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Protecting family freedom

The State has its role, parents have theirs. Parents have a God-given responsibility for raising children and we must be on our guard against the State trying to impose its secular values on families.

Politicians at Westminster and in the devolved assemblies seem to be dreaming up various ways to undermine parents. Foisting LGBT propaganda onto kids without their parents' knowledge, and imposing state guardians. Criminalising loving parents for a mild smack, and

inspecting home-schoolers.

Christians should be profoundly concerned. It is vital that we seek to protect the autonomy of the family, whether these particular issues affect us directly or not. We must speak and act with wisdom and courage to combat such overreach.

Also inside is some good news on the 'Abuse of Trust' law – one of the Institute's longest-running campaigns. Finally, young people can be properly protected from sports coaches taking advantage of them.

Christian printer reported to police

A Christian printer was accused of a 'hate crime' for declining to promote a cause he believed could negatively impact Christians.

Nigel Williams said he could not fulfil a request to produce promotional materials for SEE Change Happen – a group that says it promotes 'equality' and 'diversity'.

Nigel politely declined the order from male-to-female transsexual Joanne Lockwood, saying he was "very happy" to print for Lockwood, but not for SEE Change Happen.

In an email exchange Nigel wrote: "It is foundational



to Christianity that every person must be respected, valued and loved because they are made in the image of God, irrespective of their economic status, religious belief, gender, sexuality, race etc etc..."

"Although I'm quite sure you

have no intention of marginalising Christians it would weigh heavily upon me if through my own work I was to make pressure worse for fellow Christians".

Lockwood reported Nigel's response to Hampshire police. It was treated as a 'hate

incident' even though no criminal offence had been committed.

In England and Wales, a hate incident is "any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them".

Nigel is being supported by The Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund.

ASHERS LATEST

➤ *The UK Supreme Court will now hear arguments on the Ashers case from 30 April 2018 in Belfast.*



Stronger 'Abuse of Trust' offence announced after 17-year delay

The abuse of young people's trust by sports coaches is to be specifically outlawed, a move The Christian Institute first called for back in 1998.

The 'Abuse of Trust' offence was introduced in 2000. It sought to protect 16 to 18-year-olds from inappropriate relationships with adults in a position of trust over them – such as teachers or care workers.

The Institute supported the new offence but warned that its scope was far too narrow. In a five-year campaign we met with the then Home Secretary Jack Straw to urge him to tighten the law. We also worked directly with the late Lady Blatch and the late Lady Young to close a series of loopholes including part-time pupils and mentors. Tragically, the amendment to include sports coaches was blocked by



➤ Sports coaches will now be included in the 'Abuse of Trust' offence

the Government of the day.

We wrote to the Government again earlier this year, calling for the law to be tightened in the light of the football abuse scandal.

Now, more than 19 years after we first raised it with the Home Office, and 17 years since the offence was introduced, the

Government has announced it will close the sports coach loophole.

This is welcome, but the loophole for youth workers remains. The law needs to be strengthened further and used to protect young people in all cases where their consent could be easily manipulated.

Toyshop chain keeps Sundays special despite loss of Christmas trade

The Christian owner of a toyshop chain did not open his stores this Christmas Eve as it fell on a Sunday. Gary Grant, founder of The Entertainer, said although Christmas Eve is one of the busiest trading days of the year, he would not change his biblically-based position.



'No-fault' divorce encourages family breakdown

The Times newspaper has launched a campaign backing the introduction of 'no-fault' divorce.

It wants to see divorce turned into an administrative process that gives no chance for the abandoned party to defend themselves in court.

Each year, over 10,000 couples who file for divorce never follow through with it. Easier divorce would inevitably lead to more family breakdown and puts the most vulnerable at risk.

The Times campaign has the support of some lawyers. But it is lawyers who so often see



first-hand the damage done by family breakdown. Rather than weakening marriage, they should be arguing for schemes that support it, such as compulsory counselling.

The Big Issue: The transgender trend



By Ciarán Kelly, Deputy Director
(Staff and Communications)

In recent years, proponents of radical gender ideology have tried to impose it everywhere they can. Education and medicine, sport and politics – and even the Girl Guides – have all bowed to this new oppressive orthodoxy.

But the belief that being male or female is all in the mind is now being challenged. In the face of the transgender trend, the case is being made for protecting women, for valuing



free speech and for accepting the bodies we have.

A significant breakthrough came in November, when a professor at a 'gender identity' clinic stated that, contrary to the propaganda, just "one child born in every 20,000" experiences transsexual feelings. Professor Gary Butler said that in fact it is "incredibly rare" for children to even 'question their gender'.

But sadly children are being pushed to the front of the transsexual revolution. Girlguiding UK has said boys who identify as girls will be allowed to use the showers of their choice. Similar guidance endorsed by the Scottish Government says schools should help kids to explore their 'gender identity' without the consent of parents.

When children question whether they could be 'born in the wrong body', some professionals feel under pressure to affirm them and fear being struck off if they do not.

In recent months, the fallout from speaking the truth has been all too obvious.

An entire local Labour Party executive committee quit after one of its members endured months of "serious

abuse and harassment" from a transsexualism activist. The Women's Equality Party put one of its senior members under investigation for acknowledging that transsexualism causes harm. Professor Lord Robert Winston was abused online for revealing the "horrendous" results of 'sex-change' surgery he has seen first-hand.

But despite the abuse, objections continue to be raised. In late November, Caroline Flint MP warned that women in domestic violence centres could feel at risk from men who say they are female. Many women's groups and academics have also criticised the Westminster Government's plans to allow 'self-declaration' of gender.

We must defend the biblical truth that mankind is made male and female. And we must remember the impact on those who fall for the lie that you can be 'trapped in the wrong body'.

In October two more former transsexuals shared how transitioning did not bring them the lasting peace they desperately sought. It reminds us that as Christians it is our responsibility to welcome everyone – but not to affirm wrongdoing.

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Colin Hart urges Govt: 'Don't remove parents' freedoms'

Institute Director Colin Hart has warned the Government against axing parental freedoms under its controversial new primary school subject Relationships Education.

Under current plans, parents and guardians will not be allowed to take their children out of the lessons, which may cover issues such as homosexuality and transsexualism.

Both the Prime Minister and Education Secretary Justine Greening have indicated they are in favour of introducing very young children to LGBT issues.

In a letter to The Daily Telegraph, Mr Hart and a number of MPs and senior academics expressed concern that the lessons will "be used to stigmatise traditional marriage and promote alternative lifestyles to children against the wishes of parents". They also urged the Government to ensure it "puts the rights of parents ahead of the power of the state".



Colin Hart

COMMENT

Move to license parenting?

Plan for home-school inspections crosses a line



Ofsted seems to think that home-schooling is a hotbed of extremism. It wants the Government to require parents to tell local authorities if they wish to home-school their children and why. In the House of Lords, some Peers have called for all home-schoolers to be registered, and inspected annually or more frequently.

This is concerning. There can be little doubt that the same people who equate promoting LGBT issues with 'British values' would assess parents on this basis.

To go into the home and inspect parents crosses a line for everybody. It ends the autonomy of all families, not just those who home-school.

Under UK law, parents have always had the final decision on how to educate their children. The primary responsibility for the care and nurture of their children belongs to them. For many reasons, often related to bullying or special needs, parents choose not to send a child into mainstream education. A democratic State must respect this.

The State makes a poor parent. As the UK Supreme Court said only last year: "Within limits, families must be left to bring up their children in their own way."

CI passes legal advice to Ofsted

The Christian Institute has taken legal advice after parents sought help over inappropriate questioning of their children at school.

Ofsted inspectors had engaged in intrusive questioning supposedly to assess a school's compliance with 'British values'. Inspectors wanted to know children's beliefs on same-sex marriage and gender.

The legal opinion of leading human rights lawyer Aidan O'Neill QC is that such questioning could breach human rights legislation.

We have passed this legal advice to Ofsted to inform its approach to future school inspections.

Harry Blamires: 1916-2017

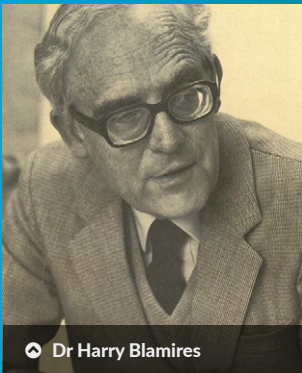
On 21 November, Christian author Dr Harry Blamires died at the age of 101.

Born in 1916, Dr Blamires studied English at Oxford under C S Lewis, who became a close friend. He later became the Dean of Arts and Sciences at King Alfred's College in Winchester.

Dr Blamires wrote more than 30 books encompassing novels, literary criticism and Christian apologetics, including *Where Do We Stand?*, *On Christian Truth and The Post-Christian Mind*.

His most influential book, *The Christian Mind*, was published in 1963, and is still in print. Lauded by the late John Stott, it argued that Christian thinking was being swept away by secularism.

John Burn, Chairman of The Christian Institute, said: "*The Christian Mind* and *The Post-Christian Mind* transformed my thinking. They exposed the way in which Christians so easily are influenced by secular humanism rather than by the Bible."



Dr Harry Blamires

Floundering Named Person policy delayed again

The Scottish Government has again been embarrassed over its contentious Named Person scheme after progress was blocked by a Holyrood committee.

Holyrood's Education and Skills Committee refused to allow a new Bill to proceed until Deputy First Minister John Swinney provided an "authoritative" explanation of how the scheme will operate.

The demand means another serious delay for the policy, which was declared illegal by the UK Supreme Court last year.

Campaign group No to Named Persons (NO2NP) said the snub was "further evidence of the terrible handling of this policy".

Along with Conservative and Labour MSPs, NO2NP is calling for the scheme to be abandoned.



Deputy First Minister John Swinney

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Be Reasonable fights Scots smack ban

In December, Be Reasonable Scotland enjoyed a packed house for its national conference in Edinburgh. 'Smacking ban: criminalising parents?' featured a distinguished panel of academics, parents and a senior local authority youth worker.

Spokesperson for Be Reasonable Lowri Turner told delegates: "What goes on in our own homes no longer seems to be private and we need to stand up against this. We should not be dictated to by politicians using criminal law to mandate the minutiae of how we raise

our own children. Parenting should be left to parents, not to politicians."

In October the Scottish Government performed a dramatic U-turn. After repeatedly refusing to criminalise parents for a mild smack, it said that it would "ensure" Green MSP John Finnie's bid to outlaw reasonable chastisement becomes law.

Be Reasonable is backed by The Christian Institute, the Family Education Trust and a coalition of parents, academics and journalists.



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Govt watchdog will uphold free speech on campus

The head of a new student watchdog has vowed to defend free speech on campuses in England.

Sir Michael Barber (pictured), of the Office for Students, says his office will adopt the "widest possible definition" of free speech, and may intervene if universities do not follow suit.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson called on universities to "encourage a culture of openness

and debate and ensure that those with different backgrounds or perspectives can flourish in a higher education environment".

In 2015, a Christian Institute-backed campaign won an important victory when the Government dropped a key section of the Prevent guidance threatening the free speech of university Christian Unions.

Draft guidance had said university

societies would be forced to hand over external speakers' talks two weeks in advance for vetting. But the Government amended legislation, and the guidance, to require universities to give "particular regard" to freedom of speech.



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Registered office: The Christian Institute, Wilberforce House, 4 Park Road, Gosforth Business Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE12 8DG
Tel: 0191 281 5664 Fax: 0191 281 4272 Email: info@christian.org.uk Website: www.christian.org.uk
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