equality laws don't appear to have given so much attention to freedom of expression and freedom of belief.

Christianity stands for everything LGBT+ would like to destroy

Another problem for Christians is that a great deal of the discrimination that affects Christians is because of the power and influence of the LGBT+ movement, which stands in stark opposition to Christian faith. In many ways it was Christianity which shaped and moulded sexuality to an ideal where it was confined to families and where there were strict boundaries around sexual behaviour. The monogamous family which forms a cornerstone for our civilisation was very much the achievement of Christianity. And it is this which the LGBT+ movement would like to see undone.

Kuby in her book *The Global Sexual Revolution* describes how unique the key beliefs of Christianity were and how they transformed the sexual and social behaviour of the societies with which they came into contact. For example, the idea that humans were created in the image of God. That creating us as male and female was one of God's earliest and most foundational acts. That man and woman were called to be complementary to one another. That marriage has a central and sacramental status and is an analogy for God's relationship to His people. That men and women were called to be fruitful and the co-creators of new human beings. By revealing the order of creation, Christianity shows up very clearly why

promiscuity, homosexuality, and the crossing of many other kinds of sexual boundary go against God's creation and are profoundly wrong.⁸⁶

For those who would prefer to reject God and live according to their own rules and ideas, His order is perceived as imposing restrictions. It is precisely this order which queer theory makes it very clear it would like to attack.

This may explain why, when Islam has a far less tolerant and far more punitive approach towards homosexuality than Christians do, it is Christianity which is so much more criticised.

Kirk and Madsen's book *After the Ball: How America will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s* was a key propaganda manual on how to promote homosexuality.⁸⁷ The detailed methodologies it outlined have been widely adopted. The book recognised the importance of trying to destroy Christianity in order to create their homosexual utopia. Marshall Kirk was a researcher in neuropsychiatry and Hunter Madsen had received a doctorate in politics and was an expert on public persuasion tactics and social marketing. Between them they wrote a very detailed practical handbook of sophisticated psychological persuasion and mass media propaganda techniques which were designed to make homosexuality a completely normal and integral part of the culture. The techniques proposed in the book have been widely applied and with a level of success which Kirk and Madsen could only have dreamt of.

Particularly notable is a tactical device used throughout the book to refer to religious dissenters and other critics of homosexual behaviour as 'bigots.' Their language is purposefully crude to enhance that idea. Much like the 'big lie' theory developed in the 1920s and 1930s by the Nazis, the constant repetition of this eventually has the desired psychological effect on masses of people.

Kirk and Madsen realised the importance of undermining Christianity and developed strategies to do so. The following quotation is from an article by Kirk which set out some of the arguments which later appeared in their book:

⁸⁶ Kuby, G., Kirchner, J.P. and Spaemann, R., 2016. *The global sexual revolution: Destruction of freedom in the name of freedom*. Angelico Press.

⁸⁷ Kirk, M. and Madsen, H., 1989. *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer It's Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*. *Harvard: Plume books*.

*'While public opinion is one primary source of mainstream values, religious authority is the other. When conservative churches condemn gays, there are only two things we can do to confound the homophobia of true believers. First, we can use talk to muddy the moral waters. This means publicizing support for gays by more moderate churches, raising theological objections of our own about conservative interpretation of biblical teaching and exposing hatred and inconsistency. We can undermine the moral authority of homophobic churches by portraying them as antiquated and backwards, badly out of step with the times and with the latest findings of psychology.'*⁸⁸

Institutions with huge influence and financial clout are pushing for restrictions on religious freedom when it comes to matters of sexuality.

It was recently reported that the UN Human Rights Office had called on governments to limit freedom of religion when religious leaders and groups oppose homosexual/trans issues. The report, written by trans activists earlier this year, called on governments to censor religious leaders with traditional beliefs. It also called for support of dissident religious groups that agitate against traditional beliefs about marriage and family. They want dissidents to change religious teachings from within.⁸⁹

That UN report was fully backed by the US government and EU officials, and it is based on dozens of already existing Western policies and programmes that seek to control religion to promote homosexual/trans issues.

This chapter has concentrated on some of the pressures Christians are up against. The last chapter showed how secular ideologies appear to have infiltrated the church. However, God is in charge and allows bad things to happen because He can bring good out of bad. So, we see there are positive stories emerging as well.

The qualitative data showed that many in the Church of England and other denominations are becoming disillusioned with the lack of faithful teaching within the Church and are turning elsewhere. This 'elsewhere' seems to be a grassroots form of Christianity which takes place either in people's homes, or online, or in small Churches. Many Christians appear to be finding that they are better able to hold on to their love of Jesus, biblical teachings, and the Christian way of living outside the main

⁸⁸ Kirk, M. and Pill, E., 1987. The overhauling of straight America. *Guide Magazine*, pp.7-14. Alternatively could use a secondary source: The Most Influential Essay You've Never Heard Of (christianpost.com)

⁸⁹ https://c-fam.org/friday_fax/analysis-for-western-countries-freedom-of-religion-ends-where-lgbt-rights-begin/

denominations rather than within them. Christians may feel freer and more able to be faithful to their beliefs when participating in a Bible study group, prayer meeting, or praise and worship from their own homes. Perhaps there is also the comfort of knowing that this grassroots form of Christianity may look more similar to that found in the early Church.

These non-denominational Christians will find fellow travellers amongst the Pentecostals and Evangelicals who belong to a whole range of small independent Churches. They may also find fellow travellers from among the Orthodox. And if the Catholic Church too, should adopt a top-down modernising progressive agenda, a grassroots movement might even take shape within the Catholic Church.

The focus on this report has been on the difficulties which Christians face as a result of ignorance about and prejudice towards Christians and the Christian faith. However, the report is not intended to leave Christians feeling discouraged and disheartened. Nor is it intended as a contribution towards a 'victimhood Olympics' which the Public Sector Equality Duty inadvertently seems to promote. It is not even intended to help demand more 'rights' for Christians, although it would be good to be treated equally in the eyes of the law. We were told to expect humiliation, mockery and disadvantage at best, when we signed our lives over to Christ.

Rather the intention is to provoke a sense of urgency and indignation. We live in a once Christian society currently plagued by false ideologies which are doing the people of this nation, particularly the young, enormous harm. It is only the truth which Christianity brings which can restore our society to health. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to defend and promote Christian beliefs in the public square, to challenge those with power over us when they try to suppress our faith or treat us unjustly on account of it, and to find opportunities to talk about our faith and our beliefs and the treasure these give us. Only by defending and promoting the faith which has given so much to this country, can we bring people back to Jesus Christ.

If you would like to donate to the work of *Voice for Justice UK*



The bank details:

BANK (BACS) TRANSFER

Name: Voice for Justice UK

Please add "CIDAC" as the reference

Sort Code:

20-01-09

Account:

73365476

Appendix 1

Table showing level of agreement and disagreement with 'If I share or discuss my religious beliefs I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me.'

A general question on social acceptance	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree	Sample size
If I share or discuss my religious beliefs I feel hostility or ridicule from those around me	56%	19%	25%	100% (1,562)
I often feel the need to hide my faith or beliefs	26%	20%	53%	100% (1,562)
I have been disadvantaged at work on account of my faith	18%	16%	65%	100% (1,562)

Appendix 2

How social attitudes vary by denomination

Denomination	We are all born male and female	Real marriage is between a man and a woman	It is always wrong to have an abortion	We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage	Social attitudes percentage score based on average
'Free' Church	94%	93%	65%	90%	86%
Baptist	74%	67%	46%	72%	65%
Christian no denomination	99%	99%	74%	94%	92%
Church of England	90%	87%	54%	77%	77%
Methodist	93%	83%	41%	62%	70%
Orthodox	93%	100%	73%	87%	88%
Presbyterian	92%	92%	69%	73%	82%
Roman Catholic	95%	94%	84%	88%	90%
Average	91%	91%	66%	84%	83%

Appendix 3

FREEDOM IN FAITH SURVEY

In recent years there have been a number of legal cases involving Christians who have lost their jobs, or been arrested or prevented from practising their faith. Because of this Voice for Justice UK are launching a *Commission a[Inquiry into Discrimination Against Christians* (CIDAC) to explore this further.

Through CIDAC people who believe they have been discriminated against on account of their Christian faith will have a body to which they can report their experiences.

Because of this spate of legal cases, CIDAC is focussing on Christians. Also because Christians are not in a minority group in the same way that for example Jews and Muslims are, discrimination against Christians has not been properly explored in this country till now.

However this does not mean that we aren't interested in the experiences of people from other faith groups. We are! To this end we have produced a questionnaire for people of any faith or belief group. So whether you are Christian or not, please feel free to fill in this survey and also pass it on to you friends.

If you believe you have been affected by these issues we would like to hear from you. All information will be treated with absolute confidentiality. If you would like to talk to us about your experiences please write to us at admin@cidac.org.uk

* Required

1. If you are interested in the findings of this questionnaire please leave your email address in the text box below.

2. First we would like to know a little bit about you. *

What is your sex?

Male

Female

3. What is your age? *

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65 or older

4. Please could you tell us about your main occupation. *

Employed

Employer

Student

Housewife or househusband or stay at home parent

Retired

Other

5. We would like to know a little bit about your social attitudes. Please could you say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. *

	Strongly Agree	Agree	I'm not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
We are all born male or female.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Real marriage is between a man and a woman.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is always wrong to have an abortion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We should avoid having sexual relations before marriage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. Are you Christian? *

Yes

No

7. Which religion do you belong to? *

Muslim

Jewish

No religion

Other religion

8. Which denomination do you belong to? *

Church of England/ Anglican

Roman Catholic

Presbyterian

Methodist

Baptist

Christian no denomination

Other

9. We would like to find out to what extent people who have a religious belief feel free to express themselves and their religious beliefs. Please could you say the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. *

Strongly

Agree

Agree

I'm not sure

Disagree

Strongly
disagree

Generally I
feel
comfortable
talking about
my faith and
beliefs.

Generally I
feel I can be
true to
myself.

When it
comes to
social issues I
feel free to
say what I
think.

I often feel
the need to
hide my faith
or beliefs.

If I share or
discuss my
religious
beliefs I
sometimes
feel
hostility or
ridicule
from those
around me.

10. Could you say to what extent you agree or disagree that you feel free to express your religious beliefs on mainstream social media.

Strongly Agree

Agree Disagree

Strongly Disagree

11. We would like to ask you some questions about your place of work or study. If are not employed or do not study please feel free to leave this question out.

Do you work/study mainly outside the home or mainly in your home?

I spend more time in my place of work

I spend more time working/studying at home

I do a mixture of both

12. Could you say to whether you agree or disagree that the following statements provide an accurate description of

your place of work or study. If you are now retired please feel free to reply based on your experiences when you were at work.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	I am not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel comfortable wearing clothing or symbols associated with my faith.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think there are negative stereotypes about people from my faith background at my place of work/study.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious discrimination is taken just as seriously as discrimination against other protected characteristics such as race or sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Do you feel you have been disadvantaged in any way at your place of work/study on account of your faith? If you are not currently working please reply based on your experiences.

Yes

No

Not sure

14. If yes, which sector were you working in?

Private Sector

Public Sector

Third Sector

Other

15. If you have ever experienced disadvantage or believe that you have been discriminated against in some way on account of your religious beliefs please could you tell us about it in the space below.

16. Do you think discrimination against people of your faith background at work, or in everyday life, is treated just as seriously as discrimination against people of other religions? *

Yes

No

I'm not sure.

17. If you don't think discrimination against people of your religion is treated just as seriously as discrimination against people of other religions please can you tell us more about why you feel like this.

18. Have you felt able to raise your children in line with your religious beliefs? If you have not felt able to do so please explain why in the comment box below.

19. Are you aware of people of your religion who have been adversely affected on account of their faith? Please tick as many boxes as apply.

Losing their job or having their pay or promotion affected.

Being prevented from practising their faith.

Being arrested on account of their faith.

Had their bank account closed.

20. If you or anyone you know personally has been disadvantaged on account of their religious belief please feel free to tell us more about it here.

21. If there is anything else you would like to tell us please do so here.

22. Thank you for filling in this questionnaire. If you would like to find out more about the findings of the survey please provide your email address in the text box below. We will soon be launching CIDAC - a Commission of Inquiry into Discrimination Against Christians. If you feel that you have yourself experienced discrimination on account of your Christian faith and would like to tell us about it please contact us on admin@cidac.org.uk. This will be entirely confidential. If you know of others who you think might fill in this survey please pass this on.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Microsoft. The data you submit will be sent to the form owner.



Microsoft Forms