

As an evangelical organisation, we adhere to a Biblical world and life view. The Bible implicitly promotes the concept of human rights on many occasions and in many scenarios, and, as a result, Christians regard the promotion and defence of basic human rights as an important element in any civilised society. Indeed, evangelical Christians have often been at the forefront of campaigns for human rights – eg, William Wilberforce on slavery and the Earl of Shaftesbury and Tom Barnardo on the protection of children.

We are concerned that the broader human rights agenda today is largely controlled by those with a secular, and anti-biblical, agenda. On the basis of that agenda, rights in areas such as abortion and human sexuality are promoted relentlessly, while those of us who would apply Biblical principles to those areas are demonised and denounced. Indeed, the promotion of a Christian view in the public square is often condemned and rejected as the antithesis of human rights. If we are to move forward as a society, it is vital that there is recognition of the legitimacy of a Christian perspective on human rights and that we strive to ensure a balance between competing rights.

We do not believe that there is a specific need for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. NI is already more than adequately provided for through legislation and quangos, and further rights-related legislation might well emerge from Judge Marrinan's review of hate crime.

If, however, a Bill of Rights is introduced, we would be keen, as indicated above, to ensure that the human right to hold to, and promote, a Biblical world and life view is included.

We look forward to further engagement with the Committee in due course.

Wallace Thompson
Secretary, Evangelical Protestant Society
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