

# ARCHDIOCESE OF GLASGOW

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## CLAUSE 28 ARTICLE BY CARDINAL THOMAS J. WINNING FOR THE DAILY TELEGRAPH - LONDON

After 50 years as a priest and more than 25 as a bishop I usually feel that not a lot will shock me. But in recent days I have been genuinely horrified to see some of the literature and video material which is already in existence and which will be allowed into our schools if Clause 28 is abolished.

In the guise of "health promotion" one authority has suggested that children as young as 13 may like to role-play the part of a homosexual "coming out"; others will be asked to put themselves in the position of a married man caught having homosexual sex in public toilets or play the part of a transvestite cabaret artist.

This is not the stuff of fiction ... it really exists and is being made available for use, in this case by one of the English Health Promotion services.

Lest anyone feel that the danger is over-stated it should be remembered that the publishers of the notorious book "Jenny lives with Eric and Martin" - which did more than any other piece of "literature" to bring about clause 28 - are on the record as stating that if, and when, section 28 is repealed they will reprint the offensive material and make it available to every school in the land which asks for it.

The stakes are high, and the need for action is clear.

It is a pity that in today's society anyone who raises a voice of concern on this issue is regarded as homophobic. To accuse Christians of homophobia is to insult and demean us. The basic Christian principle of rejecting the sin while loving the sinner cannot be repeated often enough.

The Church's position is quite clear. Homosexual persons are to be treated with the same respect as anyone else. However homosexual acts are inherently wrong and the homosexual lifestyle cannot and should not be presented as the moral equivalent of marriage and family life.

In recent days it has become clear that a similar view is shared by the vast majority of people in this country.

A broad coalition is now emerging to combat the threat which lies before us. In a recent poll 82 per cent of those questioned opposed the repeal of section 28. Today, in Scotland a campaign will be launched which will see Churches, parents groups, school boards, the Muslim community and concerned individuals from all over the country coming together to express the will of the erstwhile silent majority.

So far in England and Wales it seems that there is a strange silence on this issue. I cannot believe that Christians south of the border are any less concerned than those living north of Gretna!

Earlier this week I called on the silent majority in Scotland to make their voice heard. I am heartened by the response. Yesterday our office was inundated with calls from members of the public who are worried about the repeal of clause 28. I would hope that the silent majority will soon begin to make their voice heard in other parts of the country too.

I would also appeal to MPs and MSPs of all parties to examine their commitment to democracy on this issue. In Scotland, at least, it is said that constituents' mail is running 20 to one against repeal. The recent consultation exercise organised by the Scottish Executive resulted in an overwhelming opposition to the removal of the controversial clause.

Is it not clear therefore that our politicians have no democratic mandate to take this step, and in so-doing impose a values-free policy of political correctness on children, parents and, in fact, on society in general?

I have already made it clear that the Catholic Church, for its part, will allow no material promoting homosexual acts and lifestyles will be allowed in the classrooms of Catholic schools in Scotland.

And lest it be argued that such a position condemns confused teenagers to a life of misery, let us remember that Clause 28 does not prevent the discussion of homosexuality, nor does it prevent the counselling of teenagers confused about their sexuality. It most certainly does not prevent effective anti-bullying strategies being put in place. We all deplore bullying of whatever type and any school worth its salt will have effective anti-bullying measures in place. What Section 28 does is to prevent the promotion of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.

The current debate is not about homophobia, or discrimination or intolerance. It is about education. It is perfectly natural that parents (even those of no political or religious affiliation) should be concerned that their children will be exposed to material which they do not consider either appropriate or advisable.

I can think of no other issue on which politicians are so spectacularly out of touch with the views of the man and woman in the street than this. If they are not reminded of that fact they will push ahead with ever more damaging and immoral proposals.

That is why it is so important for all who are worried about the danger of gay proselytism to speak up and to speak up quickly. To do nothing is to silently consent.

In the face of an increasingly militant and vocal "gay rights" campaign, Scotland, and indeed the UK as a whole, needs the protection offered by clause 28.