

Pastoral Letter April 2010

Christians up against it

In one sense, this has always been so. Christians, by definition of who and what we are, are continually up against it. For a start, there is the classic triumvirate of the world, the flesh and the devil. These are ever present and ever active, and show their faces in predictable and unpredictable ways. So there is nothing new here.

At the present time, however, we are in the midst of a fresh season of Christians being up against it. To use the word persecution may be an overstatement (so far), but there are other words which apply very accurately to many Christians' current experience: words like sidelined, marginalised, victimised and discriminated against.

Several cases have caught the headlines. A Christian registrar dismissed for her conscientious stand for biblical morality. A Christian nurse suspended for offering to pray with a patient. A Christian teacher sacked for offering to do the same with a pupil and family. Christian hoteliers taken to court, having taken a stand on various matters of Scripture truth. Christian preachers harassed in the open air. Christians assaulted, threatened, 'gagged', ridiculed at work, in the press and media, and in society as a whole. All of which (and more) is regularly most faithfully documented by *The Christian Institute*, for whose work we are profoundly thankful to God. Their booklet, [*Marginalising Christians*](#), sets this out in detail.

So many of these troubles arise, directly or indirectly, from the obvious fact that there is a general forgetfulness (or ignorance) in parliament of a key responsibility which the people there bear, and for which they are solemnly answerable to God. What is that? It is to enable Christians to 'lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable (*or*; pleasing) in the sight of God our Saviour' (1 Timothy 2:2f).

Times as these, however, must be put to positive use. In ways such as these reminders:

- (1) 'It is the way the Master went; Should not the servant tread it still?'
- (2) Strength and wisdom, according to daily need and to suit every circumstance, is constantly and freely available to us from God. We only have to ask.
- (3) Our greater concern should be that the Lord will be magnified through his enabling of us to bear a faithful and patient testimony in the trials, rather than that the trials themselves be speedily removed.
- (4) Greater by far is he who is for us than all those put together who are against us – and his truth must stand and his kingdom cannot fail.
- (5) It is only here on earth that we are up against it. It will not be so in heaven, for 'There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest' (Job 3:17).