

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

Time to Turn the Tide

Call for a new law to protect religious freedom

The erosion of liberties experienced by Christians in Britain has rolled back the clock to the Dark Ages before Magna Carta.

Now Christian charity *Barnabas Fund*, generally focusing on the persecuted Church abroad, has launched a campaign (and petition) for Parliamentary protection of religious practice within the UK.

In *Turn the Tide* (Isaac Publishing), they spell out the urgent need for reclaiming religious freedom with a new law.

Liberally illustrated by a number of recent case studies demonstrating how far we have fallen down the slippery slope, the Barnabas book calls for an Act of Parliament designed to cover seven specific areas, including the freedom to interpret Scripture without Government interference.

Responding to the Casey Review

This is a response to the 2015 Casey Review set up to examine the proliferation of extremism but, in its 2016 report, effectively suggesting the implementation of a Government-approved version of Christianity.

The report defined extremism as views “*at odds with those of mainstream society*” – including traditional views of sexuality which amounted to “*taking religion backwards*”.

Turn the Tide says: “*The use of this pejorative term in a government report implies an attempt to impose a government-backed definition of ‘modern British’ Christianity.*” They clearly also see the merit of doing the same with Islam. All of which is more akin to the sort of ‘Big Brother’ arrangement existing in China.

Barred from Office?

Related to this is the apparent re-introduction by stealth of the ‘Test Act’, which in past generations excluded non-conformists and others from certain professions.

And from the experience of the 2017 General Election, it seems that it already applies to Christians, who are effectively being barred from office because they do not subscribe to politically-correct dogma, particularly on sexual ethics. Some candidates were for this reason deemed by the media to be “*unfit*” for public office and Liberal-Democrat leader Tim Farron later felt forced to resign because he was unable to reconcile his faith with the views expected of his position.

Because of this, Barnabas insists that a new law must include “*freedom from being required to affirm a particular worldview or set of beliefs in order to hold a public sector job or stand for election, work in professions such as teaching and law, or study at university.*”

There have been a number of high-profile cases of people who have lost their jobs because they have dared to speak freely of their faith, or who have been taken to court because their consciences would not allow them to provide certain services, as in the case of Ashers Bakery, who refused to bake a cake with the slogan ‘Support Gay Marriage’.

One of the most shocking cases was the recent suspension of Christian teacher Joshua Sutcliffe for calling a pupil a girl when she wished to be known as a boy. Quite apart from the obvious insanity of the ‘offence’ itself, the school had bizarrely conducted a survey of pupils’ religion which found that, out of 1,853 students, there were no – repeat *no* – Christians! And yet Mr Sutcliffe had been running a highly successful Bible Club at the school attended by over 100 pupils (bigger than most churches), which was subsequently shut down by the head.

You couldn’t make it up. I like the phrase I heard the other day: “*We have become so open-minded that our brains are falling out.*”

Recklessly Abandoning Freedom

As to the freedom we are so recklessly giving away, we are reminded that it started with the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, Clause 1 of which states: “*The English Church shall be free, and shall have its rights undiminished, and its liberties unimpaired.*”

Though it took centuries to work through, with martyrs burnt at the stake in the process, religious restrictions were gradually lifted until we became the envy of the world, with the liberty enshrined so wonderfully within our shores in time exported around the globe.



In commending *Turn the Tide* and calling on people of faith to speak up, Democratic Unionist MP Sir Jeffrey Donaldson said:

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

<https://www.prophecytoday.uk/comment/society-politics/item/982-time-to-turn-the-tide.html>



COMMUNION

Today at our **Traditional Morning Service** we celebrate the sacrament of **Holy Communion**. In the bread and in the wine we see God's sacrifice for us, we receive the Lord, and we are given strength of spirit for life. The communion wine is non-alcoholic. At the end of the service there will a retiral offering for **Mission Aviation Fellowship**.

ROLLING SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP TIMETABLE

The Sunday Morning Worship Services are as follows:

2018	Priesthill Road 11.00am
Today, Sunday, 4 th March	Traditional Communion Service
Mothering Sunday, 11 th March	Traditional Morning Service
Passion Sunday, 18 th March	Traditional Morning Service
Palm Sunday, 25 th March	Traditional Morning Service



MONTHLY HEALING SERVICE

Tomorrow, Monday, our **Monthly Healing Service** takes place at 7.45pm in **Priesthill Road**. The theme of the service is “**A latter day Moses ... times two!**” Everyone is most welcome to attend.

JACOB'S WELL CAFÉ AND THRIFT SHOP

Jacob's Well Café and Thrift Shop continues this Wednesday in the **concourse** at **Priesthill Road** from **10.00am – 12noon**. Tea, coffee, juice and biscuits are FREE. Homemade soup and a roll is £1. Cakes etc are for sale with your tea, coffee or juice. We look forward to seeing you.



‘SACRED SPACE’ HEALING CAFÉ

‘**Sacred Space**’, our **weekly Healing Café**, continues this Thursday from 11.00am till 2pm at **Priesthill Road**. Come along and enjoy a bowl of home made soup, sandwiches and tea and coffee. The sanctuary will be opened for prayer and meditation – there will be an opportunity to share with the healing team, a problem or a concern. Looking forward to seeing you there.

THE RAINBOWS, GUIDES AND BROWNIES MEET IN THE PRIESTHILL COMMUNITY HALL THIS THURSDAY EVENING

- The **Rainbows** are for girls aged 5 to 7 years and meet from **5pm to 6:15pm**
- The **Brownies** are for girls aged 7 to 10 years and meet from **6:15pm to 7:45pm**
- The **Guides** are for girls aged 10 to 14 years and the **Senior Section** are for those over 14 years. Both of these meet from **7:45pm to 9:30pm**

SATURDAY CAFÉ

Our **Saturday Café** in the concourse at **Priesthill Road** continues this Saturday from **10.00am to 2.00pm**.

