

THE BULLETIN

News and Reports from the Social issues Team

Issue 17 - July 2011

CONTENTS

Affinity's Statement on Assisted Dying	2
The Assisted Suicide Downgrade <i>Dr John R Ling</i>	3
Parenting Our Children (Part 2) <i>Ian Fry</i>	5
Co-habitation: the effects of leaving the knot untied <i>Dr John Hayward</i>	13
Update on Life Issues <i>Dr John R Ling</i>	15
The Road to Gay Marriage <i>Rod Badams</i>	20

Affinity's Statement on Assisted Dying

Affinity was invited by Lord Falconer to submit evidence to the Commission on Assisted Dying. After careful consideration, we have decided to decline his invitation.

The reasons for this decision are:

1. The Commission is sponsored by individuals and organisations which support assisted dying. The Chairman of the Commission, Lord Falconer, is also a well-known advocate of assisted dying.
2. While we are not aware of the detailed views of all members of the Commission, it is clear that the majority are supporters of assisted dying.
3. It therefore seems to us that the Commission is neither truly independent nor unbiased and that its conclusions will inevitably support changing the law in favour of assisted dying.
4. We would welcome an impartial, evidence-based inquiry into assisted dying, but do not think that the current Commission will provide this.
5. We note that in the past 15 or so months, at least eight legislatures from around the world have rejected calls to legalise euthanasia and assisted dying. In particular, we warmly welcome the decision of the Scottish Parliament at the end of 2010 to reject the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill, by 85 votes to 16.

The main grounds for our opposition to any form of euthanasia, including assisted dying, are:

1. Human life is a gift from God. He is the Giver, Sustainer and Taker of life (Genesis 1:27; Psalm 54:4; Psalm 104:29). We are stewards, not autonomous owners, of that gift. Life is, therefore, never to be rejected or prematurely terminated.
2. Though suicide has been decriminalised, it still remains a traumatic and selfish act. The Bible is not silent on this matter. It contains at least five examples, all of men, who committed suicide – their ends were tragic and not one of them was commended by God.
3. No sufficiently watertight law can be drafted, which might allow some to commit assisted suicide, but which would simultaneously protect the vulnerable elderly, sick and disabled. In other words, the dreaded slippery slope from voluntary to non-voluntary euthanasia would be initiated.
4. Euthanasia makes a mockery of the wholesome ethics and practices of proper medicine. Its two grand pillars, the Hippocratic oath, specifically forbids euthanasia, and the Judaeo-Christian doctrines command: 'You shall not murder.'

5. Palliative care is the antidote to any calls for the legalisation of euthanasia. There is a certain irony that now, of all times, when palliative care and the hospice movement are making such wonderful strides in helping people to die well, anyone should call for a law to permit euthanasia.

This statement represents the views of the more than 1,200 churches belonging to Affinity.

More than 50 organisations have declined invitations to give evidence to Lord Falconer's Commission. One of them is the British Medical Association. At the BMA's annual representatives meeting in Cardiff on 30 June, a resolution was passed supporting the stance of the BMA in not giving evidence to the Commission. The resolution noted that the significant majority of members of Lord Falconer's Commission on Assisted Dying are publicly in favour of assisted suicide and euthanasia. It questioned the stated impartiality and independence of the Commission on Assisted Dying, and requested the BMA Ethics Committee to make the Association's opposition to assisted suicide and euthanasia clear to the Commission.

The Assisted Suicide Downgrade

The campaign to legalise some form of euthanasia in the UK is clever, well-orchestrated and cash-rich. These pro-euthanasia folk, mainly working through the Dignity in Dying organisation, are media savvy. Their mantra is this – a person must be terminally ill and mentally-competent before being assisted to die. Yet they admire the work of Dignitas, the Swiss euthanasia 'clinic,' and crave a similar facility in the UK. About 120 Britons have so far travelled to Dignitas to die.

It started with those who were indeed terminally ill, such as cancer or motor neurone disease sufferers. Then, it shifted to those with progressive, but not necessarily fatal, conditions, like multiple sclerosis. Next, the traffic began to include those with severe, but non-fatal, conditions, like spinal cord injuries. Now the middle-aged and elderly with chronic, but still non-fatal, conditions, such as arthritis, are seeking assisted suicide there. See the downgrade?

Note two things. First, Dignity in Dying's insistence that assisted suicide is only for the terminally ill begins to look restrained, even reasonable. Second, the mentally-competent person's request must be voluntary and sustained, though how these qualities are assessed remains unclear. Yet they are adamant that changing the law will not open the floodgates. Note another two things. First, once a law is established it is always amended permissively, never proscriptively (*vide*, abortion, IVF, etc.). Moreover, 'voluntary' so easily slips into non-voluntary. Second, once an illegal act becomes lawful, a new clientele emerges (*vide*, abortion, IVF, etc.) and the few become the many.

BBC programme, *Choosing to Die*

On Monday 13 June, the BBC showed a documentary hosted by yet another euthanasia promoter, Sir Terry Pratchett. This is not the place to present a critique of the programme;

suffice to say that I zipped the following complaint to the BBC the next morning – the phone lines were jammed immediately after the programme.

‘I want to complain about *Choosing to Die*. This was such a one-sided programme, especially in the light of Terry Pratchett’s opening remark that ‘I want to explore the options.’ Where were they? Where was the other side of the debate? What about palliative care and the hospice movement? The latter was glossed over with Mick, the relatively poor and inarticulate ex-taxi driver, yet he was the most fascinating character in the entire programme. I trust the BBC is planning to screen a counter-balancing programme, perhaps presented by Baroness Finlay. Truth and the public deserve that much.’

Euthanasia legislation here and there

In December 2010, the Scottish Parliament roundly rejected Margo MacDonald’s End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill by 85 votes to 16, with two abstentions. Such a trouncing would silence most people, at least for a few years. No way. Proponents of euthanasia have a broken case, but an admirable tenacity. Margo MacDonald has recently bounced back and vowed to launch a fresh attempt to legalise assisted suicide in Scotland. A similar story may come to pass on the Isle of Man. In 2003, two members of the House of Keys sponsored an assisted suicide bill – it went to a select committee and its report was shelved. Manx Parliamentary elections are due in the Autumn and at least one member, if re-elected, has declared his intent to resurrect that earlier bill.

The Crown Prosecution Service seems unwilling to do its duty. In October 2009, Michael Bateman admitted helping his disabled wife, Margaret, to commit suicide, at their home in West Yorkshire, by putting a bag over her head and filling it with helium, filming this as proof that his action was not murder.

Surely by now someone must have breached the provisions of the 1961 Suicide Act

The CPS has indicated that although there is ‘sufficient evidence’ against him, it would not be in the ‘public interest’ to proceed. It believes that Mr Bateman was ‘wholly motivated by compassion.’ So far, in the scores of cases investigated by the CPS, nobody has been prosecuted. Of course, not all lawbreakers are brought to court, but surely by now someone must have breached the provisions of the 1961 Suicide Act.

In May, the electorate of Zurich went to the polls to vote whether to ban assisted suicides and outlaw suicide tourism in their city. A large majority, 85% of the 278,000 votes cast, opposed a ban and 78% opposed excluding foreigners. Next year, the voters in the Swiss canton of Vaud are having a referendum to decide if assisted suicides can be carried out in their local old peoples’ homes.

Dr John R Ling

Parenting our Children ¹

There is a crisis in parenting in the Western World. Fifteen years ago, in her book *All Must have Prizes* ², Melanie Phillips lamented the loss of confidence among parents as part of the reason for problems in our education system. More recently, Frank Furedi has sounded the same note, warning that the loss of adult authority in general is harming the young.³

At a popular level, this is seen in various TV offerings, such as *Supernanny*, where parents or their out-of-control offspring are given boundaries and a framework for living day to day. Some church leaders have added their voices to the fray. A bishop of the Church in Wales – Dr Barry Morgan – has said parents must work hard to spend quality time with their children.⁴

Such comments have led to a plethora of advice and countless books on how to produce a balanced, sane and stable child. Parenting is not only big business but also increasingly the province of ‘experts.’ In response to this, some have sought to show that parenting isn’t all that complicated. Furedi produced *Paranoid Parenting* (subtitle *Why Ignoring the Experts may be Best for Your Child*)⁵, while Christian commentator Anne Atkins wrote *Child-rearing for Fun* (subtitle *Trust your Instincts and Enjoy your Children*)⁶.

Kevin DeYoung voiced the same concerns in a recent blog: ‘Does it seem like parenting has gotten more complicated? I mean, as far as I can tell, back in the day parents basically tried to feed their kids, clothe them, and keep them away from explosives. Now our kids have to sleep on their backs (no, wait, their tummies; no, never mind, their backs), while listening to Baby Mozart surrounded by scenes of *Starry, Starry Night*. They have to be in piano lessons before they are five and can’t leave the car seat until they’re about five foot six.’⁷

The Fear Versus Faith Principle

In the previous article, the principle of *Fear versus Faith* was introduced as a helpful way of considering families, church and the young. There are other principles that will come into this discussion (e.g. idolatry because we are by nature created to worship) but this most usefully gives insight into the area of parenting.

The Voice of Fear

Given all that our culture seeks for the young, it would be unnatural for the church, and parents in particular, not to fear for them. So it is not fear as such that is under the microscope here. Rather it is allowing fear to be the only and thus the determining voice in the way parents raise their children.

(a) Fear says: ‘I don’t want my children to continue as pagans.’ Every godly parent longs that their sons and daughters will love and serve the Lord Jesus just as they do. But that very longing can

¹ This is the second of four articles on Family, Children and the Church.

² *All Must Have Prizes*, Little Brown, London, 1996.

³ “If adults behave authoritatively towards youngsters at home...it is likely that teachers will feel comfortable in exercising authority in the classroom.” *Wasted. Why Education isn’t Educating*, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 2.

⁴ From <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/8009805.stm> Accessed 26.07.10.

⁵ Chicago Review Press, Illinois, 2002.

⁶ Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2004.

⁷ From <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2011/05/10/parenting-001/> Accessed 11.05.10.

produce an approach to parenting (and indeed to the church's youth work) which seeks a formula which once applied will do the trick. Even though deep down they know that 'Parenting... is not a precise recipe. Follow the steps and . . . voilà, out pops a fear-of-the-Lord, covenant-keeping, wise young adult... All we... have to do is trust in our steps and everything goes fine.' Nonetheless, fear seeks the comfort of certainty. Yet as Ed Welch continues: 'Such parenting would actually oppose the way God does things. Instead, the (much better) system we have received is one where we parent by faith. We trust in Christ every step of the way. We pray tons and love the best we can.'⁸

b) Fear says: 'I don't want my children to leave the church.' Once more this understandable concern can produce some unwelcome fruit. The most obvious is pressure on either the pastor to make services more 'user friendly' or the youth and children's work to be more 'relevant' for the particular child or for the establishment of 'youth services.' While creativity and effort are always necessary in any aspect of the church's life, it is sometimes the case that the particular child or adolescent is unsaved and thus no amount of improvement will touch the core issue. Fearful parents are looking in the wrong place.

c) Fear says: 'I don't want my children to appear odd or out of touch.' This is nothing new. Back in the 19th century, the Anglican J.C. Ryle noted: 'A true Christian must not be a slave to what's currently 'in fashion,' if he wants to train his child for heaven. He must not be content to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is customary, or to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them, or to let them form bad habits, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train with an eye to his children's souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called odd and strange. What if it is? The time is short – the customs of this world are passing away. He that has trained his children for heaven, rather than for the earth – for God, rather than for man – he is the parent that will be called wise in the end.'⁹

d) Fear says: 'I don't want my children to miss out.' It is all too easy for parental effort and concern to be focused on academic achievement or sporting or artistic success. Clearly, such things are to be encouraged, but when driven by fear they are pursued at the expense of spiritual growth. So, an adolescent may miss Sunday worship to complete school work or be encouraged to attend the school choir but not the Christian Union. The implicit, if unintended, message is that spiritual activities are not of **ultimate** importance.

e) Fear is often reactionary – a response to some extreme behaviour or to the unwelcome consequences of poor parenting. Parents will then declare that they won't do too much spiritual stuff with their children as it might turn their children off. After all, remember what happened to so and so's daughter!

f) Fear leads to over-protection. An analogy often derided is that of the child being a tender plant. A parent may protect their child because he or she sees them as a young plant vulnerable to the elements. Yet the analogy is a helpful one. Children are to be nurtured and protected from the harsh frosts of life. But the protection is in preparation for planting them out when they can withstand the storms and strong winds of life. Protection has an end in view rather than being an end in itself.

The Voice of Faith

By way of contrast, trust in God produces very different fruit in the lives of parents.

⁸ See the article *Successful Parenting* at <http://www.ccef.org/successful-parenting> Accessed 08.06.11.

⁹ J.C. Ryle, *The Duties of Parents*, in *The Upper Room*, Banner of Truth, London, 1970 p.290.

a) Faith says: 'I want to enquire what God says in his word.' Rather than turning to the latest 'how to be the perfect parent/ produce the perfect child/ help when your kids rebel' volume from Amazon, faith knows that the words of Paul to Timothy apply to parenting: 'All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.' (2 Tim.3:16). God has not left us without guidance on this crucial matter. Rather, large numbers of verses and passages provide clear instruction and help on how to raise the young.¹⁰

b) Faith says: 'I will apply those principles regardless of the consequences. Once assured of what the Bible teaches, those who parent by faith apply those principles as consistently and comprehensively as it is possible for fallen sinners to do. Is modesty a biblical virtue? Then parents will engage in the battle to ensure that their sons value young women who are virtuous and that their daughters dress appropriately. Is laziness warned against? Then parents will discourage self-indulgence and lack of effort in the home and in life. Is sin a danger? Parents will do the hard yards of teaching their young to face up to the realities of their sin and teach them the way of repentance through the Cross.

c) Faith says: 'I will trust God – even when it seems that what I am doing is not welcome or apparently working.' So, for example, when their children are refusing to go to church they will insist that this is part and parcel of the privileges that this family enjoys. Once more it is comforting to know that such struggles are not new. 'It is a sad sight in a church when nobody comes to the Lord's Table but the older people, and the young men and the young women all turn away. But it is a sadder sight still when no children are to be seen in a church, except those who come to the Sunday School, and are often obliged to attend. Let none of this guilt lie at your doors. There are many boys and girls in every city, besides those who come to Sunday School, and you who are their parents and friends should see to it that they come with you to church.

'Do not allow them to grow up with a habit of making vain excuses for not coming. Make them clearly understand, that so long as they are under your roof, it is the rule of your house for every one in good health to honour the Lord on the Lord's Day, and that you believe that the healthy person who refuses to go to church on the Lord's Day brings great harm to his soul.

'Do not be discouraged because your children do not see the full value of church and the Lord's Supper now. Just train them to have a habit of regular attendance. Set it before their minds as a high, holy, and solemn duty, and believe me, the day will very likely come when they will bless you for your efforts.'¹¹ The language may be quaint but the sentiments exactly accord with Scripture.

d) Faith always reacts by going back to the word. Rather than seeking to pull as far away as possible from any excess or eccentricity, faith-filled parents will go first to God's word to check their own hearts as well as to receive wisdom and instruction. It may be that so-and-so's aim is biblical even if poorly delivered.

f) Faith seeks God in the word. The Bible is read, absorbed and lived out not as a moral code-book, but because in it the living God is seen. And that living God is loved. And that love of God overflows into the parents' hearts and from there governs their parenting. It is a daily battle but if 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28), then every part of life involves the Lord God and this is what our children will see at work in their parents' daily lives.

¹⁰ Such as Deut. 4:9, 6:4-9; Psalm 78:1-8; Proverbs 1-9; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21.

¹¹ Ryle, *Duties of Parents*, p.296.

An introduction to biblical parenting¹²

Perhaps no-one has thought as deeply about the Bible's teaching on parenting than Paul and Tedd Tripp.¹³ In his DVD *Getting to the Heart of Parenting*,¹⁴ Paul Tripp defines the family as 'God's primary learning community.' In this he is not alone. Preaching on Proverbs 1:7-8, John Piper declares: 'God ordained the family not just to be fruitful and fill the earth with people, but to fill the earth with instructed people and taught people. The family is the place where the next generation is born and where the next generation learns how to live.'¹⁵

Piper in turn is building on Jonathan Edwards, who wrote: 'Every family ought to be... a little church, consecrated to Christ and wholly influenced and governed by his rules. And family education and order are some of the chief means of grace. If these fail, all other means are like to prove ineffectual.'¹⁶

Tripp points out that the various communities and agencies which God has provided are never meant to displace the family from its God-ordained role. The church (through its youth work) was never given by God to replace the responsibility of parents to nurture the souls of their young. Similarly, the State was never given by God to do the work of the parent. Rather it is put there by God to protect parents and their young, and one of its arms – the education system – is there to support parents in the education of their children. It is an unhelpful and ultimately dangerous thing when parents 'hand over' their children and teens to anyone else without recognising that no-one else can or should replace them. Tripp then identifies three ways in which the family teaches:

1 It teaches theology

This may seem a million miles from the daily life of parenting: struggling to persuade the truculent teen to tidy the bedroom or persuading the young child to stay in bed or to eat its food or a thousand and one other daily challenges that are part of normal home life. Yet everything begins with God, and if parents have to do one thing among many others, it should be to give their child awe. The task has been made considerably easier than we may think, since children are hard-wired for awe. Prise them away from the flickering screen to gaze in wonder at the night sky, a budding tree or a buzzing bee. Engage them with the world that God has made and it is not a big step to their engaging with a God of wonders. We want children to be so in awe of God that they are ready to meet Him in the Bible.

In teaching God's truth to children, Psalm 78 is one of the most stirring passages on the role of the family. It is also in part a commentary on passages such as Judges 2: 10-11. To neglect teaching our children about the Lord God will not have neutral consequences. If parents don't shape them by Scripture then their children will be shaped by the world. It is as simple and as challenging as that. This is because children are worshippers. As Tripp shrewdly observes: 'Worship is an identity before it is an activity.' Children must be pointed to God – otherwise they will point their hearts towards themselves and their own needs.

¹² Obviously limitations of space forbid a comprehensive treatment of this vital matter. See Useful Resources for further help on parenting.

¹³ See their various resources at the end of this article.

¹⁴ Paul David Tripp, *Getting to the Heart of Parenting*, Sessions 1&2. Paul Tripp Ministries 2009.

¹⁵ From <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/do-not-forsake-your-mothers-teaching> Accessed 08.06.11.

¹⁶ Quoted in Elizabeth Dodds, *Marriage to a Difficult Man*, 2005, p. 25.

Part of being worshippers involves the ability of children to interpret their world. An important principle results from this realisation: 'Human beings made in the image of God do not live life based on the facts of their own experience. They live life based on their interpretations of the facts.'¹⁷

Imagine, therefore, a situation in which a child gets angry with his brother for taking the last chocolate biscuit, and lashes out at him. As the parent seeks to deal with the warfare, the guilty child will rarely locate the problem within his own heart, but will present a good case that he was justified to behave as he did. He may reveal skills a gifted lawyer may envy as he conducts his defence. In classic Genesis 3 style, he is bringing his interpretation of the facts to the parent, in order to evade responsibility. The ultimate goal of the parent though is to help that child face up to his sin so that he can be moved to the foot of the Cross.

2 The family teaches sociology

Every family involves close relationships. As a result, the child learns important sociological lessons about living in a community. Children have been designed to live as part of a loving community.

Any parent reading this will recognise immediately the massive challenge. It is not so much that young sinners find difficulty in loving their neighbours. The truth is that both parent and child often have deep difficulty in loving the ones closest to them. It is imperative then that parents are a daily living example of sacrifice for the sake of loving relationships. This may mean being willing to have a smaller house/car/holiday because they place being involved with their children above other things. Such decisions show that spending time with their children matters more than material well-being.

3 The family teaches redemption

While it may seem counter-intuitive, it is pure gospel to make children keenly aware that they are unable to meet God's standards. Unless they recognise the utter impossibility of loving their siblings truly from the heart, then they will feel no sense of need for forgiveness or for God's help.

As they grow up, the bigger challenge for children privileged to have Christian parents is likely to be self-righteousness rather than unrighteousness. Tedd Tripp in *Shepherding a Child's Heart*¹⁸ tells the story of a father having his peace disturbed by his two sons conducting what sounded like WW3 in the room next door. Moving wearily out of his chair, he discovers both children squabbling over a toy. He barks: 'Who had it first?' (How many parents will identify with the scene and with the question.) But, as Tripp points out, the question is wrong. It has done two unintended things:

- 1) reduced the matter to one of simple justice when it's about idolatry; both children are prepared to engage in conflict to satisfy their hearts' desire for the toy.
- 2) suggested that there is only one sinner in the fight, when there are clearly two.

In Luke 6:43-45, Jesus teaches that the root problem with every person is the heart. In the Bible the heart is the source of everything we think, say and do.¹⁹ In Paul Tripp's phrase: 'The heart is the causal core of your personhood.'

For many parents, however, the reality of this is hard to apply. It is far easier to focus on external behaviour. Tedd Tripp identifies two particular dangers that such a focus produces.

¹⁷ Paul David Tripp, *Getting to the Heart of Parenting*, Session 2. Paul Tripp Ministries 2009.

¹⁸ Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, Wapwallopen, Shepherd Press, 1995.

¹⁹ See the vivid picture in Pr.4:23 where the heart is like the well of life.

A Christian Behaviourism

He gives the example of a rewards system set up by a father trying to get better behaviour from his children. In the kitchen was a jar and besides it some scraps of paper and a pen. Each time one of the children behaved well, he or she had a scrap of paper with their name on it placed in the jar. Should a child misbehave, that piece of paper was removed. At the end of week the child with the most pieces of paper in the jar was rewarded. As Tripp points out, all this did was produce a child who only did good when his parents were around or he could be seen. Tragically and crucially, the heart remained unchanged.

Through this approach what the parent was appealing to in the child was the worst thing possible: self-interest, the polar opposite of the biblical pattern of developing a heart that serves others.

B Christian Determinism

This places all our hope in providing the 'right' conditions. So, as long as the right environment is provided – a Christian youth group, a Christian home, positive experiences etc., then the child will turn out all right in the end. The assumption behind this error is that in fact the problem is 'out there' rather than 'in here.' It then follows that if the child behaves wrongly, it is because they are a victim of their circumstances, rather than under the sway of a sinful heart.

This is not to say that we ignore behaviour. In a piece entitled *Why Require Unregenerate Children to Act like they're Good?* John Piper notes: 'No parents have the luxury of teaching their child nothing while they wait for his regeneration. If we are not requiring obedience, we are confirming defiance. If we are not inculcating manners, we are training in boorishness. If we are not developing the disciplines of prayer and Bible-listening, we are solidifying the sense that prayerlessness and Biblelessness are normal.'²⁰ For the same reason the state of the youth group or home life is not unimportant. However, these things do not deal with the heart of the matter and if wrongly trusted are deadly.²¹

The deadly danger with both these approaches is that they prevent the child getting to the Cross. After all, why would a child need the Cross if he can do very well by controlling his own behaviour or be changed by the right environment? The gospel is not about doing new things – it's about being given a new heart. It's open-heart surgery, not a face-lift that we need both in our own lives and those of our children.

If we teach in such a way as only to address behaviour and not the heart, then we will produce a generation who are nothing more than mini-Pharisees: outwardly respectable, but inwardly rotten. It isn't hard to see what they will look like. I'm sure we have come across many such folk who have grown up in our churches:

²⁰ From <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/why-require-unregenerate-children-to-act-like-theyre-good> Accessed 08.06.11.

²¹ Examples from Scripture where heart change rather than external circumstances is the critical factor is shown we need only think of youngsters such as Joseph who at just 17 years old sold into slavery by his own brothers and thereafter subject to unjust treatment or the servant girl of Naaman's wife who was ripped from her home at a very tender age no doubt. Though doubtless deeply hurt and confused by their circumstances because their hearts were regenerate they lived lives marked by trust in God.

- As children, they learned to live hypocritical, double lives.
- They were particularly adept at grading sins – so, for example, smoking is terribly wrong (I'm not wishing to imply that it is good), but gossip or excluding someone from the friendship group is fine.
- Finally, at some stage, the grown child either rejects the whole lot because it sees through it as sham or, perhaps worse, settles down nicely to refining its pharisaism in the church.

The main point is that Pharisees see no need for Christ or his work.

The goal of Christian parenting, therefore, must be to engage the hearts of the children. Paul Tripp gives five heart questions he used when dealing with issues with his own children:

- i) What was going on? (This is seeking reflection).
- ii) What were you thinking and feeling as it was happening? (This focuses on the heart – the seed-bed of the actions).
- iii) What did you actually do? (This focuses on behaviour).
- iv) Why did you do it? OR What did you intend to happen? (This focuses on motives).
- v) What was the result? (This focuses on 'harvest').

4 Summary thoughts on teaching

We teach all the time. Here are some ways we do so.

- **Structure of family life.** This refers to the members of whom the family is made up. A child with three siblings, no present father, and no godly grandparents will have different influences than an only child surrounded by the generations.
- **Family Values.** What's important in this home? What upsets people? What are the unspoken rules? How much human tradition manufactured in our fallen culture is actually at work here? For example, what gets a child into greater trouble, breaking a vase, or lying to his mother? How do we approach gossip, neighbours, church, secrets etc.?
- **Family roles.** Who does what? Who takes responsibility and for which issues?
- **Family conflict resolution.** Problem solving in a family is a huge influence on how children will face difficulties later. For example, do people walk away from problems, refusing to talk about them or is it the loudest voice that wins?
- **Family response to failure.** Kids are always failing, how are they treated when they do? Humiliated, mocked, taught, encouraged, redirected? Some parents simply take over and take the matter right out of the child's hands.
- **Family history.** What significant things are going on in the affairs of a family? Money, illness, tragedy, moving home, unemployment etc.

Conclusion

It is easy to conclude that parenting is impossible – and in many ways it is. As a sinner raising sinners the challenges are great. Nevertheless parenting is a great calling from God. It is a daily act of resisting fear and living by faith. Often it can involve something as simple as a momentary heartfelt prayer. Ray Ortlund tells how his father used to ask for God's strength as he walked up the drive from work. It is through such on-going dependence on God that parenting is done.

Kevin DeYoung notes: 'I ... know that the longer I parent, the more I want to focus on doing a few things really well, and not get too passionate about all the rest. I want to spend time with my kids, teach them the Bible, take them to church, laugh with them, cry with them, discipline them when they disobey, say sorry when I mess up, and pray like crazy. I want them to look back and think: 'I'm

not sure what my parents were doing or if they even knew what they're were doing. But I always knew my parents loved me and I knew they loved Jesus.' Maybe it's not that complicated after all.' ²²

A word to parents whose children have rejected Christ

There will be some parents who avoid articles such as this. The pain, and often the shame, is too great. For them it seems both pointless and too late in any case. For all that they would not disagree with anything written here – it is simply not relevant to their painful situation. Their children have grown up, rebelled, and the grief is indescribable.

Commenting on Judges 14:4, Dale Ralph Davis says: 'Many Christian parents have stood in the sandals of Manoah and his wife. They have, though realising their own spiritual inadequacies, faithfully taught, prayed for, disciplined, and loved a son or a daughter, only to see that child wilfully turn from the way of the Lord. No-one can deny it is anything but devastating. Yet one should not forget v.4: 'But his father and his mother did not realise it was from Yahweh.' What we don't know may yet prove our deepest comfort.' ²³ What he means is that God is doing something – even in our children's foolish choices and mistaken desires – that will in the end bring good.

Recently a close family member who had lived to please himself repented and was gloriously restored at the age of 54, bringing to an end nearly 40 years of heartache to his godly parents. My closing word to any parent with a rebellious child is to never give up hope: your son's or daughter's story is not over yet.

Useful Resources

English Books

The Duties of Parents by J C Ryle – various formats but originally a chapter in *The Upper Room*. Despite the 19th century language, remarkably up-to-date and refreshingly biblical.

Aren't They Lovely when They're Asleep by Ann Benton. Christian Focus.

Teenagers by Ann Benton. IVP.

Ann has also produced a helpful short parenting course *Putting Parenting to Bed* (the Good Book Company). For those with children who have rejected the faith.

Come Back Barbara. John Miller and Barbara Miller Juliani. P&R.

US Books

Everyday Talk. Jay Younts. Shepherd Press.

Family-Driven Faith. Voddie Baucham. Crossway.

Age of Opportunity Paul Tripp. P&R. (excellent on adolescents)

Shepherding a Child's Heart. Tedd Tripp. Shepherd Press.

US DVDs

Getting to the Heart of Parenting. Paul Tripp. Paul Tripp Ministries.

The Case for Kids. Paul Tripp and Tedd Tripp. Shepherd Press.

Both get into the details of parenting as well as addressing the various stages of childhood and adolescence.

Books on the family

Marriage and Family in the Bible. Ken Campbell (Ed.) IVP.

God, Marriage and Family (2nd ed.). Andreas Kostenberger with David Jones.

Ian Fry

²² <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevindeyoung/2011/05/10/parenting-001/> Accessed 11.05.10.

²³ Dale Ralph Davis, *Judges*, Christian Focus, Ross-shire, 2003, p.172.

Cohabitation: the effects of leaving the knot untied

The idea that cohabitation is the same as marriage, but without the formal tying of the knot, has been discredited by the findings of recent research by the Jubilee Centre, a leading relationships charity.

The Jubilee Centre's report, *Cohabitation: An Alternative to Marriage?*, discloses a significant difference between the nature and effects of cohabitation, as distinct from marriage. In particular, the findings reveal:

- Cohabitation serves a range of purposes and masks a wide variety of commitment levels: it cannot be considered solely as an alternative to marriage, as is its popular perception
- Cohabiting parents are at greater risk of separation and divorce
- Marriage is still more popular than cohabitation
- Cohabiting couples tend to 'break up or make up' on anniversaries

Cohabitation serves a range of purposes

Analysis shows that lengths of cohabitation have roughly doubled over 40 years. However, fewer than one in four couples cohabits for more than 6½ years and even fewer couples now cohabit for very long periods of time before they separate or get married.

Overall, the changing dynamic since the 1980s appears to be that more couples used to decide to marry and then moved in together, albeit before the wedding. Now, a greater proportion tends to postpone the decision to marry until after first living together. Cohabitation serves a range of purposes, as it always has done, but the expectations around cohabitation are shifting. The average age at which people first cohabit has increased by more than three years since 1980. The average age of first cohabitation today is about the same as the average age of first marriage 30 years ago – 23 years for women, 25 for men.

Jubilee Centre researcher Dr Guy Brandon commented: 'This raises questions of whether couples are dating for less time than they used to before moving in together, or whether they are dating for the same length of time but then cohabiting instead of marrying. Seeing cohabitation solely as a replacement for marriage appears to be too simplistic. Duration of a relationship alone is not a reliable indicator of commitment intentions. Other factors, such as joint bank accounts and home ownership, are needed to assess this – but the evidence in this regard suggests that the majority are not taking such steps of commitment.'

Dr Brandon suggests that factors such as busyness and distance apart may mean that, instead of dating, couples choose to cohabit sooner as a matter of convenience.

Cohabiting parents at greater risk of separation and divorce

The Jubilee Centre's report also shows that cohabitation offers children a significantly less stable form of family environment. The child's earliest years are a time of disproportionate risk of separation. So, by the time the child is five years old the separation rate for couples who were cohabiting when their first child was born is more than six times the rate for couples who were married. By the time the child is 16, the separation rate for cohabiting couples is still over four times as high.

Marriage still more popular

Since the early 1980s, cohabitation has been the most common form of first live-in relationship, with the incidence of cohabitation as a first live-in relationship now levelling out at around 85 per cent. However, around 55 per cent of cohabitations lead to marriage and marriage remains by far the most common family form of choice overall. Thus, there are almost 4½ times as many married couples in the UK as there are cohabiting couples.

Couples who live together before getting married are tending to do so for almost three times as long as similar couples in the early 1980s. However, although there appears to be less urgency around the decision to marry, those who use cohabitation as a 'trial marriage' to see whether they are suited to each other face a greater risk of later separation and divorce.

those who use cohabitation as a 'trial marriage' to see whether they are suited to each other face a greater risk of later separation and divorce.

Where one or both partners in a marriage have previously lived with a different partner, the likelihood of divorce soars even further. However, it is not possible to determine from the data alone whether these additional risks of divorce are a consequence of their former lifestyle choices, or simply another reflection of the factors that led the couple to choose initially to cohabit. In other words, it's not clear whether cohabiting couples are prone to separation or whether couples prone to separation tend to cohabit. Other selection factors, such as religious beliefs or even income, may also account for this trend.

The Jubilee Centre's study concludes: 'We would expect marriage to stay the most popular form of couple and family relationship, since the majority of cohabitations still lead to marriage, and marriage – whether preceded by a period of cohabitation or not – remains the more stable form of relationship.'

Policy implications

Cohabitation (and the marriages that follow) has therefore become a longer-lived but also more fragile state of relationship than ever before. This has significant policy implications, not least in terms of the future cost of family breakdown and care of the elderly for those not living in supportive family units.

Jubilee Centre Director Dr John Hayward, who headed up the research, observed: 'All the evidence suggests that families headed by married, biological parents who have not previously lived together provide the best environment for both the individuals involved and their children.'

Dr John Hayward

Executive Director, Jubilee Centre, 3 Hooper Street, Cambridge CB1 2NZ
<http://www.jubilee-centre.org/>

The Jubilee Centre, established in 1983, is a Cambridge-based independent think tank providing a Christian perspective on current trends and social issues. The report *Cohabitation: An Alternative to Marriage?* is available to download from <http://www.jubilee-centre.org/>.

The research was based on the United Kingdom Household Longitudinal Study data set, *Understanding Society*, of 14,103 households and 22,265 adults conducted between 8 January 2009 and 7 March 2010, by the Institute for Social and Economic Research and National Centre for Social Research at the University of Essex.

Abortion

Abortion statistics in England and Wales

The annual figures for abortions carried out in 2010 were released last month²⁴ – they are not pleasant reading. After two years of decline, they are up again to a total of 196,109. This figure is composed of 189,574 residents plus 6,535 non-residents. This latest total may be just 0.3 per cent more than in 2009, but it is still 8 per cent more than ten years ago. And these statistics do not include the unknown thousands of early abortions brought about by the abortifacient action of morning-after pills.

Consider some other related facts and figures. The vast majority (97.7 per cent) of abortions during 2010 were carried out under ground C, the infamous social clause, with 2,290 (1.2 per cent) cases undertaken under ground E, the so-called handicap clause. Most (96 per cent) abortions were funded by the NHS, with over half (59 per cent) taking place in the independent sector (using Marie Stopes, bpas, and the like) under NHS contracts. The trend for earlier abortions continued with 91 per cent carried out at less than 13 weeks gestation and 77 per cent at under 10 weeks. The trend towards medical (as opposed to surgical) abortions, using the so-called abortion pill (mifepristone plus misoprostol), continued to rise, accounting for 43% of the total.

Repeat abortions are becoming more common. Last year, 64,303 women (34 per cent of the total) who had a termination, had had at least one previous abortion. This included 1,280 (7 per cent) girls under the age of 18. Also among the total were 85 women who had already had seven or more abortions.

Is there any consolation in any of these figures? Perhaps the continuing downward trend among teenagers offers a glimmer of hope. A total of 38,269 teenagers had abortions in 2010 compared with 40,067 the year before. Similarly, the under-16 total was 3,718 versus 3,823 for 2009. True, there are small decreases amid a field of increases, yet even these are masked by MAP usage.

Adverse effects of abortion and informed consent

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) is currently revising its controversial document, *The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion*. The 'multi-professional group' in charge of the review is largely pro-abortion, including representatives from the two largest UK providers, bpas and Marie Stopes International. Astoundingly, there is no psychiatrist on this panel. You may wonder what their recommendation will be. The RCOG has consistently underplayed, even ignored, any adverse physical or psychological outcomes subsequent to abortion. Yet the evidence from around the world, from both proponents and opponents of abortion, is mounting. How can women give proper informed consent to abortion when the evidence is denied or withheld?

While the UK prevaricates, some states in America are forging ahead. For example, it looks as though North Carolina is set to about-face on its abortion policy. Its Woman's Right to Know Act is

²⁴ www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_126769.

making steady progress through the various legal hoops. The proposed legislation would require abortion providers to give women information about the risks and side-effects of abortion, as well as other pregnancy options, at least 24 hours before the scheduled termination. Moreover, women would need to undergo an ultrasound scan four hours before the abortion. This may sound revolutionary, but at least 24 other US states already have similar informed consent laws in place.

There are some stirrings in the UK. Frank Field and Nadine Dorries, MPs for Birkenhead and Mid-Bedfordshire respectively, have tabled amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill. Their purpose is twofold. First, they want all women contemplating abortion to have 'independent information, advice and counselling services,' not from those with a vested financial interest, namely the abortion providers. Second, they want abortion guidelines to be produced not by the RCOG, but by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE). Those five little words, 'If only I had known', may well be the haunting catchphrase of many women who have undergone an abortion, and now wish they had not. Who can oppose telling the truth?

LIFE at the high table

LIFE, the pro-life organisation, has recently been invited by the Department of Health to sit on the new Sexual Health Forum, which replaces the old Independent Advisory Group on Sexual Health and HIV. This news made the pro-choice camp, from the *Guardian* to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (bpas), hopping mad. Tolerance may be their byword, but they can be vehemently intolerant when crossed. The bpas was especially irate because, although it boasts of providing more than a quarter of all abortions in England and Wales, it has been refused its regular place at this high table.

But what is so wrong with inviting LIFE, with its pro-abstinence agenda and 40 years of experience in educating thousands of schoolchildren each year, and counselling and practically helping and accommodating girls and women with problem pregnancies, to sit on the new Forum? There will still be 10 other organisations at the table pushing their tired old line of 'more pills and condoms' and explicit sex education. Is it not time for a breath of fresh air and ideas? After all, would not most people expect any 'forum' to consist of those with a range of viewpoints?

Stuart Cowie, head of LIFE's education team, is a winsome young family man, who attends the evangelical Myton Church in Warwick. His presence at the Forum deserves our encouragement and prayers.

Sex selection abortions

The widespread practice of sex-selective abortion continues to upset the gender balance in China and India. A recent report, published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, showed that within the next two decades there will be a 10 to 20 per cent excess of young men in parts of these two countries. The preference for sons plus the advent of relatively cheap ultrasound scanning, have led to increasing abortions of unborn girls. The natural sex ratio at birth (SRB) is about 105 males to 100 females. In some Chinese provinces, from Henan in the north to Hainan in the south, this ratio has become 130 to 100. In India, the ratio in Punjab, Delhi and Gujarat is 125 to 100.

This is not just an ideological drama – there are serious societal implications. For example, because of the scarcity of women, a significant percentage of these men will not be able to marry and have children. Already in China, 94 per cent of unmarried people in the 28-49 age group are men. The fear is that their inability to find wives may result in psychological issues leading to increased violence and crimes, such as rape.

Assisted Reproductive Techniques

The 'three-parent IVF' technique

A so-called 'three-parent IVF' technique has been pioneered at Newcastle University to enable parents-to-be with serious inherited disorders, known as mitochondrial diseases, to avoid passing them on to their would-be children. Mutations in mitochondrial DNA are quite common and often non-serious, but about one in every 6,500 UK children, about 100 each year, is born with a serious mitochondrial disease, such as muscular weakness, blindness and heart failure, which can be fatal.

Mitochondria are found in every cell in the human body and contain a very small amount of DNA (37 out of 23,000 genes) compared with that found in the cell's nucleus. This mitochondrial DNA is inherited exclusively from the mother through the mitochondria present in her ova and so is passed down the female line only, so it is not present in the nucleus of a zygote. Using a method called pronuclear transfer (PNT), it is possible to extract an embryo's nucleus, prior to the first embryonic division, and transplant it into a second, donor zygote. The resulting embryo contains DNA from the nuclei of the mother and father, but mitochondrial DNA from only the maternal donor, the 'third parent'. The 'new' embryo would then be transferred to the putative mother using standard IVF techniques. The Newcastle team used 80 'spare' human embryos from an IVF programme and cultured them for up to eight days, after which all of them were destroyed.

As if IVF alone, with its inevitable destruction of human embryos, were not a sufficiently bioethical nightmare, here comes another destructive eugenic adjunct (like pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, PGD), plus a collision with the conventional two-parent offspring (like surrogacy), plus permanent genetic changes affecting subsequent generations. Currently, the use of such genetically-altered embryos is banned for treatment purposes by the 2008 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, but a review, published in April 2011 by the HFEA, declared: 'Although potentially useful clinical techniques, further safety experiments need to be done before introducing them into clinical practice.' That review is now with the Department of Health to be approved or rejected.

Assisted reproductive technologies and money

Professor Lord Robert Winston has launched a scathing attack on some of his fellow IVF practitioners, accusing them of charging exorbitant fees for treatment at their private clinics. 'In my view,' he declared, 'it is a scandal.' 'There are clinics that treat patients for around £3,400 a cycle. It is only when you look at their websites that you see they are charging up to £1,100 to £3,200 for drugs that should be obtained on contracts at around £500 to £700 per cycle.' He continued: 'The HFEA has shown itself to be completely unable to deal with this issue at all.' In addition, he accused some clinics of using misleading information to enhance their success rates, claiming: 'Desperate couples spend an average of £5,000 in pursuit of a child of their own, often blind to the harsh truth that clinics' claimed statistics about success bear little relation to the number of IVF babies who make it to live births. In extreme cases, couples are spending up to £40,000 to have a child.'

Surrogacy and money are also close friends. The altruistic element of surrogacy is waning. While commercial surrogacy remains banned in the UK, the amount of legitimate 'reasonable expenses' for the surrogate continues to be questioned. It is muddy water, both legally and ethically. In May, Mr Justice Hedley, a judge in the Family Division of the High Court, highlighted these difficulties whenever commercial surrogacy arrangements are made abroad. He said: 'Commercial surrogacy is a highly controversial matter ethically and at the end of the day, by the time the case gets to me, the best I can do is focus on the welfare of the child.' His comments came after he passed judgement at

the Royal Courts of Justice in the case of a baby known only as JJ. A British couple had gone to the Ukraine in search of a surrogate mother. Ukrainian law states that this couple are JJ's parents. British law regards the Ukrainian surrogate and her husband as the baby's parents. Poor JJ was effectively parentless and stateless. In the interest of the child's welfare, Mr Justice Hedley agreed to recognise the Britons as the legal parents and approve retrospectively the more than 'reasonable expenses' of the commercial surrogacy arrangement, something he has done on at least four previous occasions. The judge warned such prospective parents to take immigration and legal advice before embarking on any cross-border surrogacy arrangements. It is a bioethical truism that once an abnormal practice is permitted, it escalates unpredictably and uncontainably. Surrogacy is no exception.

Stem Cell Technologies

Patents for embryonic stem-cell lines – granted

One of the biggest names in stem-cell technology and regenerative medicine is Advanced Cell Technology, Inc. of Santa Monica, California, and elsewhere. Robert Lanza is its flamboyant chief scientific officer. The company has sought and, in February, was granted a patent for its single-blastomere technique. ACT claims that this technology provides a non-destructive method for producing human embryonic stem cells.

The method first requires an early human embryo, a blastocyst of 5 to 10 days old, composed of about 70 to 100 cells. From this, a one-cell biopsy is made, similar to that of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). This single stem cell is then coaxed to generate a cell line, which might subsequently differentiate into all the cell types of the human body, such as insulin-producing cells, blood cells and beating cardiac cells.

ACT hopes that this patented method will not only produce cells of therapeutic importance, but that it will also duck the principal ethical argument against the use of embryonic stem cells, namely, that when harvested an entire embryo is destroyed. But hold on. What is novel about this method? Is it not the old Winston-Handyside PGD procedure of the 1980s?

And what of the future for the remaining 99-cell blastocyst? Although such 'cropped' entities are transferred to women in the PGD-IVF context, who would want one that has been tinkered with in a biotech lab? Is not the certain fate destruction? So is not ACT guilty of disguising the destiny of the 99-cell embryo by some seemingly kind-hearted lexical engineering?

Patents for embryonic stem cell lines – banned

Meanwhile, back in the Old World, the European Court of Justice has recently signalled a ban on any such patent protection for embryonic stem-cell lines. The action before the Court was originally begun in Germany by Greenpeace. One of the advocates-general, who advises the Court, has argued that it should be unlawful to allow patents where research destroys human embryos. Judges of the Court are not bound to follow this source of advice, but frequently do so.

Up went the arms of the stem cell scientists! There will be no financial investment from industry unless our innovations can be protected by patents, they bemoaned. A patent ban will threaten the future of European medical science and we will lose our place as a world leader, they opined. And finally they played the emotive card – our work is driven by the 'ethical need to treat disease'. Professor Austin Smith from the Wellcome Trust Centre for Stem Cell Research in Cambridge spotted

the tight spot. He stated that, 'It would also send the message that scientists are engaged in immoral activity so this is very negative for our community and it would erode public confidence in what we do.' Yes, so?

A setback for iPS cells?

The journal *Nature* has recently published two articles in which genomic and epigenomic analyses of iPS (induced pluripotent stem) cells have identified genetic mutations caused by the various reprogramming processes. Such findings have been used by embryonic stem cell researchers to cast doubt over iPS cell safety and their medical utility because of the fear that DNA damage could lead to the onset of cell mutations and cancers.

Is this really a significant setback? Probably not. Numerous technical hurdles have been overcome since the discovery of iPS cells in 2006. Moreover, nobody has seriously suggested that iPS cells are yet ready for human therapeutic use – that is perhaps a decade away. In the meantime, they are immensely useful as models to study cellular activities and as tools for drug-testing. And upbeat discoveries always seem to be just around the corner with iPS cells. For example, the authors of one of these reports state: 'Remarkably, expansion of human iPS cells in culture selects rapidly against mutated cells, driving the lines towards a genetic state resembling human ES cells.' In other words, as iPS cells grow they automatically weed out aberrant cells. As these same authors optimistically conclude: 'With a better understanding of the reprogramming process, we will increase the likelihood of finding ways to counteract the pitfalls and create human iPS cells that can safely be used for cell-based therapies in the future.'

Is all the above merely academic? An article in one of the June editions of *Nature* suggests that even the idea of treatments with iPS cells may be unnecessary. Think of heart attacks – they render the muscle cells of the heart, cardiomyocytes, irreparably damaged. Their replacement is essential. Yet heart progenitor stem cells, which can develop into the required blood vessels and muscles, already exist in adults, but in a dormant, turned-off state. Paul Riley and his colleagues at University College London Institute of Child Health have found a way to wake them up! A small protein, known as thymosin β 4 (T β 4), can switch on a gene called *Wt1*, which in turn can trigger these 'sleeping' stem cells into self-repair action. Remarkable, or what? OK, this work was done in mice. Could it also occur in human hearts? Could a daily tablet or injection of T β 4 be a future treatment before or after a heart attack? Sounds like good news for the broken-hearted.

CIRM begins to back adult stem cells

CIRM (the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine) was originally set up in 2004 to circumvent President George W Bush's prohibition on the use of human embryonic stem cells. Controversially, it raised billions of taxpayers' dollars to pursue its blinkered scientific ideology. Now CIRM appears to be turning away from its original mission statement. It has recently awarded grants of \$230 million to various Californian universities and biotech companies to pursue stem-cell treatments of cancers and AIDS. But – note the irony – only four of the 14 funded projects will use embryonic stem cells. The other 10 will use adult stem cells or conventional drugs.

Dr John R Ling

The Road to Gay Marriage

Imagine that someone stood on a soap box in your local market square and, with the issue of gay rights and homosexual practice in mind, urged the country to embark on ‘a new drive against male vice which would rid England of this plague.’

Within the last few years, for making remarks a lot less polemical than that, people have been handcuffed, taken to police cells, and put on a charge under Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986.

Who, you may wonder therefore, is this strident bigot who seems to want to discriminate so passionately, uncompromisingly and publicly against the gay minority? It is none other than the Home Secretary in the Churchill government of 1951-1954, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe. In 1954, his remark ruffled no feathers, since at the time it represented the view of the three crucial elements of the UK’s democratic society – the establishment, the press and public opinion. Maxwell Fyfe was simply reflecting the long history of antipathy to homosexual practice, which had been a crime in Britain since 1533, and was outlawed under canon law before that.

If in 1954 you had stopped people on the street and told them that in 2006 same-sex couples would be emerging from a civil partnership ceremony to cameras and confetti on the town hall steps, it would have been beyond their comprehension. That indicates how dramatically, quickly and unexpectedly the deep-rooted social assumptions of the 1950s have evaporated. Homosexual practice has, by a series of rapid stages, moved from being a criminal vice, to being tolerated, recognised, granted equality and promoted with pride and approval, in less than 50 years.

In 2011 we are on the verge of seeing civil partnerships registered in places of worship, and within a year or two there will probably be a public consultation to discuss re-defining marriage to include the union both of same-sex couples and different-sex couples.

After that, as far as the gay rights lobby is concerned, presumably there will be no more worlds to conquer. The journey along the road to gay marriage seems almost complete.

1 The causes of the swift and significant changes in the attitude of British society to the gay agenda

Given that for nearly two millennia it was regarded with abhorrence, it is natural to wonder what could possibly have brought about the rehabilitation, recognition and approval of the gay agenda and lifestyle, in a mature democracy with a strong Christian heritage, in so short a time. Here are some of the likely contributory factors:

1.1 The loss of moral outrage

In 1997, Peter Tatchell, the gay rights campaigner, referred to homosexual practice as ‘consensual, victimless same-sex behaviour.’ In his mind, crime can only be crime if there is a victim. In contrast, prior to 1967, homosexual activity had been a crime for hundreds of years, even though, in most cases, there will have been no ‘victim’. When law is put in place in order to express society’s moral outrage, there does not need to be a victim. Law does not exist only to give victims justice – it signals the moral code of a society. By the 1950s, British society was beginning to lose its moral compass. The traditional attitudes and the social expectations were still powerfully present, but the country was increasingly losing sight of the source of the accepted morality – God’s righteousness as expressed in the Bible.

By 1967, when the law decriminalised 'homosexual acts by two consenting adult men in private,' there will have been more than a degree of moral confusion over the issue, some wondering why the practice was now being legalised and others why it had been outlawed for centuries. These moral uncertainties surrounding the 1967 law are illustrated by the fact that although homosexual acts became legal, propositioning for homosexual sex remained illegal. Since in practice all sexual activity has to be suggested by someone, this effectively meant that homosexual relationships were still unlawful. Thousands of men were still being prosecuted for gross indecency.

The loss of the moral dimension of the law is also demonstrated by a significant change of emphasis in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. This Act changed the law relating to 'cottaging' – homosexual activity in public conveniences. The previous offence of 'gross indecency' was replaced by the offence of 'sexual activity in a public lavatory.' In other words, rather than the homosexual act itself being the offence, the public nuisance of the act became the offence. Rather than expressing a moral principle, the law had become a utilitarian corrective. All this demonstrates the steady erosion of the moral basis which had formerly been the imperative in English law.

1.2 The discovery of the concept of sexual orientation

Here's a quotation of February 2004 from King Sihanouk of Cambodia. If you can forgive his grammar, he said this: 'Gays and lesbians would not exist if God did not create them. It's not their fault if God makes them born like that.' [*The Daily Telegraph*, 25 February 2004]

This quotation goes to the heart of the issue of the fashionable and widely-accepted concept of sexual orientation. For the past 30 years, the world has tried to champion the idea that there are two equal sexualities, both of them based on innate tendency fixed at birth. On that basis, the argument runs, sexual orientation comes within the same category as other unalterable features of the person – e.g. age, race, gender and disability – which are characteristic of an individual, but not by virtue of their choice.

The Bible does not endorse this modern assumption, nor King Sihanouk's attempt to link to God the creation of a homosexual tendency. Scripture puts a great difference between heterosexual and homosexual sexuality. In Romans 1:27 and Jude 7, homosexual practice is described as a 'perversion.' After the Fall, there was still a pattern to this world which conformed to God's order, and one feature of that pattern was connected with the role and practice of sexual conduct. In God's order, this was wholly a heterosexual pattern. While it was possible for the practices and privileges of this heterosexual framework to be abused, or exercised in a sinful way, such excesses, failures and sins are never described in the Bible as a 'perversion.' The word 'perversion' is used in connection only with same-sex sexual relationships, the essential feature of which is that they are 'unnatural' – a perversion even of the fallen nature. In the light of this, it is impossible to accept, even in a fallen world, the Sihanouk principle that God has left man with two sexualities of equal repute and normality.

The identification, theologically, of the normal pattern does not mean that there are no individual cases of genetic abnormality. The Fall has damaged every area of man's creation, and there will be those whose genetic make-up may contribute to a tendency out of keeping with God's pattern, in the same way as there are individual cases of gender confusion as a result of an imbalance of chromosomes. However, it must not be assumed that genetic anomalies are the only possible cause of a distorted sexual tendency. Environmental and social factors of various kinds may have influenced sexual tendency during the long time which elapses between birth and adolescence.

This article is not denying the reality and force of the sex drive which homosexuals experience, nor even objecting to describing it as a sexual orientation. What it does deny is that it is a birth tendency and a valid, equal sexuality.

In addition to the biblical perspective, two statistical findings powerfully support the argument that the two sexualities are not equal. If two legitimate sexualities of equal status and of similar origin exist, one might expect that the numbers claiming to belong to each of these sexual categories to be approximately equal. This, however, is not the case. An Office for National Statistics (ONS) report of September 2010, *Measuring Sexual Identity: An Evaluation Report*, found the number of homosexuals in Britain to be far fewer than the government has been assuming for years. This report found that only 1% of the population is homosexual, and 0.5% bi-sexual. This contrasts with the 5% assumption in the Consultation Document on the proposed Civil Partnership Act, published in June 2003, and the 6% assumption by the Department of Trade and Industry published in December 2005, the month in which the Civil Partnership Act took effect.

The higher percentage figures were used by the government to justify its patronage of 'homosexual rights' and its pursuit of the equality agenda. They were particularly helpful in respect of the introduction of civil partnerships. Based on a population of 60 million, 6% would represent a homosexual population of 3.6 million, whereas 1% limits the figure to a mere 600,000. The smaller the number, the easier it is for people to accept that the homosexual tendency in each case can be explained by factors other than that 'God made them born like that.' The ONS report is not only official but hugely authoritative, involving interviews with 238,206 people.

Equally compelling evidence of the difference in status of the two forms of sexuality can be found in statistics relating to the degree of exclusiveness in the sexual experience of the participants.

The results of a major survey on *Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles*, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, were published in 1994. In-depth personal interviews were conducted with 10,000 men and 10,000 women. Of the men in the survey, 90.1% had only ever had sexual experience with women, and an even bigger percentage of the women, 92.7%, had only ever had sexual experience with men.

In contrast, of the men who had at some time in their life had a male sexual partner, as many as 90.3% had also had a female sexual partner. The percentage for women was even higher, 95.8% of those who had had a female sexual partner having also had a male partner.

These statistics convincingly show a striking difference between the nature of the two sexualities. A heterosexual disposition is generally exclusive and invariable – exactly what fits the description of 'natural.' On the other hand, the same-sex drive seems to be less permanent, with very little exclusiveness, strongly supporting the contention that its impulse lies in social, environmental and personal factors, rather than pre-determined genetic characteristics.

today's Establishment attitude is driven by the assumptions surrounding the equality agenda, rather than by a reasoned and objective assessment of what is just and appropriate in the light of the evidence, and of what is morally right, socially good and conducive to individual happiness

These two sets of statistics call into serious question the nature of sexual orientation, and the government's recognition and promotion of the gay or lesbian lifestyle as a valid diversity feature on a par with race, age and disability, deserving of a legal status equivalent to marriage.

It will not be called into question, since today's Establishment attitude is driven by the assumptions surrounding the equality agenda, rather than by a reasoned and objective assessment of what is just and appropriate in the light of the evidence, and of what is morally right, socially good and conducive to individual happiness.

1.3 The pursuit of the equality agenda

By accepting the validity of the principle of sexual orientation as a birth tendency, the government has justified its regarding of the two sexualities as equal, and its awarding to sexual orientation the status of a fixed diversity characteristic. On the basis of these assumptions, legislation and public policy in the UK has not only granted equal rights and status to homosexuals, but has regarded that equality as a just entitlement, and has viewed the provision of it as obligatory and virtuous.

The equality agenda, however, has not been driven solely by the British government. Most recent equality legislation is the result of policy directives of the European Union. The Treaty of Amsterdam, approved in October 1997 and effective from May 1999, gave the EU greater powers over citizenship issues and individual rights in Member countries. In consequence, the EU began issuing anti-discrimination directives in June 2000, and there has been a steady stream of them since. The first relating to sexual orientation was issued on 27 November 2000, obliging Member States to outlaw discrimination in the workplace. More recently, a directive was issued relating to the provision of goods and services, leading under the resultant UK law to several high profile legal cases of which evangelical Christians will be aware, some of which have yet to reach the end of their journey through the courts of Britain and Europe.

1.4 The influence of the 'gay rights' lobby

Stonewall was founded in 1989 by campaigners who had opposed Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 (legislation preventing the promotion of homosexuality in schools). Stonewall's web site claims some of the credit for a number of legislative achievements – the repeal of Section 28, equalisation of the age of consent, lifting the ban on lesbians and gay men serving in the military, allowing same-sex couples to adopt, establishing the legal status of civil partnership and ensuring that the rights of lesbians and gay men in respect of the provision of goods and services were protected in the Equality Act. Outrage!, a less conventional campaigning group, was co-founded by Peter Tatchell in May 1990. Both have been highly effective organisations.

1.5 The impact of the terms 'homophobic' and 'homophobia'

The word 'homophobia' was not invented by the gay rights lobby, but its existence has contributed incalculably to the creation of the present public perception, which almost universally regards gay rights as uncontroversial. By the way they have nuanced these words, the gay rights lobby has established the idea that anyone who disagrees with its agenda is a bigot driven by irrational discriminatory prejudices. By dictionary definition, 'homophobia' means the 'intense hatred or fear' of homosexuals, neither of which is true of evangelical Christians. However, by their skilled usages of the term, pro-gay campaigners have succeeded in broadening the perceived meaning of 'homophobia' to include intellectual dissent from pro-gay assumptions and aspirations.

As a result of the consequent new *mores*, anyone querying the gay agenda is likely to be branded anti-gay, rather than being viewed simply as having a different view about an issue. The 'homophobia' factor has generally eliminated from the public mind the possibility that a negative view of homosexuality might be based on a legitimate conclusion derived from objective rational

consideration. The ‘homophobia’ factor has helped to make the gay rights agenda seem mainstream and normal.

2 How should the evangelical constituency respond to the public recognition of the gay agenda?

2.1 By continuing to declare the Christian world-view

We need to hold firmly and confidently to the Christian world-view derived from the Bible, teaching it unequivocally and unapologetically to the present church and to every new generation of Christian believers. In the recent Evangelical Alliance survey of evangelicals, *21st century evangelicals – a snapshot of the beliefs and habits of evangelical Christians in the UK*, it was disturbing to see the response, as indicated below, to the statement: ‘Homosexual actions are always wrong.’

<i>Opinion expressed</i>	<i>%</i>
Agreed a lot	59
Agreed a little	14
Unsure	11
Disagreed a little	8
Disagreed a lot	8

The above figures mean that 41% of evangelicals appear to be taking a view on the issue which is weaker than that of Scripture. Whatever the reasons for this – and these could include ignorance, loyalty to a friend, or a too ready acceptance of parts of the gay agenda’s propaganda – an immense teaching duty faces our churches, as we address all the issues surrounding sexuality and sexual practice. It is not safe to assume that everyone connected with evangelical churches understands and holds to biblical stances.

Nor is it enough to teach the principles, and to assume that the applications will take care of themselves. Aside from the social and the personal, there are the profound biblical and theological lessons to be drawn. Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Homosexuality is a distortion of that picture.

2.2 By taking an optimistic view of the future

It is only 57 years since British society began to show any tolerance towards a homosexual lifestyle. The complete Bible has been in being for more than 30 times that length of time, and there is no evidence in British social history, prior to the mid-20th century, that the practice of homosexuality was ever accepted.

We don’t yet know whether our present times represent a blip in history, or whether they are the beginning of a long-term change in the social assumptions and practices of the world

We don’t yet know therefore whether our present times represent a blip in history, or whether they are the beginning of a long-term change in the social assumptions and practices of the world. It isn’t easy to imagine the tide being turned back without a time of great gospel fruitfulness across the world, but we don’t know that this isn’t in God’s purposes, and so we have no grounds for pessimism. We can be more than optimists – we can be *praying* optimists.

2.3 By engaging in the debate over all the subject areas connected with homosexuality

We must take every appropriate opportunity to present the Christian view of homosexuality. By involvement in media opportunities, public discussion, lectures, production of literature and writing letters and articles in learned journals, we can advance the credibility and reasonableness of the Christian view, and counter the weaknesses and inconsistencies inherent in the arguments used to support the social policies which promote and justify homosexuality. By presenting truth, sensible logic, and convincing substantiated argument, with clarity and courtesy, we can address, with credibility and authority, the implications of the number of homosexuals in the population, the validity of sexual orientation and the effects of the practice, recognition and promotion of homosexuality on its practitioners and on society as a whole.

2.4 By contending as far as is possible for laws and public policies which are consistent with God's righteousness and God-given freedoms

This will mean challenging the existing law. In some instances the law is not clear and legal interpretations and judgements have still to be made. In the case of the hoteliers in Cornwall, Peter and Hazelmary Bull, in January 2011, the judge in the case granted leave to appeal on the basis that: 'There is little or no direct authority on the issues I have had to decide.' What he meant was that some of the details relevant to the Bull case had not previously been the subject of a court finding, and on those matters there is scope for the courts to determine how the law applies.

As biblical evangelicals, we believe in the principle of law as the basis for orderly society, and should regard the law as our friend, deserving of our respect, until proved otherwise. Given such an understanding of the place of law in society, it is consistent and necessary to seek to clarify any legal uncertainties which appear to inhibit the opportunity of citizens to practise righteousness. Clarifying the law also helps us to know whether, with a clear conscience, we can co-operate with the policies of the State and its agencies.

Our motive in going to court is not to 'defend our corner,' but is based upon concern for the nation as a whole. Righteous law benefits everyone, as well as being pleasing to God. Every successful legal challenge adds to the sum of righteousness in the nation. We should give the law every opportunity to come up with the right outcomes. It is only when a law has reached the end of its due process, and has clearly established a position contrary to Scripture, that we have grounds for 'obeying God rather than men' and will need to consider, in the context of an individual matter, what further steps are then required of us.

2.5 By embarking on political engagement

Where the courts find against the righteousness and freedoms which are biblical, an obvious response is to contend for changes in the law to restore or establish these values. This will involve engaging with politicians, government departments and other agencies and interest groups. The voice of the prophet must be heard. Someone has to address national governments on the subject of what pleases God. This prophetic voice must be that of evangelical Christians, since only they hold to a biblical world-view. In the course of political engagement, we will be joined by a range of co-belligerents on a variety of issues, and will welcome this, but the motive for our own involvement will be our biblical responsibilities to the world over which God is the sovereign Lord.

2.6 By ensuring that our own marriages set a worthy example

There is little point in campaigning on behalf of marriage as a theoretical ideal, if the practice which people see exemplified in our ranks does not match up, either by virtue of the number which

survive, or of their apparent quality. The Bible gives us instruction in the principles which form the basis of successful marriages and we need to work hard and constantly to ensure that our own marriages survive, succeed and inspire others. In Ephesians 5, marriage is compared with the relationship between Christ and his Church, and that analogy should be sufficient to inspire us to practise the love, loyalty, faithfulness and sacrifice which Jesus demonstrated in his regard for his Church.

2.7 By supporting agencies working to promote God's righteousness in the world

As the scale of work needed on both the legal and the political stage is beyond the scope of individuals and local churches, the work of specialist agencies, such as The Christian Institute, will need to be encouraged and supported. The role of such agencies is of immense significance in our national life, and one can only imagine that it will become more so.

2.8 By reviewing our attitude to individual homosexuals

In our contact with individual homosexuals, we need to be courteous, reasonable and winsome. Some sections within Christendom seem habitually to describe homosexuals as 'sodomites.' Wherever this term is used, it reads as though it is intended as a term of abuse, lacking any hint of compassion or concern for the individual homosexuals being described. It is hard to understand why this should be considered the most desirable approach.

If Jesus chose to speak instead about a wide range of other truths and teachings, as the New Testament seems to suggest, why should we insist on preaching about homosexuality in the market square?

It is important not to make homosexuality a totemic issue – not because we are afraid of the issue, but simply because we haven't any biblical grounds for highlighting it, and treating it as a cause célèbre. I cannot find in the Gospels even one instance of Jesus speaking about it. If Jesus chose to speak instead about a wide range of other truths and teachings, as the New Testament seems to suggest, why should we insist on preaching about homosexuality in the market square?

Fewer than two per cent of the potential hearers are homosexuals, and those that are not will sympathise with them if they think that a preacher is singling them out for condemnation. It will be an entirely counter-productive strategy. We need to preach about things that affect and challenge everyone – unbelief, and its implications, for instance, and the missing dimension of the gospel.

Finally, we need to believe that homosexuals can be rescued from the sinfulness and the misery of their ways. What we find in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is hugely hopeful. Paul gives a long list of categories of people involved in gross sins, including, in v 9, 'homosexual offenders.' But he then goes on to say: 'And that is what some of you WERE,' adding: 'But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.' This makes clear that some people were once homosexuals, but are no longer. We should never view any group of people as irredeemable.

Rod Badams

Contributors to this issue of The Bulletin

Rod Badams was a journalist for 11 years, specialising in local government, before becoming General Secretary of Christians at Work (1979-1998). He has been FIEC Administrator since 1998 and editor of *The Bulletin* since 2006.

Ian Fry was the first Director of Youth and Children's Ministry Training at Oak Hill College, Southgate, London. He is now the Pastor of Christchurch, Fetcham, Surrey.

Dr John Hayward has been executive director of the Jubilee Centre since January 2008, prior to which he worked for 12 years in international development, much of which he spent in Tajikistan, where he established an adult education centre.

Dr John R Ling is a freelance speaker, writer and consultant bioethicist. His two books on bioethical issues – *Responding to the Culture of Death* and *The Edge of Life* – are published by Day One. His personal website is www.johnling.co.uk