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A busy summer ahead

Work shows no sign of slowing down at The Christian Institute this summer. This newsletter brings you up to date.

We are supporting Baroness Cox as she promotes her Bill aimed at tackling Sharia courts in England and Wales.

We are protecting free speech by pushing for the Public Order Act in England and Wales to be amended.

We are seeking to make sure the Scottish Government's Bill on sectarianism doesn't damage religious liberty.

We are resisting attempts to

force sex education on primary schools, and to replace Christian assemblies with atheist ones.

We are defending the sanctity of marriage by responding to plans for same-sex marriage and plans to allow churches to register homosexual civil partnerships.

Our Legal Defence Fund continues to support Christians who face legal action because of their faith. Some important cases are going to trial soon.

As ever, we value your prayers and your support as we take these issues forward.

CI backs new Bill to tackle Sharia courts

In June The Christian Institute supported Baroness Cox as she launched a Bill aimed at tackling the problems of Sharia courts operating in England and Wales.

The Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill aims to stop Sharia taking root as a parallel legal system and outlaws discrimination against women in Sharia courts.

The Bill has been introduced in the House of Lords and a Second Reading debate is expected later in the parliamentary year.

The Bill itself does not name Sharia courts or Islam, nor does it interfere in the internal theological affairs of religious organisations.

It does make clear that sex discrimination law applies to arbitration tribunals. This means Sharia arbitration tribunals cannot give a woman's



Baroness Cox launched the Arbitration Bill to tackle Sharia courts that overstep their jurisdiction and discriminate against women.

testimony less weight than a man's, nor can they give women fewer inheritance rights.

The Bill also creates a criminal offence of falsely claiming legal jurisdiction over criminal or family law cases. The offence carries a penalty of up to five years in prison.

Under the Bill, public bodies would be under a duty to inform women that they have fewer legal rights if their marriage is not recognised under English law.

The Bill has attracted a broad spectrum of support in the media and in Parliament.

MPs back amendment to protect free speech

An amendment to improve the law on free speech by removing the word “insulting” from Section 5 of the Public Order Act has been tabled by Conservative MP Edward Leigh.

Section 5 criminalises “insulting” words or behaviour. This has had a damaging effect on free speech. It has been used to issue a court summons to a 16-year-old for holding a placard saying: ‘Scientology is a dangerous cult.’¹ It was used to arrest street preacher Dale Mcalpine after he said to a Police Community Support Officer that homosexual practice is a sin.



Edward Leigh MP tabled the amendment to repeal the word “insulting” from Section 5.

The amendment, which has over 50 signatories, has received widespread support. Terry Sanderson, President of the National Secular Society, has given his backing to the amendment. And

former Liberal Democrat MP Dr Evan Harris, who is a secularist and free speech campaigner, said that Section 5 needed to be “removed from the statute book altogether”.²

The amendment will be debated at Report

Stage of the Protection of Freedoms Bill, expected in the autumn. MPs still have time to listen to constituents’ concerns about Section 5.

¹ *Guardian Online*, 23 May 2008

² Dr Evan Harris speaking on Premier Christian Radio, 24 May 2011

Attempt to force gay adoption on Northern Ireland

A Northern Ireland quango is trying to force homosexual adoption on the Province.

When the issue was put out for public consultation in 2006, over 90 per cent of respondents were against allowing homosexual couples to adopt.

But despite this, the Human Rights Commission plans to go to court to push for a change in the law.

Equality targets for public bodies under new regulations

Regulations for a sweeping new equality law in England have been laid before the Westminster Parliament.

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations relate to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which came into force across Great Britain in April.

The rules will require public bodies in England – including schools, police, and local councils – to have equality targets.

Regulations for Wales have already been introduced. The Scottish Parliament is expected to

introduce something similar for Scotland.

The regulations for England have been redrafted several times amid concerns that they will be bureaucratic and expensive.

They would have been passed without a debate, but former Home Secretary Lord Waddington has tabled a motion expressing concerns about the potential impact of the laws. This has forced a debate, which is expected in the House of Lords in early September.

Plans for civil partnerships in churches 'not workable'

A Government consultation on its plans to allow civil partnerships to be registered in places of worship closed in June.

Currently same-sex civil partnerships can only be held in register offices and secular venues such as hotels and stately homes.

But the coalition Government is proposing an opt-in system so that civil partnership registrations could take place in a church if the relevant denomination consents and the owners of the individual building agree.

In response, The Christian Institute's submission warned that implementing such a system is likely to result in "legal action against churches who disagree". The Government's own consultation document admits this is a possibility.

The Christian Institute has also warned that the proposals are "not workable" given the complex array of organisational arrangements for religious groups, and that the Government is "risking the religious freedom of many thousands of people by introducing a scheme for which there is so little demand."

Christian assemblies under threat from Education Bill amendments

Christian assemblies in state schools in England could be under threat from backbench amendments to an Education Bill currently passing through Parliament.

The current law says there must be a daily act of collective worship in schools. In every school term

these must be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character".

But prominent humanist Baroness Massey has tabled an amendment to ban all religious worship from school assemblies (except in church schools), a move that could allow atheist themes to dominate. An alternative proposal

by secularist Lord Avebury would remove the requirement for worship in schools (other than church schools) and replace it with an opt-in system.

There is also a plan to allow pupils to exercise the right of withdrawal from Christian assemblies. Currently this right resides with parents.

Primary sex ed plans revived in the Lords



Plans to force sex education on primary schools in England have been revived in the House of Lords.

Similar plans failed to become law before the last General Election, but some Peers in the House of Lords are using the Education Bill to revisit the issue.

They want to impose statutory sex and relationships education on children as young as five as part of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) Education.

Several amendments were debated without a vote by a committee in the Lords on 13 July.

Under the plans children would be taught that civil partnerships and other unmarried relationships are important for family life and

the bringing up of children.

In addition, schools would no longer be discouraged from using inappropriate materials.

The proposals would also force teachers to teach sex and relationships education in accordance with 'equality and diversity' principles, potentially infringing on the religious liberty of Christian teachers.

The debate featured speeches by prominent humanist Peers, who opposed giving church schools freedom to teach about sex education topics according to their religious ethos. The amendments may be voted on at a later stage in the passage of the Bill.

Truro sex shop loses its licence but is allowed to stay open

A sex shop that opened next door to a school uniform store in Truro, Cornwall, has lost its licence following a legal action by The Christian Institute.

The High Court accepted that the licensing body, Cornwall Council, acted unlawfully when it granted a licence.

The council failed to properly consider the suitability of the location and disregarded legitimate objections from members of the public.

The council was taken to court by The Christian Institute and local resident, Armored Carlyon. Mrs Carlyon is also a city councillor and former mayor.

The court's ruling means that the council must reconsider the application for a sex shop licence. In the meantime, the council has allowed the sex shop to remain open and operate without a licence.



Sectarianism Bill slowed to allow time for consultation

Legal action taken jointly by The Christian Institute and CARE for Scotland has helped to slow down a Bill that could have damaged the free speech and religious liberty of Christians in Scotland.

The Scottish Government had planned to rush into law a Bill to combat sectarian hatred within football. It wanted the Bill to be pushed through the Scottish Parliament in just one week, in time for the 2011/12 Scottish football season. But the unprecedented haste meant the Bill was poorly drafted.

It affects much more than football and goes way beyond sectarianism. It could catch ordinary religious debate.

Concerns about the speed of the legislative timetable were voiced



Alex Salmond announced a delay to the Bill after the CI and CARE for Scotland lodged a legal action.

by a broad spectrum of politicians, media and other interested parties.

We obtained an expert legal opinion which included advice that the Scottish Government was acting unlawfully by failing to hold a proper public consultation on its plans.

We lodged a legal action against the Scottish Government at the Court of Session in Edinburgh. The next day First Minister Alex Salmond announced a

U-turn. He extended the timetable for the Bill from one week to six months. We are confident that our legal action played a significant role in this change.

This extended timescale gives Christians an opportunity to raise concerns about free speech and religious liberty. In due course we will contact our supporters in Scotland with information and advice.

Same-sex marriage consultation promised by Scottish Government

The Scottish Government has promised to hold a consultation on changing the definition of marriage to permit same-sex marriage. Dates for the consultation have yet to be publicly announced.

In order for full same-sex marriage to be legalised, the definition of marriage would have to be altered and the new definition imposed on society, including

schools. Opposition to same-sex marriage has arisen in unlikely quarters. The assistant editor of the Guardian favours retaining the traditional definition of marriage because "heterosexual marriage is there to produce and raise children in a more or less stable environment."¹

¹ Guardian Online, 14 February 2011

Bulls' appeal date announced

An appeal in the case of Peter and Hazelmary Bull, the Christian owners of a B&B penalised for their double bed policy, will be heard in the Court of Appeal on 8 and 9 November.

In January a court ordered the Bulls to pay £3,600 in damages to a homosexual couple denied a double room.

But the original trial judge allowed an appeal, accepting that his ruling does affect the Bulls' right to religious liberty and forces them to act against their sincerely-held Christian beliefs.

The case made international headlines, with two British



Appealing: Hazelmary and Peter Bull

newspapers saying the law had gone too far and calling on Parliament to take action.

The legal action was taken by Steven Preddy and Martyn Hall, bankrolled by the taxpayer-funded Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The commission will also fund Mr Preddy and Mr Hall's legal bills as they respond to the Bulls' appeal.

High Court to hear case against Bideford Council prayers

The case brought by the National Secular Society against Bideford Town Council for the saying of Christian prayers at the start of council meetings will be heard by the High Court later this year.

The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund will pay any cost order made against the council so that it will not be forced to concede due to lack of funds.



Equality Commission: courts have not done enough to defend religious liberty

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has said that courts should have done more to protect Christians affected by equality laws.

The commission says judges have interpreted laws too narrowly, and set the bar too high for Christians to prove discrimination.

It also thinks employers should do more to 'reasonably accommodate' employees with religious beliefs - just like they do with disabled staff.

The commission intends to intervene in four religious liberty legal cases heading for Europe, including the case of Lillian Ladele (pictured) - the Christian registrar disciplined



for her stance on homosexual civil partnerships.

Lillian Ladele's legal case is being financed by The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund.

The commission says its intervention will benefit religious people and others.

We welcome this announcement from the commission. It will help Christians have more confidence that their genuine concerns are being listened to.

Obviously, we await the precise details of the legal intervention by the commission, but we are encouraged by the tone of its announcement. It is a step in the right direction.

We certainly believe more could be done to allow for a reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs in the workplace, and we hope that the courts will adopt a more tolerant approach to protecting religious liberty.

When does human life begin?

The answer to the question of when human life begins shapes many big bioethical issues of the day such as abortion, embryonic stem cell research and cloning. The question therefore requires careful consideration.

There have been many suggestions and theories throughout history, but the Bible is clear that human life begins at conception. *When does human life begin?* is the latest publication from our Salt&Light series.

In this booklet Dr John Ling provides a wide-ranging explanation of biblical truth, the historical Christian perspective and evidence from modern science to support a biblical position on the sanctity of life from conception.



News video launched as we hit 500,000 YouTube views



We have launched a weekly five-minute video news bulletin, summarising some of the stories published on our website, **christian.org.uk**.

The bulletin is broadcast on our YouTube channel each Friday afternoon. It is embedded on our website and highlighted in our weekly email to supporters.

It has been very well received and is particularly useful for busy people who

want a quick rundown of the week's news on our issues.

Our YouTube videos recently passed a milestone of half a million views. The most popular video is the real-life footage of street preacher Dale Mcalpine being unlawfully arrested by Cumbria police.

Our videos also include Christian teaching, like lectures on the life of John Newton and what the Bible has to say about being a good citizen.

Christian doctor takes legal action over Government dismissal

A Christian drugs expert is heading to court to get his job back. He was dismissed from his role as a Government drugs adviser over past comments he made about homosexuality.

Funded by The Christian Institute, Dr Hans-Christian Raabe is taking legal action after he was dismissed from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in February. He has launched a judicial

review in the High Court against Home Secretary Theresa May and is represented by human rights lawyer James Dingemans QC. A trial date has yet to be fixed.