

Written contributions to the Clearing the Ground inquiry

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Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Adrian Hilton MSc MTh (Oxon)

Your organisation:

Your role in the organisation: Doctoral Researcher in Moral and Political Education at Oxford University

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

I am a former parliamentary candidate, teacher and assistant principal in a state school, currently pursuing doctoral research at Oxford University into the consequences of the (implied) repeal of those clauses in the 1944 'Butler' Education Act (and succeeding legislation) which require that all state schools hold a daily act of 'broadly Christian' collective worship and give primacy to teaching the Christian faith in order 'to reflect the history, traditions and majority make-up of the country'. The 'Free Schools' programme permits governing bodies to establish an alternative (and conflicting) ethos, with inevitable consequences for social cohesion and traditional understanding of 'the common good'.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Civil liberties Education Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There is a hypersensitivity towards (and increasing intolerance of) expressions of orthodoxy and traditional belief. The narrative used by some politicians and the media doesn't help, with talk of being '-phobic', 'bigoted' or 'prejudiced'. On faith schools, one MP observed: "It seems to me that faith education works all right as long as people are not that serious about their faith. But as soon as there is a more doctrinaire attitude, questions have to be asked." He went on to talk of 'fundamentalist bishops'. It appears that if one is not multi-faith, ecumenical and inclusive, one is by default 'extremist' or 'fundamentalist' which, in the context of Islamism, is creating a backlash against Christian orthodoxy.

Equality legislation has created a 'hierarchy of rights', with special interest groups competing to lobby for primacy. Each incremental gain is perceived as a 'victory' for one group and a 'defeat' for others: the vocabulary of war creates a siege mentality for Christians who are increasingly feeling and being obliged to act against their consciences. The fear of being condemned for 'hate speech' is creating a culture of self-censorship. One headteacher was forced to resign when she was accused of 'racism' for trying to stop segregated assemblies for Muslims. Some RE teachers are reluctant to focus on Christianity for fear of being accused of 'prejudice'. Another headteacher sought legal redress after enduring complaints against her by four Muslim governors. An investigation found that there was no evidence of racism or 'Islamophobia' on her part, but the harassment continued and she was forced to resign. Public life has become secularised and more hazardous for Christians.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

As with all qualitative research, the extent to which an audience is 'sympathetic' is dependent on a host of variables. As successive incidences of intolerance permeate the media, the public sense of outrage rises proportionally. Traditionally Conservative-supporting newspapers tend to be more sympathetic, yet some of these occasionally overstate a case and distort, thereby undermining the genuine grievance felt by the victim(s). Much of the left-leaning media (where incidents are reported) tend towards *ad hominem* dismissal and ridicule of Christians in ways they would not express towards adherents of minority faiths.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Declaration of interest: in 2005 I was dismissed as a parliamentary candidate over articles I had written in 2003 for *The Spectator*, which were considered an 'educated and thoughtful' defence of the Act of Settlement. The Conservative Party had already sat in judgement, finding in my favour. When, two years later, I was selected to contest Slough, I was called a 'bigot' by one newspaper, and summarily dismissed. Slough Conservatives were then dismissed en masse for supporting me. Despite widespread public support (including prominent Roman Catholics like Charles Moore and Lord Rees-Mogg), my political career was ended by a party leader reacting to a single expression of Anglican orthodoxy.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are not a singular community: opinion varies widely, but very many observe the tabloid tendency to distort and sensationalise relatively minor issues, while completely ignoring the serious consequences for civil liberties, especially the freedoms of speech and religion (freedom of worship is unhindered). Reasoned debate diminishes, in schools as in Parliament. Irreconcilable tensions or divisively contentious issues are bypassed or kicked into the long grass. There is dismay at the rise of an intolerant and aggressive secularism. There is anger at the more hard-line position being taken to promote gay marriage. In especially strong language, defenders of marriage as heterosexual union are condemned. Teachers are treading carefully, following the successful prosecutions of a CofE bishop and B&B owners for discrimination on the grounds of sexuality; the closure of Roman Catholic adoption agencies; Christians being discounted as adoptive parents; the EHRC referring to Christianity as an 'infection'; employees and students being prevented from wearing crosses while adherents of other faiths may manifest their religion. Equal rights appear to be becoming 'special rights' for minorities, and in the hierarchy, it is Christians who are feeling disadvantaged. Some are not infrequently torn between 'turning the other cheek' and formal protest.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Discriminated against
Misunderstood

Other - (please specify) – I won't use the word 'persecuted', primarily because of what others suffer in (say) Zimbabwe or Iran. I prefer 'unjustly treated'.

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

It is important to distinguish between the letter of the law and its interpretation: in many cases the principal issue is the judicial application of the law more than its framing. There are certain consequences for Christians that arise out of the Equalities Act 2010; some perhaps unintended. The problem now is the emerging body of case law, upon which precedents future cases will turn.

Consideration needs to be given to 'protected characteristics': some lifestyle choices and politico-philosophical beliefs are increasingly being equated with religious belief. There is no state definition of 'religion' (there cannot be), and some employment law rulings are creating a degree of confusion. The judicial application of the Equalities Act has forced Roman Catholic adoption agencies to comply with anti-discrimination legislation (despite no gay person ever having sought to adopt a child from these agencies). There is doubt as to whether freedom of religion and belief was properly respected as set out in articles 9 and 14 of the ECHR.

Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 needs to be amended to remove the word 'insulting' from the offence. This is not simply an issue for Christians: people of all faiths and none support this amendment to protect free speech. In education, it is inhibiting open debate. Teachers and headteachers (not to mention the police) need to be better informed of the correct application, in order to minimise the unjust harassment of Christians who express purely moral opinions.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The law needs to 'find space' for Christians to express their beliefs and traditions with granted exemptions from some laws (turbaned Sikhs are exempt from the statutory requirement to wear crash helmets and may also carry a sword/knife [kirpan]; animals are not stunned prior to slaughter for halal or kosher meat). We have an Established Church, so religion and politics are fused in the Constitution: we are not a 'secular democracy'. While it is important to keep subversive religion out of politics, all citizens should be free to worship whomever and however they please. And that worship should not be confined to the home or place of worship: the exhortation to 'walk in spirit and in truth' demands that faith be able to be expressed in the public sphere. Expressions of Christian orthodoxy should not be illegal because one group finds them 'insulting'.

There are in the Constitution codified checks and balances which ensure compromise and conciliation, placing a premium on pragmatic concessions to secularists and those who adhere to other religions. This is the essence of Anglicanism. However, following its initial announcement to intervene and to argue for 'reasonable accommodation', the EHRC decided not to make the case in the ECtHR. Thus the output of the body designed to ensure equality and justice in the UK is perceptibly anti-Christian. Discrimination against Christians is presented as the proper upholding of human rights and equalities law and principles. All reasonable people will agree that there is scope in a liberal democracy for the reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Where terms and conditions of employment are amended *for existing employees*, cases which involve the principle of conscientious religious objection should result in exemptions being granted by employers, who may accommodate such requests without limiting or adversely affecting the rights of others. And there must be proportionality where mutually-exclusive rights conflict: it is unacceptable that Christians are losing their jobs for (say) declining to perform civil partnership ceremonies, counselling gay couples in their relationships, or refusing to remove a cross necklace (while Sikhs may wear a kara).

Hitherto, in the equality legislation relating to the provision of goods and services, the focus has been on Christians: in the hierarchy of legal rights, sexual orientation rights 'trump' religious rights. But what happens when a local LGBT group seeks to hire the hall of a Muslim school? What happens when Gay Pride asks a Muslim to print their flyers and posters? What happens when a homosexual applies to a mosque to be their youth worker? Most, of course, won't make such requests, but a few of the more militant-minded will. These then become a clash of the rights of two minority groups. While Christians are pilloried or dismissed for their 'homophobic' views, it is likely that the state will 'find space' for Islamic conscientious objection to the normalisation of homosexuality by force of law. The alternative is legalised oppression of religious minorities under the guise of liberalism, equality and the preeminence of individual rights.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Society is plural, and in that pluralism space must be found to accommodate diversity and difference. Recognition must be given to the public dimension of religious adherence, and care must be taken to guarantee that others are always treated with respect. Mutual respect is contingent upon a social contract which espouses certain inalienable values that are common to all people and contiguous with human nature and natural justice. Primarily I am talking about dignity, which is inseparable from the pursuit of happiness and contingent on liberty. Such a contract does not seek to limit religious expression, but instead allows each person to bear witness explicitly to what he or she believes, even at the risk of causing offence.

The Anglican Settlement is benign, broad, accommodating of difference, and predisposed to peaceful coexistence. All Christians may live under its aegis, as may those of other faiths and none. The courts must administer justice which is tolerant of the Christian conscience: society should act proportionally in cases concerning religious rights under equality and human rights law. Society should make reasonable accommodations across all 'protected characteristics'. Permitting people to live as they wish is one thing. Changing the traditions of the culture (and historic definitions of terms like 'marriage') is something else. Christians are called to be 'salt and light' in society. If they are prohibited by law from loving their neighbour (by their definition; not the state's), we have simply returned to an era of religious intolerance and re-introduced the Test Act.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Postmodernism incorporates a complex fusion of positivism, secularism and moral relativism. These have grown in influence and undermined foundational Christian values and the traditional understanding of 'the common good'. A hedonistic/anarchic culture has emerged, which schools are increasingly powerless to confront. Children are taught about equality, rights and autonomy at the expense of community, commonality and responsibility. RE has

been downgraded and 'Citizenship' education is frequently delivered by teachers who do not themselves grasp the foundational ethos of liberal democracy.

Minority faiths are accorded more respect for fear of allegations of 'racism'. There is a certain blindness which accepts the Sikh cadet at Sandhurst who would not wear regimental head-dress, or the Sikh judge not obliged to wear the centuries-old wig, but will not accommodate Christians with the same degree of pragmatism. The challenge is a tension between passive acceptance or a more aggressive pursuit of equality for Christians.

The state broadcaster has said that Christians are 'fair game' for insults, while admitting that Muslims (in particular) must not be offended. Such blatant bias is an immense challenge, for the majority expression of faith is seen to be discredited and disrespected by the state as people are inculcated with an enticingly generous and broadly tolerant equality ethic which demands that one belief must be considered as true as another. The main challenge now is how to confront what Pope Benedict XVI referred to as 'a dictatorship of relativism'.

Dear Mr Streeter,

I was interested to hear about your 'Clearing the ground' inquiry. I'm wondering if you would be interested in the following story, which to me is a very clear example of discrimination against people of faith.

Our church has applied to funding bodies with plans to create a community space out of the church, removing pews, creating a kitchen and toilets, installing a new heating system and insulation etc. We've been successful with a number of funders, but we were hoping that our biggest funder would be the newly created Copeland Community Fund (CCF), since they have an income of £1.5M per year, and it has to be spent in Copeland (from Millom to Whitehaven). CCF have decided not to fund our scheme (for a confusing variety of stated reasons). Our initial trust in them allocating £100k could now jeopardise other funding which has time limits, apart from the actual lack of that money in itself!

From the start, CCF stated that they cannot fund:

'Places of worship unless for wider community benefit'.

This was no problem for our scheme, and one of their staff has helped us (a bit). Having considered our initial application and a resubmission and an appeal, they've now changed their criterion to exclude:

'Fabric appeals or improvements to places of worship'.

You may notice that no matter how great the community benefit, the CCF will not fund any improvement to a place of worship.

A small proportion of the time each week is intended to be used for worship, with very much more time allocated to community groups such as the scouts etc.. It appears that if we had decided to give up worship there, we would have been eligible for funding.

I feel that we're being discriminated against, though I don't know if there is any legal basis at all that would support my feeling. I know you're gathering evidence just now, but any hints on how to take this forward would be very welcome to us.

If you're interested, I can send an electronic copy of the two page letter from CCF which includes the above quotes in bold.

Alec Bounds (Mr)

Member of the Egremont Community Space Project

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Lawrence Burr OBE
Your organisation: All Saints Church, Norton Fitzwarren
Your role in the organisation: Churchwarden
Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Rural Anglican Church with a small congregation on the outskirts of Taunton, Somerset.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Relationships Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There is fear in the parishes that the chaos of secularism is turning society into an uncaring mix of people with no moral boundaries. Children are given no boundaries, young teenagers are lacking mentoring family figures, couples are confused in what constitutes a loving relationship and the everpresent fear of offending anyone and everyone with a threat of legal action for unintentional and unintended comment in everyday free speech constricts community life.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

The years of uninformed teaching in schools at both primary and secondary level with headmasters openly flouting legal requirements for Christian worship/teaching has produced a public with little understanding of what constitutes right and wrong. Add to this the potent mix of violent video games, social media and sexually explicit music film clips and you have a general public that is uncertain of where it wants to go and lacks direction. Thus it is easily influenced by the media who now control public opinion without question.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

News media has always been used to control public opinion for one reason or another whether for political or financial gain. The dumbing down of education means that the public are more easily led as they cannot see beyond the headlines. The explosion of social media sites perpetrates this as the vociferous minority can easily whip up public "anger" and pass it off as national opinion. This causes unease and unrest generally in society.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are becoming more and more anxious that the moral compass of society is being lost. Christianity takes many forms and does fantastic work in its outreach both at home and overseas. However, it is constantly being undermined by a society that sees the world as a battleground and looks for simple sound bites which they call knowledge. The Government is seen as being increasingly unchristian with little understanding of the history behind this country's historical links with the church and its influence for good. By trying to enforce trite policies on such things as homosexuality and secular theology, they pander to secularism.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The law is regularly discriminating against the bible and its contents. The bible is not a subversive text but is treated as such vis a vis other holy books from other religions. The Government and the Law cannot escape that they are the instruments by which the Monarch's position as Head of the Christian Church is confirmed within the United Kingdom. To actively undermine the Christian ethos of this country using the term political freedom as their excuse is worrying.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1. Christianity to be taught as the principal religion by informed teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools. 2. Educational funding only given to Christian faith schools in the UK. 3. Reverse the absurdities in the recent Equalities Act and allow Christians to be able to profess their faith in word and deed openly. 4. Discourage the obscenity of gay marriages and gay adoptions. 5. Tax incentives for clergy to encourage men and women of faith to take up the

cloth. 6. The inclusion of a Church tax in the local Council Tax to provide for the upkeep of places of worship and christian outreach. (Germany model is ideal). 7. Stop Sunday trading. This prevents thousands of families from enjoying one day of rest a week.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Christians and their places of Worship are under threat all the time yet it is to the church that many turn when in despair. Planning laws/Health and Safety/CRB etc all mitigate against a worshipful congregation and those that try to maintain a Christian presence within the community.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

A strong multi faceted community that is educated, literate and understanding of its relationships one with the other under the guidance of people with a committed Christian ethos and mores.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

We need to reclaim our land once more and provide our children with the guidance of a loving and caring community. We need the opportunity to pray and minister to the people without fear of legal recrimination. The volunteers are there - all they need is the encouragement that the Government is willing to stand up for its Christian roots.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Clive Ireson
Your organisation: Association of Christian Teachers
Your role in the organisation: Director (Strategy)
Website www.christians-in-education.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

The Association of Christian Teachers is a membership organisation representing all those Christians working in schools - teachers, support staff governors etc. It provides a weekly update on education matters. I speak nationally on education matters and we support individual members where possible.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Broadcasting & media Educations Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Finding a way to stay true to their faith, express their faith without coming into conflict with employers.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Very sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

I believe public opinion is sympathetic as long as individuals are not trying to 'sell' their faith in the workplace. Public opinion has moved on and allows us all in the main to express our views and young people in particular are very interested in each others views. Employers, particularly the state sector have not caught up with public opinion and are often 'frightened' of anyone they employ stating a personal faith view.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

For some of the media these issues become headline news when very often there is more behind the stories.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are often frightened because they are encouraged by churches and religious groups to express themselves and often to 'evangelise'. When they do this their employers bring in sanctions. I believe employers, churches and Christians in the workplace have a lot to discuss and to learn.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Privileged

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

It is more likely to be the interpretation of the law that is unfair. Christians are able in this country to do many things, there is a great deal of freedom, this is freedom that all should understand comes with responsibilities. Employees of the state including Local Authority employees must be able to stay true to their faith.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I would probably not change the law but draw up a charter for Local Authority groups, government, employees etc to sign up to - this would be very difficult to achieve but would get all interested parties talking and would bring some clarity to all about the freedoms that exist. Changing the law itself may not serve Christians well.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Matters of faith and expressions of faith are not best served by law. Freedom of speech is the most important value to maintain.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

By Christians offering the love of God on a daily basis at home, at school, in the workplace, in the supermarket etc many, many more people will want to know about our God and how they too can join with us as Christians.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

There are major opportunities in our schools for Christians to become involved. Schools are open to involvement both in working with teachers and on governing bodies. The Academy and Free School movements have opened up more opportunities for churches and Christians to get involved. In this country education was part of the family business of the church we need to get hold of it again and become further involved. By doing this we have great influence on RE, worship, discipline, Sex Education etc in our schools and a valuable sign that Christians are involved in their local communities. The challenges are that as Christians we don't spend the time out there in our schools in our communities sharing the love of God in practical ways and just 'snipe' from the sidelines.

Evidence presented to the Clearing the Ground Parliamentary inquiry into Religious
Discrimination

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This is a paper presented by Aughton Ainsworth solicitors.
- 2 Aughton Ainsworth is a law firm based in Manchester specialising in religious freedom cases and Human Rights. Aughton Ainsworth has been involved in numerous high profile cases over the past couple of years.
- 3 Clearly the perception is that Christians are being increasingly marginalised in the workplace and public life. The message is that religion is a private matter and is not to be brought into the workplace or public life. Is there any evidence to support this? A review of the cases below that we have been involved in would appear to support this.
- 4 Whilst the majority of the cases have had a positive outcome so far as the Christian litigant is concerned, the fact remains that the cases had to be brought in the first place and despite the success of the cases the problem continues. What is perhaps most disturbing is that, in the main, the Defendant in each case is a public authority.

THE UK GOVERNMENT

- 5 During the past 10 years the Government has brought in various pieces of legislation in respect of diversity and equality which has now been consolidated into the Equality Act 2010. The legislation has been used against Christians so that when it comes to issues of diversity and equality Christians lose out to other 'protected' groups.
- 6 Powerful lobby groups (e.g. Stonewall) with the backing of Government ministers and certain parts of the media have been instrumental in blocking appointments to public life.

Dr Hans-Christian Raabe v Home Office (High Court of Justice claim number CO/3995/2011)

- 7 Hans-Christian Raabe, a Christian GP, was appointed to the Government's ACMD (Advisory Council of the Misuse of Drugs). His appointment was revoked when it became known that he had co-authored an article published in Canada in 2005 in support of traditional marriage. The paper, which was a review of scientific papers, was criticised for describing a link between homosexuality and paedophilia. However, an earlier Home Office report had made essentially the same point. The Home Office revoked his appointment, following criticism from 'gay' lobby groups and elements of the media, on the ground that he would not be able to give balanced advice to the homosexual community as to the misuse of drugs. A Judicial Review has been issued in the High Court challenging the decision on the ground, amongst others, that it was perverse and absurd. The High Court has given permission for the case to proceed to a full Judicial Review hearing.

Nadia Eweida v UK (European Court of Justice application number 4842/10)

- 8 A British Airways employee was suspended for wearing a cross at work despite other employees of other faiths being allowed to wear religious symbols. Ms Eweida lost her case in the domestic courts and has taken her case to the European Court of Human Rights on the ground that the UK Government has failed to provide a remedy for the breach of Ms Eweida's right to manifest her religion. (Aughton Ainsworth was not involved in any of the domestic proceedings). The UK Government has filed its written observations. According to the observations the wearing of the cross is not a manifestation of Ms Eweida's religion or belief within the meaning of Article 9 as it is not 'intimately related or closely linked' to her personal convictions or religious beliefs

and is therefore not protected by Article 9. According to the Government's observations, the case of Ms Eweida can be contrasted with the practice of a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf which is protected by Article 9.

- 9 Support for Ms Eweida has come from an unlikely source in view of its track record. The Equality and Human Rights Commission ('EHRC') has intervened in the case in support of Ms Eweida (and another Shirley Chaplin). The EHRC has stated that it is 'concerned that the interpretation of domestic legislation by the United Kingdom courts does not satisfy Article 9, in particular by setting too high a threshold for interference and therefore failing properly to address justification' and in the EHRC's view 'domestic case law fails to give proper effect to Articles 9 and Article 14'. The EHRC concluded that the 'United Kingdom case law currently fails adequately to protect individuals from religious discrimination in the workplace'.

Premier Christian Radio v RACC and Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (High Court of Justice claim number CO/7889/10)

- 10 Premier was prohibited from broadcasting an advertisement inviting Christians to share their experience of marginalisation in the workplace. One of the purposes of the advertisement was to use the information obtained to inform public debate. The Radio Advertising Clearance Centre ('RACC') refused clearance of the advertisement on the ground it had a political objective contrary to section 321 of the Communications Act 2003. Premier issued Judicial Review proceedings in the High Court against RACC and the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (the minister having overall responsibility for broadcasting) challenging the decision.

LOCAL COUNCILS

Joe and Helen Roberts v The Chief Constable of Lancashire and Wyre Borough Council (High Court of Justice, Manchester District Registry claim number 6MAQ5136)

- 11 In 2005 Joe and Helen Roberts, an elderly couple, telephoned their local council, Wyre Borough Council, and asked how much of tax payers money was being spent on promoting homosexuality. Following the telephone call, the Council made a complaint to the police. According to ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) guidance, all such complaints are to be treated as homophobic incidents, recorded as homophobic crimes (whether they are a crime or not) and investigated as a hate crime. Shortly thereafter, the couple were visited by two police officers and were interrogated for over an hour. The officers told them they had committed a hate crime, which, according to the officers (wrongly), carried a 7 year prison sentence. Proceedings were issued against both the Council and the police. The case settled with the police and the Council paying damages, legal costs and giving the Roberts' a written apology. The police also said it would look into their procedures so that such incidents would not happen again. The actions of the police and the Council has (and some would argue intended to have) a chilling effect on all Christians.

Pilgrim Homes v Brighton and Hove Council (High Court of Justice, Manchester District Registry claim number 9MA00620)

- 12 The Council withdrew funding, worth £13,000 a year, from Pilgrim Homes, a 200 year old Christian charity set up by William Wilberforce and others to provide residential care to elderly Christians, because Pilgrim Homes refused to ask the elderly Christian residents (all over 80 years old) questions about their sexual orientation every 3 months, use images of LGBT couples in its promotional literature, publicise LGBT events and require staff to attend a Stonewall presentation on LGBT issues. The Council backed down and re-instated the funding after Pilgrim Homes issued proceedings in the High Court.

Brian Dee v St Edmundsbury Borough Council

- 13 The Council told open air preacher, Brian Dee, who had been preaching in the marketplace in Bury St Edmunds for over 10 years, that he was not allowed, under a local bye-law aimed at reducing litter, to distribute tracts. A strongly worded letter was sent to the Council warning that Mr Dee had a right to preach and distribute tracts and if the Council continued to interfere with his rights legal action would be taken. The Council backed down conceding that there was no evidence that Mr Dee had caused a litter problem and accepted that he could continue preaching and distributing tracts.

Adrian Smith v Trafford Housing Trust (Manchester County Court claim number)

- 14 Trafford Housing Trust is a public authority for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. Adrian Smith, a Christian employed by the Trust as a housing manager, was found to have committed an act of gross misconduct warranting summary dismissal. His offence was posting, in his own time, on his personal facebook page a link to a BBC news item 'Gay church marriages get go ahead'. He added a comment 'an equality too far'. The posting was seen by a work colleague who added a posting 'does this mean you don't approve'. Mr Smith responded 'no, not really, I don't understand why people who have no faith and don't believe in Christ would want to get hitched in church. The Bible is quite specific that marriage is for men and women. If the state wants to offer civil marriage to the same sex then that is up to the state; but the state shouldn't impose its rules on places of faith and conscience'. Because of Mr Smith's loyal service, he had been employed at the Trust since 1993, he was not sacked but demoted to a non-managerial position, his wages reduced by 40% and he was given a final written warning. According to the Trust his comments brought the Trust into disrepute and went against the values of the Trust. Mr Smith has issued legal proceedings against the Trust claiming that the Trust was in breach of contract, violated his Convention rights under Article 9 and 10 and failed in its statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010.

National Secular Society and Clive Bone v Bideford Town Council (High Court of Justice claim number CO/7755/2010)

- 15 A Bideford town councillor, Clive Bone, tabled a motion that the Council should stop saying prayers at the start of Council meetings (a tradition that could be traced back to Elizabethan times) on the ground that it discriminated against those who felt embarrassed or uncomfortable by the saying of prayers. The motion was defeated. Subsequently, the Council received a letter from the National Secular Society saying that the practice was unlawful and the Council should cease saying prayers. The Council took advice from the National Association of Local Councils and was told to consider discontinuing the tradition as it may discriminate against those who did not want to say prayers. The Council refused to put an end to the saying of prayers (as had been decided by a majority of the Councillors). As a result the NSS issued Judicial Review proceedings in the High Court against the Council asking the court to rule that the saying of prayers is unlawful on the ground that it amounts to religious discrimination under the Equality Act 2006 (which includes the lack of a religion or belief), breaches of the Human Rights Act 1998 and that the actions of the Council was ultra vires. The case will be heard in December 2011.
- 16 The rationale behind the NSS claim is that secularism is a neutral position. The idea that secularism is neutral (as secularists would have you believe) is a fiction. Secularism seeks to remove from public life traditional Christian beliefs and replace it with secular beliefs. There is no end to this argument. If the secularist succeeds in the banning of prayers then those who wish to say prayers could equally claim they are being discriminated against. At the end of the day, the Council voted democratically to retain the saying of prayers and that should be the end of the matter.

THE POLICE

Anthony Rollins v the Chief Constable of West Midlands (Birmingham County Court claim number 9MA11394).

- 17 Mr Rollins, a street preacher who had been preaching the same message for 14 years was arrested, handcuffed, and kept in a cell for over 4 hours. He was charged with an offence that he had used 'threatening and abusive or insulting words or behaviour within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress' contrary to section 5 of the Public Order Act 1984. The case was subsequently dropped. Mr Rollins made a complaint to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (the 'IPCC') but the IPCC did not uphold his complaint. Mr Rollins issued a civil claim for wrongful arrest, unlawful use of handcuffs and that his rights under Article 9 and 10 had been violated in the Birmingham County Court. The case went to trial. The court found that Mr Rollins' words were not threatening, abusive or insulting and that the arrest and use of handcuffs were unlawful. The court also gave a declaration that Mr Rollins' Convention rights had been violated. He was awarded damages and legal costs. The Police appealed the judgment to the Court of Appeal but withdrew it shortly before the appeal hearing.

Dale McAlpine v Chief Constable of Cumbria 2010

- 18 Mr McAlpine, a street preacher in Cumbria, was arrested and charged under section 5 of the Public Order Act 1984 for preaching passages from the Bible relating to sin. Mr McAlpine was told by the arresting officer that saying that homosexuality was a sin was a hate crime. He was kept in a police cell for 7 hours. He was charged and appeared before the criminal courts. The criminal proceedings were subsequently dropped. Mr McAlpine made a civil claim for wrongful arrest. An out of court settlement was reached with the police agreeing to pay damages, legal costs and to give a personal apology to him.

Cunningham and Abraham v Chief Constable of West Midlands 2008

- 19 Street preachers, Mr Cunningham and Mr Abraham, were preaching and handing out gospel tracts in a predominantly Muslim area in Birmingham. They were told by police officers in a very intimidating manner that they could not preach the Gospel in a Muslim area and were warned to leave the area or face being taken to the police station. They were also warned not to return or they would risk a beating. A formal written complaint was made to the IPCC. The IPCC did not uphold the complaint. Nevertheless the police officer involved was given advice that was written into his note book and the West Midland Police confirmed that there were no 'no go' areas in the West Midlands.

Salt and Light Cafe v the Chief Constable of Lancashire (incident on 19 September 2011)

- 20 Two police officers walked into the Salt and Light café in Blackpool at a time when the cafe was full of customers. Its customers are mainly Christians but it is open to the general public.
- 21 Jamie Murray, the owner, was told by one of the officers that a complaint had been made regarding offensive insulting homophobic material which was against the law under section 5 of the Public Order Act. The tone of the officer was confrontational and intimidating. The material referred to was a DVD of the Bible played on a flat monitor screen in the cafe with the sound turned off. The DVD displays Bible verses against a background of different scenes. Mr Murray was told that he could be arrested for playing the Bible if the material was offensive and insulting. He was questioned for more than 30 minutes and described it as an interrogation and that they were trying to put the 'frighteners' on him. Mr Murray became increasingly anxious that he may be arrested if he did not agree to turn off the screen. An apology of sorts was given by the police but a formal written complaint is to be made against the police.

- 22 This is the same police force that 'interrogated' Joe and Helen Roberts and despite assurances given by the police in that case that they would review its procedures so that such an incident would not happen again, clearly the problem remains.

John Craven and Chief Constable of Greater Manchester (incident on 17 September 2011)

- 23 A street preacher in Manchester City Centre was arrested under the Public Order Act 1984, marched to a waiting police van and detained for 19 hours in a police cell. From the time of his arrest at 7.15pm until midnight he was not given anything to eat or drink. At midnight he was given a drink and was given something to eat at 9.30 am the next morning. He was released without charge and given police bail to report to the police station at a later date. He subsequently received a letter confirming that there was no ground for bringing a case against him. Mr Craven is to make a formal complaint to the police.

THE ROLE OF EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ('EHRC')

- 24 The EHRC was set up under the Equality Act 2006. The Act provided a framework for the EHRC to work towards encouraging and promoting respect and the protection of human rights between individuals and groups who hold different views and beliefs. The role of the EHRC in such cases is to provide assistance to the parties for the settlement of the dispute or intervene in the proceedings in order to provide assistance to the court in respect of matters in which the EHRC has a function under the Act.
- 25 *Preddy and Hall v Peter and Hazelmary Bull* (Court of Appeal, appeal numbers 2011/0313 and 2011/0314)
- 26 In this case the EHRC acted (and continue to act) on behalf of Mr Preddy and Mr Hall against Peter and Hazelmary Bull, Christian owners of a Bed and Breakfast who refused to allow Mr Preddy and Mr Hall, a same sex couple in a civil partnership, to share a double room. It had been the policy of the Bulls as far back as 1996 not to allow unmarried couples to share a double room. The case went to trial at the Bristol County Court. The Court found that the Bulls had discriminated on the grounds of sexual orientation. The Bulls have appealed and the appeal is due to be heard by the Court of Appeal on the 8 November 2011.
- 27 The EHRC represented and provided financial assistance to Mr Preddy and Mr Hall in bringing a claim against the Bulls. A letter was sent to the EHRC pointing out its statutory duty not to take sides but to assist the court in reaching the right balance between groups of competing views. The EHRC's answer was that the EHRC had identified the Sexual Orientation Regulations 2007 as a priority support for litigation in the EHRC's legal strategy. In taking sides the EHRC had, it is submitted, failed in its statutory duty.
- 28 In what appeared to be a shift in emphasis, the EHRC issued a press release in July 2011 that employers should do more to 'reasonably accommodate' employees with religious beliefs just as is done with disabled employees and that the EHRC intended to intervene in support of the four religious liberty cases headed for the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (*Nadia Eweida, Shirley Chaplin, Lillian Ladele and Gary McFarlane*). The EHRC applied to intervene in all four cases and submitted that the 'four cases will shape UK law regarding the place of religion in the workplace, and will significantly influence the place religion has in public life within the UK more generally'. The EHRC went on to say that the EHRC was 'uniquely placed to provide an independent, distinct and wider perspective on the protection for religious beliefs'. The EHRC's position was that the UK 'should have in place laws that give a greater respect to religious beliefs than has hitherto been the case'. The European Court granted the EHRC permission to intervene.
- 29 Following the application to intervene, the EHRC backtracked on its promise. Angela Mason (formerly head of Stonewall and who now sits on the EHRC) said that the

'Commission has already decided not to put forward 'reasonable adjustment' arguments if we do continue with our intervention'.

- 30 The EHRC carried out an informal consultation exercise that invited stakeholders to provide their thoughts on the EHRC's intended position in the four cases and the use of the 'reasonable accommodations' concept to support the cases of Eweida and Chaplin but to oppose the applications of Ladele and McFarlane. The responses indicated that they agreed with the EHRC's position to support the applications of Eweida and Chaplin but disagreed with the EHRC's position not to support the applications of Ladele and McFarlane. And here lies the problem, the EHRC has been so thoroughly 'infiltrated' by an anti-Christian bias that even when the EHRC tries to do the right thing it is 'hijacked' and forced to backtrack.
- 31 To date, the EHRC'S record in Christian liberty cases is not a happy position. In the Bulls' case, referred to above, leading Counsel instructed by the EHRC has suggested that 'arguments regarding homosexuality do not reach the threshold of the basic standards of human dignity and integrity, as such views are not compatible with affording dignity to the private life of those who are not heterosexual' and therefore fall outside the protection of Article 9. This is in spite of the fact that the Judge at first instance found that an orthodox Christian belief in the sanctity of marriage and the sinfulness of homosexuality falls within Article 9. This is not the first time that leading Counsel instructed on behalf of the EHRC have made extremely serious anti-Christians remarks. In the case of potential Christian foster parents, Mr and Mrs John and Derby City Council, the EHRC intervened in support of the Council (this was not an Aughton Ainsworth case). Counsel for the EHRC said that Christian values are like an 'infection' that could harm children. Following complaints, the EHRC was forced to apologise and print a retraction on its website (3 March 2011).

Black and Morgan v Wilkinson (Slough County Court claim number 0UD02282)

- 32 On a similar case to the Bulls, a Christian owner of a Bed and Breakfast, Susanne Wilkinson, has been sued by Mr Black and Mr Morgan, a homosexual couple, for being refused a double room. The case has been adjourned to wait the outcome of the appeal in the Bulls' case.

CONCLUSION

- 33 Discrimination against Christians because of their beliefs is against their core identity, which is often misunderstood, so that a Christian is expected to act against his or her convictions in the workplace or in providing a commercial service, rather than seeing that a Christian's core belief is what they are and what they do. Lynn Featherstone MP and Government minister said, during the time she was part of a Parliamentary committee scrutinizing the Equality Bill, that 'public sector workers with faith convictions should make different choices about their careers'.
- 34 The cases demonstrate an anti-Christian bias by public authorities particularly when it comes to certain issues, such as moral issues or sexual ethics in favour of a liberal agenda driven by powerful lobby groups with a ready made platform provided by a liberal media.

Aughton Ainsworth
October 2011

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Rev Trevor Homfray-Cooper
Your organisation: Biggleswade Pentecostal Church
Your role in the organisation: Minister
Website www.biggleswadechurch.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are a friendly, lively Pentecostal church in the market town of Biggleswade, Bedfordshire. We seek to help people discover the good news about Jesus Christ, and grow in a relationship with him. We fully believe in the Bible and its relevance for today, and so look to express this into our community, through practical, visual and verbal means. We work with other churches, organisations and schools in order to reach out with the good news of God's love.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Family Relationships

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Locally we are trying to change public opinion, as the churches work together in our local community, but I think that the majority of people have such a bad opinion of church and Christianity.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media features the 'bad news' about church issues or individuals in the church, and soap operas, etc. feature Christians as crazy fundamentalists or hypocritical laughing stocks. There is very little coverage on the good that Christians and churches do in their communities.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

It is difficult to change the widespread public opinion and can feel rather overwhelming, but we need to impact the people locally to us. It is frustrating that people look to media portrayal or stereotypes to form their view of church and Christians, instead of finding out themselves from 'real-life' believers.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The expression of Christian traditions or symbols seems to be targeted, but other faiths seem protected. Also standing up for what we believe the Bible tells us, causes us to be persecuted, such as views on sexual relationships (either heterosexual outside of marriage, or homosexual).

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Clarity on freedom of speech. Discrimination laws should respect individual's faith, so a Christian owner of a bed & breakfast should be able to refuse to allow non-married couples or same-sex couples to share a room.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I don't think that Christians don't want special treatment, just equal treatment.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

I would like to see a society which expects the best of others, and is willing to help to enable others to achieve their potential. A society where it is not "every man for themselves" but "do for others what you would like them to do for you". I think that Christians can lead the way (and have done), setting an example in helping people in desperate or difficult circumstances to find their way out, whether it be from debt, homelessness, bad relationships (marital and parental) and more.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

There are many churches and Christian organisations who are already working in this areas in the UK, and these should be supported and set as examples/models for wider implementation. Resources such as finances, manpower and property are often the challenges.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: John Cavill
Your organisation: Blackmore Baptist Church
Your role in the organisation: Prayer Deacon
Website www.blackmorebaptist.com

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

It is a Baptist Church. It proclaims and teaches the good news of Jesus Christ, that God loves all people and wants them to be saved, so much so that He sent His one and only Son that whoever should believe in Him should not die but have everlasting life (after John 3:16)

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There are a number of areas where the law no longer allows Christians to act according to their conscience. They may be penalised heavily for being obedient to God and this is shameful. Some have been criticised, some suspended and others have lost their jobs. The whole of Parliament should be on its knees before God in shame for having allowed such a situation to arise.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Very sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

I believe that the vast majority of balanced and thinking people are ashamed at what is happening in our country.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Somewhat

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

One of the media's failings is that it does not include a Christian perspective on issues that it reports

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Most are very concerned.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Those that prevent Christians acting according to their conscience. Examples include but are not limited to, the accommodation industry, adoption, counselling and caring. In all these cases, the law is clearly biased against Christians. This is a scandal in the UK, a country that has long benefitted from its Christian heritage. There is nowhere else that the UK as a nation, can get its values from and it is national suicide to remove Christianity from the public square or otherwise to marginalise it. The loss of Christian values can be seen daily in all walks of public and private life, to the denigration and shame of our nation, never mind the huge financial impact.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

It will, I think be necessary to repeal a number of pieces of legislation. The equality legislation is an obvious example but it is not the only one. More generally, the UK is headed into ethical and moral chaos and to reverse this process will require the repeal of much more legislation.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

This issue arises, as do several others, from the practise of recent governments which have often acted without a mandate from the electorate. Government has instead listened to selfish and vocal pressure groups and has not acted in the common interest of the population as a whole. Inevitably, the law has been distorted and those who live according to the highest moral code are now being discriminated against.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Society in the UK should be based on Christian principles as these are far and away the best that any society has ever come up with. They are so good that many, many people who never set foot in a church nonetheless live by them. Government should lead the way by recognising that it leads the country under authority delegated to it not only by the electorate, but by God. Multiculturalism is clearly a failure and we need to put Christianity back in the centre of public life.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Major opportunity - give the major political parties such a bloody nose in the next General Election that they will at last realise how out of touch they are with the electorate. Major challenge - getting the population at large to understand that if we ignore God, we suffer. It is as simple as that.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Rev Nicolas Lowe
Your organisation: Boyn Hill Baptist Church
Your role in the organisation: Minister
Website www.boynhillbaptist.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

A small to medium church of 60-70 regular worshippers. The church has involvement in the community through schools and clubs for the young and old. There is a lot of mutual support both within the church and for others struggling with life's circumstances.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Family Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The secular agenda and the present gross misrepresentation of biblical Christianity in the public arena by people such as Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hutchins, to name a few, is a great challenge since these doctrines have been fed into public life by those with an actively anti-Christian agenda, and this has begun to cast suspicion on otherwise good and ordinary Christian people. It is in this context a few Christians (in high profile cases) have fallen foul of new equality laws (or their present interpretation.) One of the greatest challenges is to communicate/preach the gospel of Christ in a context where being misunderstood increasingly bears the risk of crossing new legal, I'd say confused, boundaries, as well as basically being called names. To say Mohammad is a false prophet = Islamophobic; to say homosexuality is a sin = homophobic; to say Christ is the only way = bigot! And so on. This immaturity replaces proper debate, and in a sense it is immaterial except that, as a preacher, I see freedom of speech as an issue as the law, or its interpretation, encroaches into this area. Social and moral support for marriage and bringing up children is no longer present in society as it used to be. New Sunday trading laws have had a very negative affect on family life. The proposed elevation of civil partnerships to the status of marriage is highly damaging to the moral fabric of the nation.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Most people want to be tolerant toward others, including to towards Christians, though there are increasingly intolerant elements in society. In regard to homosexuality, I think the view of most is toleration, though my experience is that many don't really believe homosexuality to be a very good idea, but feel coerced to follow the new orthodoxy. In regard to family breakdown, I think there is a lot of sympathy and recognition for a need for better morals, love and discipline, though usually people have less idea how to achieve it.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The main stream media, being dominated as it is by secular socialists, set their agenda and have tremendous influence that's my view. The rise of the "BBC commentator" has actually become more than reporting; they advocate a view, that of the BBC though to be fair at time you see them trying to be balanced.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Sexuality issues: all Christians I know want to show the love of Christ to all, and this should put and end to the idea that believing homosexuality to be a sin promotes hatred. (Of course there can be religiously motivated hatred, but we preach the love of Christ.) Family life: in my experience Christians highly value family life, and up hold marriage as an ideal, including single mums and divorced parents. Freedom of speech: Christians I know would want to uphold lawful freedom of speech for all, being prepared themselves to turn the other cheek to insults, while realising they should not deliberately insult people in personal conversation.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Normal but signs of discrimination

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The Equality Act is nonsense. It is possible to be investigated by the police for "homophobia" by saying homosexuality is a sin, (as was Sir Iqbal, head of MCB;) and at the same time for a gay group to be investigated for saying Islam is homophobic. They are both being investigated for saying the same thing, (i.e. that Islam is against

homosexuality (we know that,) but the so-called hate-crime is different (homophobic or Islamophobic?), which shows the "crime" really depends on who hears who say what, rather than an objective criminal act. An element of fear and confusion is introduced into law, which is most unsatisfactory. The gospel of Christ, still at the centre of the Coronation Oath, contains within it the "offense of the cross." It offends our sinful nature, mine included. The law should never interpret a personal offense as hate-crime. No-one should have the right not to be offended, even if it's not very pleasant. When that happens, freedom dies; but this is our concern with the Equality Act. I strongly disagree with people like Hutchins et al, but I also defend their right to say what they say, and it should be absolutely clear in law that the same right is afforded to Christians e.g. I can say publicly Mohammed is a false prophet, which is what I sincerely believe, without fear.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Christians are taught not to take offence, but rather to forgive, but other groups are more easily offended. So for example, if a Christian group is preaching the gospel of Christ on the street, and another group (Muslims or homosexuals or whoever) become offended or even threaten violence, it is the Christian group, or so it seems, who will be silenced or arrested, rather than the group who has threatened or carried out actual criminal disturbance or violence. This is a great threat to free speech, (not only for Christians but for people like comedians and all of us really,) and I'd like to see a change in this area of law to clarify the matter. In short, the somewhat strange and pathological fear among politicians of pandering to minorities and defending their rights to the extent of marginalising the majority seems to have passed into the Equalities Act.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Charity law seems to be an area to watch carefully. New pension law has caused problems among Baptist Churches and probably other denominations as well. This is complicated and beyond me, but I know experts at the Baptist Union have been working with the Government on the issue [and the great burden] of the Employer's Debt, which has unfairly caught the Baptist Churches as an unintended consequence.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

As an evangelical my vision/desire is for the re-evangelisation of the UK and Europe resulting in a reformation of morals and social justice for the good of all. I think there is potential for Christians to have a key role in every sphere of society by bringing godliness into the workplace and into public life. Proverbs 14:34 says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people." This vision isn't simply returning to the mythical good old days, but is progressive to bring new life to every area of society. The so-called "progressive" secular agenda based on scientific materialism has utterly failed, and I believe (re)grasping the Judeo-Christian vision for life and decency which UK governments in recent decades have been legislating against with increasing rapidity is so they could equally well start legislating in the other direction is our only hope in Britain.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The major obstacle for achieving this vision is the secular agenda which almost all our politicians of whatever colour and creed are spellbound by with a blind foolishness, and driven by like a madmen (and women); they don't realise it was the Judeo-Christian vision which gave them their freedoms in the first place. And they don't realise their direction is hell-ward bound for the whole of society. However the consequent break down in Western society which we are now witnessing affords opportunities for questions to be asked and for the church to be a place of healing and social action which in many instances it already is in its locality. Although there is potential for a grassroots revival, there is a great need for a clarion voice at the national level as well, which at present is absent.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Brian Addington
Your organisation: Personal comments
Your role in the organisation: Pastor
Website Not currently available

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Personal comments

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Human rights Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The ability to live out ones faith without prejudice and openly discuss issues from a Biblical perspective

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Not at all

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media often seems hostile to the authentic voice of Christianity. It sometimes seems that other faiths and extremist minorities are given air time, but historic Judaeo - Christian heritage is sidelined

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Many are very concerned where we are, and where we are heading

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The freedom of business owners to make choices based on their Christian beliefs

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Individuals allowed to exercise their basic human right to refuse services to an individual or group if their supported by by their historic belief system

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

It often seems that Bible believing Christians views are either ignored, overlooked, or rubbished,with a balanced view being given.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

A society where different belief systems can live in harmony, without intolerance of other's different view points

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Extremists determined to have their way

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Norma Charlton
Your organisation: C&M ministries
Your role in the organisation: individual member

Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

I am answering as a concerned individual Christian

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Christians are being prevented from complying with their beliefs in order to satisfy the demand for so-called equal rights eg medical staff being expected to perform and assist with abortions even though their faith and conscience are against the taking of life in this way; the expectation that employees should be prepared to work on Sundays and Christian festivals; the erosion of knowledge of traditional biblical stories; attempts to hijack Christmas

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

It seems to be accepted that Christians and the Church are legitimate objects of derision and 'mickey taking', whereas to ridicule other faiths is not 'approved' behaviour. Christians of today are held accountable for the faults of their predecessors. Sectarianism is blamed for many wars.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Somewhat

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

There seems to be an anti-christian bias in many apparently objective radio and TV programmes

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

I think some Christians are unaware of anything untoward - living in their own 'bubble'. The majority of Christians that I know are concerned and uncomfortable about the lack of respect accorded to individual Christians and the Church, even though most will acknowledge that there are weaknesses in all

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

that no employer can advertise for a Christian, even when the role is within a Christian organisation as it is deemed 'discriminatory' that Christians cannot run their business according to their Christian principles without risking the charge of contravening Human Rights

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I think it should be possible to choose a Christian to work in a Christian environment Christians should have the right to act according to their faith in every sphere of employment

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

My vision would be for a society that respects and cares for each member and makes appropriate provision for all. I would hope that Christians would take the lead in demonstrating the love of Christ to all around them, not in a wishy washy 'doormat' way, but in developing strong relationships within their sphere of influence so that others may see 'how these Christians love one another'. I would like to see a world in which Christians are

able to proclaim their faith, without having to apologise, through the way they behave as much as in what they say.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

One urgent need is to educate Christians as to what the call of Jesus means for them in their particular circumstance; to educate society to understand that our faith causes us to behave in certain ways and that issues of social justice and political decisions are as much a question of faith as anything in 'private life'.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Dan Boucher
Your organisation: CARE
Your role in the organisation: Director of Parliamentary Affairs
Website www.care.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

CARE is a well-established mainstream Christian charity providing resources and helping to bring Christian insight and experience to matters of public policy and practical caring initiatives. CARE is represented in the UK Parliaments and Assemblies, at the EU in Brussels and the UN in Geneva and New York. CARE is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales at 53 Romney Street, London, SW1P 3RF, Company No: 3481417, Charity No: 1066963, Scottish Charity No: SC038911

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Educations Family Life Issues

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

CARE believes that one of the biggest issues facing Christians in Britain today is the erosion of space for Christians. This operates primarily on two levels. First, through legislation that makes it difficult for Christian organisations to be Christian organisations, acting consistently with their faith and ensuring that people involved in e.g. welfare providing roles are Christians, living out the faith, as well as those with a 'spiritual' role (Acts 6. 1-6). If Christians understand that if they set up a welfare project that they won't be able to employ Christian welfare service providers in line with their faith (Acts 6. 1-6) their religious liberty is seriously compromised. Second, through the clash between sexual orientation and religious liberty rights. This clash is important because its effects extend far beyond Christian witness in relation to sexual ethics. Increasingly willingness to affirm the validity of same sex sexual relationships is being treated as a touch stone of civic orthodoxy and the options for those who are not civically orthodox are severely constrained. Interestingly, the British Humanist Association and National Secular Society have completely understood this fact and recognise that advancing gay rights legislation that does not make room for Christians (Evangelicals and Catholics) is one of the best ways of pressuring the Evangelical and Catholic presence in the public square. They have consequently been even more enthusiastic about gay rights than Stonewall. In the space of less than ten years we have moved to a place where Christians have been increasingly given the choice 'act in violation of your faith or cease service provision, or lose you job,' as seen in the case of Catholic adoption agencies, the Bulls, Lillian Ladele and Gary MacFarlane. This has all been made possible because of a distortion of what is meant by religious liberty via a flawed reinterpretation of Article 9 of ECHR.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Instinctively the public is quite sympathetic but they need to have the case for religious liberty made to them. Government seems to have largely brought into the reinterpretation of Article 9 and the privatisation of faith and has a huge interface with the public because of the large numbers of people that it employs nationally and locally. Beyond that, lobby groups like Stonewall have been very effective at impacting the private sector. Unless the case for religious liberty is made more effectively within Government, and through equivalent groups to Stonewall (see its workplace equality index), in time public opinion will probably become progressively more hostile.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The Daily Mail and Telegraph have certainly been good at reporting these issues and speaking up for religious liberty. However, they have not tended to get beyond the shock horror, 'can you believe this is happening' to actually provide a philosophically coherent counter argument that demonstrates precisely why and how a liberal democratic society should make space for religious belief. The Guardian and Times, by contrast, have not been supportive.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Evangelicals and Catholics increasingly feel marginalised and disinherited of cherished freedoms. People react in different ways. Some seek to fight back and to resist the changes, impacting the definition of legislation in these areas with Christian salt and light. Others ignore what is going on, focusing instead on what they can still do. There is recognition that over time we are moving from a place where Christian public policy engagement was about impacting the development of law with Christian principle to the benefit of all, to a place where we are increasingly having to engage to deal with laws that seek to change religious bodies and people themselves, who they can employ, what services they can provide, what jobs they can do, what they can say. In this context as Christians see the tide changing, it is common to hear people wondering whether it may not be so long until they are given the choice between living out their faith consistently or prison, like John Bunyan and others from earlier periods of British history.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Other (please specify)

CARE would describe it as mixed (in some ways we would be tempted to say 'schizoid') and this is a function of the fact that the changes outlined above have really come very suddenly, particularly in the last 10 years, and have largely hung on the clash between sexual orientation and religious liberty, they have not impacted all aspects of life. On the one hand we find ourselves increasingly in a situation where Christians are increasingly being told choose between living out your faith or cease service provision or lose your job, which must constitute at the very least serious discrimination. On the other hand, however, we live in a country with an established church, bishops in the House of Lords, a legal obligation on schools to begin each day with a collective act of worship that must be broadly Christian, lots of faith schools etc.

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

A wrong understanding of what religious liberty means. It is increasingly common to hear the notion that religious freedom is the freedom to believe certain things. James 3, however, makes it plain that faith without works is dead. In other words faith without an outworking is not faith but the negation of faith. Article 9 ECHR supports this. Article 9 para 1 sets out the right to believe and manifest belief, Article 9 para 2 limits the scope for the restriction of the right to manifest belief more than any other qualified right. Secularists, however, argue that Article 9 para 1 provides an absolute right to belief and that Article 9 para 2 says that whenever the right to manifest religious belief clashes with another fundamental right, the right to manifest must be compromised. Far from making religion the least qualified right this makes it the most. In this context Christians are increasingly being asked to privatise their faith. From the perspective of service provision, whilst in 2005 Britain benefited from Catholic adoption agencies – which were the very best – now we have none. The government gave Catholic adoption agencies the choice of either continuing, but operating in violation of their faith, or ceasing to function. This ‘choice’ demonstrated zero respect for religious freedom. It was never clear why the rights of same sex couples to access adoption services from *any* adoption agency, should trump the rights of Catholic parents to have the option of accessing adoption services in a faith sensitive way *some* adoption agencies. From the perspective of employment Evangelical registrars have been given the choice of ‘act in violation of your faith or lose your job,’ as have Relate councillors and Justices of the Peace.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

In terms of employment, the law should allow faith bodies to insist that employees are adherents who live the faith for those positions the faith tradition deems necessary (Acts 6. 1-6). In terms of employment, people of faith not working for a faith body should never be given the choice of either violating their faith or losing their job. This should be seen for what it is, religious discrimination. When the difficulty arises because of e.g. a clash between sexual orientation and religion and belief rights, an equal opportunities employer should no more process the clash by dismissing the person experiencing the clash from a faith perspective than the person experiencing it from a sexual orientation perspective. Space must be made for both. In this context the concept of reasonable accommodation currently applied to disability must be applied to religion. In terms of service provision, bodies should never be given the choice between violating their faith or ceasing service provision. A country celebrating religious liberty should make space for faith based welfare providers. In terms of equality strands, the law should be amended so that the strand for religion is made sufficiently coherent so that it can function. At present S. 10 of the Equality Act makes the self-evidently nonsensical statement ‘(c) a reference to religion includes a reference to lack of religion,’ is used to locate religion in a strand called ‘religion and belief’ where belief represents the negation of religion. This means whenever the religion speaks it is immediately contradicted by belief and the strand is paralysed. In terms of general principles, the law should embrace ‘reasonable accommodation’ for religion and or ‘different treatment under the law,’ see definition below in answer to question 14.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The radical Christian commitment that everyone regardless of any conceivable distinction is made in the image of God and therefore equally valuable, laid the foundation for the modern equalities project. When western nations began to embrace democracy, often in the context of this conviction, it was quickly recognised that simply following the majority would lead to a ‘tyranny of the majority’ that would trample the rights of minorities. In this context crude majoritarian democracies evolved into more sophisticated liberal democracies in the context of which laws were developed for the majority but questions were asked about their impact on minorities. Where minorities would be damaged by the law, liberal democracies did not set them above the law but applied the law to them differently so that it did not have the perverse and destructive consequence that would have otherwise been the case. This principle of different treatment under the law converted crudely majoritarian laws into sophisticated laws that had regard for the place of minorities. Numerous examples existed in

relation to military service, the use of vaccinations, the days of elections and more recently crash helmets. In time liberal democracies moved very properly to a place where rather than simply checking laws designed for the majority to ensure that they did not have perverse and damaging effects on minorities, they actually sought to develop laws for minorities themselves, governing the interactions of others with them. At this point, however, Britain seems to have lost sight of the fact that in just the same way a law designed for a majority can have damaging impact on minorities, which should be protected by the provision of different treatment under the law, so too can a law designed for one minority have damaging impact on other equality strands. Without the provision of different treatment under the law or reasonable accommodation such a law necessarily degenerates into crude 'majoritarian equalities legislation,' an oxymoron if ever there was one. This failure to have proper regard for negative impact seems to be having a particular impact on the formation of sexual orientation legislation and its impact on religion, particularly Evangelicals and Catholics.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

CARE wants to see a society in which religious liberty and thus the right to manifest belief as well as the right to believe is properly respected, which is necessary if one is to make space for Christianity which is premised on the notion that belief without works constitutes the negation rather than the presence of faith. This means that rather than seeing Article 9 para 2 as a justification for finding against religion whenever it clashes with another right, that it should in fact be treated as intended, namely as a restriction on the scope to qualify the right to manifest and a restriction on the scope to qualify that is more developed than in the case of any other right. Christians should play a full and active role, as Christians, in all areas including welfare service provision. We want Christians to be able to set up Christian welfare and other projects in line with Biblical principles like Acts 6 and thus know that they can insist that a successful applicant must be of the faith tradition in question and live it without fear of litigation. We want Christian organisations to be able to provide services and be free to provide them in all contexts save where doing so has the effect of making them complicit in promoting or facilitating something that is contrary to their faith. We want a society where space is made for Christian employees in places of work without a religious identity so that they are not put in a position where they are asked to choose between either violating their faith or losing their job. This should be wholly inconsistent with being an equal opportunities employer. We want a society where the equality strand representing religion enjoys the same coherence as other strands and where religion is not uniquely disadvantaged by being placed in a strand that it has to share with other actors whose existence is for the purpose of negating faith, so that faith can have a proper voice. We want a government equalities body that has no favourites and which faith communities can regard as its champion.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

All of the negative changes that have resulted in the last ten years in e.g. the closure of Catholic adoption agencies, the Prospects case, the Ladele case, the Macfarlane case, the Bulls' case, the McClintock case, etc have been the result of new pieces of legislation, namely the 2003 employment regulations, the 2007 sexual orientation goods and services regulations, the 2005 Civil Partnerships Act etc. None of the cases would have happened without those changes in the law. The only serious solution to the problem therefore must involve amending the law.

First, there is an urgent need to define what Christian liberty looks like, as per our answer to question 15, and to relate it to a proper understanding of Article 9

Second, there is a need for a Bill amending the Equality Act in line with the principles of reasonable accommodation and/or different treatment under the law which should be promoted to government, unpacked on the basis of what honouring religious liberty should look like (see the point above).

Third, if government refuses, the Bill should then be tabled as a private members Bill in both houses.

The basic approach, is that the law should be amended so that no law, be it designed with the majority in mind or minorities, should be applied in a way that has damaging impact on another protected minority. If it does adjustments should be made via reasonable

accommodation or the provision of reasonable accommodation. This can and should apply to all strands so one cannot be accused of being less than even-handed. The only way to properly address these problems is by changing the law.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Garry G Carter
Your organisation: Carter & Co Financial Planning Consultants
Your role in the organisation: Practice Principal
Website www.carterandco.eu

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

FSA regulated Financial advisers + Charity Director

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Business Charity Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The perceived view that any stance on Christian views is going to be taken to bits by the media - offering fertile ground for the few anti moral /multifaith anarchists to accuse and prosecute their own anti Christian anthem. Hence the fear that these views cannot be expressed without increasing 'persecution' and risking backlash from those organisations represented

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

The Church is guilty of offering little in the way of giving any legitimacy to the truth of the Gospel by not, in the majority, having effective leadership to influence PO.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Public opinion is formed by bias media attention

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Most are lethrgic and just want live thier lives in peace and not have to think outside the box - and whilst the occaisional event might prompt them to outrage ..most it seems dont want to take a stronger stance

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Ignored Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The increasing inability to speak out in terms of strict Biblical Interpretation about the issues and sin permeating this land - an in doing so incurring unwarranted arrest / charges / police treatment , attracting litigation , laws allowing contrary judgments , hence making the right to choose a farce.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Naturally I would like to see that the Christian Faith, its principles and truth be the upheld as the pre-eminant template for socity above all else. Law adjusted to allow free expression (for all) without gagging by the State

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

To have two High Court judges say earlier this year that "There is no place in British law for Christian beliefs, despite this country's long history of religious observance and the traditions of the established Church." Lord Justice Munby and Mr Justice Beatson made the remarks when ruling on the case of the Christian couple who were told that they could not be foster carers because of their view that homosexuality is wrong. They underlined that, in the case of fostering arrangements at least, the right of homosexuals to equality "should take precedence" over the right of Christians to manifest their beliefs and moral values. Andrea Williams, from the Christian Legal Centre, which backed the Johns' case, said the ruling "undermines the position of the established Church" in England. The Rt Rev Michael Nazir-Ali, the former bishop of Rochester, said: "However, what really worries me about this spate of judgments is that they leave no

room for the conscience of believers of whatever kind. This will exclude Christians, Muslims and Orthodox Jews from whole swaths of public life, including adoption and fostering.â€
Speaking personally, Canon Dr Chris Sugden, the executive secretary of Anglican Mainstream, said â€œThe judgment asserts that there is no hierarchy of rights, but itself implies there is one in which the right to practise oneâ€™s religion is subordinated to the secular assumptions about equality.â€ This clearly is democracy lost and is a moral outrage.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

The mission of the Church is to bring the Gospel to the world, different traditions have distinct understandings of this call to mission , BUT the call to mission does mean actively seeking to reverse the effects of sin in Society. This requires transforming the world 'Thy Kingdom Come Thy Will be Done' i.e. active engagement in peacemaking, improving the economic and social fortunes of historically oppressed groups and minorities, working to improve education, health care and, engaged in caring for the environment. .

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

If the Body of Christ /Church were to unite and actually demonstrate the relevancy of Kingdom values - to bring bring a common morality and structure back to this land.....

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Richard Kornicki CBE

Your organisation: Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Your role in the organisation: Parliamentary co-ordinator
[Note: this is an official-level response, not a formal expression of the views of the Bishops' Conference *per se*]

Website <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/>

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

The Bishops' Conference of England and Wales is the permanent assembly of Catholic bishops in these two countries. It has four principal purposes: to give expression to the collegiality of the bishops; to enable the bishops to collaborate pastorally in order to provide for the common good; to assist the bishops as teachers of the Catholic faith; and to foster relations with other episcopal conferences on both national and international levels to promote and protect the greater good.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Broadcasting & media
Business
Charity
Civil liberties
Educations
Employment
Family
Human rights
Life issues
Relationships
Religious freedom
Service provision

The Catholic Church is concerned with all aspects of human life.

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1. The assumption that religious values are only of relevance to adherents in a private religious environment and cannot be allowed to affect behaviour, practice or the public debate.
2. The assumption that changes in secular values mean that traditional Christian belief and practice has to change to match them.
3. The requirement that universal provision of public services means that each provider has to provide for the entire population, rather than allowing for different sub-sets of need to be met, provided that in total there is universal provision.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have

outlined?

Very sympathetic
Quite sympathetic
A little sympathetic
Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

It is dangerous to make assumptions about public opinion without substantial and carefully constructed survey information. Even then the results will differ for different groups of the population. But while the views of a majority should inform decision making, they must not constrain it - the majority, after all, has long been in favour of capital punishment. As has often been recognised, the true test of a democracy is how it treats its minorities.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

Somewhat
A little
Not at all

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Most people's views are formed by the media on any subject of which they do not have close knowledge.

A classic example is the media response to the Papal visit to Britain in 2010. Prior to his arrival there was unrelenting negative coverage of the Holy Father reflecting a set of beliefs and agendas that bore no relation to the reality. The moment he arrived and spoke, however, the entire country saw how wrong these perceptions had been and he was greeted with a warmth and appreciation that exposed the falsity of the image created by the media.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Catholics do not expect special privileges, but they do expect to have their beliefs and practices treated with the same respect as a civilised society would accord to anyone else's beliefs and practices, whether religious or not.

They recognise and accept that there are occasions when circumstances will prevent normal Catholic practices – an emergency call to a Doctor may prevent him from hearing Mass on a holy day of obligation. But they oppose strongly a growing practice which does not allow for 'reasonable accommodation' to be made which would prevent any clash of obligations taking place e.g. through swapping shifts with non-Catholics.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Privileged
Normal
Ignored
Misunderstood
Marginalised
Discriminated against
Persecuted
Other (please specify)

In some areas marginalised, in some areas privileged. There is a very mixed picture varying from individual court decisions to statutory arrangements which benefit e.g. religious

schooling

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

Sometimes

Rarely

Not at all

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The Equality Act 2010 created a situation where different groups with 'protected characteristics' could simultaneously claim the protection of the same piece of law in a dispute with each other. The Government was warned of the problem it was creating but chose to ignore it. When such disputes reach the courts, all the case law shows that Christian beliefs are regarded as less worthy of protection than beliefs which are in conflict with them. There is no basis for this in the Equality Act, nor in the ECHR; but in practice the law is establishing a hierarchy of human rights in which religious (particularly Christian) belief is regarded as worthy of less protection than other human rights.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The establishment of a principle of 'reasonable accommodation' as a way of meeting religious needs where it is practicable to do so (cf. legal obligations in relation to disabled access).

A recognition that common courtesy and common sense can do more to resolve the tensions inevitable in a mixed society than an adversarial legal system which should only ever be invoked as a last resort.

Better training and information at local level to avoid nonsensical claims that a particular Christian event has to be re-named or may not be advertised in a public building for fear of giving offence to others. (The Catholic Church is working on guidance to make clear what the law really does require in areas of particular concern to Catholics, but this will have a wider relevance to other religions.)

In a free society, Christian belief is as worthy of respect as any other belief; if it is not, then that says something very worrying about the nature of our society.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The fact that there are some instances where legal provision or practice is inadequate does not mean that the legal system is inherently unfavourable to Christianity.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

See document attached – Choosing the Common Good

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Charles P
Your organisation: Christadelphians
Your role in the organisation: Sec
Website www.ukchristadelphians.com

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

It's a fundamentalist Christian church

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

courts who interpret the law too narrowly and have anti Christian bias

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

They do not see it as an issue. Why should Christians have any special consideration?

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

they regard them as vital

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

equality laws

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

reasonable agreements could be reached

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

completely separate

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

human nature

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Andrea Williams
Your organisation: Christian Concern / Christian Legal Centre
Your role: Director
Website www.christianconcern.com

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Within the context of public discourse and with a particular focus on the overlapping spheres of politics, law and mainstream media, Christian Concern seeks to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and to articulate a Christian perspective on issues relating to the fundamental structure of society. The Christian Legal Centre seeks to provide legal support to those who, as a result of living and speaking for Jesus Christ, face challenge in the course of their professional or public service.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Life issues Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

In relation to our areas of expertise and interest as outlined above:

An anxiety about the proper place of the Lord Jesus Christ in society flowing from a crisis of confidence within the Church and amongst Christians about the reality of His goodness and power. A functional doubt about whether Jesus Christ can transform individuals, communities and nations, whether such transformation is for their good and how such transformation is achieved. A consequent uncertainty as to whether speaking of Jesus Christ and the patterns of life that flow from Him is a loving and purposeful thing to do, especially in the context of public debate and policy formulation.

A cultural backdrop of general uncertainty about and specific attacks on the credibility and character of Jesus Christ, in the public arena. Particular anxiety exists over whether a 'modern' and multi-ethnic society can and should retain a Christian framework and foundation.

Confusion about the role that individual Christians, Christian organisations and churches can play in society whilst remaining true to their Christian identity and biblical convictions, particularly in the area of public and professional service.

Challenges in statute and in the courts to biblical teaching on the dignity and protection of life, sexuality, marriage, family, freedom and service of others. Challenges faced by those who dissent in these areas from the position expressed in statute or by the courts, on the basis of biblical teaching and conscience.

The impact of Islam.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

**6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion
(maximum 100 words)**

The majority of the population continues to identify with the Christian faith. There is considerable public interest in society's relationship to Christianity but widespread inability to articulate the fundamentals of the Christian message or how so many of the freedoms and values that British society enjoys today have emerged from a Christian framework. There is some concern about the present state of society. There is significant but not universal support for the protection of life, marriage and family, our Christian heritage and respect for Christian conscience. There is aggressive and focused antipathy towards the Gospel and the Church from some groups.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

**8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role
(maximum 100 words)**

No further comment at this stage.

**9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above?
(please limit your answer to 200 words)**

When presented with the changes that have taken place in our society over recent years and given opportunity to consider the challenges, there is considerable concern amongst Christians and a desire to see things change. They are deeply troubled by many developments in our culture and what they see as the disproportionate influence of certain small but vociferous groups and the effect that they are having. Many Christians feel disempowered but want to be given tools to engage and to find their voice. They express a desire for leadership on these issues.

**10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law?
(you may select up to 3)**

Marginalised Discriminated against Normal

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

**12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair?
(please limit your answer to 250 words)**

The Equality Act 2010 gives protection to a number of listed characteristics. However, it does not specify how the rights established are to 'balanced' where a conflict arises. Further confusion arises from the fact that the term 'sexual orientation' is not adequately defined.

The courts have interpreted the Act (and the legislation that it consolidates and replaces) in such a way that precedence has consistently been given to rights arising from 'sexual orientation' over rights arising from 'religion or belief'.

Neither the legislation nor the courts' interpretation of it has established the principle of 'reasonable accommodation' or 'respect for conscience' in addressing how individuals with religious beliefs are to be treated in these circumstances.

It appears that the law is being used to extend beyond ensuring that individuals have access to the services that legislation mandates and is being employed to require the adoption of a view of sexual ethics that contradicts biblical teaching.

In cases relating to 'manifestation of belief', Christians have been treated differently from those of other religions.

The Public Sector Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require all public bodies to formulate 'specific and measurable' equality objectives. It is expected that the resulting policies will create further difficulties for Christians seeking to engage with the public sector.

Recent interpretation (especially by the Police) of Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986 has resulted in the proclamation of biblical truth and doctrine in preaching and / or debate being challenged.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians?

(please limit your answer to 250 words)

The issues raised in response to the previous question to be addressed.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law?

(please limit your answer to 250 words)

Recent legislation and its interpretation in the courts, alongside commentary from public bodies, lobby groups and others, has resulted in the adoption of 'Equality and Diversity' policies by employers and service providers that can create confusion about how the freedom to express belief relates to other freedoms and rights, leading to pressure on Christians to forgo their freedom.

In the current climate, the existence of legislation that does not reflect God's pattern and principles (e.g. Civil Partnership Act, Abortion Act) makes it more difficult for Christians to articulate biblical truth and question the legitimacy of certain behaviour. Some Christians have found that even drawing attention to the consequences of Abortion or homosexual activity has been interpreted as an attack on others and have faced disciplinary action.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it?

(250 words)

A society that recognises Jesus Christ as Lord and whose values, laws and institutions recognise and practise His justice, mercy, love and truth, enjoying peace and prosperity. A society in which Christians and churches are energetic in making known the good news of Jesus Christ, in His strength, through word and deed, in anticipation of the return of Jesus Christ and the renewed heavens and earth to come.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

As our society experiences more of the consequences of rejecting God's fundamental blueprint, there may be increased opportunities to draw attention to the bankruptcy of such a path and articulate the beauty of God's pattern but this will require confidence and courage on the part of the Church.

A willingness to re-consider the doctrine of multiculturalism provides a chance to explain how a Christian foundation provides the basis for a hospitable and cohesive society for all.

Renewed interest in 'Civil Society' gives opportunity to highlight and develop the Church's considerable involvement in serving the community but will increase the pressure for the issue of respecting Christian conscience (in regard to the individual) and Christian ethos (in regard to organisations and churches) to be addressed by Government if the potential is to be realised.

The continuing pursuit of an 'equalities and diversities' agenda in legislation and policy, both in employment and provision of goods and services, without incorporation of 'reasonable accommodation' represents a major challenge to Christian participation in society.

The relentless attack on marriage and family as understood biblically poses a major challenge to the structure and shape of our society and individual's experience of love and stability. The proposed re-definition of marriage to include same-sex couples is an immediate challenge.

The content of and values expressed in education, especially with regard to Christianity and to sex and relationships is a major challenge.

Continuing pressure (in Parliament, the courts and the media) to legalise assisted suicide, efforts to liberalise access to abortion (e.g. through medical abortion) and ethical challenges in the field of embryonic research pose considerable challenge to the dignity of life and human persons.

The growing influence of Islam and an unwillingness to engage with some of the challenges it presents is a significant challenge.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Malcolm Brown

Your organisation: Archbishops' Council of the Church of England

Your role in the organisation: Director of Mission and Public Affairs

Website www.churchofengland.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are the "established church" for England, present in every community through our parish system and in other structures through chaplaincy etc, offering pastoral care and other ministries to all people (whether our members or not) and tasked with the shared mission, alongside other Christians, to make the gospel known to all generations. Our historic role in the structures of the nation offers particular opportunities (eg Bishops in the House of Lords) and responsibilities (eg our legacy of thousands of listed places of worship). My department (MPA) leads for the church nationally on relations with bodies beyond the church.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Civil liberties Employment Life issues

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1. The erosion of "religious literacy" among those in public office, so that the nature of religious commitment is misunderstood and misrepresented. 2. The mistaken assumption that public roles must always be conducted from a position of "neutrality" and the assumption that this precludes religious commitment. 3. The erosion of community bonds and civil society so that few viable structures stand between the individual and the State. 4. The "chill factor" which makes Christians (and others) wary of acting in the public realm because of (often mistaken) ideas about what the law demands or prohibits (This includes things like Health and Safety misapprehensions as well as over-zealous interpretation of equality legislation). 5. The creeping marketisation of areas of life which should be grounded on relationships rather than pseudo-contracts. The associated assumption that no organisation can exist for the good of others but only for its own sectional interests. 6. The widening of material inequality which marginalises increasing numbers of people from civic life and generates cynicism about working for the common good.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Public opinion is not adequately represented by the media in general. People's opinions emerge more clearly in small local settings where the depths of disillusionment (and often cynicism) about current moral norms is often evident - but so is a real sense of impotence about anything ever changing. This observation is based on contacts and examples across a wide geographical, class and religious/ethnic spectrum. There is a consensus that structures on which we depend are broken - but few ideas for viable change.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media's role is highly influential on the issues, but misrepresents them through a general lack of religious literacy. The degeneration of the popular press is a key factor here. The "broadsheet media" (and equivalent, such as "Today" and "Newsnight") often have a better grasp of religious issues but locate them in a kind of free market of ideas which seems to be competing with a default secularism. I think the "top end" of the media is potentially willing to handle religious issues better but often doesn't know how.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

It is rarely possible to generalise about what "Christians" think - it's hard enough to epitomise what Anglicans think..... In my experience, some Christians have become excessively frightened of "rampant secularism" and are (mistakenly, I think) looking to a US-style culture war to maintain their sense of Christian dominance. Others (from the liberal end of the Christian spectrum) sense less of a problem but are usually open to seeing that they are in danger of forgetting what the gospel actually stands for. Part of my job is to "re-educate" the liberals, and this is fairly straightforward (they are, after all, self-consciously Christian so can't totally ignore the problems of faith in the public square) but I find it harder to calm down the ones in moral panic, egged on as they are by elements of the Right wing media which (in my view) is exploiting Christian anxieties for a political agenda which has little to do with the gospel. One test is whether a Christian moral critique of society embraces both a social and an economic critique - liberals neglect the former and conservatives the latter, but both are essential to rethinking social ethics.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Privileged Normal Misunderstood This is a complex question and the position of Christians in the law is paradoxical.

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Rarely

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The problem, I think, is the fundamental philosophy of the State which informs much policy-making, rather than the form or interpretation of specific laws. In wider philosophical circles (secular as well as religious) the "liberal" view of neutrality is widely discredited, yet our public discourse continues to be dominated by the idea that holding any kind of commitment or belief is illegitimate in the discharge of any public role and out of order in the public sphere. The interpretation of law by the courts (eg Equality law) has been mixed, sometimes showing a stronger awareness of the significance of "communities of tradition" in the social fabric, and sometimes blind to this.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

It starts with the concepts behind the law, not with detailed amendment. The law needs to be cognisant of the way in which people "belong" to groupings much bigger than the family and much smaller than the State, in which they learn what it is to be moral beings. There are many such communities, not all compatible with each other. It comes down to the difference between "plurality" and "normlessness". Plurality means acknowledging the many communities and traditions through which people learn to live well. But what we have often had instead is a normlessness which refuses to take any moral position at all, suggesting instead that everyone is free to define themselves, and what is moral, in their own way. Admittedly, there are problems for the law in adjudicating between the demands of different moral communities (and some Christian anxiety seems to be more about the loss of an exclusively Christian legal and public discourse) but a more grown up approach to pluralism would help.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Some recent cases in Equality law, brought by Christians, have not been helpful to Christian mission. They sometimes seem to be grounded on a (fundamentally secular!) assumption that all religions are similar in character so that, if Muslim dress codes are recognised socially, Christian symbols should be treated analogously. But Christians don't have dress codes or dietary codes (Matthew 6 :1!) and the analogy doesn't hold. Churches should be very wary of "me too" arguments based on the treatment of other faith groups.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

We need to move from seeing ourselves as a "society of strangers" (Bentham) to a "community of communities" (Figgis and others). There is still a role for the State in mediating at the edges, but the focus on individual autonomy as the highest good has broken down under its own contradictions (no man being an island...). A community of communities recognises that there are many moral traditions, including religious ones, which don't agree about everything, but works hard to maximise the consensus, whereas the society of stranger assumes no consensus is possible. That rejection of moral consensus is a core tenet of market economics, so the "socialising" of the market is intrinsic to the project of restoring viable moral communities. Within a community of communities, the Christian faith has room to be itself (as do others) and its mission is to epitomise the good (including the good of all) in its own life in such a way that others are drawn to it. The historic dominance of Christianity in British society (and the history of abusing this position) adds a complicating

factor - best met by publicly exemplifying Christian humility without abdicating the responsibility to live the gospel in the world.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

If the rhetoric of The Big Society is sincere, it offers us the best opportunity for a generation to re-establish a vision of society as the community of communities - but do enough people in politics recognise this deep significance? Christian concern for the common good is taking more concrete forms than for many years - building on this may help establish the notion that faith can benefit all, not just its own members, in the public imagination.

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Submission to Christians in Parliament Inquiry into discrimination faced by Christians.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a non-departmental public body established under the Equality Act 2006. It has operated as the single equality and human rights body in Britain since October 2007. As the independent advocate for equality and human rights in Britain, the Commission aims to reduce inequality, eliminate discrimination, strengthen good relations between people and promote and protect human rights.

The Commission is committed to protecting the rights of all groups in society, including those with religious beliefs, and warmly welcomes this inquiry into discrimination faced by Christians. The Commission believes it is important for the government and others to have a full understanding of religious rights, and balance the rights of different groups within society.

We are unable to answer the specific questions within the consultation document given the personal nature of many of the questions and the Commission's role as a regulator. However, the Commission has been working actively in this area, particularly over the last year. We hope that details of this may be of use to this inquiry.

The Commission has been working on a range of projects looking at the rights of people with religious and non-religious beliefs. Further information on each of these projects has been attached to this submission. Projects include:

- **Legal meetings with selected religious groups.**

The Commission has recently met with a number of religious organisations with legal expertise. Our aim has been to foster stronger relations with religious communities and seek out appropriate legal cases, which will set a legal benchmark in the rights of religious communities. The Commission also hosted a meeting of the Interfaith Legal Advisors Group.

- **Research papers into religious discrimination.**

The Commission aims to be an authoritative centre of intelligence on equality issues. Over the past four years we have produced several research papers covering religious issues, these include 'Religious discrimination in Britain: A review of research evidence, 2000-10' by Professor Paul Weller at the University of Derby and the Commission's statistical briefing paper on Religion and Belief.

- **Legal intervention at the European Court of Human Rights.**

On 15 September the Commission submitted our intervention to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) on four cases relating to alleged religious discrimination in the workplace. The Commission submitted that in the cases of Eweida and Chaplin that the Courts may not have given sufficient weight to Article 9(2) of the Convention; and in the cases of Ladele and Mcfarlane that the domestic courts came to the correct conclusions. Our legal intervention followed an informal open consultation with a wide cross section of stakeholders.

Leading on from our legal intervention at the European Court of Human Rights, the Commission is starting a series of discussions with key stakeholder groups on the concept of reasonable accommodation for religious belief. Unfortunately it is unlikely that the Commission will have undertaken these discussions before the end of the APPG on Christians in Parliament inquiry.

- **Regulating the Equality Act 2010**

As the regulator for equalities and human rights legislation, the Commission is charged with promoting and enforcing the Equality Act 2010 which provides much greater protection to people with religious or non-religious beliefs. The Act protects the rights of people with religious and non-religious beliefs in a number of areas, including employment and in the provision of services. Religion and belief is also now covered under the public sector equality duty.

Concluding remarks

The Commission is confident that religion and belief is appropriately protected under current legislation, including in particular the Equality Act 2010. However, it is our concern that in some legal cases the courts have taken a too narrow interpretation of the legislation. This includes the cases of Eweida and Chaplin, mentioned above. Further details of the Commission's intervention to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has been attached to this submission.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name Dr Don Horrocks

Your organisation: Evangelical Alliance

Your role in the organisation: Head of Public Affairs

Website www.eauk.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

The Evangelical Alliance was founded in 1846 and is the oldest alliance of evangelical Christians in the world.

The Alliance is the largest body serving the UK's 2 million+ evangelical Christians, and has a membership including denominations, churches, organisations and individuals. In its formative years the Alliance particularly stood for the victims of religious persecution and enabled evangelicals from different denominations to work together.

The Alliance speaks on behalf of its members and represents evangelical concerns to Government, the National Assemblies, the media and key decision-makers. In resourcing its members and encouraging Christians to fully engage in their communities as responsible citizens, the Alliance strives to make evangelical truths publicly accessible.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Civil liberties Human rights Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

- Religion and belief rights under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights being unfairly singled out for restriction contrary to the original intention of the Convention and respect for diversity and difference implicit in equalities legislation not actually outworking in practice in balanced and proportionate outcomes.
- Issues relating to Christians in employment and the delivery of public services, such as unfavourable treatment by employers compared to other religions in the wearing of jewellery. These also cover being required to become morally complicit in behaviours that are proscribed by faith and conscience. In most court cases involving Christians where there has been a clash of religious rights with sexual orientation rights, religious rights have been unfairly restricted by a too narrow focus and application of equalities legislation as a blunt instrument, resulting in the emergence of a hierarchy of rights with religion and belief rights located firmly at the bottom. This has recently been publicly conceded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. In Parliament, civil service and local government, as well as quangos and other public bodies, widespread

religious illiteracy means that the existence of and necessity for exceptions for religious groups in equalities legislation in order to make it workable is customarily met with hostility, ignorance, misunderstanding and opposition. Other areas involve unfair treatment where Christians' freedom to deliver services, hire buildings or raise finance from local authorities has been refused because they are 'religious' or automatically deemed (wrongly) to be engaged in so-called 'proselytism' or the conditional delivery of services (see attached for a recent example).

- Churches' freedom not to allow civil partnership ceremonies or to refuse to accept a proposed redefinition of marriage is also under threat.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

We believe public opinion accepts that tolerance for different views in a multicultural society requires there to be some accommodation of moral dissent within reasonable limits and where based on genuine religious belief and freedom of conscience. Whilst the perceived imposition of religious agendas is not sympathetically received by the public, neither do we believe the public wish to see people of faith coerced into acting against their convictions or losing their jobs because of their faith. In our view, public opinion is much more open to the principle of reasonable accommodation for protection of religion and belief than the doctrinaire imposition of narrowly interpreted equalities law, as well as admitting the need for good relations and commonsense in resolving situations of potential conflict to keep unnecessary matters out of the courts.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The religiously illiterate media are largely responsible for inculcating negative public perceptions about religion generally, and Christianity specifically. This mostly occurs through the general adoption of a hostile attitude to religion and belief, often seeking to present stories and issues in terms of polar extremes. A classic recent example was the Pope's visit to Spain in which media headlines focussed on the actions of a handful of protesters and virtually ignored the millions of supporters who enthusiastically came from all around the world to celebrate the visit. Portrayal of religious people in the media is invariably biased and seems designed to present them in a negative light in contrast, for example, to gay characters who invariably appear to be positive.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

A major problem seems to be that 'equality' is frequently being treated as if were 'sameness' with Christians and others being coerced into the confines of effectively a state-imposed ethic. Christians are not asking for exceptional treatment, only fair treatment. Fair legislation

should recognise both equality and diversity – and in a plural society that should include religious people. Government, Courts and The Equality and Human Rights Commission ought to be defending them and are palpably failing to do so. Indeed, the Commission controversially intervenes against Christians in the courts. It is unfair and essentially discriminatory to force Christians, for example, to choose between denying their faith or losing their job. This is not an ‘either/or’ but a ‘both/and’ situation. Conflicting rights must be reasonably accommodated by the law in all but rare and very exceptional last resort circumstances where it is demonstrably impossible to achieve accommodation despite every attempt to do so. Christians are not arguing for denial of anyone’s rights. They want freedom, fair space, tolerance and respect for all. The principle of reasonable accommodation – which respects all views, allows space for all and actually is already implicitly recognised in some legal proceedings – should become explicit and statutory for rights across the board. The injustices that we are all too frequently seeing today have been caused by governments introducing equalities legislation – albeit involving unintended consequences – and they must therefore be resolved by government too.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood
Marginalised

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Equalities Act 2010
European Convention on Human Rights Article 9
Public Order Act (1986) (Section 5)

We firmly believe that the principle of ‘reasonable accommodation’ urgently needs to be introduced into current equalities legislation across the board. However, we also accept that at present the real problem is that the Courts have not been applying the current law correctly especially as regards indirect discrimination which particularly impacts Christians. The law requires that a “provisions criterion or practice” must be a “proportionate” means of achieving a legitimate aim. In addition, Article 9.2 requires that any limitation on religious freedom must be “necessary”. It is our view that what has gone wrong in the various religious freedom cases that have concerned Christians is that the Courts have taken an unduly restrictive view of what is “proportionate” or “necessary” and have not engaged in any real balancing exercise when different rights are in conflict. Another way of dealing with this may be for the government to issue guidance under s14 of the Equality Act 2006 making it clear that employers must ensure that their requirements are “proportionate” and “necessary” and also making the point that where different rights are in conflict no particular set of rights can take precedence. However, as an immediate priority, we are strongly supportive of the concept of reasonable accommodation being made a statutory requirement.

We are also concerned about proposals which may end up penalising churches that refuse to conduct civil partnership and other ceremonies.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

We strongly support a 'reasonable accommodation' amendment in UK law to allow for conscientious objection in the workplace on religious grounds. Indeed, we believe Britain's adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights requires it. It ought to be included in equalities legislation in statutory form. At the very least, it should be a requirement that tribunals and courts will not be permitted to take on cases that have not demonstrably been through a proper 'reasonable accommodation' process. This could take the form perhaps of a code of practice. The principle is well understood in the area of disability rights and generally works well when people of commonsense and goodwill are involved in the process.

There may need to be detailed consideration of how it would work in practice. Ultimately if the needs of a disabled person cannot reasonably be accommodated by an employer then regrettably in the final analysis that employee cannot be accommodated – but such instances should be very rare. We would expect the same approach to be adopted with regard to religion and belief rights. The needs of Lillian Ladele could have easily been accommodated by her employer but were not - for ideological reasons. The McFarlane case demonstrates that on some rare occasions reasonable accommodation is not possible. In the Cornwall bed and breakfast case involving Peter and Hazelmary Bull, reasonable accommodation would have depended on the availability of alternative bed and breakfast accommodation nearby so that everyone's human rights could be respected. If no nearby facilities were available then regrettably no reasonable accommodation would have been possible. The Public Order Act should be amended to remove the chilling effect on free speech caused by the outlawing of the subjective "insulting" conduct. The Equality Act should be amended to specifically ensure that churches cannot be challenged on grounds of discrimination for refusing to conduct same-sex ceremonies.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Professor Julian Rivers has demonstrated (see attached) how society seems to have embraced an equality culture that sees difference and diversity as a problem and seeks to equate 'equality' with 'sameness'. Whereas a Christian concept of equality emphasises equal worth and dignity of all people despite their differences, contemporary equality culture appears to trivialise and suppress distinctives and differences instead of acknowledging, celebrating and accommodating them. Often, this spurious secular and/or multi-faith 'neutrality' has the effect of strictly limiting religious human rights recognition to (in the view of Christians) some largely peripheral religious functions (such as washing facilities and prayer rooms). In the public realm, there has been a concurrent de-emphasis on the importance and seriousness of spirituality, morality and ethics with a consequent dismissal of the place of personal conscience. Instead, there has emerged a creeping 'state ethic' requiring contractual compliance which may often override religious and ethical personal conscience. A single dominant public ethic can in fact be hugely oppressive, especially when it encompasses family life, marriage, sexual behaviour etc, when it may not in fact be many steps away from a totalitarian approach. Most of the discrimination cases in the courts have involved indirect discrimination where Christians have suffered disproportionately compared with others because the application of policies and rules tend to be harder for Christians to comply with. This is because Christian ethics is more individualistic and conscience-based in contrast with other faiths which tend to have mandatory collective rules of behaviour. This demonstrates the need for a more flexible system that places a premium on reasonable accommodation.

Having said this, there are instances in which Christians have misinterpreted the law, for example, when it was recently incorrectly stated after a court case that Christians would not be able to foster children as a result. This shows the need for greater clarity for all – including for those who have to implement what can be complex law as well as for those who have to stay within it - amidst worryingly frequent instances of confusion.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

At the Evangelical Alliance we have a vision for a free and authentically diverse society with a clear sense of a biblically informed common good - a society that is at ease with itself, and values marriage, family life and children. Importantly, this society will cherish the rights that it has secured, and balance them with a sense of duty to those who have gone before, those we live with today and those yet to born. With Christ as the hope of the nations, such a society will experience the gospel of salvation as maximally proclaimed and experienced, and be maximally supported to accept or reject this transformational message. With a broad appreciation of the historical role of Christianity for providing civil liberties, securing political freedoms, and defining the priorities for social good relations – loving neighbours becomes normative because, in Wilberforce’s words, ‘we have made goodness fashionable’.

Alongside the cultural embedding and securing of biblical truth, the role for Christians in this society is to preach the gospel in word and deed, for our healing and for the glory of God. As the book of James attests:

‘Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.’ (James 1.17)

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The church must put its own house in order and ‘walk the talk’. It is a truism that as the church goes, so the nation goes. Christian nominalism needs tackling. As the Church grows globally and as Christians once again begin to see public life in missional terms in the UK, there are signs of hope for our community of nations. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that for Christians to be able to live fully Christian lives, the social, political and cultural after-effects of the secular century need to be acknowledged and addressed.

In our late-modern, Western context, the major challenges and opportunities for the Christian vision for a better society, are bound up with the paradoxical condition of secular humanism being simultaneously hugely influential and obviously inferior. As it is both politically ascendant and also crumbling under the weight of its own contradictions, there is a dual challenge of dealing with its horrendous propositions effects, and providing holistic alternatives in the wake of over a century of poor political thinking and leadership.

Although the vacuum in political thinking and practice provides a wonderful opportunity for Christianity to once again renew society through motifs such as the ‘big society’ and the ‘good society’, this engagement must go hand in hand with a broad, open and thorough public debate about the myth of secular neutrality.

To see a more free, fair and hopeful public square, there needs to be acknowledgement that, contrary to secularist thinking, there is not a legal solution to every problem. Such thinking has resulted in freedom currently being destroyed in the name of one-size-fits-all ‘equality’. The legal compulsion towards ‘sameness’ through the imposition of a hierarchy of human rights is a clear and present danger to plural society. Such liberal authoritarianism, being entirely predicated on autonomy and individual choice (predominantly for the wealthy and educated), represents the greatest and most urgent challenge in politics today. If real freedom, real equality and real diversity are to be preserved, the ‘liberal fascism’ that accompanies the civic religion of secularism must be addressed.

Dear Mr Double,

I am writing to support Gary Streeter in his bringing to the attention of Parliament how Christians are feeling marginalised in our increasingly secularised society. I have been a Christian for over 50 years and worked most of that time in the local community through our local church. Increasingly I feel government does not value our Christian heritage and seeks to eliminate the Christian faith from national life.

A few years ago our county council refused to put a notice on the library notice board advertising a Christmas Carol service. The church has been there 800 years and has probably held a carol service most of that time. We were told that it might offend the Muslims. The library had recently hosted an Eid party and when we said this was hardly even, we were told the Christians had had a visit by Father Christmas!

I also read that the BBC is considering using "common era" instead of AD/BC. The advocate said this was now common practice. If such things do offend Muslims there might be a case, but in fact the response in both cases was that Muslims own Jesus as a prophet and are not offended by celebrating his birth. In fact most Muslims are alienated by the secularisation of western society not its religious heritage.

The government have a choice. If they continue to follow the secularist / humanist agenda and marginalise the Christian majority of the country the churches will withdraw from society to their own world. My church runs the biggest youth club in our local town (the county council one has just closed due to lack of funding), a family support group where all the attendees are referrals from social services as vulnerable families (again it was closed by the state when funding ran out and we took it over) and numerous other community activities eg a lunch club for the elderly, three toddler groups, etc.

I have grown disillusioned with the state over the years as it seems to work against us whilst failing to offer these services or when they do run them they cost many times the cost that we run them with church volunteers and finance.

I trust Gary Streeter's inquiry yields some constructive results not least to stop the damage being done to society by trying to obliterate our cultural heritage.

Thank you,

Gordon Jones

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Terence Walters
Your organisation: Groundlevel Churches UK
Your role in the organisation: Parliamentary Liaison Officer
Website www.groundlevel.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Groundlevel is a network of churches providing spiritual and practical support and care for the member churches. We provide teaching and training through leaders' days, regular group meetings, seminars, and an annual leadership conference. We run the annual Grapevine Celebration where many thousands of Christians gather for worship, fellowship, mutual support and teaching from excellent speakers. We resource ministries to youth and children and we are involved in mission nationally and internationally.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Human rights Religious freedom Life issues

(Human Rights has been crossed because it covers so many of the issues mentioned.)

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The major issues are freedom of conscience, freedom of expression and freedom to manifest, i.e. live out, their faith in their daily lives. It is so difficult now to determine where and how the Christian may manifest his/her faith. It is not certain when there is freedom to express what the Bible says, either verbally or through action, because of the way in which legislation is being applied and interpreted. Freedom of conscience, expression and manifestation of belief seems to be curtailed for the Christian. Examples of this can be found in the law relating to public order, employment, family, and life issues. These go to the very root of freedom of conscience because Christians should be living by the teachings of Jesus. They cannot have a public life which denies their basic beliefs and at the same time maintain their Christianity. But if they try to live by those beliefs they are sometimes marginalised and/ or fall foul of some law, largely because of the rigid way that law is interpreted. The interpretation and application of some law seems to work against Christians no matter what the cause of the case. Consequently many practising Christians perceive that Christianity is being marginalised.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

In some areas the public would support the Christian viewpoint on areas like marriage, adoption and life issues (e.g. abortion and euthanasia). Recent polls have suggested as much. Nevertheless there is little within the media that would suggest this.

Unfortunately some of the public are being anaesthetised by the media against anything that smacks of faith or morality, particularly Christian faith and morality. It seems that nowadays anything goes, so long as it doesn't "hurt" anyone else. The problem is that even though an individual may not be identified as being hurt, such an approach leads to a degeneration of society.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Very few media authors stand up for morality, and life. It is reported that Christians who believe in creation were openly spoken of as "stupid" on BBC's Newsnight. Christians are regularly portrayed as odd, unbalanced people on television. Yet atheists are given air time to promote their views often without challenge. Such has been the erosion of morality.

The media are trying to mould public opinion. It seems that generally the extreme views are the ones promoted together with those of the minority groups, at the expense of the views of the majority of the public. It is almost as if we should be apologising for our Judeo/Christian heritage.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are thankful that they live in a society where at least they are free to worship together and serve the communities as best they can. However they are fearful of the erosion of the values and principles for which they stand and the way that the justice system seems to be happily contributing to and even promoting that erosion.

There is a genuine fear amongst some Christians, especially evangelical Christians, that they will not be able to live out their faith. This is because of the restrictions being placed upon them by statute and secondary legislation which purports to promote equality and prevent discrimination. They see that the way the legislation is being applied and interpreted means that some are more equal than others. They feel that often they are the ones being discriminated against.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Ignored Marginalised

Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Public Order, Employment, Family, Human Rights, Life Issues are all being used in a way which seems to be unfair to the Christian.

Throughout the legal system the application and interpretation of the law gives the impression that it is the Christian who will always be regarded at fault in any given situation. E.G. police arrest a Christian man being attacked for displaying a placard saying that homosexuality is a sin, but then not arresting Muslim demonstrators calling for people to be killed; community support officers moving on Christians who were handing out leaflets in

case it would offend Muslims and threatening them under public order laws if they did not comply, yet allowing Muslims to set up tables to promote their faith; employers taking strict measures against Christian workers but not others; employers who refuse to allow flexibility for Christians in working practices to accommodate conscience issues, and the GMC who are bringing proceedings against a Christian doctor for discussing faith with a patient despite the fact that the complainant did not turn up at the original hearing.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Those who have responsibility for administering the law need to adopt an approach which **is seen** to be fair and even handed. It should also be ensured that such people had knowledge of the faith issues involved and truly understood the ramifications of those faith issues. Some judges seem to demonstrate a sad lack of understanding and a refusal to accept that basis upon which our system has developed over the centuries. The Common law is based on Judeo- Christian principles. That needs to be recognised and not simply ignored.

Some application of "reasonable accommodation" could be applied in some cases as it is with disability cases. It might be difficult to define but not impossible. If it can be applied to one set of rights then why not another?

Although the Government has stated that there is no hierarchy of rights the reality seems to be that there is. The courts seem to have adopted a hierarchy of rights with the Christian's rights always being trumped by other rights, and that certainly seems to be the approach of the Equality and Human Rights Commission despite their recent intervention in four cases going before the European Court of Human Rights.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Over the last 30 years or so we have seen great changes where traditional values and principles have been undermined. Change in society is inevitable and often to be welcomed, but those changes should not have the effect of promoting the rights of some while eroding the rights of others. The rights of Christians to speak and manifest their beliefs must be protected, but what is apparently happening is that those rights are being curtailed. While understanding that discrimination is not acceptable in the provision of services to the public, there must be some reasonable accommodation for freedom of conscience in many of the other areas that have been reported.

There is clearly a difficulty in making the Christian voice heard since the NGO which is supposed to protect human rights, despite words to the contrary has adopted a hierarchical approach which puts Christian rights at the bottom of the list always. The EHRC seems to regard the rights of Christians as the least important of those it is called upon to protect. Its Chair has made some outrageous statements about Christians which clearly shows how he regards them. One change in the law could be to abolish that Commission.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Society should be fair, just, inclusive, compassionate and provide opportunities for all.

Over the centuries many of the major changes within society have been because of the positive influence of Christians manifesting their faith, by putting it into action. The examples are obvious. Christians are called to serve, just as Jesus did. When they have been allowed

to do so they have been a positive influence on society. They can make a positive impact upon society today as well.

What David Cameron is calling for in the "Big Society", Christians are already doing and have been doing for years. Family and the care of children, promoted so well by Ian Duncan Smith, are at the heart of what Christians believe.

So Christians can make a valuable contribution to society working together. Christians are called to love our enemies and work for the common good through serving as Christ served.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Challenges –

internal aspects of church –

the way that church is perceived – dull, boring and irrelevant

the aging population within many churches

leadership in the church nationally is divided and does not speak with one voice

external aspects of church

because of some of the above the church is often marginalised

the media's portrayal and attitude to Christians is to ridicule them

Opportunities

the church must realise the need to change

there must some unity in the way the church speaks on issues

the church can and is able to provide resources which no other body can there is a heart to serve

historically the church has been an effective agent for positive social change - need to build on that and work towards positive social change today

Dear Dr. Hill,

I don't know whether or not this may be suitable for Mr. Streeter and the Christian M.P.s, and please accept my apologies if it should be too late.

At the beginning of my career, 40 years ago, I trained in psychiatry; but as a Christian soon came to realise that the then brand new Royal College of Psychiatrists had suddenly come into being as a totalitarian institution to regulate psychiatry with Government approval. Previously, liberal academic bodies had simply offered accreditation for budding psychiatrists like myself, and then we could go on after qualification to develop our own practices as we saw fit, provided we would adhere to the moral code demanded by the General Medical Council. You could even offer biblical solutions. But from now on the official secular humanist treatment for distressing manifestations of fallen human nature was medication and manipulation of the mind by psychological science. From now on you could not get away with any course of action unless it was approved, whereas beforehand you could have done anything unless it could be proved wrong. A resurgence of the Justinian Corpus Juris Civilis was suddenly limiting the freedom of the mentally ill to find Judeo-Christian spiritual healing! Of course, the issues involved could be a significant threat to the onward march of scientific humanism.

Furthermore, most churches were very pleased to pass the bother of people whose hearts and minds were distressed over to the medical specialists. And there was a distinct tendency to ostracise those Christians who continued to advocate the process of personal repentance and taking every thought captive and making it obedient to Christ. No more cure of souls! Sin was now officially an illness! So it was necessary for me to be very careful not only to work where the Lord put me, but also not to become too distressed by church.

At the end of my official career, 10 years ago, I was leading a psychotherapy unit at Grendon Prison, near Aylesbury, a specialist prison for men eligible for the psychiatric diagnosis of 'personality disorder'. My job was to work with serious sex offenders who seemed genuinely to want help to change their offending behaviour. We refused to take people on medication. What proved effective was to have them live in community for an extensive period of time, in such a way as to be accountable to each other in groups for their thoughts, memories, feelings and behaviour – not unlike John Wesley's band meetings! The prisoners would refuse to let anyone deceive them (and part of my job was to make sure), which was very healthy. They would say, with some justification, "You can't con a con!" There were some harrowing stories, and the crimes men had committed were mostly repeats of what had been done to them. How do you break such a cycle? I preached the healing nature of forgiveness and taught the psychology of Judeo-Christian right and wrong. I could not have got away with openly preaching Jesus, although I did talk about him in private. One or two actually accepted the Lord. Nevertheless the pursuit of repentance was very effective. But sadly I do not believe our chaplain really understood what was going on, although he was a nice chap.

Then came political correctness. At the insistence of Home Office officials, and of our psychologists (who had mostly been trained at Reading University!), right and wrong was replaced by what was legally acceptable. Some of our prisoners had committed dreadful homosexual crimes but suddenly any hint of criticism of homosexuality became a disciplinary matter. So how were they to be helped now? I was even taken before a tribunal for a rather bland joke I made (neither derogatory nor obscene!) about a poster painted by one of our homosexual inmates. Then it was recommended that we attend courses for civil servants, in order to learn techniques for suspension of judgement, at Nuneham Courtenay in Oxford, a branch of the Hindu Brahma Kumaris World University of Light!

English Law has been increasingly geared to support a secular scientific humanistic world system that is rapidly gaining hegemony. And the Church has become weak because it has forgotten what it means to test the spirits and declare that Jesus is Lord, even in the middle of this spiritual battle. And it has forgotten how to be truly hospitable to desperate people outside the city gate.

I have come to believe the healing ministry must be accorded a bigger place in Christian churches. Actual healing can no longer be found in hospitals and prisons except by accident. Generally you get the technology, but the care is not as good as it was, and any

spirituality is multifaith. But Christians can still go into hospitals and prisons, and chaplaincies do still offer some hospitality to them. However the majority of Christian leaders need much more teaching about spiritual healing. Psalm 107:20 says, "He sent his word and healed them." But most Christians seem to believe this involves the philanthropic provision of better conditions rather than a change of heart so as to face the truth in the name of Jesus.

I do beg you to keep 1 Peter 4:17 constantly in mind: "For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God."

Yours in Jesus,

Dr. John Gordon.

5th September 2011

Dear Ms Beer and Commissioners,

Legal intervention on religion or belief rights: seeking your views

I wish to respond to the consultation exercise that you have initiated regarding your own proposed submission to the European Court of Human Rights on the issue of Religious Discrimination and Human Rights, noting with concern the very short period of time allowed for this, especially coming at the end of the August holiday season during which many potential respondents have been away. Even in my own case I have not had the time to do the amount of research I would have wished.

Personal Background

I make my submission as an ordinary member of the public, confirming that I am a British citizen, resident in the UK at the above address. In making this submission I do not represent any official body or campaigning organisation.

I have been prompted to make this submission out of concern for what I and many of my friends and associates perceive to be injustices in relatively recent court decisions regarding professing Christians, specifically, but by no means exclusively, in relation to Nadia Eweida, Shirley Chaplin, Lillian Ladele and Gary McFarlane whose Appeals are currently under consideration.

As regards my own background I am a graduate in theology from King's College, London, have also been awarded an MA degree in Public and Social Administration from Brunel University, and additionally have had many years of experience teaching RE and PSHE in state secondary schools, sometimes as a Head of Department. My outside interests among others include Third World Development and Fair Trade, environmental and animal welfare issues, and, with relevance to this submission, concern for human rights at home and abroad, especially as regards religious persecution and discrimination. Though unashamedly a practising Christian, though not always a very good one, I have not only campaigned for people who share my Faith, but also in the past on behalf of Muslim victims of persecution in Serbia and the Balkans, and more recently on behalf of Buddhists in Tibet. Though it might come as a surprise to some were they to glance superficially at my answers to the questions posed by the EHRC I was also a signatory to a petition to the Ugandan Government objecting to the punishments proposed in the Ugandan Parliament for those engaging in same sex relationships.

At this juncture it would seem appropriate for me to give my answers to the three questions raised by the Commission.

Question one

In answer to the first question I do not believe that the UK tribunals and courts applied the correct principles to the cases of Nadia Ewedida and Shirley Chaplin.

I would contend that within an allegedly democratic society people should as a general principle be free to wear or display an item of clothing, jewellery, or a badge which gives expression to their Faith or values. The only restrictions should be that the visible expression of such beliefs does not directly disparage the beliefs of others, does not set out to be deliberately provocative, is not offensive to generally accepted standards of taste and decency, does not endanger the safety of the wearer or other people, and would not reasonably be construed as a hindrance to carrying out responsibilities within a working environment efficiently.

Opponents of this position have argued that the wearing of a cross, crucifix or fish badge could endanger safety. Something of excessive length or weight might indeed do so, but it is hard to envisage how an item which was small and light would do so else the same argument could be applied to the wearing of a poppy, secured to clothing with a pin! How often has that been regarded as a health and safety issue? Surely this is an area where common sense rather than judicial rulings should apply! My guess is that a lot of those critics professing a concern for health and safety are if they were honest much more motivated by ideology.

Again some opponents, whilst acknowledging that in certain religions particular items are expected to be worn, have argued that no such ruling applies to Christianity. However, just because something is not mandatory in a Faith when that Faith is most broadly interpreted, it does not follow that on grounds of conviction or conscience an adherent may not feel they should wear, or refrain from wearing, a particular item of attire. Why then should they suffer job discrimination when they apply such a principle within the work place? A person or a group of people could surely only be construed as undermining the freedom of others if privileges were granted to them which were withheld from others through law or by the regulations of an employer, so that those others were restricted from wearing something of a similar size and level of safety to express alternative values!

If someone is permitted to give expression to a belief by what they wear it may well increase their sense of personal well-being and confidence which could be a positive asset in the workplace.

In my case if I saw a public servant wearing a cross it would have the potential to produce a positive effect on me as the recipient of that service. Though I would naturally take other factors into consideration as well, the display of a cross would be likely to give me a greater confidence in the service I was receiving and encouragement that the person serving me was someone sympathetic to my own values, especially if they were able in conversation to confirm to me that the cross for them was not merely some kind of fashion accessory. This would be especially true in regard to a nurse or medical practitioner since I would think that the said person, because they would feel answerable to a Higher Power, would be extra conscientious. It would also be inclined to make me feel more relaxed about sharing my concerns which would potentially have a therapeutic benefit.

Question two

In response to the second question, unlike the EHRC's latest position, I do not consider the tribunals and courts applied the jurisdiction tests correctly. I regret that apparently due to outside pressure, as well as from a public intervention by one of its own members, a former head of Stonewall, the EHRC has gone back on a previous commitment made as recently as July, to challenge the fairness of the courts' rulings on this matter.

Perhaps one of the reasons for the judgments being delivered in the way they were was due to a lack of adequate knowledge and understanding of the *raison d'être* affecting the beliefs, values and lifestyles of people like Lillian Ladele and Gary McFarlane. This is not meant to be a criticism of the judges themselves for even a judge cannot be expected to have expertise in every field, but it does give weight to a suggestion by Lord Carey that because of the unique skills and empathy required in making judgments in this area there should be specialist judges to hear cases relating to alleged religious discrimination. Sadly in today's society many people are ignorant about the main teachings and concepts in religion, especially Christianity, not least due to a shortage of specialist trained teachers in schools and the superficial treatment given by much of the media.

Whilst it is fundamental to the Christian ethic to demonstrate love and compassion to all, including towards those with whom one disagrees, the majority of Christians, certainly on a world-wide scale, base their beliefs, values and lifestyle, not on what might be fashionable or politically correct at a given time in history, but rather on the teaching of Scripture, especially

the New Testament, as well as on church tradition and experience. So far as human sexuality is concerned adultery, fornication and homosexual practices are regarded as sins, no less and no more than other sins, but nonetheless sins. (eg. Ex 20:14; Lev.18:22; Mt.5:27f; Mt.15:19; Acts 15:20; Rm.1:26f; 1Cor.6:9ff; Eph.5:3; 1Thes.4:3). Such sins though forgivable through trusting in Christ and his death on the cross, are not only things to be avoided in one's own life and repented of if committed, but also nothing should be done to condone or promote such behaviour in other people. To do otherwise would make one guilty too. Though some people may have a homosexual orientation and feel more comfortable in the presence of people of their own gender, there is for Christians, Orthodox Jews, Muslims and other Faith groups a clear difference between that and succumbing to temptation. Unfortunately the Law in this area fails to comprehend the difference between orientation and practice, and people who love sinners but cannot condone sin, wrongly are unjustly regarded by some ignorant people as being what they call 'homophobic,' and this mistake can often colour judgments, if not directly by professional judges, certainly by many of those making submissions.

For Christians, including I would suggest Lillian Ladele and Gary McFarlane, their Faith is not something which can neatly be confined to the private part of their life, to a particular day of the week, or to a religious building, but has to be applied to the whole of life. They would reject the oft repeated but nonsensical notion that what one does in one's private life, good or bad, has no relationship to what one does in public!

Now some lawmakers and some interpreters may assent to such a morality as outlined above, others will have a much more 'permissive' one. However the latter should not be regarded as being more 'objective' than the former. Some will question the very existence of God and in regard to their own lifestyle the validity of the claims of a religion, and that is within their right. Others will be persuaded by the 'reasonableness' of a religion's claims and be impressed by what believers allege to be the power of Faith to change the lives of individuals and society for the better. But what the European Court needs to concern itself with is whether making allowances for particular requirements of a person's faith inevitably discriminates against others. My contention would be that it does not need to do so.

As already stated in my response to the first question, respecting the conscience of someone who does wish or feel able to promote a particular activity need not affect the freedom of someone else to act differently in concert with those of a like mind. In the case of Lillian Ladele, the Christian registrar, the 'Gay' Civil Partnership ceremony could have been performed by someone who had no moral objection. So too, sexual counselling of a 'Gay' couple could have been done by someone other than Gary McFarlane. Neither Lillian Ladele nor Gary McFarlane were seeking to forcibly prevent others whose values were different from acting according to those values, but from the standpoint of these persons they would no doubt have seen their own stance not just as a matter of Faith but also in support of, rather than a threat to, public health and morality.

Question three

From what I have presented so far it will come as no surprise that my response to the third question; 'do I think that some concept akin to reasonable accommodation for individuals wishing to manifest their religions or beliefs in the workplace should be incorporated into the approach to human rights in the UK?' would be answered with an emphatic 'yes'.

I agree wholeheartedly with EHRC that 'where possible ways should be found within the Law for promoting the resolution of disputes at an early stage, without protracted, costly, complex legal proceedings that irretrievably damage relations between the parties.' Unfortunately such a desirable goal has not always been achieved, hence the current cases before the Court!

In my role as an RE teacher (now retired) I always tried to encourage pupils to think critically, but also to show respect for those in the classroom and in the wider community

whose beliefs were different from their own, and never to try to pressurise others to change their beliefs through exclusion or ridicule. Tragically it now seems to be certain adults who are incapable of grasping this, not so much religious fundamentalists, but rather militant, illiberal and intolerant secularists! Such behaviour and unwillingness to accommodate was paralleled in one Party dictatorships such as prevailed in Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. But it should not be a characteristic of a modern pluralist country with aspirations to extend democracy rather than to reduce it.

In Britain accommodation already takes place when mature rather than bigoted people set the agenda. For instance doctors who do not wish to perform an abortion on conscience grounds are not required to do so. Similarly non-Christian teachers can be excused from attending the part of a school assembly where collective worship takes place. There is no good reason why similar allowances cannot be made in other areas.

Many Christians are heavily involved in contributing to their local communities. They do this because of the values they hold just as adherents of other Faiths do, or indeed those who are motivated by exclusively humanist ideals. Surely it cannot be just to contend that contributions from Humanists are welcome, but not from practising Christians! At a time when corruption and selfishness has tainted national life so markedly, be it in street rioting, bankers' boardrooms, or in the conduct of certain Press barons and MP's, does it not make sense to support people with a conscience rather than to alienate and disenfranchise them?

Reasoned criticism is legitimate, but forcing people of good character and with exemplary work records to choose between their job, often a vocational one, and their conscience, is surely contrary to the spirit of a fair-minded society. It is clearly not right that people should be forced to condone practices they believe to be wrong.

The EHRC would do well to note that among others, Lord Woolf, former Chief Justice, has recognised that there is now an imbalance in the law as regards treatment of people of Faith and I believe the law should indeed now be modified accordingly.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to forward this submission

Yours sincerely,

John Wainwright

Dr Dave Landrum
Clearing the Ground
Evangelical Alliance
Whitefield House
186 Kennington Park Road
London SE11 4BT

13 October 2011

Dear Dave

Thank you for the invitation to respond to the Clearing the Ground Inquiry. I apologise for the delay in sending this submission, and I'm grateful that you are able to accommodate us.

I am responding on behalf of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. As you know, between us we have just over half a million members in churches across the country.

We have chosen not to use the questionnaire for our response as we do not feel able to answer the questions in the form they are put. However we hope that our comments will be of some use.

- Your questionnaire asked for our key organisational concerns. Our three denominations have identified as priorities in public life: poverty and inequality; peacemaking; and helping Christians to live out their faith in the world.
- When the Equalities Act and earlier legislation were being considered in Parliament, our Churches made it clear that Churches were in favour of promoting equality and tackling injustice. We did so also recognising that sometimes different rights would be perceived as being in competition, so there may be occasions where protections or exemptions would be wanted by some.
- We do not have particular examples of where we feel Christians have been discriminated against, though we are aware of the totemic cases which have been through the courts. It is important to recognise that this is new legislation and its ramifications are still being worked out in the courts. Secular law is an imperfect human instrument by which societies attempt to understand and comply with justice. There are some cases which feel manifestly unfair to Christians' ability to manifest their faith; there are others where the rights of Christians have to be held in tension with the rights of others.
- Whilst it is important to monitor how the legislation is working out, there is a danger in over-stating the extent to which some Christians are experiencing "discrimination". Therefore we are concerned about the *perceptions* of discrimination which exist within our churches. Stories in the media, which have been whipped up by certain campaigning bodies, can reinforce the feeling that the law is pitted against the belief and practice of Christians. This is unfortunate because it has the potential to prevent Christians confidently taking part in public life, and also reinforce the message that equalities law is against Christians.
- We hope that this Inquiry will help to "lower the temperature" over concerns about Christian discrimination, and enable a calm and reasonable look at any examples of discrimination.

Please do contact me if I can be of any further help.

With best wishes

Rachel Lampard

Team Leader and Policy Adviser

The Joint Public Issues Team: Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches working together

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Julian Rivers
Your organisation: University of Bristol
Your role in the organisation: Professor of Jurisprudence and Warden of Wills Hall
Website <http://www.bris.ac.uk/>

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

University. This submission is in my capacity as an individual academic and does not reflect the work or views of my employer. I am not responding on its behalf.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Educations

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The central problem is the widespread assumption that religion and some aspects of morality are personal and private matters, and that it is inappropriate for an individual to express their religious or moral commitments in contexts of diversity. This assumption is itself a normative one - it is an element of political morality - based on the view (a) that religious diversity provokes social conflict; (b) that the solution is to 'privatise' religion; (c) that people whose religious affiliation is overt are in that sense not playing by the rules. What has changed is that even ten years ago, those who disagreed with this position were tolerated; now, by contrast, attitudes generally have hardened up. The difficulty is that in PART this position is well-founded and would be supported by most Christians. In some sense religion should be separate. The failure to define and capture a public consensus around the proper and improper place of religion in public life is the key issue. The legal cases are just the tip of that iceberg.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

I don't public opinion (at least as conveyed by the media) is sensitive enough to the key issue I have outlined. Rather it oscillates unstably between crude assumptions ('religion is a private matter') and outrage ('nurse sacked for wearing cross...').

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Inevitably, the media's interest in a good story tends to highlight the conflicts and gloss over the compromises. This only tends to exacerbate the narrative that religious diversity causes conflict, and thus indirectly gives credence to the secularist solution of radical privatisation.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

I guess many Christians experience a sense of confusion and loss. They are used to a certain degree of fairly minor social hostility - workplace sneering etc. - but not the idea that conscientious Christians might fall foul of their employers and receive no legal protection. There is a sense that the UK should still be in some sense a 'Christian country' and that at the very least that should mean that Christians can continue believing, speaking and acting as 'normal' and not fall foul of the law. Public life should be comfortable.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Privileged

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Rarely

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Equality laws are beginning to provide better protection for religions which are more cohesive and which contain mandatory norms of religious practice. There is also a particular unwillingness to accommodate those (not necessarily Christians) who think that the new public and legal-sanctioned sexual ethic is mistaken.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Two changes: (1) A clear obligation of reasonable accommodation on employers in respect of the religious and ethical beliefs of individual employees would solve many of the problems. (2) In addition, there needs to be a clearer recognition of the right of religious organisations to act autonomously, that is, according to their own standards of ethical belief and practice,

and to require those employed or representing the organisation to maintain fidelity with those standards.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Quite apart from aspects of Anglican establishment in the strict sense, we should not ignore the way in which Christian assumptions about the nature and social role of religion have shaped the law applying to all religions. There are many examples, but the decision of the Supreme Court in JFS is a perfect instance.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Christians are citizens of two kingdoms, and their earthly citizenship is subordinate to their heavenly one. Their role is to engage critically with the powers of this age, seeking the welfare of all, material, relational and spiritual. This engagement is of enormous value even in the present age. But it requires a principle of institutional separation of organised religions and the state, a principle of collaboration in areas of shared interest (e.g. pastoral care, education and welfare) and a principle of freedom of individual belief and practice.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The radical privatisation of religion sought by secularism hinders the active and beneficial engagement of Christians in public life. The law is coming to reflect a 150 year long struggle by secularists to achieve this. This is an opportunity to restate what we think the proper AND improper forms of engagement in social and political life by Christians - as well as to highlight the benefits of maintaining the 20th century British constitutional settlement in this respect.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Judith Butler
Your organisation: Kingdom Faith Church
Your role in the organisation: pastor
Website www.kingdomfaithsw.com

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are a church who promote the welfare of all people through service to our local community, and believe fully in the teachings of Jesus Christ.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Life issues Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Christians face unequal ability to stand for their rights, whilst other "groups" have their rights reinforced by the law. Christians are perceived to be prejudiced when they express an opinion or stand for their rights. Therefore, it seems that freedom is being given to other groups and taken from Christians. Expressing our opinion is seen as inflammatory, which obviously undermines the ethos of "freedom of speech".

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media take a minor difference of opinion and make it a "hate" issue rather than an opinion, instilling suspicion and fear in some people towards the Christian Faith.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

For those Christians who I know and mix with, there is a growing concern that we are being marginalised and spoken of as hating people who have different opinions and lifestyles to us. This is far from the truth - our main goal is to give people value and respect by listening to their opinion whilst also being free to express our opinion/beliefs.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Robin Hirsch
Your organisation: Kingdom Technology Partnership
Your role in the organisation: Managing Partner
Website www.kingdom-technology.co.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We provide management consultancy services, in particular world-wide benchmarking of railways. The business was set up to see how to run a commercial organisation under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I have been Hon Treasurer of various charities (SGM Lifewords, Groundwork N London), though not currently speaking on behalf of anyone else.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Business Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Prohibition of the right to express Biblical standards and views in public and to apply them to the exercise of our professional services. Discrimination by secular authorities (national and local government, the NHS and others) against Christians and in favour of "minorities". Christians are a minority but are not recognised as such. (Only 35% of people believe in God and 7% of those are not Christians.) A general view in the media and amongst many commercial companies that to express any religious views is not acceptable. The Equalities Act protects Muslim, Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist but not Christian views and practices. Companies try to prevent Christians from making their views or Christian identity clear. No political party favours marriage - indeed the tax system discriminates against it - though it results in happier, more successful, more law-abiding children.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

According to the British Social Attitudes 26th Report from the National Centre for Social Research, "religion has personal and social benefits, but faith should not be taken too far.

From politics to private life, many domains are seen as off limits to clerical involvement." They could have said "the involvement of Christians" rather than "clerical involvement".

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

They tend to be at the forefront of secularism, though not universally. What they want more than anything, of course, is to tell a scandalous and negative story, so occasionally they will champion Christians against iniquitous bureaucrats.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

They are frustrated but feel that that they are impotent to do anything about it.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Where discrimination is banned, the rights of other minorities is held to trump those of Christians. The unfavourable treatment of marriage by the tax and benefit regulations also impacts disproportionately against people of any religion, including Christians.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I would like to see the rights of Christians protected in the same way as other minorities. It should be acceptable to quote and paraphrase the Bible and to practice one's profession in obedience to Biblical teaching, even where this discriminates against other minorities, provided that one is not providing a monopoly of a service. So a Christian should be entitled to refuse to carry out abortions, to offer counselling or provide accommodation only to heterosexuals open to marriage, to express Biblical attitudes to children in foster care - always provided that this does not mean that because of a monopoly position, this denies any access to these services for homosexuals or those entitled to abortion.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Society should balance the benefit of the population as a whole (and the greatest benefit of the greatest number) against the respect for individual freedom to behave as one likes (provided that what one does is done with respect for others). The role of Christians is to love one's neighbour as oneself. Christians should therefore be amongst the strongest supporters and participants in charitable endeavours and because of their altruism and sense of responsibility, they should also participate strongly in leadership positions in politics and all other aspects of life, where they are qualified to do so. Christians also should play a unique role, alongside the members of other religions, in praying for the country and discerning and proclaiming the prophetic vision given to them for the country and the world, as well as in individual cases.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The major challenges are the unwillingness of politicians to acknowledge their Christian beliefs and to bring forward policies that are seen as Christian or pro-religious or even pro-marriage. Party political bias, fear of perceived voter preferences and lobbying by those funding that party, that all make political parties favour special interest groups rather than society as a whole. This applies to all parties. Pusillanimous, political and unscriptural leadership by the churches, especially the large established churches and in particular the Anglican churches.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Rev Sharon Ferguson

Your organisation: LGCM

Your role in the organisation: Chief Executive

Website www.lgcm.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Provides support to LGBT Christians of all denominations. Challenges faith based homophobia and transphobia and develops and provides resources for churches and faith organisations to encourage dialogue around these issues of sexuality and gender. Campaigns for human rights for the LGBT community around the world especially when violations of human rights are justified on the grounds of religion.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Human rights Relationships Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Being a person of faith is not popular in today's society and therefore standing up for one's belief can be difficult and often meets with ridicule. This sometimes has the knock on effect that people feel it necessary to make a point on every issue regardless of how minor which actually makes the situation worse. There is the underlying opinion that faith is a private matter and therefore should not be part of public life but a person's faith influences and informs everything they do in life (or at least should if taken seriously). In a multicultural society it can be difficult to express your beliefs without seeming to negate someone else's beliefs. There is also not one understanding of the Christian faith which also causes confusion as it can be practiced in daily life in many different ways.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Christianity is often perceived as being against human rights and in conflict with an equal society whereas it should be leading these aspects if truly following the radical social justice

message of our Lord. If more Christians promoted equality for all instead of appearing bigoted and only interested in their own rights then the public would be more sympathetic.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media love to pitch Christians against other faiths and also against the lgbt community. In reality there are many lgbt people who are also Christians and these two aspects are not opposed to each other for many people. This increases the impression that all Christians are bigots.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

You use the term Christians as if they are one homogenous group which they clearly are not. Some use the media to propagate the 'victim' scenario of Christians whilst others despair at the constant pitting of one group against another. In my opinion most Christians are embarrassed by the futility and waste of money and resources that is the outcome of the legal cases brought to challenge the equality polices. It is not the way that we are told in the Bible to deal with conflict and simply makes us look stupid. Most Christians get on with living their faith harmoniously with their colleagues, neighbours, friends, local society etc. and do not understand the need for all this negative publicity.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Privileged

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Not at all

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I do not consider the law to be unfair to Christians, in fact, the law privileges Christians as they have built in exceptions and exemptions to state laws that other people do not have. Certain sections of the Christian faith also have representation in the legal process by their position in the House of Lords that other sections of Christianity or other faiths do not have. This means they are able to influence the laws from the outset. How can Christians complain about the application of laws that they have voted into existence?

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

All your questions are making the assumption that Christians are not treated fairly and that there is an issue. My understanding of questionnaires and research was to discover the situation and not have the answer up front or lead the participants to make a particular conclusion. This survey will only accommodate those who believe there is unfair treatment and not give an accurate picture of how Christians truly feel. There is no need for any change to current laws - certain Christians just need to stop expecting special treatment or for everyone to think the same way as they do. The reason we have so many different denominations within the Christian faith is because we do not all interpret the scriptures in the same way. This was the case from the very 1st century and Paul wrote extensively to the first communities about this and the need to accept diversity and praise God that people followed Christ in different ways (see Romans). We do not need to agree, we just need to follow Christ and live our lives according to our understanding of what that means and allow others to do the same.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The law is summed up in these two commandments: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And love your neighbour as yourself.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

For society to accept difference and live in harmony with it and for Christians to lead the way in this as Christ commanded. Too many leading Christian figures are propagating violence, hatred and fear instead of love, tolerance, peace and understanding. Perhaps if this was to change Christians would be more respected in society.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Stop the media from promoting conflict between groups and instead report situations where people are working together. More Christian figures to stand up and support equality for all and human rights even if it doesn't fit in with some of the minutia of their interpretation of scripture but simply because it's the fundamental message of Christ.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Andrew Betts-Brown

Your organisation: Life in Abundance (Ecuador) Trust

Your role in the organisation: Chairman & responding personally

Website www.liat-ecuador.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Christian charity in Ecuador (Fundaci3n Vida en Abundancia) providing 1. support (material, financial, spiritual) for disabled adults and children 2. a school for special needs children & a pre-school for children in a "rubbish-tip" community 3. refuge, respite, legal advocacy, rehabilitation & training for women & children suffering domestic violence / abuse. As a retired NHS GP, I also maintain contact with still active Christian colleagues & am sensitive to any local evidence of restrictions on health service staff in the expression of their faith, both in ethical guiding principles and freedom to share & discuss spiritual matters with patients.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Human rights Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Equality & Human Rights legislation is increasingly being framed and interpreted by police & courts in ways which restrict Christians' freedom to live out and express their faith in terms of the guiding ethical principles governing their personal and work conduct, and the freedom to share / discuss their faith with patients / clients / customers / colleagues. This appears to be based on the erroneous belief that such conduct by the majority faith in the UK somehow infringes the human rights or equality status of minority groups / faiths / gender groups. I believe the opposite is true. Such "protection" merely deprives minority groups in such areas of what should be the normal universal exposure of citizens (be they minority or majority members) to the FULL range of personal belief / expression (religious or otherwise) and manner in which these work out in home, public and workplace arenas.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Very sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

I believe the vast majority of the public are sympathetic to these issues, as expected, since the perceived vulnerable ("victim") minorities remain a minority in public opinion unless their opinions are "skewed" in terms of exposure by the media. However, expression of majority public opinion about minorities etc is frequently "chilled" by fear of infringing "political correctness"

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

I believe that the media, at times, choose, for a variety of reasons, to "champion" the "human rights" of minority groups in ways which seem more to sensationalize the issues rather than being sensitive to ALL participants in the opinion debate, and ensuring that we truly live in a just, honourable and inclusive society.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

To all intents and purposes, all the Christian colleagues, friends, church members etc with whom I exchange views on these issues feel similarly to me. However, a few show evidence of being influenced by "politically correct" legislation to such an extent that they feel less certain about the Biblical "norms" of their faith, while MANY more, while steadfastly holding to their Biblical foundations, feel they increasingly have to be careful about the expression of their faith both publicly and in the workplace. The perversity of this is that legislation which seems designed to "protect" certain minorities from discriminatory words and actions from Christians now seems to be increasingly enforcing a new form of discrimination against the very faith which has undergirded the UK's laws, institutions, public life for centuries.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Laws which are framed on the assumption that CURRENT secular and liberal codes of ethics relating to e.g. 1. sanctity of life (abortion, embryonic research, euthanasia etc) 2. gender identity & sexual orientation 3. freedom of religion can be defined in absolute terms as "normal", even though these run clearly counter to historic codes of ethics which have

underpinned much of what has made the UK a just and compassionate society for past centuries when Christianity formed much of the "bedrock" of our society and institutions. Christian adoption agencies and fostering couples with excellent records of effectiveness are being rejected simply on account of adhering to their Christian principles & beliefs. An addiction treatment centre is deprived of funding support on account of including prayers and the reading of the Bible in the daily routine. As a Christian GP, I frequently discussed "faith" and, not infrequently, the Christian gospel in the context of helping patients to address their problems. I often prayed for or with patients. However, today a GP in an openly declared Christian practice risks suspension or GMC disciplinary measures for offering to pray for a patient!

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

From what is stated above, I believe that laws should be MUCH more careful about attempts to redefine long-established ethical and moral "norms" in the space of one short generation. They should recognise and defend the rights of Christians to express, uphold and work out their core beliefs, which include a right to withdraw from certain work obligations that conflict with their principles, without having to face, persecution, demotion, industrial discipline and even dismissal. In almost all the test cases, there is a right of "choice" for the perceived "victim" to seek services or help from an alternative source. Christians should be able to declare their Christian position to employers, or to patients / clients / customers at the outset, so the latter can make their own choice as to whether they wish to seek an alternative professional / tradesperson, etc.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There is now case evidence that, sometimes, militant factions, in the name of certain minority groups, set out to deliberately use fresh "equality" legislation to target and "trap" Christians to break the new laws. The Christian victims in these cases frequently have excellent work records, and are known for their caring attitudes towards and treatment of patients / clients / customers. This is despicable. Furthermore, a number of public service employers seem intent on targeting Christians, possibly to demonstrate their policy on equality issues. Such cases cause immense distress, lengthy suspensions or job loss, defamation of character, and being "smeared" in ways which could severely prejudice future work prospects. Most of the public would be hard pressed to consider such incidents as "crimes" yet they receive far more publicity, manpower time and costs than dealing with all sorts of other incontrovertibly criminal activity.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

1. A Return to Trust. Honesty and integrity in state and private institutions, thus breaking public cynicism due to corruption in high places, where the veneer of respectability is wearing very thin. How? By recognition in society that character and honour are more important than personal wealth or power and that following Christian values lead to them. 2. By encouragement of Christian charitable work among the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged, and by recognition of good work where due, and not stigmatising and withdrawing funding because Christian ways of life are involved in the charity. (e.g. Teen Challenge drug rehab). 3. Laws to facilitate not hinder teaching of ethics, values, history & science from a Christian standpoint in all educational establishments alongside any other teaching. Only then can children experience true choice. 4. Legislation aimed at eradication of the sexualisation of young children, and presentation of role models on a basis of character & integrity rather

than celebrity status per se. 5. A return to the Christian family model. Where children grow up with both loving mother & father present, statistics show that children are more secure, better behaved & go on to do better in life. 6. Recognition that our Christian heritage is something to be proud of and maintain, and an expectation that Christianity is and should remain the religion of this country, and a determination to promote its clear moral backbone and the spiritual Christian "Good News" which is transformational.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

1. There should be a major visible Christian presence at national events such as Olympics 2012 which will give an opportunity to give Christian welcome and support to foreign participants & visitors. 2. The church should unite to challenge the onslaught of secular humanist thinking and legislation, and resist as strongly as possible all attempts by police, employers and the courts to silence or restrict its role in society. 3. Each Christian MP should engage with their Christian constituents to gain the promise of their strong support which will enable them to speak with a much stronger and more uncompromising voice in parliament on crucial Christian issues. 4. Churches should actively encourage and support members to engage with their MPs and support them. 5. Media caricatures and misrepresentations of Christians who are actively seeking the benefit of society should be challenged and resisted. 6. As the predominant faith group in the country, Christians should be pro-active in reaching out in love to all other faith and cultural groups in the country. They should have no need to apologise for their faith in Christ. 7. The ability to achieve any of these aims will require a determined effort at political & legislative level to dismantle or amend the most discriminatory aspects of recent legislation.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Michael Petek

Your organisation: None

Your role in the organisation: None

Website None

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

I am responding in a private capacity.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There is legal uncertainty as to the freedom of Christians to participate in public life and to assert the exclusive privilege of Christianity, as the only religion which possesses all the truth which God has revealed, to structure the whole of life in general and civil life in particular.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media is actively hostile to the world view and moral vision and standards of Christianity. The media refuse to convey and uphold the certainty that marriage exists only between a man and a woman and is for their mutual perfection as they co-operate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives. The media refuse to respect that sexual relations are licit only when and insofar as they are open to procreation and promote the mutual assistance of a man and a woman united in marriage.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

They concur.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Ignored Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

In what concerns the Equality Act 2010 and the related case law, Christians have been found to have acted wrongfully in law, and have had their own claims dismissed, in refusing to aid and abet homosexual acts and relationships either by providing the means for their commission (eg. a double bed in a guest house) or by being required as a public official to officiate at civil partnerships. All Christians must affirm on pain of heresy and idolatry, and everyone else in good conscience must concur with them, in the following: (1) that homosexual unions and acts can under no circumstances be approved or accorded categorical legal recognition. Unlike marriage, they cannot provide for the procreation and the survival of the human race; (2) Homosexual acts are acts of grave depravity and intrinsically disordered and can under no circumstances be approved.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The right to freedom of conscience must be clarified and elaborated. No one shall be forced to act against the dictates of their conscience. Neither shall anyone be restrained from acting according to the dictates of conscience, within due limits. No one shall be entitled to take offence at the quiet and harmless profession of Christian truth in private and in public.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

My vision for society, and a good one, is one in which Jesus Christ is given the honour due to Him as Universal King. Whatever in any way offends Him must have no place in the laws and public affairs of the United Kingdom. In particular, the bond of marriage must be held inviolable. Civil divorce as to the bond, whether by judicial decree, legislation or private agreement must be abolished and must not be relied upon to allow the remarriage of anyone whose prior spouse is still alive.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The major opportunity is that Christians do not fight for victory. They fight from that victory which Jesus Christ won on the Cross.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Mrs June Mundell
Your organisation: A community christian church
Your role in the organisation: member

Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

A community christian church

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Broadcasting & media Educations Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The anomalies of 'political correctness'. Promotion of homosexuality and the promotion of sexual licentiousness. The increasing acceptance of abortion as a form of birth control. The prohibitions on speaking and teaching Biblical truth - particularly in schools. The increasing propagation of the beliefs of 'evolutionists'. The ambiguity of the law in regard to tenets of Christian beliefs.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Public opinion has been and continues to be influenced by the attitude of compromise from much of the church - in particular The Church of England but not exclusively. A lack of teaching of christianity in schools. Primarily a turning away from our Christian heritage by our government and therefore the public in general

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Extremely biased against christianity and it's message. Issues that would have been thought better not glamourised and promoted are now portrayed as normal

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Some are very concerned but many nominal christians are not that bothered

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Ignored Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Promotion of 'the gospel' in the public arena Sexual ethics Abortion Marital status
Education

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

For christians to be allowed to speak about and put into practise their beliefs

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The laws of this land which were originally based on christianity are being gradually eroded by militant secularists. This was particularly increased during the lifetime of the previous labour government. We have now reached the stage that holding to one's christian beliefs can jeopardise a person's position in their place of work or even leisure!

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

To return to our christian heritage, roots and laws so that christians can make the difference to society as they have been able to in the past as in the early years of the previous century - i.e. health provision, education, prison reform and the plight of the destitute and homeless etc.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

For christians to 'get real', 'get their hands dirty', to discard irrelevancies and to not be ashamed of the truth of the Gospel.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: N Gretton

Your organisation: -

Your role in the organisation: -

Website -

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Not

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Life issues Religious freedom Service provision

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The same as in their face in their private lives: To maintain integrity. To embrace others. To hold onto faith.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

My hope is that authentic followers of Jesus in public life will find that people are both attracted to and challenged by them.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A little

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media by its nature wants stories of the exceptional not the ordinary. However, there is a clear bias in some areas. An example would be the abortion debate, where the much of the media's preferred terminology clearly favours one side, ie "pro-choice" & "anti-abortion". (Less biased pairings would be "pro-choice" & "pro-life" or alternatively "pro-abortion" & "anti-abortion".)

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

We live in a country where there is religious freedom and little persecution. However, many Christians sense a gradual shift in public and media attitudes away from Christianity. That said, the more faithful Christians are likely to spend less time complaining about their own rights, and more time supporting the rights of others, particularly the oppressed and disadvantaged.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Normal

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Rarely

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I would prefer to focus on aspects of the law that are unfair to others (such as children of asylum seekers).

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Nothing in particular.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

No

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Fairness, justice, employment, stable families.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Human selfishness, including my own,

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Martin Charlesworth
Your organisation: Newfrontiers Churches (UK)
Your role in the organisation: Public Affairs Officer
Website www.newfrontierstogether.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Family of evangelical/charismatic churches numbering 230+ in UK. Involved in mission, church planting, social action and community transformation.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Family Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The role of the media is often important, providing potential both to support and sometimes to undermine or challenge the role of Christians in public life. Also, the outworking of the current human rights legislation has the constant potential to undermine the religious rights of Christians as other rights are favoured both culturally and legally.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Public opinion relating to the church is very mixed- our social action is often favoured, our moral values are often challenged and our attempts to communicate our gospel message are often opposed.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media fails to represent accurately the growing strength and core values of evangelical Christianity in the UK.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are very concerned about family and charity. They are strongly motivated to support and work on these issues in society.

Christians are anxious about religious liberty. They often feel powerless to resist the perceived erosion of religious liberty.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Marginalised Misunderstood

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Human rights legislation theoretically supports religious rights, but in practice these are often overridden by other rights.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I would like to see the principle of "reasonable accommodation" formally introduced into human rights law.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Christians have the potential to make a very positive contribution to society at every level. This opportunity is enhanced in theory by the "Big Society" agenda. However, the legal issues outlined above will have to be addressed for the potential of the church to be fully harnessed to the benefit of society.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: P and J Flanders
Your organisation: N/A
Your role in the organisation: N/A
Website n/a

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

we are members of the public

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Civil liberties Family Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Recent legislation pushed through by the Labour Government has made it difficult for Christians to express their faith in the workplace. This includes wearing a Christian symbol, offering to pray for a patient or expressing a Christian point of view in one's own establishment. Other faiths do not appear to be targeted in the same way. It has become difficult to express biblical views without concern of legal action. Even offending someone has become a potential crime, even when no offence was intended. This is a major blow to Freedom of Speech.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media in this country has mainly left wing, secular views. Any opposing view, such as Christianity tends to be demonised. The biggest scandal, in our view, is the almost total silence about the persecution of Christians in many countries.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

The Christians we know share our concerns. Christians feel that the UK used to be at least a nominally Christian country, but that Christianity now is at best sidelined and with increased frequency harassed or criticised.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

We believe that it is a basic human right to be able to express one's faith. Freedom of speech is a hard won privilege in our country and one that many people in other countries do not enjoy. We consider these rights have been eroded. Christians should not be coerced into going against their consciences in the workplace. And they should be able to express their Christian views without fear of being prosecuted. As the law stands at present these things are "blurry" and we consider that in a number of cases Christians have been penalised for expressing or living out their Christian principles. Even when these people have been vindicated, the damage done to their businesses or future prospects has been significant.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

To clarify the law to ensure "a level playing field". Basic freedoms such as freedom of speech and freedom of religion is the right of every UK citizen. Clauses in the law concerning "giving offence" are very subjective and open to misinterpretation.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Our society has been founded on Christian principles for many years and nominal Christianity at least was the cornerstone of our nation. Our PM talks about "Broken Britain". He is right and not just in the areas that experienced riots. We need to return to these Godly principles and Christian values. The Church needs to speak out clearly and courageously. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and this country desperately needs to hear this Word.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

We believe that many people feel a sense of hopelessness about the enormous problems gripping our society and that Christians therefore do have tremendous opportunities to reach out to them with the message of hope that the Christian faith offers. The challenges to this are a secular society, a secular media and at present a largely rather weak church!

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Cllr Mrs Mary Douglas
Your organisation: Pioneer Churches UK
Your role in the organisation: Parliamentary Liaison Officer
Website www.pioneer.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Pioneer is a theologically mainstream Christian denomination with around 12,000 members in 80 congregations across the UK. Our congregations span generations, backgrounds, classes and races, and one of our congregations embraces 47 nationalities. We have a network of Tamil churches and strong links with black majority churches. We have a reputation for engaging with traditionally hard to reach groups. We also work to build community beyond church, forging links between people of different generations, races and income brackets. We run a wide variety of community projects addressing challenges as diverse as youth exclusion and lunch clubs for the elderly.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Relationships Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Lack of respect for, and understanding of, Christianity. Our laws, history, culture and language are rooted in biblical Christianity and yet many are ignorant of, and even hostile towards, Christianity. As one church leader says, "Our country was founded on Christian principles which, sadly, governments are destroying and then they wonder why there is so much unrest." Bias towards non-Christian lifestyles and worldviews. Other religions being treated with more respect than Christianity. General distrust of, and contempt for, Christians. Unfavourable portrayal of Christians and Christianity in the media and in public discourse. Resistance to formerly widely accepted truths and norms, such as marriage, respect for older people, belief in God. Exclusion from government funding, national and local, unless Christian identity and practice is abandoned. Unfair discrimination laws, giving precedence to sexual orientation over religious belief. This is doubly insulting as the homosexual practice which is being prioritised over Christian practice, is itself contrary to and, in many cases, deeply offensive to, that Christian practice. It is also deeply damaging as it threatens to prevent Christians championing marriage as the best environment for raising children, even though this is both biblical and statistically proven. As a governor of a C of E controlled school, we nearly removed reference to "marriage" from SRE policy because some thought it would be prohibited by equality laws. Restriction on free speech. Street preachers arrested for stating that the Bible says that homosexual practice is wrong, or that Jesus is the only way to the Father.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

There are several, conflicting, perceptions of Christians: Christians are scary and threatening. As a street pastor, when I said that "we were a group of local Christians", the reaction was similar to that which I would expect had I said that "we were a group of local terrorists". Christians are judgemental and hostile. Another common response is "Are you going to preach to me then!" (The responses change to welcome when I explain that we are there to be helpful to people who had drunk too much). Christians are anachronistic and impotent, as per the stereotypical country vicar

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

TV soaps, reality shows and films portray a set of behaviour which we know, intellectually, is not real but nonetheless which we absorb as if it were real. It becomes our plumb-line for how the rest of the world is behaving, becoming almost a kind of "peer group" point of reference. Somehow, Christianity is presented as the establishment, which has failed us, lied to us, tried to oppress us and against which we are all rebelling together. It is also presented as anachronistic, a refuge for those who are intellectually, socially or emotionally unable to survive without this prop.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Fear of speaking the truth. Assumption that we must ask permission to do good work in the community and that permission will be granted only if we don't mention God in any way. Resentment that there seems to be one rule for those of other faiths, or no faith, and another for Christians. Sorrow and bafflement at the apparent collective amnesia of the last 1500 years, in which Christianity has been the foundation of our nation, our society and, indeed, our civilisation. Deep concern at the effect which such rejection of Christianity will have. We live in a country in which the majority of people describe themselves as Christian (71% 2001 Census), in which the law, the constitution, the very language is rooted in biblical Christianity and yet in which the government and media seem intent in expunging any vestige of Christianity from the public conscience. Our society is close to collapse, on the admission of our own Prime Minister. The Church wants to help. We have thousands of willing volunteers, great experience in community work; and access to the source of all love, truth and beauty. Unshackle us and let us get to work!

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

It is becoming more difficult to be a Christian in the work-place and society today, as has been illustrated by the cases taken to court against Christians. Christians have human rights too, as expressed in Article 9 :0 "to manifest his belief... in practice. Christianity is a way of life so, if a Christian is given an ultimatum between doing something which is against his belief and being sacked, his/her human rights are being denied. Other religions are allowed to wear head/body coverings to work, so why cannot Christians wear crosses? People who set up B & B in their own home should have the discretion to refuse same sex, or "unmarried couples." In the same way that Christian medical staff were able to not participate in abortions, Christians should be able to refuse to conduct civil partnerships or counsel homosexual couples; there are other staff available to do this. Christians are afraid to even teach that sex outside marriage, including same-sex sex, is damaging, changes the status of marriage and is 'less than ideal'. So we are silenced through fear and labelled homophobic. If we disagree with something does that make us phobic? Christians wanting to work in the community are afraid to offer prayer and a relationship with God, the very things which make the most profound and lasting difference to people's lives.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Clear distinction needs to be made between that which is a matter of choice and that which is not. A person's skin colour is not a matter of their choice. Homosexual orientation is less clear. Homosexual practice is clearly a matter of choice, as is religious practice, and those who engage in it should not be in the same category within law as those whose skin is a certain colour. For chosen behaviour, distinction needs to be made between behaviour which is a moral choice, and/or is prohibited in any religion, and that which is not. The degree of tolerance required for behaviour which is a moral or religious issue should be different from that for other types of behaviour. If the religion I follow prohibits the eating of pork or homosexual practice, I should not be required to tolerate in a B&B in my home the eating of pork or homosexual practice. Distinction also needs to be made between the person and their behaviour. In the example above, I should be required to tolerate in my B&B those who eat pork or engage in homosexual practice, as long as they do not do so in my B&B. In general, I would wish that the law and the government had less to say on these things. The state has overstepped the boundaries of its proper authority and it needs to decrease its reach.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

I see a better way than we live today Where hearts cry out for the living God Where every individual is connected heart to heart with the Creator of all, where Jesus's lifeblood runs throbbing through our veins, every one, and we are connected to God, to our Lover, our Maker, our Redeemer and to each other – all made in the image of the invisible God. I see a society where mothers and fathers are committed to each other in marriage, where children know that they are loved and secure. Where there is great respect and honour for the older generation, for parents, teachers, and those called to lead our nation. Where those who find themselves homeless are offered food and drink and comfort and a home. Where all who can, work; and neighbours support each other. Where we as a nation give generously to other nations, understanding that although we live in tribes we are all one race. Where the centre of our being is God, at the core of every part of our lives – one-to-one with Him. Where He is honoured in all we do – at home, at work, at play, in government. In government – that every law will be passed with God in mind – His glory, His ways, His wisdom, His righteousness, His justice. That He is the one who made us, it is to Him that we are responsible for all we do and are and hope and dream. Christians are the instruments of God's choice.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Opportunities Big Society and smaller state. Opportunity for the church to regain its place as provider of education and social care, to be seen as relevant and credible. Conservative ideology naturally opposes the political correctness of recent years. Parenting, families, gangs: There is a great need for relationship building, parenting education and support, mentoring, caring, loving – this is what the Church does. The church – Growing understanding of who we are and what God is calling us to do. Work by Christians in Politics with – those who teach the teachers – in theological colleges. – Increasing engagement with government through CARE, EA and New Church parliamentary liaison officers. – Academies – strategic thinking and action by the National Society – Challenges The theology of the church – Leftist – the belief that social justice is the role of government, not the church. Compare this to the statement by Pope Benedict that – These things are too important to be delegated to government – Belief that salvation is confined to the individual, rather than involving the redemption of the whole of life. – Recognition and status given to those who work within the church, ministering to the flock, rather than to those who are active in the wider community. – Failure to equip and release individual Christians to make a difference everywhere we are Big Society and smaller state. If the church does not move quickly and make it work, then the government may take the reins back and our opportunity will have gone.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name Kemi Caroline Bamgbose
Your organisation: Premier Christian Media Trust
Your role in the organisation: Campaigns Manager
Website www.Premier.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Premier Christian Media Trust is the largest Christian media organisation in the UK. For 16 years, Premier has served the Christian community and those on the fringes of faith, through its various media platforms.

'Our principle objective as an organisation is to 'present the whole of the Gospel, from the whole of the Church to the whole of the UK and beyond'.

Premier consistently aims to broadcast a range of informative, entertaining and inspirational content on all media platforms.

Premier works in partnership with Church leaders, organisations and Parliament to host events and campaign on issues of concern to the faith community, worldwide.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Religious freedom Charity Broadcasting & media

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The growing threat of aggressive secularism is eroding the role of Christians in society. This attack is largely based on a view that atheism is neutral whereas it is a concerted effort to replace one set of beliefs, Christian, with another, secularism. Prominent Church leaders and other high profile people have spoken of this in recent years.

Christians face hostility in the name of equality and diversity which leaves them at the bottom of the pile when it comes to competing rights of other 'protected' groups.

Discrimination against Christians, because of their beliefs, is against their core identity which is often misunderstood so that a Christian is expected to act against his or her convictions in

the work place or in providing a commercial service rather than seeing that a Christian's core belief is what they are and what they do.

Powerful lobby groups (e.g. Stonewall) with the backing of Government ministers and certain parts of the media are instrumental in blocking appointments to public life.

Christians are often portrayed negatively by some parts of the mainstream media compared to other groups. The BBC's General Director, Mark Thompson, admitted that Christianity gets rougher treatment than Islam and that a liberal bias against Christianity exists.

The general public and Christians also agree with Thompson's statement, reflected in the research conducted by Premier over the past five years.

Apathy and the extreme right wing views expressed by some Christians, who are all too willing to complain and play 'victim', have also been identified as a challenge.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Public opinion is informed by the media which generally has a liberal bias against Christians. However, there appears to be sympathy amongst the general public that traditional Christian (British) values are being eroded.

The EHRC recently issued a statement that it intended to propose the idea of 'reasonable accommodation' in the work place for Christians. However the Commission has since backtracked in response to Angela Mason's (formerly of Stonewall) intervention. This example highlights the powerful role lobby groups that are opposed to Christianity play.

Research reveals that the general public also believe the marginalisation of Christianity is set to worsen over the next five years.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media needs to be more responsible and fair in its representation of Christianity.

Christian characters are often ridiculed in fictional TV programming, whereas other religious groups, such as Muslims, are treated sensitively and homosexuals portrayed positively. Feedback from Premier's research and even the BBC's most recent survey reinforce this.

News coverage, at times appears to be biased against Christians. More specifically, the high profile 'cross' cases, were often covered in a sensationalist way. This not only affects public perception but can create apprehension amongst Christians.

Our research also reveals Christians are concerned at the decline in Christian- orientated content in the mainstream media.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Based on findings from consultations and public polling, Christians are greatly concerned about the increasing marginalisation of Christianity in the media. For example, one finding from a C-Panel survey revealed that 88% of Christians think the media has a secular agenda.

This was also reflected in another survey, which found that, out of four areas of public life; the media, the government, the workplace and in public-Christians thought the media was the most likely to be anti-Christian.

Our research also reveals that Christians agree that the biggest threats to the Christian faith in public life are secularism, the media and apathy. This can be evidenced through the hundreds of responses we have received from our Freedom of the Cross consultation, conducted last year.

Many respondents from our various consultations, expressed deep concern at the discrimination faced by Christians, in favour of other groups i.e. Islam or those of a differing sexual orientation. A small percentage had directly experienced marginalisation i.e. at work but the majority of respondents through our consultations had either known someone who had or made general observations by way of what they had seen in the media or in everyday life.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The Equality and anti-discrimination laws, particularly relating to employment and the provision of goods and services, are being interpreted against Christians. The courts have consistently failed to interpret such laws so as to give effect to the rights of Christians to live according to their beliefs guaranteed by article 9 scheduled to the Human Rights Act 1998. For example, in the BA cross case the court found that as wearing a cross was not a scriptural requirement BA had not discriminated against Nadia Eweida by suspending her for breach of BA's uniform policy whilst at the same time allowing other employees of different faiths the right to wear symbols relating to their faith, such as the wearing of the hijab or turban.

When it comes to competing rights the court is asked to balance the rights of Christians against the rights of others. In such circumstances the courts have consistently favoured the rights of others. For example, the right of the Bulls to live and work in accordance with their Christian beliefs by refusing to allow a same sex couple to share a double room was

limited in order to protect the right of others, namely the homosexual couple. It was open to the court to find that a reasonable balance could be struck between the competing rights by not requiring the Christian couple to promote what they consider to be a sin. The court refused to make such a finding. The effect of this is to drive the Christian couple out of business. Such an approach applied consistently by the courts would lead to the withdrawal of society of individuals holding traditional Christian beliefs from society.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The equality and anti-discrimination laws need to be applied consistently and fairly to all groups regardless of religious belief or sexual orientation.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Public Order legislation and 'hate speech' has been used by the police to wrongly arrest street preachers (e.g. Tony Rollins and Dale McAlpine), Christian hoteliers (Ben and Sharon Vogelenzang arrested for having a conversation in the hotel they ran with a Muslim guest) Joe and Helen Roberts interrogated by two police officers and accused of a hate crime for questioning their local authority as to the how much money was being spent promoting homosexuality, two American missionaries told they could not preach the gospel in a Muslim area in Birmingham by Police officers.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

In the words of Christian sociologist, Dr. Os Guinness, our vision for the future is for a civil society; a place where every individual respects the right of others to express their deeply held convictions in a civil manner.

Although the UK is considered a nominally Christian country, it has become increasingly multi-cultural and multi-faith in nature. Therefore to impose Christian values on society would be deeply unfair. Consequently, as a Christian organisation we do not subscribe to the idea of a 'sacred public square'.

A 'secular public square', which seeks to drive all expressions of faith into the private sphere, is also not a viable or desirable alternative.

In order for the vision of a civil society to be realised, key areas of public life need to be held to account and revised in light of this.

For example, as a media organisation, Premier passionately believes the mainstream media has responsibility to represent Christians and Christianity in a balanced and fair way. To practically enforce this Premier suggests OFCOM, the official media regulatory body, should hold the relevant party, should they breach this, to account.

In relation to the Christian community, we would like to see Christians take an active, visible role in society. Premier believes the Church can play a vital role in equipping Christians to defend and express their beliefs in all areas of public life, whilst respecting other groups' rights and beliefs.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The greatest threats and challenges to realising this vision are the factors mentioned earlier in the survey- secularism and the various factions within the Christian community.

For example, secularism, gives the impression of a level playing field for all, but in truth, it is seeking to suppress all public expressions of faith to the private sphere only.

Premier also believe there needs to be greater consideration from groups in society, with competing rights, to respect and tolerate one another in a civil manner. The government and other key social constructs need to facilitate this in a fair and just way.

The two extreme christian views- the apathetic and the over zealous defenders of the Christian faith, are also another challenge. Striking a balance between the two groups is essential if Christians are to truly impact today's society in a positive way.

The unprecedented number of cases regarding Christian discrimination in the workplace, taken to the European Court of Human Rights, has brought about a great opportunity regarding the Courts application of equality and anti-discrimination laws. It is also a great opportunity for employers to revise HR policy in light of this, therefore ensuring consistent and fair treatment of all groups in the work place.

A. RELATE

B. BACKGROUND NOTE TO THE SECRETARIAT OF 'CLEARING THE GROUND'
PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

Scope of this paper

The Parliamentary inquiry 'Clearing the ground' is considering issues surrounding the position of Christians before the law and also the freedoms Christians can exercise in public life. In Gary Streeter MP's letter to our CEO Claire Tyler, he references there has been a "number of high profile court cases involving Christians", and of course this includes a case we are very aware of - Relate v MacFarlane.

We hope the inquiry appreciates, as a couple and relationship support organisation, Relate are not in a position to comment on other cases or indeed many of the broader questions you raise in your inquiry paper.

This paper aims to offer the inquiry secretariat a note of information and factual position on the one case relevant to Relate in a spirit of aiding a well-informed inquiry, as opposed to a public submission on the aforementioned wider issues.

About Relate

Relate is working to promote health, respect and justice in couple and family relationships. As the UK's largest provider of relationship support, every year we help over 150,000 people of all ages across a national network of over 70 Centres working at 600 locations as well as by phone and online.

Our services include relationship counselling for individuals and couples; family counselling; counselling for children and young people; and sex therapy. We also provide friendly and informal workshops for people at important life stages. Often Relate work with individuals at very emotionally fragile points in their lives, and our staff help explore very complex and sensitive needs.

Relate is committed to respecting both the religious beliefs of its staff as well as its clients, regardless of age, gender, colour, religion, relationship status or sexual orientation.

Relate v MacFarlane

One case which has been often cited is an Employment Tribunal case, Relate v MacFarlane. In this case Relate Avon, a federate member of the Relate network was accused of unfairly dismissing Mr MacFarlane on the grounds of his religious views. The situation arose following Mr MacFarlane's position that he would be unwilling to provide certain services and advice to same-sex couples – which he said stemmed from his religious beliefs. On a professional level (delivering counselling and therapy services) there are a number of practical issues this raises which made it difficult for Mr MacFarlane to fulfil his role as a Relate counsellor:

- c. The professional bodies which regulate counselling and therapy have equality as core concepts in counselling and therapeutic relationship services to protect those who are vulnerable. This is fundamental as counsellors should not be seen to be

judgemental. Relate practice is fully compliant and engaged with the relevant professional bodies.

- d. The **professional bodies which regulate counselling and therapy have introduced equality as core concepts in counselling** and therapeutic relationship services to protect those who are vulnerable. This is a fundamental concept as counsellors and therapist should not be seen to be judgemental. Relate practice is fully compliant and engaged with the relevant professional bodies.
- e. It is a very big step for clients to pick up the phone and ask for help and this is usually at a point of crisis in their relationship. Usually the first call is made by one person in the relationship and **our initial contact needs to be sympathetic and supportive regardless of their circumstance**
- f. In most cases **we do not know what our counsellor will be faced with when the client attends** their first appointment. Relate does not question the client prior to the first appointment and to do so could undermine both the counselling relationship and the outcomes. This is a very important point which illustrates **the importance of counselling staff being able to deliver services to any couple or family**
- g. **Some clients are not always clear about their sexuality.** In these instances issues of homosexuality may only arise well into the counselling process. A failure to recognise, or if recognised to deal with these issues could result in irreparable harm to the client. One option would be to look at changing therapists, but clients may feel discriminated against if they are passed to another therapist for a reason that is part of who they are. This option would also undermine the vital bond of trust and continuity in our service.

The case was held by the Employment Tribunal and the Employment Appeals Tribunal ruled that Mr MacFarlane had not been unfairly dismissed. The Court of Appeal refused permission to Mr MacFarlane to make a further appeal.

Relate maintain our position that we aimed to act fairly and appropriately at every stage of the process with Mr MacFarlane and others.

Finish

We hope this paper has proved useful and accurate in relation to Relate's specific case. Please do not hesitate to contact our Interim Head of Public Policy, John Loughton on John.Loughton@relate.org.uk or 0207 554 2884 should you have any further questions.

We wish the inquiry and its participants the very best in its future work.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Richard Miller
Your organisation: Church of England
Your role in the organisation: Retired Minister
Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

I am a retired Anglican minister and part of the Dorchester Team near Oxford. I have contacts with various Christian groups. I am particularly in contact with the Rev. Dr. Clifford Hill.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Civil liberties Family Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I am particularly concerned about some of the issues of political correctness, which causes some Christians to come into conflict with councils and other organizations and sometimes other faiths. One of the issues that is causing much confusion and concern is gay rights. When I have expressed some concern about trying to make homosexuality doctrinally compatible with the Christian faith, I have come under some serious criticism, even from people who I thought were my brothers and sisters in Christ.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

I think the public do not see any spiritual conflict with accepting same sex unions, even to the extent of having them blessed or recognised in church ceremonies.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The power of the media is sometimes quite alarming and it is of some considerable concern that a few activists in well placed positions can present their opinions as normal and acceptable. They can even demonize those who disagree with them.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

I believe the issue of sexuality, eg. whether a Christian B&B refuses a double bed to a gay couple or a Christian couple are not allowed to foster children if they disagree with homosexuality, is creating great confusion and distress. On one occasion I was subject to a vitriolic attack when I was critical of what a practising gay American bishop interpreted scripture as supporting gayness in one of my sermons. Otherwise I think a number of clergy are too afraid to face this issue if they have any views at all. I find this most worrying.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Ignored Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I highlighted two cases in the last year, the B&B in Cornwall and a Christian couple denied the right to foster children because of their views on homosexuality. I am concerned that more and more things that appear to marginalize or even defame the Christian faith are often ignored. Those who do this, would be reluctant or afraid to do this with other faiths. While I would not want to see repressive laws put in place or freedom of speech endangered, the right of Christians to express their faith or to counter what is being said seems to me to be ignored.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Quite simply to respect reasonable conscientious objection to some of the laws and ideas being promoted today.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I think I have said enough already.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

I think it would help if the Christian Faith was responsibly taught in schools at all levels. Nearly fifteen years ago, I was teaching a class and discovered that no one had heard of the Ten Commandments. What has shocked me in the recent riot and looting episodes is that no one has mentioned the Ten Commandments. While I do not expect everyone to subscribe to these, if only the last six were adhered to by the general public there should be a considerable decrease in crime and broken homes.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

I find it hard to keep pace with the internet and up and coming technology, but I would have thought reputable religious channels on freeview might arouse interest in matters of faith and belief. At the moment there seem to be many adult channels, merchandise, gay channels and lottery channels in addition to well known channels, BBC, ITV, Aljazeera, CNN etc. There is not so far as I know one faith channel.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Ian M Reed
Your organisation: Saint Mary's Community Church, Dundee
Your role in the organisation: Prayer Support

Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

A church set in the midst of a very deprived area, seeking to bring encouragement and freedom to people who feel neglected and forgotten.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Life issues Relationships

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1. Standing up for the rights of the poor at a time when the Government would appear to have the balance between economics and social justice badly wrong. Anyone speaking in the public arena is made to feel disloyal and politically inept. 2. Speaking up for the rights of Christian Organisations to operate within perceived biblical truth concerning sexual relationships. 3. Speaking up for the claims of Christianity to represent an exclusive way of salvation.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

The aggressive neo athiest movement led by Richard Dawkins has polarised opinion and made the debate much more poisonous.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

It would seem that the mainstream media is much more inclined to provide a platform for the new atheists who really have little proven support to justify their promotion by the media.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Sadly, it would seem that Christians are divided about the issues, particularly in the area of sexual orientation. The debate is becoming more heated and in danger of causing division. There is also a greater reluctance to speak out in the public arena because of the pressures.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The right of Christians to apply their understanding of biblical ethics in the realm of sexual orientation in an increasingly aggressive application of sexual human rights.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The right of Christians to apply their understanding of biblical truth in the area of sexual orientation as regards employment and provision of services.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

A society which is based more on justice for the poor and less on economic principles which have increasingly created a greater gulf between the rich and the poor. Christians should have a 'prophetic' voice which warns about the consequences of government policy, but should not be seeking a privileged role in society. Christians should be allowed the freedom to be counter cultural in a society which has become increasingly secular, rather than bemoaning the loss of a 'christian country'.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

In a time when capitalist market economics is crumbling Christians have the opportunity to speak out for and demonstrate an alternative vision. The challenge is that government is showing a strong determination to have a 'last stand' for the economics of the market and is dismissive of any attempt to speak of alternatives.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Diane Taylor

Your organisation: Salt & Light Churches UK

Your role in the organisation: Parliamentary Liaison Officer

Website www.saltlight.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Salt & Light is an international network of churches, formed in England in the early 1970s and formalised in 1982. Consisting of around 75 congregations, and involving approximately 6000 members, we have mainstream Christian beliefs and operate the accredited King's Bible College and Training Centre in Oxford. We place a particular emphasis on community activity and serving, and cover a range of social projects – for instance, Street Pastors, chaplaincies, pregnancy crisis and post-abortion counselling, marriage counselling, debt counselling, overseas relief and work amongst youth, children, the bereaved, immigrants, the elderly, prostitutes, the poor and those with social needs.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Life issues Relationships Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There has been a great increase in recent years in activity and legislation to do with human rights and freedoms. However, parallel to this (and largely because of this) there has been a decrease in freedom of action, speech and even ideas and opinions amongst faith groups, especially Christianity. This is a challenge. As Christians we are motivated to act with respect and humility, but at the same time cannot allow our own deeply held beliefs and morality to be disallowed. We are constantly looking for ways to serve and make a positive difference in society whilst being open about our faith and honouring God.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

In many areas of service (eg Street Pastors, chaplains, counselling) Christians are respected and appreciated and allowed to "be Christian". However, in many paid professions there is less tolerance, even where the person of faith has a great deal to offer because of that faith and the positives that it brings. Media propaganda has a lot to do with this. There seems to be considerable inter-faith respect and tolerance.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

TV is probably the most influential medium, and in both fictional and news/documentary broadcasting there is frequently an assumption against the Christian faith and its moral code. Vicars, priests and Christians are frequently portrayed in plays and soaps as weird, intolerant, bigoted or deluded. In documentaries and news programmes interviewers seem frequently to come from an atheistic and cynical stance. Contemporary comedians are overwhelmingly and openly mocking of faith. Over a comparatively short period of time " 3 or 4 decades " this has contributed to a rapid turn around in the country's perception of the Christian faith.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Coming from a group of "new" churches, rather than an established denomination which perhaps carries a little more standing and recognition, I would say that the vast majority of members in this particular church group are aware of prejudice against them " or at least against Christians in general. If this is modern-day persecution then it is perhaps to be expected. People are less up-front about their faith than they would like to be, for fear of ridicule, misunderstanding or even accusations of misconduct (as has been seen in some well-known cases). I believe that, even from the pulpit, there has been a gradual tempering of Christian teaching " a falling in line with popular ideas and practices.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Discriminated against unappreciated

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1) There seems to be little recognition that a moral code is a vital part of the Christian faith and should be accommodated. For instance, where a person would prefer to counsel married couples rather than homosexual couples because of deeply-held beliefs, this should be recognised. Other professionals are allowed to specialise in certain areas. 2) There has been some discrimination against the display of Christian symbols " eg a cross. In our

society where the burkha, turban, bindhi etc are frequently worn, this does not seem consistent. 3) The clinic which counsels pregnant women to go for an abortion whilst gaining financially from the abortion industry is regarded as acceptable, whereas the Christian counselling service which encourages women to look at alternatives to abortion is regarded as prejudiced. This has to be wrong. 4) Human Rights legislation seems to be weighted heavily in favour of many groups, and heavily against Christians, who appear to be at the bottom of a hierarchy of rights.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Without legal expertise, it is difficult to answer this. I think I would have to say "anything that corrects the injustices listed above". Our laws are straying too far into prescriptive territory where a certain code of thought and action is required. We should rather encourage natural respect, which is fundamental to the Christian faith, and a "live and let live" attitude.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

I believe that Christians can play a fundamental role at the heart of society. We should, through our love of God and his exhortation to respect and care for all people, be a real community-building force. We are increasingly seeing this happen and, with the Localism Bill and promotion of the Big Society, our opportunities could and should increase further still. However, this has to be in conjunction with a recognition by government, both local and national, that our motivation is our love of Christ and his teachings and that that motivation cannot be sidelined or covered over. If we have a truly Christian attitude this should present no problem. I would also like to see more Christians taking up roles in public life where they can influence not just legislation and decisions, but affect too the whole atmosphere and integrity of Government. Party politics has its part to play "if we don't allow factions that are set around fundamental political philosophy, they will grow around other less helpful ideals. However, party politics should not replace or dominate integrity and conviction. The presence of Christians of all political persuasions in government helps to achieve this "the more the better!! If these two things are achieved, with full recognition of faith, then perhaps the decline in respect and regard for the Christian faith will be reversed, and it will be seen as a fundamental building block of society

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Opportunities: The move towards localism and the Big Society. The inability of officialdom to address the increasing social needs. The increasing emergence of major (and minor) Christian initiatives in serving the community in many areas of life. The increasing desire amongst churches to push out into society and not confine Christian expression to church services and in-house activity. The trend in some professions towards taking early retirement, releasing energetic and time-rich people into service.

Challenges: Overcoming the prevailing anti-Christian attitudes and media hostility. The "busyness" of people and need for both partners in a marriage to work full-time. The bad press of politicians whose own integrity is constantly in question.

â€¢ The watering-down of faith, as a result of the prevailing culture. â€¢ As in previous answers, the current discrimination against Christians in human rights legislation

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Revd Robert O'Neill
Your organisation: St Mary's Church, Luton
Your role in the organisation: Curate
Website www.stmarysluton.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are the parish church of Luton.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Family Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Secularisation Syncretism Attack from various minorities with a disproportionate influence on national life.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Sympathy depends on whether you ask a Christian (nominal or committed) or non Christian.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Somewhat

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

BBC is terribly biased against biblical morality and ethics.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are extremely concerned about the issues raised but feel their ability to voice their opinions is somewhat limited.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Ignored Misunderstood Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Equality Law. It's also been made very difficult to publicly comment on homosexuality and Islam without being accused of some 'hate crime'. Ridiculous! Freedom of speech is being eroded.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Drop the Equality Law! Reinstatement of freedom of speech and uphold it even for those who oppose the Gospel.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

I would like to see a national debate about where we, as a society, draw our moral values. If the prevailing view is secular, so be it. We will work harder to preach the Good News!

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Media bias. The influence of the Liberal Democrats in the current government. Christian MP's from any party should become more vocal in Parliamentary debate - some are already doing a good job.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: David

Your organisation: The Barn Christian Fellowship Droitwich

Your role in the organisation: Pastor

Website <http://www.barn-christian-fellowship.org.uk/>

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are Christians who meet together to worship and study God's Word and help one-another to live according to His Statutes. We strive to live as family and glorify His name while making every effort available to enable the society with whom we work and live to know the truth so as to be saved from the Moral Wickedness that envelopes them bringing chaos and hopelessness.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Relationships Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1 - public proclamation of the Gospel - Jesus is the ONLY Saviour. The Exclusivity of Salvation only in His Name. 2 - freedom of speech to declare HOMOSEXUALITY to be sin and God's Word clearly defines. 3 - inability to hold any public office while holding to a true Christian ethic as above. 4 - inability to run a B&B exclusively for Christians and excluded immoral relationships as above. 5 - ignorance on the truth of Creation and Evolution; the education system is biased which together with the media shapes the thinking of the public to discount reasonable arguments for Creation and so lead the ignorant to believe what they are told is fact. 6- Sex education for schools preconditions young children to an immoral lifestyle believing sex before marriage is normal. It is also the clear intention of those writing the programs to instil in the children that there is nothing wrong with Homosexuality. In fact to vilify those who even suggest it is immoral and against God's Will. 7 - the Sex Education of primary school children is clearly CHILD ABUSE. Even should parents refuse their children to take part in the classes, they are imposed upon by their peers in the playground.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Not at all sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

If society is led by public opinion it is headed for trouble. Surely it is obvious that the majority are always wrong. It takes a brave person to step up to lead society into what is best for them. It cost Jesus Christ His life and cost each of His Apostles their lives and all they owned. A most important question is - what standards do you believe we should lead the people to live up to? Or is it just opinion - based on the lowest common denominator - public opinion?

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

SEX and Sells. Anything that builds power, increases wealth or pleasure will sell and increase votes to those seeking acclaim in one form or another - Result = ultimately collapse of society. Uncontrolled media will inevitably lead to Collapse and deception.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians? that is the first question to answer - Who are we thinking of? True Christians will hold fast to God's Word which is very clear in it's teaching ethic. Christians find it difficult to publicly express their feelings and beliefs because of the mocking and accusation of society in general and the strength of the LIE that is constantly published on POLITICAL CORRECTNESS! May I ask - who made up this rubbish? May I propose a better standard to "Politically Correct." How about a true proven standard, which never fails, proven in time under extreme duress by the Jews and Christians - "Biblically Correct." There is so much false teaching on the media today that many Christians are confused about what the truth even is and as a result often believe their feelings about issues and relativism rather than Biblical Truth. Many are horrified about the Sex Education in schools when they see booklets like "Too Much Too Soon" put out by The Christian Institute for example. Most are abored by Homosexual relationships in public life and the immorality amongst the top members of society and Government.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Persecuted

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

1. Homosexual Marriage 2. Public proclamation and being allowed to wear Christian artifacts or offer of Christian help unless first approached. 3. B & B's not able to exclude immoral clients. 4. Foster parents having to accept homosexuality.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

I think we need the lawyers to help us sort this out. Foremost I would say - Freedom of Conscience.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

A Biblical Society where there is freedom to preach the truth of God's Word and where the Government will maintain order to protect that freedom according to Romans 13. Government must realise they are accountable to the Almighty and their role is to determine what He says - NOT ANY MAN'S OPINION AND NOT MY IPINION.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The power of money and fallen society brings down the rest. Unless there is a turning to the Lord to see Sin for what it is - Nothing can change. Only the Gospel is the Power of God for salvation and the turning of society.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Sam Webster
Your organisation: The Christian Institute
Your role in the organisation: In house lawyer
Website www.christian.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are an evangelical Christian charity which is committed to defending and promoting the Christian faith in the public square, in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. We defend religious liberty, the sanctity of human life and marriage and the family.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Life issues Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

How to live consistent and true Christian lives in an increasingly secular society. There are pressures on Christians to compromise their beliefs, whether in keeping silent for fear of being marginalised or in terms of acting against their consciences as informed by Christian teaching. Christians know that Christ calls them to be salt and light and to be a force for good in public life but it seems that the prevailing culture in public life more often than not promotes a concept of equality and diversity and tolerance which protects and tolerates everything but the liberties of Christians.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

There is a general feeling that many people, including those of no faith at all, are tired of the intolerance shown towards Christian beliefs. Not only does it seem unjust, but in a liberal and pluralistic society it seems so unnecessary. The political elite and the culture of the public sector often seem out of step with general public opinion. Many people who would not necessarily call themselves committed Christians value the contribution of Christianity to our society and culture.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Somewhat

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Some quarters of the media have been helpful in highlighting many of the cases where Christians in public life have been marginalised. Equally, there are sections of the media, particularly the broadcast media, which appear to be institutionally hostile towards Christianity.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians are stirred up by what is happening in the UK today. They increasingly feel that they lack a voice in public life.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Answer number 11 is with reference to equalities legislation as interpreted by the courts. This is with reference to both service provision and the employment sphere. In particular, law makers and judges have not sought properly to address the question of balancing rights where there is a conflict. The law will remain unfair until the notion of reasonable accomodation is applied to religious beliefs and their manifestation.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

See answer 12. Reasonable accomodation. In other words, where the manifestation of a particular religious belief can be accomodated, it should be. There should be a legal presumption that beliefs are accomodated unless, in a particular context, it is not possible. For example, if a longstanding Christian registrar is conscientiously unable to carry out civil partnership unions but there are a team of other registrars in the same authority who do not have such objections, her views should be accomodated by not forcing her to perform such unions. The service delivery is unaffected. Performing civil partnerships do not constitute the main role of a registrar of births, deaths and marriages.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

There are also concerns about free speech and the use of public order legislation. Some Christians have been prosecuted for expressing their Christian beliefs. However, there are few, if any reported cases of non-Christians being prosecuted for insulting Christians and their beliefs. At the end of the day, we are not calling for such prosecutions, but for a more sensible interpretation of public order legislation, which gives better regard to freedom of expression, and for legislation to be amended to give more consistent effect to such rights.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

A truly open and tolerant society in which no person is excluded from public life on account of their beliefs or anything else. A society which values the place of faith within it and encourages for the good of everyone those who are motivated by the Christian gospel. Also a society which stops denying, or is embarrassed by, its own Christian roots, which form the basis of many of our modern freedoms. A society which encourages robust debate uninhibited by a form of political correctness which has instilled a 'chilling effect' on many and where there is currently a sense that many who are in public life frequently do not say what they really think.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The four Christians who are currently taking their cases to the European Court of Human Rights present an opportunity to revisit important issues about the balancing of rights and the accommodation of religious beliefs in the UK. Equally, whilst highlighting discrimination against Christians where it exists, Christians also need also be made aware of the great freedoms we do still have more generally. There is a danger that Christians lose confidence and fail to try and involve themselves in public life. Also, the preoccupation of the media with triviality and celebrity presents a challenge as it means that public policy fails to reflect real concerns on the ground.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Mark Barrell

Your organisation: The Lawyers' Christian Fellowship

Your role in the organisation: Executive Director (and member of the LCF Legal policy team on whose behalf this document is submitted)

Website www.lawcf.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

The Lawyers' Christian Fellowship exists to bring the whole Good News of Jesus Christ within the legal world. It does this by promoting the Christian faith throughout the United Kingdom and internationally by working, in particular, with those in the legal profession, both qualified and studying. We achieve this by providing resources (publications, speaker meetings, events and conferences) to lawyers and students, working with lawyers internationally to do similar work as well as to enable access to justice to the poor and oppressed and by engaging in discussion in the public square.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Human rights Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Christians are finding that their views and wishes are, at times being marginalised or unheard – to the point that they are on occasions under pressure not to manifest their belief in public life. Christians do by and large still enjoy the freedom to worship within their own private sphere and within the church context. However it is clear that there is growing concern that the law is not providing the proper space in which Christians (and people of other faith) can properly manifest their belief in the public sphere. The 4 cases in which the EHRC have recently intervened have already resulted in a vast amount of negative publicity and have encouraged widespread concerns that religion and belief is treated as a second-class protected characteristic. Christians are also concerned that, where they have concerns over foundational Christian values affecting the family and life, their point of view is not heard with any sympathy and they are often at best labelled as fanatical and at worst discriminatory. For example the recent announcement to redefine marriage is an area of great concern but one in which objections by Christians are merely heard in homophobic terms rather than being understood in 'public good' terms. Christians sincerely want to benefit public life by promoting what is universally good for society and makes society flourish (e.g. Biblical understanding of family and life) – but these positions and endeavours are often misrepresented as being essentially negative or moralistic rather than promoting the public good.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

In the main the public are sympathetic to most of what Christians would be concerned with, the right to life, the preservation of law and order to sustain the public good, the need for stable and well ordered family life. However the impression that is given very often in the media is that Christians are “against” so much when in fact they are “for” so much more.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The difficulty is that whilst the public are in favour of much of what Christians see as being positive for society very often the way in which their views are reported – especially in the media is misunderstood or misleading. Sadly the media is prone to promoting a particular secular agenda and the sensationalising certain aspects of Christian beliefs and values without placing them within the right context of the debate.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Most Christians, from our experience, would be in agreement with the views outlined above.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

First, in relation to the Equality Act and Human Rights Act, the court's refusal to recognise any doctrine of reasonable accommodation where a minority right conflicts with the consciences of Christians.

Secondly, also in relation to the Equality Act, the very narrow circumstances under which an organisation is allowed to engage adherents to one religion.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

We would argue in favour of the inclusion of the idea of reasonable accommodation within UK law. The notion of reasonable accommodation is one whose broad outlines can be

delineated simply. It is obviously analogous to the idea of reasonable adjustments which is familiar to employment lawyers and has formed part of the law of disability discrimination. Both notions recognise the extent to which those who are “different” can expect in an inclusive and liberal society their differences to be respected and accommodated in the interests of creating a truly diverse nation. Critically, by placing a positive duty onto the employer a reasonable accommodation test would cohere with Article 9 which puts the burden on the discriminator and narrows the scope of any exceptions to the right to religious freedom. There is no difficulty in formulating the notion of reasonable accommodation as a duty on employers “to take such steps as it is reasonable, in all the circumstances of the case, for the employer to have to take in order to prevent an employee holding a particular religion or belief from being placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who do not hold that religion or belief”.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Future trends. Freedom of speech is prized by all. It protects frank debate, political and religious freedom. It means nothing if those who feel offended by others’ speech can silence them. In recent years the expansion of a ‘rights-based’ approach has threatened to put the freedom of speech in tension with a perceived ‘right’ not to be offended. This may have happened through an expansion of what is assumed by the right not to be discriminated against. Traditionally, the criminal law is concerned with actions rather than speech (unless that speech incites criminal action). This lends itself to an objective (and therefore accessible) test of what is or is not criminal. The more expansively ideas such as discrimination are perceived – such as ‘stigmatisation’ (a term discussed at the UN Human Rights Council) – and the more an exclusively rights-based approach is emphasised, the more *subjectively* they are interpreted. Consequently *speech* which is *felt or claimed* to be stigmatising, offensive, abusive or insulting (whether on the basis of religion, sexual orientation or anything else) starts naturally to be sanctioned under the same category as discriminatory *action*. Although one can understand how this trajectory has developed, it is vital to prevent “over-balancing” and to protect the act/speech, objective/subjective distinctions upon which both the freedom of speech and the rule of law depend. For Christians this should protect our talking freely about the Bible’s teachings, including in church, the workplace, and in public – without being limited by the latest fashions in what is politically correct.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Society is designed to thrive and can do so when it has the freedom to live in accordance with the created design-order given to all humanity by God, and has the opportunity freely to know and come to acknowledge and accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ. All who live within society are social and civil beings, who (we believe) are given their precious life to live in relationship with God with air in our lungs, rain on our fields, and have orderly and peaceful relationships with the world and with one another. Government is ordained to rule according to law for the good of society, maintaining public structuring which accords with God’s moral design-order by protecting and encouraging those who do good to society, and correcting and restraining those who do it evil. This provides the foundation for the rule of law which protects human freedoms for everyone’s benefit. Rule according to law is consistent and accessible and so must stand on shared truth about the world as it really is. This promotes intellectual analysis, constructive discussion, diversity, and the use of evidence benefitting society in its ability to live peaceful, purposeful and significant lives. Christians are called to love our neighbours which includes being a significant Christian influence within this process, thereby assisting human government and the courts to fulfil their God-given mandate allowing all within our society to flourish, and telling our neighbours the great news of Christ’s greater government for *eternal* human flourishing in a renewed society.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

One of the major opportunities is that, for the most part, Christians are, at present, able to engage freely in private and in the public square in the UK and to hold their beliefs without fear of persecution or imprisonment. There is a great deal of tolerance for those who hold different beliefs within the UK and a genuine desire that there should continue to be the freedom to express opinions on how society should be structured and say which genuinely held convictions should be protected – such as the right to life and family,

Another opportunity is the fact that in the main many fundamental truths and values held by Christians are widely recognised and held by people in the UK, including the right to freedom of belief and expression of belief, and the freedom of association. Many would agree that the pursuit of justice without favouritism, and need to protect the poor and vulnerable, are essential to any democratic society.

The challenges are however becoming more apparent as Christian contribution is becoming less influential and are being marginalised. This makes it harder for Christians to demonstrate that our contribution is sincerely intended for the benefit of everyone, and that we are not merely a self-serving special-interest group. Many Christians feel pressurised to keep their beliefs and opinions to themselves for fear of being told that they are not free to manifest those beliefs without the possibility of coming into conflict with the law.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Dennis Wrigley
Your organisation: The Maranatha Community
Your role in the organisation: Community Leader
Website www.maranathacommunity.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Maranatha is a national movement of thousands of Christians in churches of all traditions. Established for 30 years, its members are involved in a broad range of social projects, helping the unemployed, homeless, addicts, young criminals and those from broken families. Its activities include reconciliation work in Northern Ireland. Maranatha Groups and Prayer Cells exist across the land. Committed to prayer and healing, their key words are Unity, Renewal and Healing. Operating a programme of training courses, research and relief projects and social action initiatives, Maranatha daily reviews current issues and operates an effective Christian voice in the public space.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Broadcasting & media Family Human rights

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The foundations of our society are undoubtedly Judaeo-Christian. At best there is collective amnesia about key aspects of history demonstrating that freedom, democracy and rule of law, as developed in this nation, are rooted in Biblical teaching. At worst we are witnessing a deliberate and concerted effort to destroy these foundations and remove the influence of Christianity from our national life. Thus, the key issue is that the cultural environment has established a negative disposition towards Christians in public life. In the guise of tolerance, the secular agenda has been promoted so vigorously that Christian views are now considered irrelevant, ridiculous or objectionable. Suppression of debate and lack of open-mindedness on the part of officialdom, academics and media with an unwillingness to countenance any absolute, save that there is no absolute, means that Christian views and beliefs are rejected in the social and political arena. There is progressive undermining of institutions that have been the established building blocks of our society, from marriage-based family to common citizenship based on shared loyalty and law. Society, now conditioned by Darwinian, humanistic and Marxist thinking has subtly moved traditional family roles from unfashionable, through inconvenient, to being anti-social. The elevation of a concept of rationality based on an extreme form of materialism beyond any other form of knowing, excludes the sacred and spiritual dimension from all debate and expels religious belief from the public sphere. Thus Christian contributions on issues such as euthanasia, abortion, care of the elderly and children, have been marginalised.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Quite sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

There is widespread public concern about our national decline expressed strongly in public reaction to the banking crisis, corruption in journalism and police, Parliamentary expenses scandal and the riots. There is profound concern about anti-social behaviour and blatant moral decline instanced in drug-taking, pornography, child abuse, the growth of serious crime and gang culture. Although our Christian heritage is often presented as imperialistic and shameful, there is a very real feeling that we are in danger of forgetting our history and of losing our moral and cultural bearings, though few are able to articulate precisely what the underlying problem is.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media have exercised enormous influence on lifestyle in the United Kingdom in the past 40 years. Public opinion is massively misinformed and under-informed through selective reporting and broadcasting and is thus manipulated by media with an evident secular humanist and "politically correct" bias. Immense power has been exercised without responsibility. The permissive agenda of the 1960's was eagerly promoted by most of the mass media, so trivialisation and vulgarity have invaded television and the young have been deliberately sexualised. Public concern about violence, foul language and obscenity is largely ignored. The Christian faith has been ridiculed and marginalised.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

There is deep and growing concern among many Christians about the state of our nation, but many feel inhibited and powerless in the face of the rising tide of anti-Christian activity, with widespread shock over recent discriminatory court cases. They are equally aware of the diminishing influence of the Church and a growing and aggressive attitude to the Christian faith in public life. The Christian community is very diverse, often ill-informed and as susceptible to propaganda as the public at large so there is a wide range of responses. We have observed: frustration, despair, anger, confusion, shame, fear and insecurity. However, in our experience, Christians, when informed and mobilised, believe that they and the wider Church can and will make a positive difference to their local communities and the nation as a whole. Some Christians have retreated from public witness, waiting for God to intervene through revival. However many have responded to key issues by actively engaging in work for the poor and the marginalised. The plight of the younger generation is widely recognised resulting in many Christian initiatives for children and young people. Christians are looking for clear, united church leadership in the face of our current national situation.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Often

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Â·Undue latitude and influence has been granted to minorities, undermining the logical consistency and universal applicability of the law, and with it the Judaeo-Christian values which the law has traditionally embodied. Christians are denied freedom of speech. Â·To accommodate minority religions and beliefs, exceptions are made to rules that apply to the majority. Similar exemptions are not afforded to Christians, eg. wearing a cross. Â·The application of equality legislation penalises Christians wishing to uphold Christian values eg. those who do not wish to register civil partnerships between homosexuals or provide sexual relationship counselling to homosexual couples have been forced out of their chosen employment. Meanwhile, a blind eye is turned to Muslim attitudes towards homosexuality, the rights of women and freedom to choose one's religion. Â·Commitment to equality above all else has led to every religion and belief being given equal weight, regardless of truthfulness, moral value or impact on individuals, society and the law. Christian adoption societies have been forced to close or comply with anti-Biblical practices. Â·Equality legislation applied to educational curricula unacceptably pressurises Christians (especially children and teachers) to remain silent about their beliefs ranging from creation to family structure and sexuality. Â·The law is not applied and enforced fully and impartially. Incitement to racial/religious hatred law is usually directed against Christians. Blasphemy against Christ is ignored in contrast to avoidance of the misuse of the name Allah. The police have not taken issue with inflammatory content in the Koran.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Â·The starting point should be complete freedom of conscience. Â·Statements that are factually true should never be penalised by the law merely because they are spoken, no matter how hurtful this may be nor what the consequences. Â·In accordance with long-standing principles of English law (the "reasonable man" test), test of harm should be objective. The job of the law is to deal with legal rights and duties, not feelings and perceptions. Â·An offence should always require both physical act (actus reus) and criminal state of mind (mens rea). Â·When judges interpret legislation, it should be taken as read that Parliament could not and did not intend absurdity. Â·Judges should balance the rights of claimants against those of people who are not party to the proceedings but who will nevertheless be affected by the court's decision, taking account of the impact on society as a whole. Â·Judges should apply to all cases involving religion and belief the test of consistency and compliance with the underlying principles of English law. Â·No group or individual should be able to insist that measures in their favour should be implemented regardless of cost and impact on the majority. Â·Regard should be had to the moral content of the religion or belief that claims the protection of the court. Â·There should be an end to the "one law for them and another for us" approach. Â·Legislation which penalises Christians should be urgently reviewed now.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

A generation of anti-Christian aggressive secular humanism has produced a layer of cultural, legal and political bias against Christian views. A couple prosecuted on a charge of religiously aggravated behaviour following discussions about their beliefs with a Moslem woman faced media presumption that they were bigots and a legal presumption that it is religiously offensive to discuss traditional Christian beliefs. Their successful business was destroyed because it was socially and politically unacceptable for their views to be held by a supplier to the NHS. Our approach to minority rights increasingly involves subordinating individual conscience: No individual or collective right should prevent speaking the truth. It is for this reason that libel law has a defence of fair comment, meaning that nobody will be guilty of libel if what they say is true, no matter how hurtful or damaging this may be. Yet where hate crime or the Equality Act 2010 is concerned this approach no longer holds. Hence the Equality Act 2010 fails to distinguish between: (a) what can be objectively determined and hence is actionable (the "reasonable man" test) and what is merely subjective and hence should not be the subject of interference by the courts; and (b) a criminal act (actus reus) and a criminal state of mind (mens rea) - English law has traditionally required both in order for an offence to be committed. The law currently strikes the wrong balance between equality and freedom, harming everyone, not just Christians. The creation of "thought police" seriously endangers freedom.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Judeo-Christian truth and values have been demonstrated, over centuries, to be strong and reliable foundations for a just, tolerant and healthy society. Our vision for society is for a restoration of freedom to promote Christian truth with consequential liberty for those of all religions and none. The role of Christians is to be salt - preserving what is good - and light - illuminating healthy lifestyles and relationships. Christian truth brings hope and healing. Christian values create social cohesion. Christian morality enriches the family, community and public life. The central non-negotiable values of our society include: Freedom of conscience; Freedom of speech; Freedom of choice; Freedom of religion; Freedom of worship; and Equality before the law. These take priority over contradictory views in other cultures, religions or ideologies. Our aim is for genuine human happiness, not shallow hedonism or the excesses of libertarianism. Technical progress and material advancement should be regulated with wisdom and against a moral yardstick, protecting society from irresponsible self-seeking and destructive influences. Our vision is for a healthy and stable society - the fruit of marriage-based families and individuals living in good relationships with one another. A just society where the most vulnerable, particularly the young, old, unborn, poor, outcast, stranger and marginalised are protected and cared for; a society where the inherent dignity and worth of every human being is respected and affirmed, irrespective of possessions, privilege or any other label. Christians can play a central role in rebuilding the broken walls of our society.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

There are signs that many are searching for a spiritual dimension of life. There is a hunger for an understanding of the purpose of life in the face of the abysmal failure of the secular humanist experiment of the last 50 years. Our nation currently faces a major opportunity as young people, who are weary of selfishness and greed, are beginning to recognise the futility of hedonism, and discover that life has meaning and purpose. There are large numbers of active, passionate and organised Christian believers who are motivated to work

for the betterment of the nation. In a world of relativistic beliefs which have brought confusion, the potential is great for the nation to embrace absolutes which bring hope, moral direction and stability. We believe that, in our country, the Church and Christian faith are now facing the most severe assault for 400 years. A struggle for the soul of our nation is taking place. For generations the Church has played a central role in serving the local community. The challenge is that today, thousands of church projects which benefit society, are denied public funding, solely because they are Christian in ethos. Many churches give a considerable proportion of their income to charitable projects but there is still a sense of them being penalised. In order to realise the immediate opportunity for change, the aggressive secularist influences in politics, academia and the media must be challenged. As Christians we believe there is hope for our land.

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Helen Cameron
The Salvation Army
Your role in the organisation: Head of Public Affairs
Website www.salvationarmy.org.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

We are a Christian denomination and a social welfare charity.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Charity Employment Service Provision

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The more plural nature of the public square provides an opportunity for us to express the Christian beliefs and values upon which our work is based.

We meet human need without discrimination. Our publicly available ethical statements mean that we are sometimes portrayed as not helping people with whom we have an ethical disagreement. This is not the case and we seek to correct this misapprehension when it occurs.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Very sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

We find public opinion to be overwhelmingly supportive of our work. Opinion surveys show that we are widely trusted by the public and we seek to live up to that confidence placed in us.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Somewhat

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media are highly influential with those in public life but much less so with those we seek to serve and those who support us.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

We would have no basis upon which to reply to this question.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Normal

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Rarely

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

We rarely experience any unfairness in relation to our work. We may from time to time criticise public policies which we feel may disadvantage those we seek to serve. We are conscious that like many Christian organisations we benefit hugely from the benefits accruing to charitable status and that these apply to our religious as well as service-providing work. We are successful in attracting public and donor funding and our faith status is usually regarded as either neutral or an advantage.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

We have no specific proposals to make.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

None

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

We don't really have a publicly formulated statement that would fit the bill. Here are our mission and vision statements.

Mission Statement

Called to be disciples of Jesus Christ, The Salvation Army United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland exists to save souls, grow saints, and serve suffering humanity

Vision Statement

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we will be a Spirit-filled, radical growing movement with a burning desire to lead people into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, actively serve the community, and fight for social justice

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Elizabeth Hunter
Your organisation: Theos
Your role in the organisation: Director
Website www.theosthinktank.co.uk

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Research and comment on the role of religion in society

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Civil liberties Human rights Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Ethical behaviour Openness about faith

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media is the primary conduit through which people's opinions are formed- on all subjects, not just religion.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

There is a huge variety.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Normal

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Rarely

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

In a very few instances it appears that confusion about how to balance difference rights has led to some questionable judgements. However, more analysis needs to be done.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Not yet sure.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

A society which acknowledges intrinsic human value, whose highest priorities are justice, peace and compassion. Christians are called to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and by doing so work to bring about the kingdom of God.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

The human heart is the biggest challenge, and the oppurtunities are all around us.

We have a great opportunity to review human rights legislation in this Parliament. The Government needs to see the seriousness of the difficulties beginning to emerge in human rights legislation to have any chance of addressing the issues we face.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Tony Pennell
Your organisation: none - just a church member
Your role in the organisation: house group leader

Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Personal response

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Life issues Relationships

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Increasing pressure at work, school, in general conversation to conform to a secular world view. Christianity is generally regarded as out of date, 'uncool', irrelevant and divisive. Most media reporting and discussion is heavily biased towards this view and the school curriculum increasingly marginalises Christian values. . Biblically-based discussion of sexuality (esp. homosexuality), abortion, marriage, divorce, and other religions (esp. Islam) is effectively forbidden (certainly in public, often in private too). Proclaiming Biblical truths in these areas opens Christians to possible censure, job loss, discrimination or even prosecution. Human rights legislation is increasingly interpreted in favour of other beliefs (including humanism), but usually against Christian beliefs. The result is a watering down of Bible-based church teaching to avoid these topics - or the adoption of compromising non-Christian 'multi-faith' or 'liberal' doctrines which attempt to make Christianity 'palatable'. The Gospel IS divisive - Jesus said so! This emphasis on secular humanism, the biased interpretation of Human Rights legislation and the spread of Islam will make it increasingly difficult and risky to proclaim one's faith in the UK.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Very few now have any knowledge or understanding of basic Christian truths, so are easily convinced by spurious secular/humanist views. The significance of the fact that 'objective' secular scientists basically ASSUME ab initio that the supernatural is impossible is lost on most people. not surprisingly they are then able to 'disprove' all sorts of things!

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

Religious broadcasting at the BBC is led by a Moslem. Biblical Christians are rarely given a chance to express their views and are usually interviewed aggressively. Most media spokesmen for Christians are on the 'safe' liberal wings of the church..

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Many are very fearful of sharing their faith (or just stating what they believe) on 'dangerous' topics, for fear of repercussions. 'Evangelism' has become a dirty word and is effectively forbidden outside of the church - where it is least needed! The loss of Christian principles in schools, families public places and in business (and Parliament and other national institutions) is greatly felt. The work of loud secular minority pressure groups means that the loss seems to be inexorably increasing day by day.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Dr. Adrian Miles
Your organisation: Transform Work UK
Your role in the organisation: Workplace Consultant
Website www.transformworkuk.org

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

Transform Work UK (TWUK) is a registered non-profitmaking company. It aims to support and inspire Christians to transform the workplace and the nation. TWUK provides support to over 180 Christian workplace groups and professional associations across the UK. Its aim is to: help Christians to work in a godly way; reach out to their colleagues with the good news of Jesus Christ; live out their faith in the context of the workplace; cope with difficulties and stresses associated with the UK workplace; make a difference where God has placed them. TWUK delivers its aims by: helping workplace Christians build vibrant and effective workplace groups; facilitating and delivering conferences and workshops to workplace Christians and the church; developing and providing relevant Christian workplace resources; maintaining a website which provides access to relevant materials.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Business Employment Life issues

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

* The ability to witness as Christians in the workplace without fear of disciplinary action. * Restrictions on role of faith in workplace policy and practice, imposed by the secular majority, (Not other religious groups or minority groups) under the guise of diversity or equality legislation. * The undermining of the Christian contributions to the development of the social care and health structures in the UK. * The downgrading of Christian celebrations in response to 'being sensitive' to other cultures and faiths.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

Very sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

Although the above issues facing Christians are negative. There are many organisations which take a positive stance to supporting Christians in the workplace, alongside other staff groups. The number of effective Christian workplace groups is growing and this seems in general to reflect a shift in opinion of effective organisations. A growing number of senior managers see the support and encouragement of staff groups, including Christians, as making sound business sense. The rise of other religions has resulted in a negative public perception of people of other faiths and cultures. However, the experience of TWUK is that this is a misrepresentation of other faith groups who are more than happy to work in conjunction with Christians.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

A great deal

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The Christian/faith issues which hit the headlines are inevitably in regard to negative stances taken by senior managers in organisations. This results in fanning the flames of cultural and religious division. This is unfortunate since the experience of TWUK is that there are far more positives concerning Christians in the workplace than negatives.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

The experience of TWUK of Christians in the workplace is varied. In some organisations, Christians experience the support of their organisations and colleagues and have grown in confidence in the way in which they witness their faith. This is usually where there are a good number of Christians in the organisation. Where there are fewer Christians, a view is sometimes taken of 'keeping your head down' - in case speaking out or sharing your faith with others raises sensitive employment issues e.g. medical professions. Some of our colleagues in areas of social care and child care face particularly challenging issues and dilemmas e.g. fostering and adoption.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Issues arising for Christians within the workplace are in the main less to do with the law, rather more concerned with the implementation of diversity frameworks which have been developed by the HR departments of individual organisations. In particular whilst there is a recognition of some groups as specifically needing to be identified within HR diversity policy such as women, people with disabilities, black and minority ethnic groups and sexual

orientation, however, the recognition of faith groups as a specific staff group is more confused. There is a tendency to group all faith groups under the umbrella of 'Faith Forum'. Whilst there are common issues between staff faith groups, there are also some clear differences which are not taken into account within by the organisation. Thus the creation of a multi-faith forum is sometimes a grouping of convenience, without commitment to identifying the needs and potential contribution of Christians or other faith groups to the organisation.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Clearer guidance is needed in relation to employment legislation concerning the need to take account of the needs of individual faith groups and in particular Christians.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Our current society has lost sight of key values which are required to live in community. These are love, care and concern for others. I would wish to see a society where these three values are lived out initially within families, but also within and between the many varied communities in the UK and more widely to those in need in overseas countries. This cannot be achieved through following a set of rules or laws, although these might assist. The missing ingredient in our modern society is faith. It is faith which ultimately provides the inner motivation within each one of us to see a fair and just society. For Christians this means the love of Jesus Christ, but we need to recognise that for others it may mean their particular faith. Christians, along with other people of faith need to be involved personally in living out this vision, but also those in 'power' need to be less afraid of publically acknowledging this and be to be prepared to publically recognise that Christians and other faith groups in the UK can play an active role in building better and more compassionate communities.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

There is a recognition within many communities that things are not right and that our society has something missing. The recent census indicates that over 70% of the population describe themselves as Christian. Whilst this may not be actively lived out, it does provide a potential opportunity for Christian groups and the 'Church' to play a more active role in promoting key values. However, it needs politicians to speak out and support the need for a greater role in faith bodies in shaping our communities.. This needs to be done with due care and sensitivity to non-believers. They have rights too! However on the basis of over 70% declared Christians, too ignore this group and the to fail to recognise that our social welfare system is based on the work of many Christians, would in itself be discriminatory. The increase and influence of Islam is seen by some as a threat, but this has in many cases opened the doors for Christians who rightly can demand parity of consideration. Working with other faith groups is an opportunity not a barrier. One opportunity which TWUK is considering is developing a charter mark for 'faith friendly' organisations.

Clearing the Ground Inquiry

1. Please tell us who you are and whether you are responding on behalf of an organisation

Your name: Jeremy Andrews
Your organisation: Verwood Road EvangelicalChurch
Your role in the organisation: Pastor
Website

2. Please describe what your organisation does? (less than 100 words)

A church with Sunday services and weekly activities.

3. Which of the following issues is of greatest interest for your organisation? (please select up to 3)

Family Human rights Religious freedom

4. What key issues face Christians in public life today? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The ability to live and work in a way which is consistent with their faith. Also, to be given reasonable accommodation in the work place and not fear being penalised for live and work according to their sincerely held beliefs.

5. Do you consider public opinion sympathetic to the issues you have outlined?

A little sympathetic

6. Please add any further comment regarding public opinion (maximum 100 words)

In the last few years Christians have been penalised under so called equality legislation. There has been some public sympathy for them. I think public opinion would favour a change in the law, or a change in the way current law is being interpreted, to allow Christians more freedom to live according to their faith, without it having a negative effect on any other groups of people.

7. To what degree do the mainstream media contribute to the public perception of these issues?

Somewhat

8. Please add any further comments relating to the media's role (maximum 100 words)

The media have helped to highlight the issues that Christians have been facing. As a result the public have been made more aware of the problems some Christians have faced.

9. From your experience what do Christians think about the key issues you have outlined above? (please limit your answer to 200 words)

Christians have largely been concerned about these issues and feel that there needs to be a change to allow Christians greater freedoms to speak and live according to their faith.

10. How would you best describe the position of Christians in relation to the law? (you may select up to 3)

Misunderstood Marginalised Discriminated against

11. Do you consider the law or its interpretation, to be unfair to Christians?

Sometimes

12. Which specific aspects of law, or its interpretation, do you consider unfair? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

So called equality legislation, particularly the law regarding the sexual orientation and provision of goods and services. Also, the law about using words which might be insulting. These laws and their interpretation have been used in a way which is unfair to Christians.

13. What changes, if any, would you like to see to current laws or their interpretation in order to ensure fair treatment for Christians? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

The law needs to be changed or clearer guidance given to the police and courts so that Christians are not legally required to condone homosexuality, and that to say that homosexuality may be wrong is not, in and of itself, an offence.

14. Do you have any further comments about the treatment of Christians in relation to the law? (please limit your answer to 250 words)

Christians have been unfairly treated, such as Mr and Mrs Bull, the Cornwall hotel owners. Also, Lillian Ladelle, the Christian registrar, who was sacked because of her unwillingness to conduct civil partnerships. Other examples could be given.

15. What is your vision for society, and the role of Christians within it? (250 words)

Christians should be able to live and work in society without fear of persecution.

16. What do you see as the major opportunities and challenges in realising that vision? (250 words)

the challenge is for society to accept that Christians have sincerely held beliefs which should be respected and accommodated. there needs to be a better balance of the rights of all groups on society, including Christians.

Gary Streeter MP
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA

10 October 2011

Dear Gary

Re: Clearing the Ground Inquiry

Thank you for your letter inviting us to input into the Clearing the Ground Inquiry.

World Vision is a child focused Christian development, relief and advocacy organisation. We work in nearly 100 countries, to bring about lasting change. Our work helps transform the lives of millions of the world's poorest and most vulnerable. We want to demonstrate God's unconditional love in everything we do.

This submission focuses on our engagement with Government and ability to recruit Christian's to particular jobs where we consider there is a occupational requirement for the post-holder to be a Christian.

World Vision has certain roles where we consider it is essential that a Christian fills them, in order for us to effectively carry out our mission to transform the lives of the world's poorest and most vulnerable children. We therefore place "Occupational Requirements" on some of our jobs, with clear criteria as to why the role needs one and a robust process to assess the rationale for this decision. However, whilst we support the equalities legislation that allows us to do this, we feel that at the same time the ambiguity in this legislation makes us and other similar organisations vulnerable. None of our legal advisers is able to give us an absolute guarantee that we could not be challenged in court or tribunal, as there is neither precedent in the courts nor clarity in law. We would welcome Parliament bringing clarity to this situation, reducing our vulnerability and recognising the need for organisations like World Vision to have this requirement.

As a faith based international development organisation we work closely with Government and particularly the Department for International Development. DFID has developed and strengthened their understanding of our role and the Secretary of State, Andrew Mitchell MP, spoke to Church House about the important role faith organisations play in development. We commend this engagement and feel that it reflects both the importance of faith and the long Christian tradition in the UK of standing up for the needs of the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

In 2009, World Vision co-organised a series of seminars looking at the issues of faith and development. We were very pleased with the reception that this project received. It demonstrated the importance that faith can play in development. Some will treat faith based organisations with suspicion, but our experience is that this is very rare. Our more frequent impression is that our engagement is welcome and the role of faith in development is recognised and included.

We very much appreciate the opportunity to input our views to your inquiry. If there is anything more we can do to help, please do contact Chris Page, UK Government Relations Manager, on 07595 963441 or chris.page@worldvision.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Justin Byworth
Chief Executive

[cc. Dr David Landrum, Clearing the Ground, Evangelical Alliance, Whitefield House, 186
Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT]