

## CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

David Phillips

In December new legislation will allow two people of the same sex to enter into a Civil Partnership and gain a new legal status of a 'civil partner'. Despite the claims of some this is intended to be a form of same-sex marriage. This is clear from the fact that the government and other supporters of the legislation resisted attempts to broaden out the provision to cover, for example, an adult and elderly relative or two sisters living together. Indeed Civil Partnerships are deliberately modelled on marriage. The Government website outlining the provision states, "Same-sex couples who form a civil partnership will have parity of treatment in a wide range of legal matters with those opposite-sex couples who enter into a civil marriage." It is significant that this statement can be found on the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bi- and trans- sexual) section of the *women and equality site*; this provision is aimed directly at providing legal benefits and protections to homosexual couples.

Entering into a civil partnership will mean making a commitment to provide for the partner and 'any children of the family'. The partner will be able to act as a parent of any children. The partners will be treated in the same way as a spouse for such things as child support, life assurance, insurance, tax, inheritance, pensions, immigration and so on.

The couple must both be of the same sex, they cannot already be in a civil partnership or marriage. They must be 16 years or older and cannot be within the prohibited degrees. If civil partnerships are not meant to be homosexual marriage, which some claim, then these represent a gross injustice since they discriminate against different sex couples who do not wish to enter a marriage relationship and, for example, against two sisters who wanted to secure the same benefits. The only possible reason for preventing a civil partnership between a closely related couple (the prohibited degrees) is to try and make civil partnerships seem like a marriage. This prohibition makes sense in the context of marriage because of the potential for genetic problems in offspring but it is meaningless in same-sex relationships.

Any place except for religious venues that is currently authorised to conduct marriages will automatically be authorised to conduct ceremonies for civil partnerships. Public notice will have to be given in advance but addresses are not included - presumably for fear that it might be misused.

The dissolution of a civil partnership will have to be done through the courts with the justification of unreasonable behaviour, separation or desertion. Same sex relationships registered in other countries (about a dozen at present) will be recognised in the UK, and entering into a civil partnership can be a means of securing immigration.

No Christians will wish to enter into such a relationship. Even if a couple genuinely had no intention of engaging in homophile sexual activity, which is clearly contrary to the revealed will of God, they would still be participating in something which makes a mockery of the God-given relationship of marriage and the justification for doing so would be purely to do with securing rights and privileges.

It should be noted that there have been attempts to revise the proposed incitement to religious hatred legislation to include homosexuality. If this ever proceeds then even criticising the practice in the way I have done in this article will become a crime.