TURN THE TIDE

Reclaiming Religious Freedom in the UK

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Second UK edition, February 2018

Published in the United States by Isaac Publishing
6729 Curran Street, McLean, Virginia 22101

ISBN: 978-0-9977033-5-1

Printed in the United Kingdom

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“The Church has a duty to protect the free practice of all faiths in this country.”

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
Lambeth Palace, February 2012

INTRODUCTION

Why this booklet has been written

This booklet has been written to explain the reason why Barnabas Fund is seeking a new Act of Parliament in the UK to guarantee seven fundamental aspects of freedom of religion. These seven freedoms have developed in the UK by various mechanisms over the last five centuries but are now under threat. See page 39-43 for more details. A law to protect and guarantee them is urgently needed.

Barnabas Fund is running a petition on this. Please go to www.OurReligiousFreedom.org or call 024 7623 1923 (+44 24 7623 1923 from overseas) for more details.

Tracing the heritage of religious liberty takes us back more than 800 years to Magna Carta. At that time, England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland were separate nations; it was long before Great Britain was created, let alone the United Kingdom. So Magna Carta's ringing call that "the English Church" must be free should not be seen as limited to England. We must see it as an affirmation to be embraced by the whole of the UK, but expressed in the language of its time and context.

We believe that God's hand has been over this nation. He has guided, blessed, provided and protected over centuries. In times of great sin and impending judgement, through the prayers of His people and the work of His saints like Wesley, Whitefield and others, judgement was averted. God in His mercy intervened.

We believe that, as a nation, the UK has again left the pathways of God. We have forsaken His laws, and we are faced with the possibility of the lampstand being removed from our country (Revelation 2:5). With this will probably come the loss of our fundamental religious freedoms. Yet we believe it is not too late. We believe that we are still, as a nation, in the hands of our sovereign Lord, that it is He who will determine our destiny. Meanwhile we, as His people, must, like Nehemiah of old, pray, build and be equipped and ready to respond to every kind of attack (Nehemiah 4). Finally, we must heed the words of 2 Chronicles 7:14 "If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land." (NIV)

"The Church is always most effective when it cries from the wilderness."

John Stott

CHAPTER 1

From freedom to chains – and back again?

"The English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired"

From Clause 1 of Magna Carta, 1215

Once we were free; today we are in chains. On 6 December 2017, Lord Pearson asked the government a critical question in the House of Lords:

> My Lords, will the Government therefore confirm unequivocally that a Christian who says that Jesus is the only Son of the one true God cannot be arrested for hate crime or any other offence, however much it may offend a Muslim or anyone of any other religion?

The government whip refused to comment. Such an equivocal response would have been unthinkable in an earlier generation.

The UK led the world in developing freedom of religion, and in spreading the idea of religious freedom across the globe. Today, that heritage is being turned upside down. This is primarily due to attempts to impose an increasingly intolerant secular humanism on Christians and churches. Anti-Christian prejudice, sometimes called "Christianophobia," is raising its ugly head. Over the last two decades, Parliament has begun to enact laws restricting religious freedom. Pre-existing laws have been misused by the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), even claiming that to quote from the King James Bible in public is a criminal matter. (See page 9.)

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty"

Wendell Philipps (1811-1884)
American activist who worked for the abolition of slavery

The new "Test Act"

Most disturbingly, in 2018, the 100th anniversary of the year when for the first time almost all UK citizens were allowed to vote and stand for Parliament, there are moves towards what is, in effect, the reintroduction of a "Test Act" to exclude committed Christians from holding certain

public offices unless they deny aspects of their faith. In the run-up to the June 2017 general election, some sections of the media were apparently attempting to "out" certain parliamentary candidates as "unfit" to hold public office because they held to Biblical beliefs like miracles, traditional marriage, family values and the sanctity of life. The media also challenged senior Christian politicians with overtly "theological" questions, seemingly with the intention of discrediting them. Candidates from other religions did not appear to be subjected to similar questioning.

Anti-Christian violence

Christians in public life are increasingly facing threats and even violence because of their beliefs. Some of the violence is committed by individuals from minority groups which are themselves subject to hate crime. The government appears reluctant to tackle, or even to acknowledge, this Christianophobia. Alarmingly, the timing of some violent incidents suggests that the violence may be marching in step with advocacy actions promoting the ideological agenda of particular groups by governmental bodies.[1]

Why has this happened?

One reason is that we have forgotten our heritage. Britain was the first country in the world to develop human rights like freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The very first clause of Magna Carta includes the statement: "The English Church shall be free," and ends: "This freedom we shall observe ourselves, and desire to be observed in good faith by our heirs in perpetuity." From the 16th century onwards, Britain led the world in developing and establishing these freedoms and then spreading them to other countries around the globe.

Lamentably, a great many of our MPs and journalists have little or no knowledge of this great heritage of religious freedom. Sadly, this is also true of many Christians. In this booklet, we aim to correct that. We seek to remind the great and good, the ordinary person in pew and street and most importantly our children – the next generation – of what has gone before. Some of our ancestors died to achieve these freedoms. Others were imprisoned, or were exiled or had to flee the country. Some were denied an education, not allowed to hold jobs in the public sector or stand for Parliament. Why? Simply because of their faith. William Tyndale gave his life so that the Bible could be freely read in England. John Bunyan spent twelve years in a Bedford prison for the right to preach and worship freely.

"Liberty … is the delicate fruit of a mature civilization; and scarcely a century has passed since nations, that knew the meaning of the term, resolved to be free. In every age its progress has been beset by its natural enemies."

Lord Acton (1834-1902)
English historian and MP

They won those freedoms by determination, commitment and refusal to compromise. At the time, many considered them bigots, fanatics or worse. But they won freedom for all of us, Christian and non-Christian alike.

The tragedy is that today the sacrifices of our ancestors have been forgotten, and the liberties which they struggled so hard to gain are being gradually whittled away. The tide of history is turning. Christians are once again being excluded from public posts, thrown out of university or even shamed by the media and declared unfit to stand for election or hold public office because of their Christian beliefs.

Freedom of religion under attack

Freedom of religion in the UK is under assault. This attack comes from an increasingly aggressive secularism that prioritizes the rights of some groups over others. It comes from Islamism* that grabs the advantages offered it by political correctness while gradually seeking to align UK law with sharia.

It is time for a new generation to rise up and reclaim this great heritage of religious freedom – one of the UK's greatest gifts to the world – before it is lost forever.

* It is important to distinguish between Islam, Islamism, Muslims and Islamists. Islam is a set of religious beliefs and Muslims are the people who follow this religion. Within Islam is a minority view which is known by a variety of terms including "Islamic fundamentalism," "political Islam" and "Islamism." It is the view of Islam as a comprehensive political ideology that aims at establishing Islamic states under sharia law by various means (which may include violence). It is characterised by zeal, activism and a desire to follow sharia in every minute detail. Islamists are the minority of Muslims who take this view.

Recommendations for action by Church and Parliament to restore religious liberty

It is essential that Church and state recognise the need to turn the tide and save the UK's heritage of freedom of religion.

Recommendations to the Church

The Church must not yield to pressure to incorporate other beliefs into the Christian Gospel. It is essential that the Church stands firm against any attempt to impose a government-approved, politically correct version of Christianity. This is a challenge the Church has faced many times before. It is worth remembering the courageous stand taken by German church leaders in 1934. In the Barmen Declaration,[2] they recognised that the churches which had incorporated aspects of the then "politically correct" ideology of National Socialism into their beliefs had, in fact, corrupted the Gospel. They had made the Church's teaching subservient to the Nazi government and Nazi ideology. The Barmen Declaration proclaimed that the Church "is solely Christ's property." Two of its paragraphs state:

- We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church could and would have to acknowledge as a source of its proclamation, apart from and besides this one Word of God, still other events and powers, figures and truths, as God's revelation.

- We reject the false doctrine, as though the Church were permitted to abandon the form of its message and order to its own pleasure or to changes in prevailing ideological and political convictions.

Recommendations to Parliament

1. **There should be a new Act of Parliament specifically affirming all seven aspects of freedom of religion* which have developed in the UK over the last five centuries, applying to members of all religions and none. Amongst other aspects, this should specifically state that no one holding or standing for public office should be required to hold particular (religious or non-religious) beliefs or face discrimination because they do not hold particular beliefs (except where this is a genuine occupational requirement such as chaplaincy posts).**

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* See page 39 for more details

2. The government should reaffirm the importance of freedom of religion in the UK's history and constitution, and the UK's historic role in spreading freedom of religion around the world.

3. All secondary schools should teach the importance of the historical emergence of freedom of religion in the UK, its development and spread around the world.

4. All government policies and proposed legislation should be subject to a "Freedom of Religion Impact Assessment" specifically to ensure that freedom of religion is protected.

5. Where any new law or policies could harm freedom of religion, the government should ensure "reasonable accommodation" to safeguard freedom of religion.

6. Publicly celebrate the world-leading role the UK has played over the last 500 years in the development of freedom of religion and belief around the world, including the removal of any requirements on those holding public office to subscribe to particular beliefs.

All the above actions by Parliament, which would benefit members of all religions, would be in line with the international agreements and covenants on human rights to which the UK is already a signatory. These include the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976). These two international agreements guarantee *some* of the seven fundamental religious freedoms, such as freedom of worship, and freedom to choose or change your religion. However, they have little to say about the freedom to propagate your religion by preaching and trying to convince others of the truth of your beliefs, and nothing at all to say about the freedom to establish places of worship and the freedom from being discriminated because of your religion (such as being required to affirm certain beliefs in order to hold certain jobs, study or stand for election).

The examples and case studies in this booklet have all been in the public domain for some time, many of them have been highlighted in the mainstream media, and some of them have been brought to the attention of government departments and select committees. Yet there has been a failure to act. At the same time the incremental erosion of religious liberty in the UK has continued and even increased. That is why there needs to be a new Act of Parliament to guarantee the seven aspects of freedom of religion, which have historically developed in the UK but never been specifically included in a specific law.

CHAPTER 2

The rise of Christianophobia: how freedom of religion is being undermined

William Tyndale was strangled and burnt at the stake in 1536 for his desire to enable everyone in England to read the Bible for themselves

The term "Christianophobia" is used to describe the prejudice against Christians which has recently become evident in many Western countries, including the UK. This prejudice is shown in intolerance and discrimination, much of which flows from the media. But another source of Christianophobia is certain politicians who mistakenly consider human rights to mean championing the ideology of certain groups and enforcing those beliefs on others.

Lest we forget...

Perhaps most troubling is the fact that few politicians, and even fewer members of the general public, have any clear idea of how much of our

heritage of religious liberty is being undermined and eroded. The reason for this is simple – few people today have any idea of the battles of the past: how people were burnt at the stake, went to prison, fled to America and laboured to change the law, so that we could today enjoy freedom of religion, freedom of speech and other freedoms.

Often, in our history, Christians, by making a stand for freedom to express their faith, brought freedom for the community generally. An example is *Bushell's Case* (1670) where William Penn (later the founder of Pennsylvania in the US) and another Quaker were preaching in the open air in Gracechurch Street, London. They were arrested and brought before the court for holding an unlawful assembly. The jury found them guilty of "speaking in Gracechurch Street" but refused to say that they had been speaking to an unlawful assembly. The infuriated judge locked up the jury without food, water or a fire to keep them warm until they returned a verdict that the court would accept. Penn shouted at the jury, "You are Englishmen, mind your privilege, give not away your right," before he was hustled to the cells.

The jury, with this encouragement from Penn, held firm. After two days of incarceration, the jury returned a not guilty verdict. In response the judge fined them for contempt of court and ordered them to be imprisoned until they had paid. Penn protested that this was in breach of Magna Carta and was forcibly removed from the court.

The foreman of the jury, Mr Bushell, applied to a higher court for a writ of *habeas corpus* to free the jury because of their wrongful imprisonment. The Court granted the writ and held that no jury could be punished because of the verdict they returned. This established the freedom of the jury as a constitutional right.

Protecting beliefs instead of people leads to persecution

Instead of guaranteeing basic freedoms to everyone and treating people equally before the law, politicians often seek to protect the beliefs of certain minorities who are deemed to have suffered discrimination in the past. This is very dangerous. A free society must protect people, not ideas or ideologies. Trying to protect beliefs from criticism or contradiction, not only suppresses freedom of expression but also soon leads to the persecution of people who hold different beliefs. This heralds the end of a free society.

Unless we recover and honour the freedoms that past generations suffered to achieve, we will almost certainly forfeit those freedoms in this country. We will also find it increasingly difficult to raise our voices in support of persecuted Christians in other countries, including those living as minorities in societies where another religion is dominant.

Seven case studies of Christianophobia in the UK

Case study 1

Crown Prosecution Service claims quoting the King James Bible is "a criminal matter"

In February 2017, a CPS lawyer told Bristol magistrates court that publicly quoting from the King James Bible "in the context of modern British society, must be considered to be abusive and is a criminal matter."

The lawyer was speaking at the trial of two men arrested in 2016 for preaching in a Bristol shopping area. The police arrested the men not because of *how* they were preaching but because of *what* they were preaching. During the trial, the CPS lawyer went on to claim:

> To say to someone that Jesus is the only God is not a matter of truth. To the extent that they are saying that the only way to God is through Jesus, that cannot be a truth.

After the trial, the street preachers' solicitor, Michael Phillips, expressed his concern at the actions of the CPS:

> This prosecution is nothing more than a modern-day heresy trial – dressed up under the Public Order Act.[3]

If the *manner* in which the men had been preaching had caused a problem, the police could have prosecuted them under public nuisance laws. (For example, if their amplifier had been too loud and they had refused to turn it down). However, the preachers were arrested and then prosecuted for the *content* of their preaching, even though everything they said was consistent with orthodox Biblical Christianity down the ages.

We know exactly what happened because one of the street preachers was wearing a body camera. This recorded what he and the other preacher said and also what was

said by some of the hecklers who were disrupting the meeting. From this recording it appears that some in the crowd were deliberately trying to "set up" the preachers by asking them questions about Islam and homosexuality and then calling the police. Even though some of the hecklers were abusing and swearing at the preachers, the preachers were always respectful and never swore back. Nevertheless, the police choose to arrest the preachers, not the hecklers.

Even though the charges were eventually dismissed, the CPS lawyer's claim that in modern Britain it is now a criminal matter to quote publicly from the King James Bible is particularly disturbing.

The freedom to read the Bible in public was in fact one of the very first aspects of freedom of religion to be established in England. In 1537, Henry VIII issued a royal decree specifically allowing this.

> The King James Bible also has a unique status in English law, as in 1611 it was given specific legal authorisation to be read in public, which is why it is sometimes called the "Authorised Version". Although it is not quite certain how this was done in a letter to *The Times* in May 1881, the Lord Chancellor suggested it was almost certainly done by an Order in Council.[4]

The King James Bible has also had a massive impact on the development of the English language, perhaps even greater than the impact of Shakespeare. Many everyday phrases we use such as "to fall flat on his face," "to put words in his mouth" and "pride comes before a fall" come directly from the King James Bible.

What is at stake here is not a public prosecutor's ignorance of the historical significance of the Bible, but the fact that a lawyer representing the Crown could actually argue in court that publicly quoting the Bible should be a criminal offence. The two street preachers were later acquitted in an appeal to the crown court. However, the decision of both police and CPS to prosecute the men for the *content* of their preaching and the CPS lawyer's claim that it is illegal to publicly quote Scripture, represent a massive assault on freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

Case study 2

The Casey Review seeks to create a government-approved version of Christianity

"The English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired." So says the very first clause of Magna Carta, the "great charter" signed by King John and the barons of England on 15 June 1215. Only four of the Magna Carta's 63 clauses have remained part of English law to this day. This is one of them.

Magna Carta

An essential part of the freedom of the English church is the freedom to interpret Scripture without the government imposing an interpretation that everyone has to accept. It was not until the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603) that this was explicitly acknowledged. Nevertheless, it has formed the bedrock of religious freedom in British history.

We should therefore find it shocking in the 21st century when a government report proposes that the government should impose particular interpretations of Scripture to ensure that they fit "with the views of mainstream society." Yet this is, by implication is, what the Casey Review's report does.

The Casey Review was set up in 2015 under Dame Louise Casey to look at what the UK government should do about ethnic and religious minorities that had failed to integrate into wider society and were considered to pose a risk of being drawn into extremism and terrorism. Its report *The Casey Review: A review into opportunity and integration* was published in December 2016.[5]

The report defined "extremism" as views "at odds with the views of mainstream society."[6] It gave examples from various religions include "newer Christian churches" and stated that "all such instances undermine integration and should be challenged."[7] Elsewhere the Casey Review made clear that it considered such views to include traditional views of sexuality.

Dame Louise recommended "a new oath for holders of public office"[8] indicating that this should express support for "British values." Elsewhere in the report she included support for LGBT ideology as part of British values.[9]

The new "Test Act"

This in itself would be scandalous, as it would be like reinstating the various "Test Acts" which were abolished between 1719 and 1871 as part of Britain's 400-year march of progress towards full freedom of religion. These "Test Acts" required anyone wanting to become a school teacher, magistrate, local councillor, MP or university student to publicly assent, often by swearing an oath, to a particular set of beliefs. The law thus excluded Nonconformist Christians and Roman Catholics from any of the above positions.

The Casey Review went further. In a section titled "Regressive attitudes" it divided the UK population into two groups.

> While many people in the UK appear to be seeing religion as increasingly less important and, in some cases, less of a force for good, for others, religion is very important in their daily lives. Within this latter group there appear to be some who are keen to take religion backwards and away from 21st Century British

> values … on issues such as … sexual orientation.[10]

The phrase "taking religion backwards" is particularly disturbing, and not just because of the level of prejudice it displays. The use of this pejorative term in a government report implies an attempt to impose a government-backed definition of "modern British" Christianity. The report described the 40% of Anglicans and 35% of Catholics with conservative Biblical views on sexual ethics as those holding "less progressive views towards sexuality." Citing the British Social Attitudes survey (2013), the Casey Review stated that such views could also be found "among older people and those with low educational qualifications."[11]

Creating a politically correct version of Christianity

The Casey Review expressed the belief that "there is strong merit" in creating a "modern British understanding of Islam" and that "the Qur'an should be interpreted for modern times and modern values."[12] Given the Casey Review's repeated criticism of traditional Christian teachings, the question arises as to whether there is an implied suggestion that Christianity also should be updated and the Bible reinterpreted to conform with modern British attitudes, for example, on sexual ethics.

Perhaps the most generous comment that can be made about Dame Louise's review is that she appears to have been handicapped by a lack of understanding of the importance of freedom of religion in British history and therefore must be unaware of the threat her suggestions and recommendations pose to liberties previous generations suffered great hardships to achieve. Only the most repressive and authoritarian governments, such as those in Belarus and China, seek to impose a particular version of Christianity or state-approved interpretations of Scripture.

The church must always be free to criticise government and society – whether on morals, behaviour or indifference to the important issues of life, like marriage and family, the elderly and the marginalised. It is vitally important that the church speaks from the Bible, rather than from any secular political ideology. But the government must never dare to impose a particular interpretation of Scripture on the church.

Case study 3

Government attempt to impose compulsory registration and Ofsted inspection of Sunday schools

In 1812 Parliament abolished the law which forbade meetings for non-Anglican worship and teaching within five miles of major towns. Since then everyone has been free to worship, hold Sunday schools and even build churches and chapels wherever they liked without any special restrictions.

However, on 7 October 2015 Prime Minister David Cameron announced the government was proposing that Christian Sunday schools, along with mosque schools, should be required to register with the government and be subject to inspections by Ofsted, the government school inspectorate.

Two weeks later, on 19 October, the government published its Counter Extremism Strategy, which voiced concern about "supplementary schools" (i.e. educational settings outside of normal school hours). It suggested that those attending them "may be at risk of being presented with, and believing, twisted interpretations of their religion." Why did the Home Office, which published the Counter Extremism Strategy, think it appropriate for the government to decide what are/are not appropriate interpretations of any religion?

On 26 November 2015, the Department for Education released a 15-page proposal for the compulsory registration and inspection of supplementary schools. This suggested that where an organisation was providing at least 6-8 hours per week of teaching it should face compulsory government registration and inspection. Hence, a local church running a Sunday school (2 hours per week) and a couple of children's clubs for different ages (2 x 2 hours per week) or a youth club (2-3 hours per week) would require government registration and Ofsted inspection.

Implications

The government could only enforce these proposed regulations if it knew which churches were running Sunday schools and children's clubs. Therefore, in practice, it would have to make it compulsory for Sunday schools to register even if they were not teaching for six or more hours per week. In fact, the first

14 questions of the government's consultation on these proposals were essentially an attempt to obtain information about where supplementary schools existed, the number of children attending and what they were taught.

Banning "undesirable teaching"

The government proposal also listed five "Prohibited Actions" for all supplementary schools, including Christian Sunday schools. Some of these, like not accommodating children in unsafe premises, were perfectly reasonable. However, one of them is "undesirable teaching." The report does not define this ambiguous term; it merely illustrates by saying "for example teaching which undermines or is incompatible with fundamental British values, or which promotes extremist views."[13] However, when viewed alongside attempts by secular humanists to hijack "British values," this is concerning.

Sunday schools aren't the problem!

The elephant in the room, which no one wants to talk about, is Islam. In order to avoid stigmatising Muslims as a group, the report refused to acknowledge a problem in *some* Islamic supplementary schools. Instead, it decided to impose restrictions and inspections on all religions. This will simply mean that more resources are required to identify where there are genuine problems. More importantly, requiring Sunday schools to be registered and inspected by the government turns the clock back on religious freedom by more than two centuries.

Case study 4

Freedom to change one's beliefs and convert to another faith - Nissar's story

In 1689, the Toleration Act became law. This allowed people to follow whichever faith they chose. The freedom to change one's beliefs and convert to another religion is one of the essential aspects of freedom of religion.

Persecution of converts in the UK

Many British adults raised in other religions who freely choose to become Christians have been subjected to extraordinary levels of abuse, including physical violence. This is particularly true of Christian converts from Islam. Very few are accepted by their families. Most experience emotional abuse, and are penalised in various ways such as being prevented from attending college, thrown out of the family

home and no longer treated as a son, daughter or spouse. Many are physically abused. Some have been locked in rooms or garages for days, weeks or even months to try to force them to return to Islam. Others have been tricked into travelling to countries like Pakistan and forced to marry a Muslim once they arrive. In such countries, their life is greatly at risk as relatives may murder them to restore the family honour or in obedience to Islamic law (sharia) that requires the execution of any adult male who leaves Islam.

Nissar Hussain and his family have suffered violent persecution from local Muslims in Bradford because Nissar and his wife left Islam and became Christians

Government ignore the problem

This is a hidden scandal in our midst – religious persecution is happening right under our noses in the UK. Many Christians who have converted from Islam are silent about their suffering for fear that speaking out will make things worse. Yet the police, CPS and Home Office behave as if the problem does not exist. They ignore even formal complaints or treat them as a "cultural" matter. The unspoken implication of labelling the matter as cultural usually seems to be that nothing should be done about it, primarily so as not to offend the community.

Nissar and Kubra

Nissar Hussain and his wife Kubra were brought up as Muslims, but converted to Christianity about two decades ago. Since then, Muslims have attacked their house in Bradford many times, damaged their car and severely beaten Nissar. On one occasion, he had to be hospitalised after four men armed with a pickaxe handle attacked him outside his home.[14] Both Nissar and Kubra were falsely accused by members of the local Muslim community, resulting in each of them spending many hours in detention at a police station. In June 2016, he wrote to his local MP summarising the attacks and abuse he and his family had endured as well as police inaction.

> *"We were forced out of our previous home after over several years of suffering as converts and in short my family and I endured 'hell' by my fellow Pakistani young men in the form of persecution which entailed assault, daily intimidation,*

criminal damage to property: smashing house windows and also 3 vehicles written off whilst the community looked on and even endorsed this. One of vehicles was torched outside my home. Despite witnessing another vehicle being rammed deliberately by a man who I knew, the police did not even take a statement never mind an arrest. Finally after being threatened to be burnt out of my home these young men deliberately set the neighbours' house (which was vacant) on fire in the hopes that our house would catch fire. When I had reported it to police prior to this happening the police sergeant's response was: "Stop trying to be a crusader and move out!" In short the police had wilfully failed us so as not to be labelled racists or seem to cause the Muslim community offence at our suffering and expense.

After being forced to move out in June 2006 we settled in St Paul's Rd and set about rebuilding our lives, which was going well and had no issues and forged good relations with neighbours until we contributed in a Dispatches documentary called 'Unholy War' highlighting the plight of converts from Islam to Christianity in September 2008. Then our problems began, largely posed by the A. family who have been engaged on a campaign to drive us out our home given their bigoted attitude and thoroughly unscrupulous conduct and since last July they have embarked upon criminal damage to my vehicle to the point I have now had my vehicle windscreens smashed for the fourth occasion. The most recent incident occurred on 24 April when I had my vehicle smashed in the early hours of the morning and cannot express the financial impact also as I have to wait 3 weeks at a time for the glass to be ordered from the States as my vehicle is American. And again as in our previous experience the Pakistani community has looked on at our suffering and turned a blind eye whilst others have been openly hostile, while they enjoy freedom and liberty religious or otherwise whilst imposing their will rule and reign upon us and we are treated as second class citizens.

As a result of the latest criminal damage, and after weeks of having no car until it was repaired, I took the liberty of parking my vehicle away from outside my home for peace of mind, as given the misery over the last several years I have been diagnosed with PTSD and my wife and family also suffer stress and anxiety. When I went this morning to get my car I was mortified to discover that my car has been smashed deliberately yet again. Clearly we cannot go on living like this; … our lives have been sabotaged, we fear for our safety and suffer anxiety daily, not to mention

> *the financial costs to all of this wanton criminal damage.*
>
> *I cannot express in words the Police failure over the years which has led to our suffering and have no confidence in them whatsoever and am desperate for your help.*

Only when the local press published Nissar's story, did the police start to take his family's situation seriously. In November 2016, Nissar, Kubra and their children were moved out of Bradford under armed police protection to a new home they had bought in another part of the country.[15]

Still ignored by the Home Office

Despite media reports of attacks such as those on Nissar, the Home Office still refuses even to acknowledge the problem. On 26 July 2016, the Home Office published a Hate Crime Action Plan (HCAP). This included a single mention of anti-Christian hate crime, the first time the government had recognised such a phenomenon, but totally ignored the widespread problem of abuse suffered by Christians converts from Islam such as Nissar. Ironically, the publication of the HCAP was overshadowed by the day's news of the brutal murder of a priest by Islamists while he was leading a service in his church in France.

In its submission to a subsequent Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry in 2016, Barnabas Fund noted that there were broadly three types of anti-Christian hate crime in the UK: (1) hate crime arising from a general contempt for Christians held by some elements in society, such as attacks on clergy and vandalism specifically targeting churches; (2) threats and sometimes actual acts of violence carried out against Christians and Christian property by LGBT rights extremists. For example, the owners of Ashers Bakery in Belfast received both death and arson threats, and suffered serious damage to their property during a recent court case relating to whether they should be compelled to bake a cake promoting the redefinition of marriage; (3) attempts at forced reconversion back to Islam. The submission observed that:

> We are concerned that political correctness and fear of raising concerns about hate crime committed against Christians by a small minority within groups which are themselves subject to widespread hate crime, may have made the Home Office reluctant to acknowledge the latter two types of hate crimes.[16]

Case study 5

Pastor prosecuted for sermon preached in his own church

The freedom to preach, evangelise and seek to convince others of the truth of one's beliefs (achieved 1812) is both absolutely central to freedom of religion and an essential part of freedom of speech.

A Christian minister in Northern Ireland was prosecuted for a theological critique of Islam in a sermon he preached in his church. Seventy-seven-year-old Pastor James McConnell, who was then recovering from cancer, faced up to six months in prison.

The content of his May 2014 sermon

Pastor McConnell was prosecuted for a sermon he preached in May 2014 at Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle, Belfast, one of Northern Ireland's largest churches. The sermon was also available on the church's website.[17] His theme was Jesus Christ being the only mediator between God and humankind and the only Way to God. At the start of his sermon, he spent a few minutes speaking about the persecution of Christians in Islamic countries. This was then prominent in the news as Islamic State were spreading rapidly across both Iraq and Syria causing hundreds of thousands of Christians to flee. Meanwhile in Sudan, Miriam Yahya, a pregnant Christian woman had been sentenced to death for refusing to renounce the Christian faith she had been brought up in and was then awaiting execution. Pastor McConnell referred to both events:

> Christians are persecuted, their homes burnt, churches destroyed and hundreds of them, literally have given their lives in martyrdom. Also today, or in the next couple of days, a lovely young woman by the name of Miriam, 27 years of age, because she has accepted Christ as her Saviour will be flogged publicly and hanged publicly.

Pastor McConnell's church, Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle, Belfast

He stated that it was an irrefutable fact that those persecuting Christians in such ways were driven by the belief that Islam demanded this. He then went on to reject Islamic claims that "the Biblical prophets were all Muslims, including

Noah and Abraham and Moses and even our Lord Jesus Christ."

Pastor McConnell stated that it was clear that Allah could not possibly be the same as the God of the Bible and so concluded that Islam was "satanic."

Police complaint by an Islamist

These brief comments, prefacing a 37-minute sermon focusing on the Bible, led to a social media storm calling for Pastor McConnell's prosecution. Four days later, Dr Raied al-Wazzan of the Belfast Islamic Centre lodged a complaint with the police. The police charged McConnell under the 2003 Communications Act with broadcasting an offensive comment on the internet. According to documents seen by the *Belfast Telegraph*, Dr al-Wazzan had admitted in his police statement that he had not even listened to the sermon, even though it was available online.

Dr al-Wazzan was due to have been the main prosecution witness in the trial. However, a few months after accusing Pastor McConnell, Dr al-Wazzan was himself embroiled in a controversy when he told BBC Radio Ulster that Islamic State had been a force for good in his home city of Mosul, Iraq, making it "the most peaceful city in the world."[18]

This was when Islamic State had seized Mosul and nearby towns causing an estimated 200,000 Christians to flee.

A courageous Muslim scholar defended Pastor McConnell

A very different and courageous approach was taken by Muslim scholar Sheikh Dr Muhammad al-Hussaini, who volunteered to speak in defence of Pastor McConnell. Dr Hussaini said he had "grave concerns" about the prosecution of Pastor McConnell and "strongly upheld the moral right" of people of all faiths to freely debate issues. He added:

> Against the flaming backdrop of torched Christian churches, bloody executions and massacres of faith minorities in the Middle East, it is a matter of utmost concern that, in this country, we defend the freedom of citizens to debate and critique religious ideas and beliefs - restricting only speech which incites physical violence against others.[19]

The Public Prosecutor

The Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPSNI) first attempted to persuade Pastor McConnell to accept an "informal warning" – an admission of guilt which would have led to him having a criminal record. However, McConnell saw this clearly as an attack on freedom of religion that he needed to fight, declaring:

> Either they try me and put me in prison or I am free to preach the Gospel.

A volley of criticism was levelled at the PPSNI when Pastor McConnell was found not guilty at a trial in January 2016. The PPSNI responded:

> This case gave rise to difficult and novel issues in relation to the limits to the defendant's freedom of speech and freedom to practise his religion and required careful analysis and consideration of all the relevant evidential and public interest factors.[20]

McConnell's comments about Islam were not "novel." In fact, immediately after his comments on Islam, he said in the sermon how others like Luther and Wesley had made similar statements. What was "novel" was the PPSNI's attempt to seek to restrict a Christian minister's "freedom of speech and freedom to practise his religion" by prosecuting him for making such statements.

Case study 6

New "University Test Act" - Sheffield University requires social work students to support same-sex marriage

Between 1719 and 1871, Parliament repealed various laws that had excluded Roman Catholics and Nonconformist Christians from employment in certain professions, including teaching. In 1854 and 1856, University Test Acts, which excluded people from studying at certain universities unless they affirmed particular beliefs, were repealed. However, in 2015, academics at Sheffield University effectively introduced a new University Test Act by expelling a student from a social work course because he had posted comments on Facebook supporting a Biblical view of marriage.

Felix left Cameroon

Felix Ngole was born in Cameroon, a country that was basically a one-party state. It was described by Amnesty International in 2017 as a country where "human rights defenders, including civil society activists and journalists, continued to be intimidated, harassed and threatened. In response to curtailed freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly, journalists reported that they self-censored to avoid repercussions for criticizing the Government."[21]

A Sheffield University building

Expelled for answering a question about his Christian beliefs

Felix posted comments supporting freedom of religion in a private Facebook discussion. He was responding to the case of an American marriage registrar who was jailed after the US government's redefinition of marriage forced her to choose between losing her job or acting against her conscience by conducting same-sex marriages.

During this private Facebook discussion, Felix answered direct questions about his own views:

> The Bible and God identify homosexuality as a sin … same-sex marriage is a sin whether we like it or not. It is God's words and man's sentiments would not change His words.

He stated these views politely and respectfully. But a couple of months later, Felix received an email from the university informing him that they were investigating his Facebook comments. A panel chaired by an academic interviewed Felix and removed him from his course. The academic failed to disclose her own conflict of interest as a leading LGBT campaigner at the university.

Prevented from entering his chosen profession

The university argued that as the MA would qualify Felix as a social worker, they could not allow him to continue pursuing it as what he said could affect gay people he might work with in future. The university later admitted in court that they had no evidence that Felix had ever discriminated against any gay people or that he would be likely to do so in the future. Instead, they argued that the views he had expressed raised questions about his "fitness to practise" as a social worker.

In effect, what Sheffield University had done was to introduce a new University Test Act, a century and a half after these laws had been repealed. The Test Acts had specifically excluded Roman Catholics and Nonconformist Christians, obliging them to study outside England if they wanted to get a university degree. By debarring Felix from his course, Sheffield University took a highly regressive step in terms of freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and academic freedom.

The slippery slope to a new form of "Test Act"

Equally alarming is the fact that this has not been done by a new law passed after public debate by our elected representatives in Parliament.

It has been achieved by a group of academics behind closed doors in a university committee, who are not accountable to the public. How did we get to this situation?

- The 1999 Health Act allowed the Health Secretary to make legal regulations for various health-related professions, including social work, by means of a statutory instrument. (Statutory instruments are laws which parliament formally approves but does not debate in parliament unless MPs specifically ask to.)

- The Health Professions Order 2001 (a statutory instrument) set up the Health Professions Council (HPC) whose duties included setting standards of conduct, ethics and fitness to practise for a number of health-related professions. It did not, however, even hint that anyone in these professions should be required to publicly affirm a particular worldview or set of beliefs.

- In 2003, the HPC issued *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*. This document was revised in 2008 and 2016. It stated that members of these professions "must not discriminate against service-users, carers or colleagues by allowing your personal views to affect your professional relationships or the care, treatment or other services that you provide." There was no suggestion that members of these professions should be required to affirm particular personal beliefs. The HPC now regulates 16 different professions including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, paramedics and social work.

- The HPC later issued *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*. This specifically states that it is for guidance only, as the HPC does not regulate students. It tells students they should follow the policies and guidelines produced by their education provider. However, it also warned students: "You should be aware that your conduct and behaviour outside of your programme may affect whether or not you are allowed to complete your programme or register with us..." In other words, unelected officials in the HPC decided that they could regulate not only the professional lives of members of these professions, but also their private lives.

- In 2015, a Sheffield University committee, chaired by an academic, who was a leading campaigner for LGBT ideology at the university, decided that the areas of a students' private life that might raise questions about their "fitness to practise" as a social worker, were not simply issues such as whether they had a criminal conviction, but included whether they held traditional Christian beliefs about marriage.

The Sheffield University committee reversed three centuries of progress towards full freedom of religion in the UK starting with the repeal of the Schism Act in 1719. This had required teachers to affirm publicly particular religious beliefs. It excluded from the profession Baptists, Quakers, Roman Catholics and others who held different beliefs.

Treating Christians differently

Sheffield University appears to have been more tolerant of an Islamic cleric who advocated domestic violence, than they were of Felix's Christian beliefs about same-sex marriage. On 3 December 2015, shortly after the university began investigating Felix, it allowed an Islamist to speak to a student audience. During his lecture, the cleric promoted his YouTube channel on which he sets out an Islamic case for men hitting their wives with a stick. He told the 120 students present, "Put these videos on your Facebook pages, share it with people."[22]

Felix Ngole took Sheffield University to court, but lost as the court ruled that his religion did not actually require him to comment on the story of the US marriage registrar, a ruling which severely limits both freedom of religion, freedom of speech and academic freedom. After the case, Felix said:

> I was born in Cameroon, under a dictatorship, where free speech was heavily censored. I had always been led to believe that in the UK people could share their beliefs and opinions without fear of persecution from public authorities. Of all places, I would expect universities to be places for free exchange of ideas and debate. It is shocking that, as a student, I can be thrown out just for believing in the Bible.[23]

Case study 7
Christian teacher suspended for calling a pupil a girl who wished to be known as a boy

A Christian teacher was suspended in November 2017 for saying, "Well done, girls." Joshua Sutcliffe, who taught maths at Cherwell School in north Oxford, had used the phrase immediately after defusing a situation where a group of pupils had become irate during a lesson.

One pupil, born as a girl, had previously told the school that she wished to be known as a boy. After referring to the group as "girls" Mr Sutcliffe had immediately apologised, saying it had been a mere slip of tongue. However, later the pupil's mother complained that the comment was discriminatory.

Mr Sutcliffe was removed from teaching and made to work in the staffroom while an investigation took place. He was then suspended for an indefinite period after the school said his "misgendering" breached its equality policy.

Mr Sutcliffe, who is also an associate pastor of Christ Revelation Church in Oxford, said he was "shocked and saddened" by the school's actions. He told the *Oxford Mail* that whilst he disagreed with the idea that gender can be fluid he always sought "as a teacher and Christian to treat each of my pupils with respect and dignity." He added that he had used the pupil's preferred male name, even though this "conflicts sharply with my Christian beliefs."

> Although I did not intentionally refer to the pupil as a 'girl', I do not believe it is unreasonable to call someone a girl if they were born a girl.

Mr Sutcliffe labelled his suspension "political correctness gone mad." He said beliefs such as his were being increasingly "punished", adding:

> The aggressive way in which transgender ideology is being imposed is undermining my freedom of belief and conscience.[24]

Transgender ideology argues that gender is different from biological sex and claims that people should be able to choose whether they are a man or a woman. It seeks to enforce this ideology on wider society by insisting that everyone else must "respect" the gender that someone identifies as. For example, proponents of gender ideology insist that boys who identify as girls must be allowed to use female facilities such as toilets and changing rooms.

This case illustrates the way that politically correct ideology has infiltrated significant parts of the education establishment. Although this is often described as "equality," it can sometimes be highly discriminatory against those holding orthodox Christian beliefs.

Mr Sutcliffe had been running a highly successful Bible Club at the school, which was attended by over 100 pupils. However, it was shut down when the head teacher told him that it could not run without a register and curriculum. Mr Sutcliffe produced these, but the head still shut down the club, while allowing the school's LGBT club to continue running without either.[25]

When asked by the *Oxford Mail* why he had suspended Mr Sutcliffe, the head teacher said:

> This school takes issues of equality and discrimination seriously, whether they be issues to do with religious belief or gender identity. It has a range of governor-approved policies to ensure the school acts appropriately and lawfully.

However, those policies raise some serious concerns. In October 2017 , just a few weeks before Mr Sutcliffe was suspended, the head teacher had introduced a new "Single Equality Policy." This began by stating that the school has a legal duty to publish data to show it is treating people equally.

The policy, which included a section on LGBT and transgender, also contained a survey of pupils' religion which found that out of 1853 pupils in the school, there were 214 Muslims, 24 Jews, 23 Hindus, six Sikhs and apparently no Christians. However, there was no category for "Christian" listed on the survey, only "Church of England" and "Methodist" (see screenshot below).

Gender (2016/2017)	
Girls	885
Boys	968

Religion and Belief (2016/17)			
Church of England	0	Sikh	6
Hindu	23	No Religion	653

The Cherwell School
A Centre of Opportunity

Jewish	24	Other Religion	38
Methodist	0	Unknown	35
Muslim	214	Refused	30

The above figures, about the religion of its pupils, were downloaded from the "Single Equality Policy" section of Cherwell School's website on 11 December 2017. By 21 December 2017 this had been replaced on the school's website by the school's earlier 2015-16 "Equality Statement." The latter had additional categories of Baptist and Catholic, but also claimed that there were no Christians on the school roll of more than 1800 pupils

What is more, the numbers in the survey only add up to 1023. This means that 830 pupils were not included in the survey. Given the number of thriving churches in north Oxford and the large attendance at the Bible Club before it was closed down, it seems rather implausible that the school has no Christian pupils. This is the sort of manipulation of statistics that we often see in countries where the oppressed Christian minority face significant discrimination or persecution and the size of the Christian minority is significantly under represented by government officials.

CHAPTER 3

Why has this happened?

Secular humanism is deliberately undermining Christianity

Over recent decades, leaders of the humanist movement have implemented a bold yet subtle agenda for promoting their atheistic beliefs in Western countries. Biblical morality has been replaced with unbridled permissiveness, love of neighbour with materialistic narcissism, and truth with relativism. The result has been the destruction of personal Christian faith, and the loss of all respect for Christianity and the Church.[26]

One particular humanist strategy involves four stages:

1. Create tolerance of humanist ideas that are contrary to the norms, values and beliefs of a Christian-heritage society.

2. Pressure the authorities and society until humanist beliefs and behaviours are given equality with the pre-existing norms of society.

3. Reverse the norms and values of society, so that Christianity begins to seem foolish, backward, evil and a threat to human progress.

4. Work to make the previous norms of the formerly Christian society illegal.

Working through education, the media, popular culture, legal action, governments and international bodies, the humanist activists are well on the way to achieving their agenda, with the UK one of the most advanced areas of their activity.[27]

Political correctness entrenches discrimination against Christians

Political correctness is an outcome of "identity politics," which divides society into favoured and less favoured groups. Favoured groups are those deemed to be have been oppressed in the past. They include women, ethnic minorities, LGBT and members of religious minorities in the West, such as Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, etc.

Favoured groups are assumed to require not just equal rights, but extra rights to overcome past disadvantage. This greatly undermines another of the UK's most important historic national values – equal treatment of all before the law.

It is absurdly unjust to treat people of one group, such as Christians, less favourably today than members of another group, because of what happened to the second group in earlier generations. Why should we punish the present generation for the alleged sins of previous generations? Yet this is precisely what the advocates of political correctness do to Christians.

In 2016, when Ashers bakery in Northern Ireland were being prosecuted for declining an order from an LGBT activist to bake a cake with a slogan supporting gay marriage (see page 31), *The Guardian* newspaper wrote an editorial arguing:

> Although it is invidious to have to choose between religious and sexual identity, the law should, when in doubt, protect sexual minorities over religious ones.[28]

This "positive discrimination" by definition discriminates against members of non-politically correct groups, such as Christians.

The dangerous shift from protecting people to protecting beliefs

It is important to distinguish a religion/ideology/worldview or any other set of beliefs from the human beings who hold those beliefs. People (e.g. Muslims, Christians) should be protected; ideas and ideologies (e.g. Islam, Christianity) should not be. So it should always be possible to critique and criticise ideas, even though this may hurt people's feelings. But any other kind of hurt to people because of what they believe should never be tolerated.

Political correctness has over-ruled this principle and seeks to protect the beliefs of favoured groups from criticism. This is very dangerous because it undermines freedom of speech, freedom of religion and academic freedom.

New laws to enforce beliefs

In just one decade, the government moved from promoting the rights of minority groups to enforcing the beliefs of those minority groups on churches and other voluntary organisations. One result was that Christians in some public sector jobs now have to act against their faith or lose their jobs.

- **In 1998, a Home Office consultation document described marriage as "the surest foundation for raising children."**
- **In 2002, the government supported an amendment to the Adoption and Children bill which allowed unmarried couples who were living together to adopt children.**

- **In 2004, the Civil Partnership Act granted legal recognition to same-sex relationships.**
- **In 2005, the government activated a clause in the 2002 Adoption and Children Act allowing same-sex couples to adopt children.**
- **In 2007, the government passed the Sexual Orientation Regulations (SOR) prohibiting any business or organisation from refusing to provide goods or services to someone because of their sexual orientation. Because the SOR was a statutory instrument, it was introduced without parliamentary debate or scrutiny.**

Ideology above evidence

Secular humanist ideology often prevails in shaping government policy even when it flies in the face of evidence.

In 2002, when parliament debated whether the "right" to adopt should be extended to unmarried couples living together, MPs who voted for it were warned that research showed that the breakup rates for unmarried couples were approximately six times those for married couples. Ignoring this evidence was a serious issue when a vast array of research showed that parental separation had harmful effects on children and those in need of adoption were generally in care precisely because they had already suffered significant emotional damage.

The imposition of the new ideology on the public sector

In a number of public sector jobs, Christians are now forced to choose between acting against their Christian beliefs or losing their jobs, just as in the days of the Test Acts, centuries ago.

When the Civil Partnership Act was passed in 2004, marriage registrar Lillian Ladele told her employer, Islington Council, she had a conflict of conscience due to her Christian beliefs about marriage. She asked for "reasonable accommodation" such as to officiate only at heterosexual marriages. Even though Islington Council accepted that it had more than enough other registrars to handle the civil partnership ceremonies, it refused her request. It demanded she act against her Christian beliefs or resign. Miss Ladele took her case to the European Court of Human Rights, where she lost on a majority verdict. However, the two dissenting judges in their powerful minority opinion stated:

> It is … pertinent to observe that when [Ladele] joined … the London borough of Islington in 1992, and when she became a registrar of births, deaths and marriages in 2002, her job did not include officiating at same-sex

> partnership ceremonies. There is nothing to suggest … that it was to be expected … that marriage registrars would have to officiate at these ceremonies in the future. If anything, both the law (the Civil Partnership Act 2004) and the practice of other local authorities allowed for the possibility of compromises which would not force registrars to act against their consciences. In [Ladele's] case, however, a combination of backstabbing by her colleagues and the blinkered political correctness of the borough of Islington (which clearly favoured "gay rights" over fundamental human rights) eventually led to her dismissal.[29]

Andrew McClintock, who had served as a magistrate for 18 years on the South Yorkshire bench, was forced to resign after requesting to be "screened out" of cases involving children for adoption with same-sex households.[30]

The imposition of the new ideology on the voluntary sector and civil society organisations including churches and businesses

"Civil society" is everything that government does not control. It includes voluntary organisations, sports clubs, scout and guide groups, campaigning organisations, churches and Sunday schools. The government is now seeking to regulate civil society organisations, not simply on issues like child protection, but also enforcing aspects of an ideological agenda.
In May 2014, the Northern Ireland Assembly voted against redefining marriage, a decision which angry LGBT activists blamed on Christians.

Ten days after the vote, an LGBT campaigner walked into Ashers bakery, which makes clear on its website that its owners are Christians, and asked them to make a cake with the slogan "Support Gay Marriage" and the logo of the LGBT campaign group Queer Space. The owners, who had previously declined orders that included nudity or offensive language, politely declined the request, as promoting gay marriage went against their Christian beliefs. The LGBT activist then filed a complaint with the Northern Ireland Equality Commission who sent Ashers bakery a letter ordering them to "rectify" the situation within seven days or be taken to court. The Equality and Human Rights Commission paid all the legal costs of the LGBT activist, which created the possibility that Ashers bakery could be driven out of business by the size of the legal costs it incurred. The publicity generated by the NI Equality Commission taking up the case was followed by Ashers bakery being subjected to threats, including death and arson threats and serious damage to the bakery.

Reasonable accommodation

Significantly, much of the legislation that has proved problematic appears to have been ideologically driven. The government could have followed the "reasonable accommodation" model of the 1967 Abortion Act that allowed employees a conscientious objection to taking part in abortions so they did not have to choose between their job and their faith. This was a very important provision, as it prevented the creation of a backdoor Test Act, by which to be a doctor, nurse or midwife would mean accepting the belief that we have the right to terminate the life of unborn children.

However, there has been no provision for "reasonable accommodation" in any recent legislation , for example, the Sexual Orientation Regulations, which has the effect of a "Test Act" for a number of public sector posts.

Misuse of human rights law

Human rights are good! Human rights were born because of the Bible's teaching that all people are made in the image of God and therefore deserve dignity and respect.

There are two approaches to human rights. One approach says "this is what the government is not allowed to do to people – lock them up without a fair trial, torture them, force them to hold particular beliefs in order to hold public office or stand for election, etc." We see this approach in Magna Carta, the US Constitution and English Common Law.

The second approach, dating from the era of the French revolution in the late 18th century, gives specific rights to every individual, for example, the right to life. However, two problems arise with the second approach. Firstly, there is no agreement as to what these rights are. Many humanists claim that the right to have an abortion is a "human right" even though it involves the death of an unborn child. Secondly, one person's rights can conflict with another person's rights for example, the right to freedom of speech and the right, increasingly being claimed, "not to be offended."

What then happens is that the police, courts or a government body have to decide whose rights are more important. This hands immense power to people who have never been elected to decide what is and is not allowed, perhaps according to the dictates of political correctness, rather than in accordance with historic human rights such as freedom of religion.

Jeff and Sue Green ran a bed and breakfast at their family home in Wales where they lived with their three young children. For several years, they had a policy of only offering double rooms to married couples and never received any complaints. However, at the end of 2013, they received a letter from a "senior enforcement officer" at the Equality and Human Rights

Commission (EHRC) ordering them to change this, warning them it was "unlawful" to discriminate against someone over their sexual orientation. After receiving the letter, they changed their policy and now only permit guests to sleep in single beds, after which they received a letter from the EHRC saying that the matter was now closed. However, questions remain about the actions of the EHRC, especially since it does not appear that any complaint was ever made about the Greens' previous policy.[31]

Hate speech, hate crime and hate incidents

One of the consequences of the attempt to protect not just people, but also beliefs of certain groups has been "hate speech" laws. The original idea of "hate crime" was that certain crimes motivated by hatred of, for example, a person's race or religion, should be treated more seriously. However, two major problems have emerged with hate crimes.

1. The coining of terms such as "Islamophobia" and "homophobia" have meant that instead of preventing attacks on *people*, such as Muslims or gay and lesbian people, one is prevented from criticising their *beliefs*.

2. The definition of hate crime is too broad. Almost anything can be called a hate crime if someone alleges that it is. The CPS and the Association of Chief Police Officers agree that a hate crime is:

> Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender.[32]

In other words, if anyone, however unrelated to the crime, alleges that a criminal offence was motivated by prejudice, the police must record it as a hate crime.

The police and CPS also ask people to report "hate incidents" which are not serious enough to amount to criminal offences.[33]

A 42-year-old Scottish evangelist was accused of a hate crime in 2016 after preaching from the Bible to a gay teenager. Gordon Larmour was arrested by police after telling the story of Adam and Eve to a 19-year-old who asked him about God's views on homosexuality. The street preacher referred to Genesis and stated that God created Adam and Eve to produce children.

Although he had not used any kind of offensive language, he was arrested. Within minutes he was charged withthreatening or abusive behaviour "aggravated by prejudice relating to sexual orientation." He spent a night in custody and was eventually cleared of any blame by a sheriff.[34]

Threats and acts of violence against Christians in public life

The evidence suggesting a relationship between government policy and hate crime against Christians is very troubling. The example of Ashers bakery in Northern Ireland has already been noted (p.31). The government's redefinition of marriage to include same-sex partnerships was accompanied by threats and actual violence against Christians who spoke in very moderate terms against it:

- In February 2012, the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, originally from Uganda, received threats as well as abuse, some of it of a racist nature, after he had stated in *The Daily Telegraph* that he believed marriage must remain between a man and a woman".[35]

- In June 2012, Rhys and Esther Curnow, a newly-married Christian couple, received a large volume of hate mail, including explicit references to sexual acts and suggestions that people like them should be subjected to "compulsory sterilisation" after they dressed in their wedding clothes to hand in a 550,000 signature petition against the redefinition of marriage at 10 Downing Street.[36]

- In February 2013, Conservative MP David Burrowes, an evangelical Christian, received repeated abuse and death threats after opposing government plans to redefine marriage. He told *The Sunday Times* that he started to take the threats "more seriously" when he discovered that details of his travel arrangements had been posted on the internet.[37]

Government actions can trigger anti-Christian violence

It is significant that all these attacks occurred immediately after actions by governmental bodies (the UK government and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland) which appeared to have inspired a small number of extremists to believe that they could use threats and acts of violence to enforce LGBT ideology on Christians.

Media bias and the use of overtly theological questions

One of the most disturbing aspects of recent Christianophobia has been the targeting of Christian candidates standing for election.

- In the summer of 2016, Andrea Leadsom, one of the possible candidates to succeed David Cameron as leader of the UK Conservative Party and Prime Minister, was subjected to a torrent of media abuse. A substantial part of the abuse was mocking her Christian faith.

The media have moved on to asking Christians standing for election explicit theological questions. Sometimes they openly state that the candidate is "unfit" to hold public office because he or she holds traditional Christian beliefs.

- The 2017 general election campaign began with the media pressurising Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron to say whether as an evangelical Christian he believed gay sex acts were "sin." Eventually he said no, but after the election reigned as Lib-Dem leader saying, "To be a political leader especially of a progressive, liberal party in 2017 and to live as a committed Christian, to hold faithfully to the Bible's teaching, has felt impossible for me."

  Two years earlier *The Spectator* magazine had predicted that this is what he would be forced to do, calling him "the victim of a secular inquisition."[38]

- *The Daily Mirror* published a story mocking Kirsty Adams, a candidate standing in the marginal seat of Hove, because she had once prayed for a deaf man who was healed.[39] Two weeks later *The Spectator* not only repeated the story, but in an article entitled "Election: 2017 do you believe in miracles?" concluded by claiming that this showed her "manifest unfitness for public life."[40]

Such targeting of Christian candidates is exactly the sort of behaviour that some gay candidates faced a generation ago, and which the same media outlets now take great pride in condemning.

Why has Parliament allowed this?

There are several possible reasons. The first is "constitutional illiteracy." Many MPs simply do not know how incredibly important the development of freedom of religion has been in our history, the development of our national identity and values and even the UK's contribution to the wider world.

Secondly, governments of all parties have used statutory instruments (secondary legislation) to pass many of these laws. These do not get the sort of scrutiny and debate that primary legislation gets. Some of the most controversial ones, like the Sexual Orientation Regulations (2007), have thus been passed without debate. If MPs

had been given an opportunity to debate and scrutinise them, it is likely that amendments would have been proposed which could have prevented some of the religious discrimination that has occurred.

Thirdly, political parties have tried to win elections by seeking votes from minority groups. This has led to them playing "identity politics" and facilitating the agendas of such groups, without giving due consideration to the effect on other groups.

John Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford county jail (1660 – 1672) for the right to preach the Gospel freely in Britain

CHAPTER 4

How freedom of religion developed in the UK and spread around the world

Freedom of religion has a long history in the UK. It is one of the UK's most important national values and one of its most important contributions to the world. Over the centuries, thousands of victims of religious persecution overseas have found refuge here. Queen Elizabeth I welcomed tens of thousands of French Huguenots to England after an estimated 70,000 Protestants were killed in the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in France in 1572. Freedom of religion became so important to our national reputation abroad that in the 16th century England became known as the *Asylum Christi* i.e. asylum of Christ.

Although there was a long history of the struggle for freedom of religion in our country, it was Protestantism, and particularly the Puritans in the 16th century, that really brought about the full development of freedom of religion. The right to read the Bible in your own language and interpret it for yourself was central to what reformers like John Wycliffe and William Tyndale believed when they translated the Bible into English.

The coronation oath

Although freedom of religion started to develop during Henry VIII's reign, it was Elizabeth I who established it as one of our most important national values. In the five years before she ascended the throne in 1558, more than 280 men and women had been burnt at the stake for their Protestant faith. Elizabeth, who had herself had been imprisoned during the short but bloody reign of her half-sister Mary, was determined to bring about religious toleration.

What Elizabeth did was ground-breaking. It laid the foundations for the full freedom of religion which developed later. Her 1559 church-state settlement established important boundaries. The church could not encourage anyone to swear an oath of allegiance to a foreign power, while the government could not interfere in the church by imposing a particular interpretation of Scripture or the sacraments. These separate spheres for church and state have been positively affirmed by every subsequent sovereign in their coronation oath.

This is enormously important today, although many of our politicians seem to have forgotten it, or have never been aware of it. It is not for the government to impose a particular interpretation of Scripture on Christians or adherents of any religion. If people in the name of a religion encourage a criminal act, such as swearing an oath of allegiance to Islamic State or encouraging terrorist attacks, they should be prosecuted for those specific criminal acts. But it is both wrong and dangerous to suggest that there should be government-approved versions of Islam or any religion, as the Casey Review recently implied (see pages 10-13).

How seven foundational freedoms of religion developed in the UK – and spread across the world

When we look at British history, we can see seven specific elements of religious liberty which were established over a period of time.

1. **Freedom to read Scripture in public**

   In 1537 a royal decree by King Henry VIII made it legal to read from the English Bible in public. This was then reaffirmed by a royal decree of King Edward VI in 1547.

   This early foundation of religious freedom is now being eroded, as we have seen in chapter 2 (pages 9-10).

   New legislation is needed to affirm the freedom to read in public the Scriptures of any religion.

2. **Freedom to interpret Scripture without government interference**

   The freedom to interpret the Bible, established by the 1559 church-state settlement of Queen Elizabeth I, laid the foundations for religious tolerance in England.

   In Scotland the General Assembly Act of 1592 affirmed these as a previously existing liberty amongst other freedoms for the church:

> *THIS assemblie hes power to handle ordour and redress all thingis omittit or done amiss in the particulare assemblies IT HES power to depose the office beraris of that province for gude and iust causes deserving deprivatioun And generalie thir assemblies hes the haill power of the particulare elderschippis quhairof thay ar collectit … IT APPERTENIS to the elderschip*

to tak heid that the word of god be puirlie preachit within thair boundis the sacramentis richtlie ministrat the discipline intertenyit and the ecclesiasticall guidis vncorruptlie distributit IT belangis to this kynd of assembleis To caus the ordinances maid be the assembleis provinciallis Nationallis and generallis to be kepit and put in executioun ... same IT HES power to excommunicat the obstinat formale proces being led and dew intervall of tymes obseruit ... Thay haif power and iurisdictioun in thair awin congregatioun in matteris ecclesisticall ”

The Church of Scotland Act 1921 affirmed as lawful the *Articles Declaratory of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland*, which had been drawn up earlier in the 20th century, thus recognising the Church of Scotland as Scotland's national church but independent from the state with regard to spiritual matters. The *Articles Declaratory* are still in force.

Section 5 of the Church of Scotland Act states: "This Church has the inherent right, free from interference by civil authority... to declare the sense in which it understands its Confession of Faith, to modify the forms of expression therein, or to formulate other doctrinal statements ... but always in agreement with the Word of God and the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith."

Thus the Church of Scotland Act sets out separate spheres of authority for church and state, similar to the 1559 church-state settlement in England.

The freedom to interpret the Bible without government interference is now being undermined, as we have seen above (pages 10-13).

New legislation is needed to affirm the freedom of followers of all religions to interpret their Scriptures without government interference.

3. Freedom of worship

The 1689 Toleration Act allowed Nonconformists their own places and forms of worship. Freedom of worship is one of the few aspects of freedom of religion which is not currently being undermined in the UK. However, there is a dangerous trend of politicians starting to refer to “freedom of worship” instead of “freedom of religion” i.e. reducing the freedom of religion which has historically developed in the UK down to just one of its seven aspects.

4. Freedom to choose or change your faith or belief

The 1689 Toleration Act established this.

Even this is being eroded, as we saw in Chapter 2. (see pages 15-18). The police, CPS and Home

Office refuse to take sufficient notice of the widespread intimidation, abuse and violence suffered by Christians who convert from Islam. The Home Office's Hate Crime Action Plan does not even mention this.

5. **Freedom to preach and try to convince others of the truth of your beliefs**

This was established by the repeal of the Five Mile Act in 1812, which had stopped Nonconformist ministers from preaching within five miles of any town that had a Member of Parliament.

Today this freedom is seriously threatened as preachers are arrested for the content of their preaching, whether in the street or in church buildings. (see pages 9-10 and 19-21.) In practice, it appears one may now freely propagate certain politically correct views, but Christian beliefs are increasingly restricted.

6. **Freedom to establish churches, synagogues, mosques etc.**

The repeal of the Conventicle Act in 1812 allowed Nonconformists to meet freely for worship. The law had previously forbidden any meeting for non-Anglican worship of more than five people, other than members of the household. This had effectively made illegal the building of Nonconformist chapels in towns.

7. **Freedom from being required to affirm a particular worldview or set of beliefs in order to hold a public sector job or stand for election, work in professions such as teaching and law, or study at university**

This was achieved by the repeal of various Test Acts between 1719 and 1871 which had required people to publicly affirm certain beliefs in order to be a school teacher (1719), army officer (1778), lawyer (1791), mayor (1828), student at Oxford or Cambridge universities (1854, 1856), or hold an academic post at these universities (1871). Full freedom of religion was finally achieved in 1888 when the Oaths Act allowed atheists to become Members of Parliament.

This freedom spread to other countries of the English-speaking world as they became independent, and were specifically incorporated into the constitution of the USA (1787) and Australia (1901).

Today, this central aspect of freedom of religion is being undermined, as those holding public sector posts in fields such as education and health and standing for election are being put under enormous pressure to publicly affirm beliefs, particularly about sexual ethics, contrary to Biblical teaching. As we saw in chapter 2 (pages 21-24), a student was expelled from an MA course

at Sheffield University in what amounted to a combination of a new university Test Act and a restriction on certain professions for those unwilling to publicly affirm certain beliefs.

Similarly, media attacks on parliamentary candidates and party leaders focusing on their Christian faith, with the implied or stated suggestion that this makes them "unfit" for public office, are a step backwards towards the time of the Test Acts. Just as these Acts excluded from Parliament any Nonconformist, so these new "tests" seem intended to exclude any who do not conform to current politically correct beliefs.

Other values associated with freedom of religion

In addition, the attack on freedom of religion has undermined other important freedoms that have developed over the centuries in the UK. These include:

- Freedom of speech – the freedom to criticise other people's ideas and beliefs.
- Freedom of the press – the freedom to publish any critical comments providing they are not libellous.
- Academic freedom – the freedom for anyone of appropriate ability to study at university regardless of their beliefs and the freedom to engage in academic criticism of any ideology or belief system.

The need for a new law guaranteeing all seven aspects of freedom of religion

One of the problems with the way freedom of religion has developed in the UK is that it has emerged by the repeal of laws that restricted it. In other words, it has developed by the removal of restrictions, rather than by any positive affirmation of freedom of religion.

This is why it has now been possible for the majority of these seven aspects of freedom of religion to begin to be eroded in the UK today.

This makes it imperative to frame a new law, as recommended on pages 10-11, a law which positively affirms all seven aspects of freedom of religion that have developed over the last 500 years in the UK.

In light of the challenges reported above, the seventh of these religious freedoms will need to include at least the following: **freedom from being required to affirm a particular worldview or set of beliefs in order to hold a public sector job or stand for election; work in professions such as teaching, healthcare and law; study at school, college or university; or give parental care to a child.**

The new law will safeguard a vitally important part of human rights which the UK led the world in developing.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Barnabas Fund is a leading international aid agency providing practical help for Christians living with pressure, harassment, violence or persecution. It also seeks to raise awareness of their plight, encourage prayer on their behalf, and do what is possible to try to tackle the reasons for the persecution. As part of this, it has for many years been concerned with the growing pressures on Christians in the UK and other Christian-heritage countries in the West.

Barnabas Fund would like to acknowledge the work done by other Christian organisations seeking to promote freedom of religion in the UK and providing support to those who have suffered as a result of the increasing erosion of religious liberty in the UK. We would particularly like to acknowledge and affirm the work of the Christian Legal Centre at Christian Concern For Our Nation and of the Christian Institute for the work they have done over many years in the field of religious liberty in the UK.

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hope and aid for the persecuted church

The publication of this booklet is both timely and much needed. Like many Christians in the United Kingdom, I am alarmed at the gradual erosion of the religious liberties and values that we have sought to uphold in this country for centuries. We live in a society today where there is growing intolerance among the metropolitan liberal elites towards those of us who take a faith-based approach to life. They speak much of diversity and inclusion but promote laws that undermine the values dear to Christians and practise the exclusion of people whose religious views they find 'unacceptable'.

It is time for the Church and people of faith to speak up and speak out. The Barnabas Fund is to be commended for taking the initiative through this booklet to speak into the public square and to equip Christians with the information they need to do likewise. We must not retreat from public discourse on these issues, otherwise the words of Christ will ring in our ears that the salt kept in the cellar will lose its saltiness. We should not be afraid of debate or putting across our point of view. This booklet is a most welcome and excellent contribution to that debate. I commend it to the reader.

Rt Hon Sir Jeffrey Donaldson MP
Member of Parliament for Lagan Valley

For more information visit

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ISBN 978-0-9977033-5-1
90000>
9 780997 703351

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