

## THE BULLETIN

*News and Reports from the Social issues Team*

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## Is it still possible to teach about the Christian faith in schools in 2017?

This is the question that we have found ourselves asking at **cross**teach over the last few weeks. Parents complained at a Church of England primary school in Tunbridge Wells about the visible symbols of Christianity (a cross in the school and Bible verses on the school website, for example) and the Christian teaching that their children receive in collective worship and RE lessons, led by the local church vicar and youth worker and **cross**teach schools workers, among others.

The complaint snowballed to the point that the Headteacher said that, although 'I do not believe **cross**teach have done anything wrong', and although he had no issue with the teaching, nevertheless, to satisfy the parents, **cross**teach was no longer welcome to the school to lead Collective Worship or RE lessons.

For a small charity more used to quietly getting on with our work (which is to teach about the Christian faith in schools) it was quite a rude awakening to find ourselves being talked about on the radio and described in the national press as a 'banned' organisation.

It was quite disturbing to hear that some parents felt our teaching confused pupils and even upset some of them. This is clearly not our intention. Added to this was the way some were describing our Christian beliefs using quite alarming language. We had to take stock and ask ourselves some fundamental questions.

### Should schools be teaching about Christianity?

It is very much the case that schools have a legal duty to both teach about the Christian faith:

*The law requires that local authority RE agreed syllabuses and RE syllabuses used in academies that are not designated with a religious character 'must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, while taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'.<sup>1</sup>*

and to have daily acts of worship that are wholly or mainly of Christian character:

*In the light of the Christian traditions of Great Britain, section 7(1) of the Education Reform Act (and the corresponding section of the Education Act 1993) says that collective worship organised by a county or equivalent grant-maintained school is to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. The Act then further defines collective worship of a 'broadly Christian character' as being worship which reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief. Any such worship should not, however, be distinctive of any particular Christian denomination.<sup>2</sup>*

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development should also be an integral part of the life of a school. This is another area where teaching about the Christian faith can make a positive contribution.

In this context, it is clear that Christianity still has a significant place in our schools, and even more so in 'church' schools. This in itself does not justify what we do; schools could get on with this aspect of school life without us.

### What do visiting speakers contribute to the life of a school?

One reason **cross**teach was established was the frequent reports stating that Christianity was being taught badly in many schools and leaving pupils with a poor understanding of what Christians really believe.

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<sup>1</sup> A Review of Religious Education in England, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales, October 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Religious Education and Collective Worship, Department for Education circular number 1/94.

A group of Christians decided to do something about this and see if they could find a way to provide schools with a free service to enhance the teaching of Christianity and enrich the educational experience for all pupils.

*There were a number of specific weaknesses in the teaching about Christianity. Many primary and secondary schools visited did not pay sufficient attention to the progressive and systematic investigation of the core beliefs of Christianity.*<sup>3</sup>

*Many pupils leave school with scant subject knowledge and understanding. Moreover, RE teaching often fails to challenge and extend pupils' ability to explore fundamental questions about human life, religion and belief.*<sup>4</sup>

It appears this is still the case:

*There is inconsistency in the quality and provision of RE, with increasing numbers of schools not even meeting the basic legal requirement. Pupils are experiencing a lottery in their access to high quality RE.*<sup>5</sup>

RE is often taught by non-specialists:

*3.4 The answer to (i), provided by the DfE workforce survey, is that 55% of those teaching RE have no post-A Level subject qualification compared to only 28% of history and 33% of geography teachers. This figure includes many teachers who teach RE for only a few lessons a week.*<sup>6</sup>

These factors mean that organisations like **cross**teach and local churches, in providing a free service with qualified and experienced workers, can assist with teaching Christianity in schools. We can work with them to give their pupils a better understanding of Christianity. As committed Christians we are able to both explain what we believe, share how that impacts our lives and respond to questions and challenges from pupils. As well as our teaching skills and first-hand experience of being Christians, we are also able to bring enthusiasm and passion to our lessons. This in itself is often a key factor in engaging the pupils.

It seems to us to be a question of whether or not we leave the teaching of Christianity in schools to teachers ill-equipped to do it well, or whether we step in and support schools as much as we can to make sure pupils have a better understanding of what Christians believe. We believe that appropriately trained and resourced Christians should take up this challenge and do as much as they can to work with schools in this area.

We get lots of positive feedback about how we enrich the education of the pupils we work with and add value to what the school is already doing. It is also encouraging to see this is recognised on a larger scale by the RE community:

*...in both written and oral evidence, mention has been made of the ways in which visits and visitors enhance the pupil experience in re at all levels. When both visitors and teachers are well-briefed, and the learning goals are clear, visits and visitors can be extremely powerful. They provide opportunities to explore how worldviews are lived out in practice and how individuals negotiate their relationship with religious or non-religious institutions.*<sup>7</sup>

*Representatives of the main faith communities, who can speak about the faith traditions from the inside, appear to be an important resource for RE in both primary and secondary schools and are therefore valued highly by them (pp.178–9, 189–90).*

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<sup>3</sup> *Transforming religious education*, Ofsted, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> *Religious Education: realising the potential*, Ofsted, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> *Interim Report, Religious Education for all*, Commission on Religious Education, September 2017.

<sup>6</sup> *RE: The truth unmasked, The supply of and support for Religious Education teachers*, An Inquiry by The All Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> *Interim Report, Religious Education for all*, Commission on Religious Education, September 2017.

*...pupils find direct encounter with other religions through outside visits and visitors to the school (and also on video clips) particularly helpful in their understanding (p.213).<sup>8</sup>*

Obviously these benefits do not just come from Christians; schools benefit greatly from a whole range of visiting speakers within RE, Acts of Worship and the wider life of the school. It is a great encouragement to us to be reminded of the value of what we do and to have many of the RE teachers we work with, and school leaders, speak so highly of our work and the impact we have on the learning of the pupils:

*Crossteach have aided the provision of our curriculum by embedding key Christian views throughout KS3. We believe this is highly important with regards to the fact that 50% of our reformed GCSE is now based on Christian beliefs and practices. We wish to embed these key beliefs earlier within the KS in order that students have a clear grasp of these ready for GCSE.<sup>9</sup>*

*For some time I have invited the **crossteach** team to work with pupils from year 8 up to 6th formers. Every lesson, every talk, has been professionally prepared and presented. As a result of this our pupils have been able to more fully and clearly answer questions relating to the GCSE and A-level courses they are taking. They are more confident and all have appreciated **crossteach**'s visits.<sup>10</sup>*

## **How does our work benefit all pupils?**

It is easy to think that teaching about any specific religion is helpful for pupils who follow that religion or come from that religious community. Maybe it is not so useful for the others. We are not just in schools to teach 'Christians' about Christianity. We are not even in schools solely to teach all pupils about Christianity. We believe wholeheartedly in the wide benefits of good RE for all pupils, and seek to contribute positively to this. Our expertise is in the teaching of Christianity, but we strive to work in a way that is accessible to all pupils and encourages them to consider and develop their own beliefs, while increasing their understanding of what others believe. We aim to lead activities that provoke critical enquiry and thoughtful reflection, as well as being engaging, stimulating and inspiring.

If we look around the world and look back through history, it is easy to see that much conflict, intolerance and prejudice flows out of ignorance. An ignorance of the 'other' can create fear and lead to an 'us and them' mentality. One of the key reasons we contribute to the teaching of RE in schools is to help pupils have a better understanding of Christianity. We believe this will help them better understand Christians and, therefore, reduce ignorance and confusion and hopefully contribute to greater harmony among the different groups in our communities. It seems many feel there is a rise in discrimination against religious groups:

*Prejudice and discrimination against some worldviews and the communities that belong to them appears to be increasing in the UK, in particular islamophobia and anti-Semitism. At the same time, more individuals and public commentators are making a concerted effort to combat these prejudices in public discourse and to understand the diversity within religious communities. This is a striking illustration of the division and hatred that can result from a lack of understanding about religions and how they work.<sup>11</sup>*

It is challenging to see how much ignorance there is in our own culture about Christianity and what Christians really believe. And this is in a culture that many still consider 'Christian', or at least having Christian roots. We still meet many people who think Christians believe 'good people go to heaven and bad people go to hell' for example. This is even the answer some examination boards require in exams! No wonder non-Christians misunderstand us when we talk about heaven and hell. It can sound to them as if

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<sup>8</sup> *Materials used to Teach about World Religions in Schools in England*, Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of Warwick, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> Warwickshire Head of RE.

<sup>10</sup> London Lead Teacher of RE, Committee Member: Barnet SACRE, Elect-Member: NATRE (National Association for Teachers of RE), Admin: Save RE Facebook Forum.

<sup>11</sup> *Interim Report, Religious Education for all*, Commission on Religious Education, September 2017.

we are saying, 'We are good people and will go to heaven. You are bad people and will go to hell.' There is no understanding of grace, forgiveness and the place of Jesus in this. We meet many pupils who can be confrontational with us because of what they think we believe and stand for. Our work to correct these misunderstandings is of great value, as is the work of all RE that reduces ignorance and misconceptions.

Even despite various criticisms of RE in school, these benefits are still recognised:

*A major success of RE is the way that it supports the promotion of community cohesion. In many schools RE plays a major role in helping pupils understand diversity and develop respect for the beliefs and cultures of others.<sup>12</sup>*

Preparing pupils for life in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain must include an education that introduces them to the multitude of communities that exist within wider society and the individuals they will learn, play and, in the future, work alongside:

*Encountering worldviews other than that of one's own background may open up a wider range of options for pupils. Reflecting on one's own worldview in the light of these encounters may also open up new options and ways of thinking. This may, in turn, raise their aspirations and improve their understanding and relationships with peers and future colleagues.<sup>13</sup>*

It seems that our political and educational leaders still see the value of good RE in schools. The current review of RE by the Commission on Religious Education will hopefully lead to improvements in its teaching in schools and greater investment in staff, training and resources. There is still time for you to contribute to this review, and I would encourage you to do so. You have until 9.00am on 4 December to submit your submission.<sup>14</sup>

### **Is it still possible to teach about the Christian faith in schools in 2017?**

Given the recent circumstances, it has surprised some to find out that the answer to my original question is 'Yes, it is still possible to teach about the Christian faith in schools in 2017'. I would encourage every church to consider how they might contribute effectively to the teaching of RE within schools, and to the wider life of schools in your communities.

**cross**teach is an educational charity with educational aims which are clearly linked to the curriculum. As we have nervously contacted schools to see if any have been swayed by the negative things they have read in the press we have all been encouraged to find out that, yes, we are still welcome. The professionalism of our staff and the support that they give to hard-pressed RE teachers and headteachers is appreciated; our staff are still welcome to teach engaging RE lessons that provoke critical enquiry and thoughtful reflection; our staff are still welcome to lead inspiring, stimulating collective worship; our staff are still welcome to enrich the curriculum with co-curricular discussion groups that allow pupils to explore fundamental questions. As an organisation we are still able to do things that will help pupils to understand and respond to the Christian message in an informed, rational and insightful way.

Is it possible? Yes. Is it easy? We were never promised that.

*Wayne Harris*

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<sup>12</sup> *Transforming religious education*, Ofsted, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> *Interim Report, Religious Education for all*, Commission on Religious Education, September 2017.

<sup>14</sup> The interim report in full here: <http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Commission-on-Religious-Education-Interim-Report-2017.pdf>

You can submit your contribution here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/CoREConsult1>

If you wish to read and consider the questions first, you can download a copy of the questions here:

<http://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Interim-report-consultation-survey-final.pdf>

## Social Care and the Church

It is hardly headline news that social care is in major crisis in our country at the present time. The problems are highlighted in newspaper articles on a regular basis. If, like me, you keep copies of these articles, you soon build up a vast collection and most of them really tell the same things: the system is underfunded, there is a serious deficit in provision, vulnerable people do not always get the right levels of care, and politicians are struggling to find any real answer despite a plethora of reports. The situation is very unsatisfactory and what is disappointing in the light of all this is the silence, or at least muted voice, of the church of Jesus Christ.

This article therefore seeks to highlight some of the latest issues being raised, and to suggest an aspect of the problem that the church can speak to and act on. You will notice as you read the various press quotations that they were all written at around the same time. Similar sets could be produced for other dates. That simply illustrates that these issues are continually coming to the fore.

*'Don't make us sell our homes!'* was the headline in the Daily Express on 3 October 2017. The sub-title said, *'Pensioners' anger at spiralling cost of social bills'*. Quoting research by pensions experts Aegon, the article by Sarah O'Grady, their Social Affairs Correspondent, quoted a range of statistics about people's attitude to funding social care:

- Selling their property to raise funds is seen as a step too far for millions of homeowners but they admit taxpayers should not shoulder the burden of the nation's care costs.
- Two-thirds of those questioned believe any payments for social care should be shared between them and the Government.
- Nine in ten want to see a cap on the contributions from individuals.
- Only one in four believe the Government should pay all costs, perhaps recognising that this could place an unreasonable burden on future taxpayers as more people need social care in old age.
- Two out of three people were against the proposals in the Conservative manifesto at the last election which suggested that the value of a person's home should be included in any care assessment.
  - Almost three quarters of those aged 65-plus were against it.
  - More than half of 18-34 year olds were against it – although fewer of them owned property.
- Unexpectedly, there was strong interest among 18-30 year-olds, which casts doubt on the perception that people leave thinking about funding social care until it is too late.

The Government is preparing yet again to consult on how to cover the costs of social care. Steven Cameron, pensions director at Aegon said: 'As the Government prepares to consult on this controversial but hugely important topic, our research has shown a keen interest across the ages in finding a fair solution.' When given a range of options regarding how they were likely to make advance provision for social care costs, two out of five said they would use their pension.

The present system for payment for Residential Care involves people contributing from their State Pension and also from other pensions and financial assets, with a contribution from the Local Authority unless the assets exceed £23,250. The difference between the combination of these sources and the actual cost of the Home will then be either met by the family, or the Home may have a two-tier charging system so that self-funders subsidise Local Authority-funded residents. Some voluntary organisations, like Pilgrims' Friend Society (Pilgrim Homes), fund the difference from donations if family cannot support or are limited in the financial contribution they can make.

A significant element in the complex arrangements that are in place at the moment is the level of support that individual Local Authorities are able, or willing, to make. This is generally regarded as inadequate although the Local Authorities maintain they are at their limits in what they are paying. The problem of

funding is having serious impacts for providers. For instance Four Seasons, who are probably Britain's largest provider of care homes, are currently in very difficult financial circumstances. Much of the reason for that has to do with the way the company is financially constituted, but a significant further reason is the chaotic and inadequate way Local Authorities fund people who need a care home. Certainly in recent years many homes which have been run by voluntary organisations, and especially Christian groups and churches, have become financially unviable and have had to close.

The consumer group Which? have conducted a survey which shows that a quarter of elderly people who need residential care will be unable to find a bed in a local home within five years in some areas of the country (The Times, October 4, 2017). The research identified black spots where the provision of beds looks unlikely to keep up with growing numbers of people aged 80 and older who will need such care. Jane Morrison, chief executive of Independent Age said: 'While this alarming research shows the shortfall in care home places predicted by the end of this parliament, we know there are already many older people and their families who are struggling to find a good quality care home.'

The crisis can be seen in this limited amount of provision and the deteriorating state of supply. Since 2010 35,000 day-care centres for the elderly have closed, and 1,600 care homes have shut in the last six years. As a consequence, one in ten NHS beds are now occupied by an elderly person who would have been discharged had provision been available. The situation is made even worse by the fact that many local authorities say that private agencies have pulled out of contracts to provide home visits and care because they are no longer financially viable. The whole system is creaking and seems ready to collapse. There are many quality care homes that provide excellent care and are still financially viable, but even they are under strain. There are also many care agencies that provide good care to people in their own homes and are also continuing to function within the very tight budgets they have. But there is little margin for innovation and development of new ideas.

As part of their response to all this Government ministers are highlighting attitudes within society as a significant factor in the problem. Jackie Doyle-Price is the Care Minister and she was reported to have said that families must learn from ethnic minority communities and take more responsibility for looking after elderly relatives (The Times, October 4 2017). She maintained that 'as a society we've become less good at looking out for our neighbours, not just our families'. This is a rather contradictory position for a Conservative politician to take, since encouraging married women to work has been at the heart of some of their economic policies and working wives, along with increased social mobility, explain why many older people are not as supported by their families as they would have been in past generations. It should also be noted that a wholesale approval of Asian families' care of their elderly, which is what Ms Doyle-Price and Jeremy Hunt are promoting, needs to be unpacked. Having run charities in Birmingham and Bristol which served older people and had extensive contact with Asian communities, I would be much more guarded in advocating they be copied. Let me say that Labour Party policies in this area are equally woolly and inadequate and that I have great respect for Asian people but their approach to care of the elderly would not be mine.

Justice Minister, Dr Phillip Lee, has added his voice to this attack on families. In the Mail Online, October 6 2017, he wrote that 'Britain is a "selfish" society where families shirk their duty by "outsourcing" the care of their elderly relatives'. He added that 'families needed to face up to "uncomfortable" truths about the demands of looking after elderly parents and grandparents, rather than expecting the state to care for them.' Whilst there may be some truth in what Dr Lee is saying it is too generalised and fails to recognise how much some families are doing. One suggested way to help families care is to give tax breaks to those who do, or for legislation to enable people to take time off work to look after elders within the family.

Enough has probably been said to describe the problem and to show the challenge being faced by government and by families in responding to the problem of an ageing society and the increase of frail, elderly people. How should the church be responding to this? Let me suggest some areas for thought arising out of Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 5:1-16. The passages refer to widows, and as such identify an area

of need in Apostolic times. John MacArthur, in his little book 'Caring for Widows' makes the point that 'the Greek term "widow" (chera) means "bereft" and conveys a sense of suffering loss or being left alone. These are women who are vulnerable and needy.' Such terms could also be applied to many older people, whether widows or not. The description of widows who are 'really widows' in 1 Timothy 5:5 clearly also covers many older people today. These are concerns that God has highlighted throughout the Bible – Psalm 68:5: 'A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy habitation.'

1. **The early church took responsibility to support those in need.** So in Acts 6 ministries of mercy clearly had a prominent place in the life of the church. It was to resolve the problems that were arising that the 'deacons' were appointed. In his epistle James emphasises this: 'Pure religion and undefiled is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.' (James 1:27). Austin Walker, in his excellent book 'God's Care for The Widow', identifies the church's duty to widows as being: to visit them in their trouble; to relieve their needs; to comfort them in their distress. This is exactly the ministry older people need in their various situations and vulnerabilities. This is surely an area where the church needs to revive its ancient calling.
2. **The men appointed to oversee the provision in Acts 6 appear to be among the 'best' men spiritually in the church.** That surely illustrates the priority given to this group of needy people. Sadly, in many churches the leading people tend to do other things that they consider more significant. The growing demands of older people in our society, and especially in our churches, need the very best in our churches to be involved in organising their care.
3. **This support may include financial inputs.** The word 'honour' in 1 Timothy 5:3 has a financial element, as it does when referring to elders in verse 17. This idea of financial support is stated much more explicitly in 1 Timothy 5:16. That becomes very relevant as we consider the costs of care, and especially residence in a care home. Some churches endeavour to establish their own care provision, but that can be fraught with difficulties. Reviewing such establishments across the country one has to say that some are better than others! The main point here is that Paul expected churches to be involved in meeting the costs of care for their elderly people. Do we have the right to ignore these Scriptures in a day when older people are not being adequately provided for by the State?
4. **Families carry a specific responsibility for the provision and funding of care for their elderly people.** Paul sees children and grandchildren having a role to play (1 Timothy 5:4), and he emphasises the seriousness of this in verse 8. Failure to do this is considered to be extremely serious. The vehemence of Paul's language is matched by that of the Lord himself in Mark 7:9-13. Fulfilment of the Fifth Commandment is seen in how families care for their elderly folk. Both Jesus and Paul are unequivocal in their expectations of families. This is something churches should be teaching their congregations and a failure to do so is an abrogation of responsibility by pastors and church leaders.
5. **Providing need not necessarily mean actually doing the caring in every situation.** The word for 'provide' in verse 8 has the sense of 'provide in advance', and refers to taking thought and planning the best provision possible. This should be done for 'his own', and whilst that refers to widows in the passage it is extended in verse 8 to 'those of his household'. Paul is including children and old people. My wife and I cared for my wife's father for seventeen years, but when my widowed mother developed dementia we knew that the best care for her would be at one of the Pilgrim Homes. And we did that even though my wife, who is a nurse, had run an Elderly Person's Home, and I have specialised in working with older people and especially people with dementia; we knew where she would get the best care.
6. **Particular care should be shown to their spiritual needs.** Paul seems to give specific attention to this in Titus 2:1-3, where he deals with issues that should be taught in pastoral ministry to older people. Furthermore, the Apostle Paul addresses the whole issue of discipline and correction for older people in 1 Timothy 5:1-2. Whilst he is dealing with the manner in which older people should be addressed, he



is also identifying that good care of older people will involve the delicate business of correction. What this teaches us is that the spiritual needs of older people should take a prominent place in pastoral care.

7. **Older people still have ministries to fulfil and churches should be encouraging this.** There is no certainty about what Paul meant by 'taken into the number' in 1 Timothy 5:9 in the New King James Version – 'be enrolled', 'put on the list' in other versions. What is said alongside this refers to the spiritual calibre and usefulness of some of these widows. Verse 5 describes these women as ladies who are given to prayer. The sort of person being considered is like Anna in Luke 2:26-37. Verse 10 shows a range of other areas of service. The rest of the Bible describes many areas of service for older people, and the care of them will involve enabling them to fulfil their callings to serve the Lord. It is not being faithful to God's Word if we relegate our older people to a place of inactivity and no influence.
8. **One significant implication of the above is that churches should consider supporting Christian organisations caring for older people.** Such support may be regular financial giving, or encouraging members to engage with the organisations as volunteers, or directing older people to those organisations for help, support and especially a home. It seems the most extraordinary lack of understanding and care for older people when churches fail to direct their members to Christian care homes and subject believers to a potentially ungodly ethos in a non-Christian home.

These eight observations from these two passages and supported by other references show just how much the local church should be doing for older people. At a time when the care and support of older people is so manifestly lacking it is time for the church to be more active in this area and to demonstrate the practical implications of 'loving one another' (John 13:35).

*Roger Hitchings*

## The Challenge of Islam in the UK

The increasing influence of Islam in the UK poses a challenge to the church. How should we respond? In this article I would like to review the current influence of Islam in the UK and discuss something about the beliefs and worldview of Muslims, before outlining some ways that the church can and should be responding.

### The Influence of Islam

#### The fastest growing religion in the UK

At the last census in 2011, there were 2.7 million Muslims in the UK, or 4.8% of the population.<sup>15</sup> This has risen quite rapidly from only 105,000 in 1960.<sup>16</sup> The previous census in 2001 showed a Muslim population of 1.6 million. Islam was therefore the fastest growing religion in the UK over the ten-year period, showing growth of nearly 70%. Pew Research estimate that by 2030, Muslims will have reached 8% of the population.<sup>17</sup> Already, 8.1% of all school-age children are Muslim.<sup>18</sup> The name Muhammad, when allowing for spelling variants, has been the top boys' name for babies in Britain for five years running.<sup>19</sup>

#### Segregation and lack of integration

The Policy Exchange report, 'Unsettled Belonging: A survey of Britain's Muslim communities', published in 2016, claimed to be the most extensive research of British Muslims ever conducted.<sup>20</sup> The report found that 53% of Muslims were born outside the UK, while 93% had parents born outside the UK. This demonstrates that much of the growth is occurring through immigration.

According to the report, 43% of Muslims support the introduction of Sharia law, broadly defined. Fifty three percent prefer to send their children to a school with strong 'Muslim values' and 44% said that schools should be able to insist on 'a hijab or niqab' in uniform, while 32% disagreed with this.

The government commissioned Dame Louise Casey to review integration in society. Her report was published in December 2016.<sup>21</sup> She found that there is indeed a problem in terms of integration of religious minorities. In a striking statement, she said: 'None of the 800 or more people that we met, nor any of the two hundred plus written submissions to the review, said there wasn't a problem to solve.'<sup>22</sup>

In many ways it is encouraging that there is widespread recognition of the problem. This also means that that it is becoming more politically acceptable to say so. Casey articulated something of a cultural clash in some of our communities:

*I also found... cultural and religious practices in communities that are not only holding some of our citizens back but run contrary to British values and sometimes our laws. Time and time again I found it was women and children who were the targets of these regressive practices. And, too often, leaders and institutions were not doing enough to stand up against them and protect those who were vulnerable.'*<sup>23</sup>

She made clear that many institutions are too accommodating out of fear of being labelled Islamophobic:

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/religioninenglandandwales2011/2012-12-11>.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ijesd.org/papers/29-D438.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-europe/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/MCB-Muslims-in-Numbers-infographic-final.jpg>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/09/20/muhammad-top-english-baby-name-fifth-year-running/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/unsettled-belonging-a-survey-of-britains-muslim-communities/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration>

<sup>22</sup> Casey Review, p5.

<sup>23</sup> Casey Review, p5.

*Too many public institutions, national and local, state and non-state, have gone so far to accommodate diversity and freedom of expression that they have ignored or even condoned regressive, divisive and harmful cultural and religious practices, for fear of being branded racist or Islamophobic... At its most serious, it might mean public sector leaders ignoring harm or denying abuse.*<sup>24</sup>

She highlighted Islam in particular, and said, 'We found a growing sense of grievance among sections of the Muslim population, and a stronger sense of identification with the plight of the 'Ummah', or global Muslim community.'<sup>25</sup>

Trevor Phillips, former head of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, said last year that 'the integration of Muslims will probably be the hardest task we have ever faced'.<sup>26</sup> This is a remarkably strong statement, and all the more significant coming as it does from the man who claims to have commissioned the report that first introduced the term 'Islamophobia' to Britain twenty years ago.

The problem is exacerbated by concentration of Muslims in certain urban areas. The 2011 census showed that major cities such as Bradford, Luton, Slough, and Birmingham all have Muslim populations over 20%, compared with 5% for the overall population of the nation.<sup>27</sup> The Casey Review said that 'people of Muslim faith live in increasing and greater concentrations (relative to other minority ethnic and faith groups) in particular local electoral wards in certain areas in the north, the Midlands and London.'<sup>28</sup> This creates segregated communities where some Muslims have little interaction with people from other communities, and where children attend Muslim-dominated schools. The Casey review cited a survey of pupils at a non-faith secondary school, which found that pupil estimates of the Asian population of Britain ranged from 50% to 90% (the actual figure is 7%).<sup>29</sup>

### **Cultural influence**

Islam has a disproportionate influence on our culture, given that it represents only 5% of the population. Multiple mainstream supermarkets and restaurant chains sell halal meat, often without labelling it. London hosts an Islamic fashion show.<sup>30</sup> Debenhams recently became the first major department store to sell Islamic clothing.<sup>31</sup> Posters proclaiming 'Subhan Allah' meaning 'Glory to Allah' appeared on hundreds of buses this year.<sup>32</sup> In education, exam boards have rescheduled exams to avoid clashing with Ramadan for the next three years.<sup>33</sup> Islamic schools have been found to contain extremist material.<sup>34</sup> Several of our leading universities have accepted significant Islamic funding, ceding influence to Islam in tertiary education.<sup>35</sup>

As far as religious influence goes, this is most symbolically demonstrated with the fact that many church buildings have been converted to mosques. Indeed, the mosque attended by the Manchester Arena attacker was previously a Methodist church. Perhaps even more shockingly, the Muslim call to prayer was chanted in Gloucester Cathedral earlier this year,<sup>36</sup> and in St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow, the Qur'an was recited during a communion service.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Casey Review, p16.

<sup>25</sup> Casey Review, p13.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/my-sons-living-hell-j72t7fppc>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rft-table-ks209ew.xls>

<sup>28</sup> Casey Review, p23.

<sup>29</sup> Casey Review, p49.

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2016/may/29/london-show-reflects-global-boom-in-islamic-fashion>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/debenhams-hijab-muslim-clothing-women-uk-department-store-religion-a7575306.html>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslim-charity-islamic-relief-allah-is-great-posters-buses-islam-positive-light-a7019396.html>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/06/popular-exams-in-uk-to-be-rescheduled-to-avoid-ramadan>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3911470/The-extremist-schools-t-close-Four-Muslim-colleges-ordered-shut-Government-use-courts-defy-ministers.html>

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.meforum.org/6205/foreign-muslim-funding-western-universities>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/756360/islamic-call-to-prayer-historic-british-gloucester-cathedral-outrage>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/bishop.michael.nazir.ali.condemns.koran.reading.at.anglican.cathedral.epiphany.service>

The BBC reported in 2015 that there had been more than 11,000 recorded cases of ‘honour crime’ in the last five years.<sup>38</sup> Earlier this year, a Glasgow shopkeeper was killed, effectively for being the wrong type of Muslim.<sup>39</sup> He had been granted asylum when he moved from Pakistan in 1998. It was expected that Scotland would be a safe place for him and his family. The Crown Prosecution Service has been accused by a whistle-blower of being afraid to tackle honour crimes for fear of causing unrest in Asian communities.<sup>40</sup>

In prisons, Muslims are disproportionately represented, being 14.5% of the prison population.<sup>41</sup> A government report found that prison Imams are routinely distributing extremist literature amongst prisoners.<sup>42</sup> There are also reports of prisoner-run ‘sharia courts’ carrying out various types of corporal punishment.<sup>43</sup> The net result is that inmates leave prison more radical than when they went in, with many converting to Islam in prison.<sup>44</sup>

### Jihadists

British intelligence services say they are monitoring over 3,000 home-grown Islamist extremists who are willing to carry out attacks in Britain.<sup>45</sup> Another 20,000 have featured in previous inquiries, and are considered to pose a ‘residual risk’. Some of those who carried out attacks this year were in that latter group. Police and intelligence services have some 500 live anti-terror operations running. Some 850 British Muslims have travelled to support or fight for Jihadist groups in Syria or Iraq.<sup>46</sup> Another 600 have been stopped on the way.<sup>47</sup> The mother of one of these fighters claimed that her son had been radicalised in just seventeen days in London after attending sermons at local mosques.<sup>48</sup> It is not physically possible for intelligence services to monitor all these people, given that MI5 only employ around 4,000 people.<sup>49</sup> It takes three teams of six people, plus support staff, to monitor one person round the clock.<sup>50</sup>

Home-grown radicals are bad enough. There are also overseas-grown radicals that we are importing. The head of the Armed Forces has said that Jihadists are ‘hiding in plain sight’ among migrants.<sup>51</sup> One foster mother was shocked to find that the supposed 12-year-old boy she fostered was actually a 21-year-old trained Jihadist, skilled with a rifle, and with Taliban and child abuse material on his phone.<sup>52</sup>

### Sharia law

It has been estimated that there are over 85 Sharia courts operating in the UK.<sup>53</sup> This has created a de-facto parallel legal system for people in some communities. Women, in particular, may face tremendous family pressure to use Sharia courts, and may lack both the necessary English skills and a proper understanding of their rights under British law to otherwise enjoy the protections that would be afforded them through the English court system.<sup>54</sup> In addition to family pressure, refusal to settle a dispute in a Sharia forum could lead to threats and intimidation, being labelled as an unbeliever or being ostracised from the community.<sup>55</sup>

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/103716.htm

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-33424644>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/07/muslim-man-admits-murdering-shopkeeper-asad-shah-who-wished-belo/>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/11/07/cps-afraid-to-tackle-honour-crimes/>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.itv.com/news/2016-04-19/muslim-jail-chaplains-distributing-islamist-literature-leaked-report-reveals/>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36419430>.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-36437686/sharia-courts-in-british-prisons>.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/the-jihadi-training-camp-right-in-the-heart-of-london-a3249941.html>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/7c55b0b8-4253-11e7-9319-8b08a5454daf>.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985>.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/15/foreign-secretary-600-uk-citizens-isis-syria-philip-hammond>.

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/23/jihadi-johns-fourth-beatle-unmasked-as-refugee-given-shelter-in/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/faq>.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22718000>.

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/14/jihadists-hiding-plain-sight-among-migrants-head-armed-forces/>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3863392/Foster-mother-discovers-12-year-old-Afghan-refugee-orphan-cared-21-year-old-jihadi.html>

<sup>53</sup> Denis MacEoin, *Sharia Law or ‘One Law for All?’*, Civitas, June 2009, p69.

<sup>54</sup> *Sharia Law in Britain: A Threat to One Law for All & Equal Rights, One Law for All*, June 2010, p16.

<sup>55</sup> Baroness Caroline Cox, *A Parallel World: Confronting the abuse of many Muslim women in Britain Today*, Bow Group, 2015, p9.

Machteld Zee has exposed how many of those promoting the operation of Sharia councils in the UK are actually fundamentalists who want to turn the UK into an Islamic state, imposing Sharia law on all citizens.<sup>56</sup> Sharia law is inherently discriminatory against both women and non-Muslims; in these courts a woman's voice counts half as much as a man's voice. Some Sharia court judges have argued for child marriage, or say that 'a husband should not be questioned why he hit his wife'.<sup>57</sup>

In 2014, Britain became the first non-Islamic country to issue a sovereign Sharia bond. There are now over twenty banks offering Sharia compliant products in the UK, with over 100,000 retail customers.<sup>58</sup> Elsewhere I have outlined the various problems with Islamic finance, which is based on a modern, radical interpretation of the Qur'an and is promoted by fundamentalists.<sup>59</sup> The UK, nevertheless, remains committed to London becoming a centre for Islamic finance.

## Beliefs of Muslims

Rather than discussing the five pillars of Islam, or the six articles of faith, which can easily be found on the internet if you are not familiar with them, I want to look at some worldview ideas proposed by the more fundamentalist end of the spectrum in the UK.

### Problems in society

Britain is seen as failing morally and spiritually; immorality is on public display in our culture, on TV, in films, in the music industry; socially, family breakdown is evident; culturally there is a loss of national identity, economically, there are many issues and criticisms that can be made; spiritually, Christianity is seen as weak and in decline: only 5-7% of the population regularly attend church. The critique is made by Muslims that our society is obviously failing in many ways and we, as Christians, would agree.

Where we would differ would be in the diagnosis of the reasons for the failure of our society. The Islamic view would be that Christianity is to blame for the present situation. Britain is understood to be basically a 'Christian culture', but Christianity has failed to provide a moral foundation for our society; Christians lack confidence in their beliefs and cannot define or defend their faith well; Christianity is failing to attract people to church, whereas Islam is rapidly growing in this country with many converts from Christianity to Islam. Christians are seen as living no differently to unbelievers, lacking moral integrity, with similar levels of family breakdown. In any case, as Muslims see it, Christianity is false and based on a corrupted scripture.

### The attraction of Islam

The solution, therefore, is very clear to the Muslim mindset: Britain and British people should accept Islam as the foundation for society. It is useful to understand the attraction of Islam in this context.<sup>60</sup> Islam is viewed as a moral religion. Alcohol is not allowed, nor is adultery, stealing or various other crimes; women cover themselves up, rather than flaunt their sexuality; there are clear penalties for moral violations, both in this life and the next. Christianity, by contrast, is seen as relatively immoral, especially when you compare Christian cultures with Islamic cultures.

Islam is also a 'simple' religion. It has a simple creed and a simple theology of 'one God'. There are no complications like a Trinity, or an incarnation, or the atonement, or the ascension. There is a clear morality: good deeds are weighed against bad; it is fatalistic. Islam is thus easy: It is the easiest religion in the world to join (and the hardest to leave!). There are only five things to do: the five pillars of Islam. It is very clear whether you have done what is required or not. Islam is recent; it came after Christianity. It has built-in

<sup>56</sup> Machteld Zee, *Choosing Sharia? Multiculturalism, Islamic Fundamentalism & Sharia Councils*, Eleven International Publishing (2016), pp111-118.

<sup>57</sup> Machteld Zee, *Choosing Sharia? Multiculturalism, Islamic Fundamentalism & Sharia Councils*, Eleven International Publishing (2016), p118.

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.thecityuk.com/news/global-market-for-islamic-financial-services-up-12-to-2trillion/>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.christianconcern.com/islamicfinance>

<sup>60</sup> For more on this see: David Pawson, *The Challenge of Islam to Christians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003).

defences against Christianity and being more recent implies that it is better, newer, improved and more relevant relative to other religions.

Islam is also a masculine religion: It is a religion for men and by men; Islam attracts men. Christianity is often seen as effeminate and weak; there are more women than men in most churches. Islam is understood to be a reverent religion: Muslims pray five times a day; Christians are thought to only pray on Sundays; Muslims kneel and bow down before God; church worship often lacks such obvious reverence. In a consumeristic society people will choose the religion that they prefer. Islam can appear to be better and more attractive than Christianity in all these ways.

### Surveys

Surveys have revealed some striking information about the beliefs of British Muslims. The Policy Exchange survey of 2016 found that 96% believe that the attacks of 9/11 were not carried out by Al Qaeda.<sup>61</sup> The vast majority believe that there is some other explanation, and this is commonly understood in Muslim communities.

The ICM survey of 2015 found that 7% of Muslims support the objective to create an Islamic state.<sup>62</sup> Only 3% said that they support the way in which Isis is establishing a caliphate. This is a small minority of British Muslims, but 3% of around three million Muslims is 90,000 people supporting Isis. When it comes to free speech, the same survey found that 78% believed that no publication should have the right to publish pictures of Mohammed. This rose to 87% when talking about the right to publish pictures making fun of Mohammed. Muslims are thus very intolerant of criticism of their religion and do not support free speech in this respect.

The survey asked whether violence is justified in a number of situations. As many as 24% sympathised with violence by organised groups to protect their religion; 18% sympathised with violence against those who mock Mohammed. Sympathy with terrorist actions for political protest was much lower at 4% but 31% agreed that it is acceptable for British Muslims to keep more than one wife, even though that is illegal in this country. Also, 35% believed that Jewish people have too much power in Britain.

### How can the church respond?

Islam poses a challenge to the church in the UK. It is growing rapidly, and gaining influence throughout our society. So how can the church respond?

I would like to outline 'five pillars' of responding to Islam:

*Firstly, prayer:* Islam is a spiritual entity; this is a spiritual battle. The Bible tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood (Eph. 6:12). Prayer is key. We need to clearly understand that Muslims are redeemable, whereas Islam is not and pray accordingly. Islam works against Christianity and the gospel. All of our interaction and responses to Islam need to be grounded in prayer.

*Secondly, love:* Jesus said that we should even love our enemies (Mt. 5:44). Not that Muslims are our enemies, but Islam is an enemy of Christ. Our responses to Islam need to be motivated with love – love for Muslims, and love for others. We cannot respond to anger and hatred in any other way than with love. We also need to show that we as a church will love and support those who at great personal cost are willing to leave Islam to follow Christ. This is why we at Christian Concern set up our Safe Haven<sup>63</sup> project to show exactly that kind of love to converts.

*Thirdly, confront:* It is a mistake to see confrontation as unloving. Jesus confronted the Pharisees in the

<sup>61</sup> <https://policyexchange.org.uk/publication/unsettled-belonging-a-survey-of-britains-muslim-communities/>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.icmunlimited.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Muslims-full-suite-data-plus-topline.pdf>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.safe-haven.org.uk/>

most forthright manner (Matthew 23). Paul confronted the Athenians with the futility of their idolatry (Acts 17:22-34). Paul even publicly confronted Peter over his compromising behaviour (Gal. 2:11-14). Islam is an ideology that needs to be confronted. Paul said: 'We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ' (2 Cor. 10:5). Islam sets itself up against the knowledge of God. Its truth claims need to be confidently confronted; the church needs to build up resources for Christians to confidently challenge and confront Islam in our society at every level. Whether it is with friends and neighbours, or in the public square and in the media, we lovingly confront Muslims with the truth claims of Christianity and desire that they should experience the love of Christ.

*Fourthly, expose:* Paul said: 'Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them' (Eph. 5:11). There are aspects of Islam that need to be exposed. Islam is an intolerant religion. This does not mean that all Muslims are intolerant people. Rather, it means that the ideology presented in the Qur'an and in the example of Muhammad is intolerant. It is also discriminatory against both women and non-Muslims; it advocates violence and cruel punishments; it seeks political power. These things need to be exposed. One way that we have done this is in producing a booklet outlining various problems with Islamic finance.<sup>64</sup> This exposes the real agenda behind Islamic finance and how it is based on a modern, radical interpretation of the Qur'an. Christians need to shine a light on things that are being done in the name of Islam to expose their true nature.

*Fifthly, resist:* The influence of Islam in our society needs to be resisted in law and in politics. Christians need to be actively involved in this kind of resistance. Amos said: 'Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts' (Amos 5:15). Christians should use our legal rights and freedoms to maintain and protect Christian freedoms. The great example of successful resistance was the campaign to stop the mega-mosque from being built in London for the 2012 Olympics. The original plans were for a building that could hold at least 40,000 worshippers, making it the largest place of worship in the whole of Europe.<sup>65</sup> The mosque was backed by Islamic group Tablighi Jamaat, who preach a conservative and separationist version of Islam. The mosque was successfully resisted with a campaign led by Alan Craig and a small group of others, which also garnered support from the local Muslim community.<sup>66</sup> Christian Concern supports Christian street preachers who are deemed to have offended people by insulting Islam, with a 100% success record in defending free-speech so far. We have also defended Christians who have lost their jobs for witnessing to Muslims. Baroness Cox has valiantly sought to resist the influence of Sharia courts through parliamentary bills. This kind of resistance needs to grow and gain wide support in the church as we seek to preserve our Christian freedoms.

Part of the challenge of Islam is that it is bold and unashamed in its approach. In this it can put to shame Christians who shy away from talking about our faith or proclaiming its relevance to society. In the end, the only effective response to radical Islam is radical Christianity. If more of us were radical, bold and unashamed about our faith, confident in confrontation and challenging Islam's claims, then many more Muslims would turn to Christianity. As it is, there are reports of churches baptising Muslim believers, on a regular basis in some cases. God appears to have chosen to use Islam to awaken the church. The question is, will we respond to this call?

*Tim Dieppe*

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.christianconcern.com/islamicfinance>.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3632591/The-shadow-cast-by-a-mega-mosque.html>

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.alansangle.com/?p=2017>.

## Abortion – Fifty Years of Shame

Anniversaries are how we mark out our history – some are welcome, others are not, some are humdrum, others are special. This year two are extra special – a 500th and a 50th. Both changed our world. The first is when Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church in 1517, which ushered in the wonderful gospel freedoms of the Protestant Reformation. The second is the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act, which ushered in the hideous practice of legally killing unborn children in England, Scotland and Wales. The story of the Augustinian friar has been retold many times, the slaughter of the defenceless pre-born is a more veiled story.

### How did we get the 1967 Act?

The history of UK abortion law is long but simple – for many centuries abortion had, by and large, been a criminal offence. And even today, abortion remains, perhaps surprisingly, illegal in the UK. This is primarily because sections 58 and 59 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act still make it a crime for anyone, using any means whatsoever, ‘to procure the miscarriage of any woman’. The 1929 Infant Life (Preservation) Act further extended this prohibition to a child ‘capable of being born alive’. In other words, for a hundred years and more there was an explicit and widespread public condemnation of abortion, severe penalties for those illicitly involved, as well as genuine protection for the unborn and their mothers.

So what happened in 1967? How did we acquire just about the most liberal and ruthless abortion law in Europe, even the world? Pre-1967 statutes allowed abortion only for the preservation of the mother’s life and health. For some, this was never enough. If the door to abortion was slightly ajar, they wanted it ripped off its hinges. Yet no British government was willing to grasp the nettle. Several MPs had introduced abortion-liberalising bills, but they had all foundered.

Then in May 1966, David Steel MP drew third place in the ballot for private members’ bills and he introduced his Medical Termination of Pregnancy Bill into the House of Commons. Its first reading was on 15 June and a protracted and arduous debate began. Days and nights were spent arguing, rewording, lobbying and generally manipulating events in both Houses. It was all quite legitimate – the Bill’s supporters simply seized their opportunity. Eventually, with parliamentary time being given by the Labour government of the day to ensure its success, the Bill passed its third reading on Friday 14 July 1967 after an all-night sitting in a half-empty House of Commons by a majority of 167 to 83. It received the Royal Assent on Friday 27 October. Six months later, on 27 April 1968, the Act came into operation – the legalised killing started.

One year later, its sponsor, David Steel, speaking at a meeting of supporters, said that the Bill was successful because ‘The right men were in the right place at the right time.’ By contrast is the dismal fact that the number of evangelical Christian leaders who ‘saw the issue’ and stood up and spoke out against the Bill can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Effective opposition was too little, too late.

### What is the content of the 1967 Act?

The Act was not only a compromise, but also a poorly-drafted piece of legislation. This may have suited the purposes of the pro-abortionists, because over the years most of its intended legal boundaries have been ridden over roughshod. During the next two decades, no fewer than fifteen attempts were made in Parliament to revise the Act either by tightening the criteria for abortion or lowering the upper time limit. All failed.

In outline, the 1967 Abortion Act did not legalise any abortion. It gave no right to a woman to an abortion and it did not provide ‘abortion-on-demand’. Also, it imposed no duty on any doctor to carry out an abortion. Nevertheless, it did offer a legal defence against the charge of attempting ‘to procure the miscarriage of any woman’ under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act. Thus it did, according to section 1, protect from prosecution a ‘registered medical practitioner’ who performed an abortion, as long as two such doctors certified that, in their opinion, formed in good faith, the continuance of the pregnancy



would involve risk, on one or more of six statutory grounds, greater than if the pregnancy were terminated. After fifty years, 97% of all UK abortions are now performed under ground C, the so-called 'social clause'. It specifies the 'risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman'. In effect, this criterion is as long as it is wide – almost any pretext will do.

### **What is the effect of the 1967 Act?**

In simple terms, the answer is that an estimated 8.8 million unborn children have been aborted in the UK during the last fifty years. Such a colossal number is almost beyond comprehension. The annual figures remain enormous – during 2016 there were 190,604 abortions performed in England and Wales, plus another 12,063 in Scotland. This total of 202,469 is approximately the entire population of Bournemouth or Swansea or Aberdeen. It is equivalent to 770 unborn children every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Have you grasped the enormity of abortion, on your doorstep?

Legalised abortion was never envisioned to be like this. Back in 1967, abortion was intended for the poor, overworked, struggling woman with several children, living in squalor with a useless drunken husband. It was regarded as a last resort. Today, fifty years on, abortions are typically for young, single women, in good health, in decent housing, with a regular income, carrying healthy unborn children. What are we doing?

Over the years the 1967 Act has been tweaked so that the upper time limit for abortion is now typically 24 weeks. However, if disability, such as Down's syndrome, is suspected then the upper limit is birth – yes, 40 weeks. However, what has not changed in the last fifty years is the physical and mental toll on mothers, fathers and, of course, the unborn. For many parents, the aftermath of abortion is often shadowed by guilt and regret. Such symptoms of post-abortion syndrome are denied by many medical authorities but are familiar to those involved in pro-life counselling.

### **What is the future of the 1967 Act?**

For some, the reach of the Act is still not enough – they want more than 200,000 abortions each year. And there are now serious calls to decriminalise abortion. Indeed, in March of this year, a Ten-Minute Rule Bill was presented to Parliament. Its purpose was to remove all legal restrictions on abortion by tearing up sections 58 and 59 of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, the 1967 Abortion Act and probably the 1929 Infant Life (Preservation) Act too. Alarming, the Bill was passed by 172 votes to 142. The second reading was set for 12 May, but in the meantime, a General Election was called, Parliament was dissolved and the Bill fell. Nevertheless, this episode should jolt the consciences of MPs and us.

Furthermore in September, the 33 Council members of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) voted to change the College's position from neutrality to supporting decriminalisation. The RCOG's president, Lesley Regan, has said that abortions should be treated no differently from other medical procedures – including something as simple as removing a bunion. While most abortionists are members of the RCOG, its full membership of 6,000 was not consulted. A similar ethical stance has also recently been taken by the British Medical Council and the Royal College of Midwives. The latter's chief executive, Cathy Warwick, who incidentally is also the chairwoman of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS), the UK's largest abortion provider, also did not bother to consult her members. There is clearly an alliance of radical pro-abortionists currently pushing their extreme agenda. Decriminalised abortion for any, or no, reason, at any stage of pregnancy, performed anywhere would be a truly disturbing prospect.

### **How are you affected by the 1967 Act?**

Since an estimated one in three women in the UK has now had an abortion before the age of 45, you, your family and your friends, may well be directly affected. Indirectly, we are all affected. Because the lives of more than 8 million unborn children have been terminated in the UK in the last half-century, we should all be dismayed. It is our fifty years of shame. Evangelical Christians have, for too long, been equivocal about abortion – shame on us especially! If you have not shed tears about its practice and aftermath, you have not yet understood abortion.

We are the people who should, above all others, understand such life and death issues and respond with principled compassion. Have you responded at all? Do you still hold 'a moderate view' on abortion? What hinders you from upholding a wholeheartedly pro-life position? Is it the issues of disability or rape or underage girls? Perhaps you need to ponder anew what it means to be 'created in the image of God' (Genesis 1:27) and to be 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139:13-15). Abortion is a direct rebellion against the God-given gift and dignity of the unborn.

### **What must we do about the 1967 Act?**

Christians have an onerous task here. We have been entrusted with both the diagnosis and the cure. The Christian worldview possesses rugged answers to difficult questions and then it calls us to engage and care for all those entangled with abortion and its consequences.

So, have you prayed for, given of your energy, time and money to help those caught up and suffering? They are all around you. Perhaps now, on this heinous 50th anniversary, is a good time to pledge to respond more biblically. Abortion has been called the greatest genocide in history. As the great anti-slavery campaigner, William Wilberforce, once declared in another context, 'Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way but you can never again say you did not know.'

*John Ling*

## **Review – A Better Story: God, Sex and Human Flourishing**

Glynn Harrison, IVP 2017, 216pp, £9.99

'In the space of just a few decades the Christian moral vision, which had buttressed the ancient institutions of marriage and family for centuries, effectively collapsed' (p.xiv). So writes Professor Glynn Harrison in the introductory chapter of this stimulating and challenging critique of contemporary Western culture in relation to sex and relationships.

Professor Harrison, who formerly served as Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Bristol, where he was also a practising consultant psychiatrist, provides an overview of the history of the sexual revolution and outlines a biblical response. He writes against a background in which Christians who adhere to an orthodox view of sexual morality feel overwhelmed and in which many Christian leaders are afraid to address the issues. By 'orthodox', he means those who hold to the following propositions:

- God intended marriage as a lifelong commitment between one man and one woman.
- Marriage isn't simply a human arrangement, but something sacred in God's eyes.
- God himself joins a man and woman together as 'one flesh'.
- This understanding prohibits all forms of sexual activity outside the marriage bond. (p.xvi)

He argues that evangelicals have been caught napping by the scale and speed of change. In a relatively short space of time, we have gone from occupying the cultural mainstream to being viewed as an 'immoral minority'. Professor Harrison writes that, 'The experience of being an immoral, as well as a cognitive, minority creates an overwhelming pressure to conform' (p.77). *A Better Story* has been written to help such believers relate their convictions to the challenges of the sexual revolution.

The book consists of three parts. In Part 1, 'A better understanding', Professor Harrison argues that Christians are struggling and failing so badly in the wake of the sexual revolution because we are not thinking. We have not grasped the ideological coherence of the sexual revolution or mounted an effective intellectual engagement with it. We have also failed to grasp that the revolution has a positive moral vision of its own and we need to grasp the central role of narrative in winning hearts and minds. Part 2, 'A better critique', proceeds to consider how thoughtful, biblically-minded Christians should respond to these challenges and begin a critical engagement. Finally, in Part 3, 'A better story', Professor Harrison urges Christians to recover our confidence and communicate a better narrative with conviction and vision. Each chapter concludes with a helpful summary of 'key ideas' contained within it.

## **The sexual revolution**

The sexual revolution is defined as 'the overturning and liberalisation of long-established social and moral attitudes to sex that began in Western culture in the 1960s and continues to the present day' (p.3). Professor Harrison identifies two major causes and then analyses the ideology of the revolution, with a particular focus on radical individualism, which he describes as 'a modern form of ancient Gnosticism' (p.23). He writes:

*Gnosticism is about discovering, and then expressing, the 'inner you' hidden beneath layers of cultural and religious control. The new Gnosticism says people act properly – that is, authentically – when they freely express their inner true self. The rejection of external authority and the free expression of sexual interests become a kind of moral good and source of flourishing (p.23).*

To modern Gnosticism is attributed the successful erosion and dismantling of marriage as a divine institution, the deconstruction of the family and the cultural dominance of the idea that 'just being yourself' is the road to success (p.19).

A chapter devoted to the moral vision of the sexual revolution draws on the moral foundations theory of the American social psychologist Jonathan Haidt in his book, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. Haidt theorises that our intuitive reactions to moral questions tend to operate along six basic psychological systems, or foundations. People on the political liberal left give more weight to individual needs and concerns such as care, fairness and oppression, whereas people who are more socially conservative or from non-Western cultures place a greater emphasis on general principles that bind people together, such as loyalty, authority and sacred values. Professor Harrison observes that:

*[The] cultural shift away from 'general principles' to individualistic moral reasoning has been one of the greatest achievements of radical individualism over the past half-century, and nowhere more so than in the field of sexual ethics... (p.37).*

The entertainment industry was 'probably the revolution's most effective tool of cultural subversion' (p.42). Scriptwriters pitted hypocritical politicians and fossilised bishops against brave men and women finding the courage to be 'who they really are', and the real-life heroic narratives of ordinary people battling for their freedom were used to embed the stories of the revolution into popular culture.

While the sexual revolution promised so much in terms of freedom, flourishing and wellbeing, it has failed to deliver. The radical individualism at its heart has led to a higher proportion of people living alone and higher levels of loneliness which have undermined community cohesion. Professor Harrison observes that: 'idols always ask for more and more, but give less and less, until in the end they have everything and you have nothing. And so it is here' (p.121). Children in particular have suffered:

*The revolution's ambition for childhood appears to be a confused mixture of near-obsessive... requirements for more safeguarding and endless calls for more 'sex education' that nobody quite knows how to define. Sadly, the revolution has little positive vision for what a good childhood looks like and seems extraordinarily adult-oriented in its preoccupations (p.98).*

## A better story

As the title of the book suggests, its central burden is to urge Christians to construct a new narrative, presenting a Christian vision for sex and marriage. Professor Harrison argues that if we are to win hearts and minds we need not more facts, but a better story. He suggests five core convictions that form the foundational pillars for our story:

- God has spoken: you don't have to figure it all out for yourself.
- God welcomes you into a reality of his making, not yours.
- We flourish as human beings when we work with, rather than against, the grain of God's reality.
- God not only reveals who he is, but he reveals who we are as well.
- No matter what happens, God is good. (pp.126-133)

In his own two-page outline narrative, Professor Harrison encourages Christians to confess to a deficient and sub-Christian view of sex, to express gratitude to the sexual revolution for being a wake-up call, to point out the failure of the sexual revolution, to set forth a vision for sex and marriage and to demonstrate that the sacred link between sex and marriage offers the best chance of flourishing for all (pp.180-182).

Many welcome and much-needed insights are scattered throughout the book. There is, for example, a strong emphasis on the way that marriage enshrines a culture of commitment and binds men to their responsibilities for the children they bring into the world:

*A society that values strong, committed marriages will, by default, nurture the virtues that are critical to the well-being of children: keeping promises, delayed gratification, commitment for the long haul, a focus on education, the blessings of self-control. We can call this the stability factor... In a culture that values marriage these virtues become embedded in family life and recycled on to the next generation. (p.106)*

The point that marriage is not only good for Christians, but good for everybody, and helps to build stronger communities that protect the most vulnerable is made repeatedly. We should therefore not be deterred from having 'a vision of the ideal and of what works in the best interests of children overall' (p.104). In the face of all the injustices and inequalities heaped upon them by the sexual revolution, children need to be put back at the centre of our vision for the family. Professor Harrison notes that 'Beyond vague notions of inclusion and diversity, the revolution seems to have little that is positive to say about the true nature and meaning of sex and sexuality' (p.113) and comments that our children need a richer moral framework than that.

## Questions

With some justification, *A Better Story* raises some probing, uncomfortable and unsettling questions for evangelical believers. However, at some points it may be wondered whether Professor Harrison cedes too much ground. For example, is it really true to say that 'Christendom's dysfunctional attitudes to sex helped create the discontent that triggered the revolution and propelled it forward' (p.81)? A similar assertion later in the book is also open to question:

*Orthodox Christians, with their sub-biblical shame culture, paved the way for much of the sexual revolution. And as the revolution got under way, our cowardly inability to articulate an alternative vision of sexual flourishing remains a continuing source of shame... (p.121)*

And is it not a rather sweeping statement to claim that 'secular culture understands the heart better than most Christians' and that 'We should thank God that the sexual revolution has stopped us in our tracks because it brings us face to face with our pastoral poverty and rubs our noses in it'? (p.143)

There is an emphasis on the need to discover a language of fairness, compassion and equality in order to relate to the radical individualism of our age:

*We must connect with the individualistic, compassion-driven morality of today's culture while managing to communicate something about the importance of the big principles that safeguard the many as well as the few. Our narrative needs to engage with today's moral concerns about equality, injustice and freedom from oppression. (p.180)*

However, little explanation is given as to what such engagement might look like in practice. More detail on this point would have been helpful.

At the end of his 'narrative', Professor Harrison writes:

*While we can't stop advocating for ways of life that we believe bring flourishing, we won't try to impose them again, because people must be free to make their own choices. (p.182)*

But it is not altogether clear what he means by not trying to 'impose' ways of life that bring flourishing. What implications would such a stance have for campaigns seeking to protect children from the normalisation of LGBT lifestyles in Relationships Education lessons in school, for example? Is the 'narrative' he presents compatible with a longer-term campaign to repeal the Marriage (Same-Sex Couples) Act 2013 and recover the legal definition of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman? And is it compatible with opposition to same-sex adoption?

Many readers are likely to struggle with the chapter 'The End of Longing', sub-titled 'How our sexual desires connect us with heaven'. Professor Harrison writes that:

*[T]he biblical picture of marital sexual union is nothing less than an anticipation of an even deeper union with the Divine. And whether we are married or single in this life, sexual desire is our inbuilt homing instinct for the Divine, a kind of navigation aid showing us the way home. (p.137)*

Towards the end of the chapter, having surveyed several passages in which the imagery of bride and bridegroom is employed to represent the relationship between God and his people, he asserts:

*[T]he Bible has no problem comparing God's love with erotic human love. Eros captures the human experience of desire of such force and intensity that we feel almost physically compelled by it... If we want to understand God's love for us, we are invited to look into the most intimate and private corners of our felt sexuality and cross-refer... [H]uman erotic sexual desire is a picture of God's love, and we need to look into our sexuality to understand his love fully.*

*[O]ur erotic experiences of being sexual... are a divine homing instinct for the glorious union that lies ahead.' (p.146)*

Professor Harrison recognises that such thoughts will be uncomfortable for some, but maintains that such discomfort is due to a sub-biblical attitude to the erotic that 'will not do' (p.149).

That human marriage is an image of the union between Christ and his church and is intended to display something of the love of the heavenly bridegroom for his beloved is beyond dispute, but as with any biblical imagery, we have to be careful not to press the details too far. Failure to pay due regard to the essential difference between the earthly picture and the heavenly reality can lead to some bizarre and far-fetched interpretations. Berkhof's observations on typology in general apply equally to the Bible's treatment of marriage as an image of a far greater union:

*To pass from the type to the antitype is to ascend from that in which the carnal preponderates to that which is purely spiritual, from the external to the internal, from the present to the future, from the earthly to the heavenly. (L Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation, Baker, 1952, p.147.)*

## The challenge for the church

At several points in the book, the reader may gain the impression that if Christians would only show contrition for past failures and achieve a better balance between caring for individual needs and concerns while holding on to biblically-rooted principles, then we would command much more respect and reverse some of the damaging fallout from the sexual revolution. But in the penultimate chapter, Professor Harrison shows that he does not view the world through rose-tinted spectacles. Before attempting to craft his narrative he injects a note of healthy realism:

*We must start by recognising the naivety of believing that, even with the most compelling narrative, this vision will be welcomed in the public square. No matter how winsome, how persuasive, our case, no matter how well we manage to prove its life-giving goodness, standing against the flow always courts rejection. We are fallen, prideful creatures who do not welcome the exposure of sin in their lives. No matter how well we avoid being judgmental, people will feel judged and resentful. That is why Jesus told us to take up our cross and follow him. (p.179)*

He rightly emphasises that 'orthodox convictions around sexual ethics need to be based in reason and calm analysis, not... gut responses driven by fear and disgust' (p.89) and stresses that it is a mistake to view it as our calling to be 'orthodox in our doctrine, but liberal in our love'. Truth and grace cannot be separated. Our calling is to be orthodox in doctrine *and* in love, compassion and grace. Grace accepts us where we are, but it does not leave us there (p.193).

At the personal level, husbands and wives who remain faithful to each other not only bear witness to the love of God, but they put it on display. Single people who abstain from sex outside marriage equally bear witness to God's faithfulness (p.153), and weddings provide an opportunity to bear cultural witness to the meaning of marriage, with the potential to surprise and inspire (pp.187-188).

Given the power of culture to shape hearts and minds, and given the way that orthodox Christians are increasingly excluded from the public square for their adherence to biblical principles, where should our priorities lie? Should we devote our attention to sustaining our own beliefs within the Christian community (Rod Dreher's 'Benedict Option')? Or should we refuse to be silenced and stand up and be counted, whatever the cost (the 'Wilberforce Option'). In addressing this question, Glynn Harrison comes firmly down on the side of *both*, though he suggests that, realistically, in the short term we may need to devote more energy to preserve confidence in our own communities.

All in all, this is a most thoughtful and stimulating treatment of a very important topic. We may not agree with the Professor Harrison at every point, but he will not be too troubled by that. He does not profess to have written the last word on the issue. This is 'simply an introduction', he writes, 'There's much more to do.' He has written with the aim of making us *think*, and if this book does that, it will have achieved its purpose.

*Norman Wells*

## Latest news of significant individual cases

*The following are summaries of the story so far in some of the significant recently-resolved or still unresolved cases involving Christians responding to a wide range of legal, police or disciplinary action against them. Seeking a remedy by means of litigation can be a lengthy process – sometimes taking several years for a closure to be reached. All cases mentioned are being handled by the Christian Legal Centre.*

### Religious Freedom at Work and in Education

#### Victoria Wastenev

Victoria Wastenev, a former senior NHS occupational therapist, was disciplined for giving a Christian book to a Muslim colleague and for praying for her. She was suspended by the NHS Trust for almost nine months and eventually found guilty of three 'offences' by an internal disciplinary panel: inviting her Muslim colleague to church-organised events, praying with her (despite having permission to do so) and giving her a Christian book.

An Employment Tribunal ruled that the Trust was justified in disciplining Victoria for sharing her faith with her colleague, despite seeing evidence that Victoria's colleague appreciated and reciprocated her friendship. Victoria appealed the Employment Tribunal's decision to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. They too decided against her, holding that the treatment of which she complained was because of, and related to, her inappropriate actions, rather than any legitimate manifestation of her belief. Victoria was granted an oral hearing at the Court of Appeal in May, though this was subsequently vacated and a new date arranged on 27 July. Following this hearing, permission was refused for a full hearing.

An application to the European Court of Human Rights is being drafted.

#### Barry Trayhorn

Barry Trayhorn was forced to resign from his job at a sex offenders' prison after Bible verses that he quoted during a Christian chapel service provoked a hostile response from prisoners and prison management. Whilst leading worship at a chapel service in May 2014, Barry spoke about the wonder of God's forgiveness for those who repent, quoting 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 from memory. The verses mention a number of sins, including adultery, homosexual practice, greed and drunkenness. The prisoners were at the service of their own volition, and were free to leave at any point.

Four days after the service, a complaint was made. Barry was immediately barred from helping with chapel services. He was later told that his comments during the service were 'homophobic' and breached national prison policy and he was issued with a final warning. Barry complained to the Employment Tribunal that he had been constructively dismissed and that he had been discriminated against because of his Christian faith. The prison defended its decision to discipline Barry because it said prisoners needed to be protected from offensive statements and Barry's comments may have resulted in bullying towards homosexual prisoners, even though no evidence for this was presented to the Employment Tribunal.

The Employment Tribunal held that Barry had not been discriminated against by the prison by sharing his Christian faith. This decision has very disturbing implications for the freedom to maintain gospel witness in prisons. Barry successfully applied for permission to appeal the Employment Tribunal's decision to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. The Employment Appeal Tribunal decided against Barry, and permission is being sought to appeal to the Court of Appeal.

#### Richard Page

Richard commenced work as a magistrate in Kent where he served for 15 years. During this time, he became a well-respected member of the Family Panel. In July 2014, while presiding over an adoption case involving a same sex couple, Richard expressed the view that a child is best raised by a mother and a father during a closed-door consultation with colleagues. Having heard all the evidence, he decided that his legal

duty to act in the best interests of the child meant that he could not agree with placing the child with a same-sex couple.

His colleagues complained about him and, following an investigation by the local Justice of the Peace Advisory Panel, the case was referred to the Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice. They told Richard that his Christian beliefs about family life were discriminatory against same-sex couples. He was publicly reprimanded and barred from sitting as a Magistrate until he had undergone equality training.

In March 2016, Mr Page appeared for a few seconds on BBC Breakfast News and said that 'my responsibility as a Magistrate as I saw it, was to do what I considered best for the child, and my feeling was therefore that it would be better if it was a man and woman who were the adoptive parents'. Richard was removed from the Magistracy by the Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice for the comments he made during the BBC interview which were held to have brought the magistracy into disrepute which constituted serious misconduct.

Mr Page lodged a claim at the Employment Tribunal, claiming discrimination on grounds of his Christian faith. A preliminary hearing concerning judicial immunity was scheduled at the Employment Tribunal for October 2016, though this was subsequently adjourned. The adjournment was made to allow the Supreme Court to consider judicial immunity in a separate case before them later this year. A preliminary hearing for Mr Page was scheduled for September 2017 though this has been deferred until 4<sup>th</sup> December 2017. A full hearing will take place from 12-19 February 2018.

In a separate matter, but one which is related to Richard's decision in the adoption case, the NHS Trust where Richard used to be a non-executive director, suspended him pending investigation into his comments. They later decided that it was not in the interests of the health service for him to continue serving as a non-executive director. This is a further example of the way in which Christians are being forced out of public life for holding Bible-based beliefs.

At a preliminary hearing at the Employment Tribunal in January 2017, the judge described Richard Page's case as 'crying out to be heard'. A full hearing took place at the Employment Tribunal from 1-4 August, and the judgment has yet to be handed down. The Christian Legal Centre are continuing to support Richard, and will make an application to appeal if the Employment Tribunal rule against him.

### **Sarah Kuteh**

Sarah began working for the NHS Trust in 2007, and initially served as a Senior Staff nurse for 5 years in the intensive care department, before being promoted to Sister. In January 2016 she was assigned a position in the pre-operation assessment department. Her role included taking patients through a pre-op assessment questionnaire, covering various topics including the patient's contact details, their health, allergies to medication, and their GP's details. The questionnaire also asked about the patient's religion, as this may have informed their future treatment.

Many patients expressed their beliefs in the questionnaire, and, on occasion, Sarah would enter into discussions with them about their faith. Where the patient said that they were not interested in religion, she would ask, where appropriate, how they had arrived at their decision. Depending on the patient's demeanour and their willingness to talk about religion, she would also sometimes share briefly about how her faith had changed her life.

Following a short investigation, during which Sarah was unable to quiz the witnesses who had made complaints, the hospital dismissed Sarah in August 2016 for gross misconduct, a penalty which Sarah believes is completely disproportionate and punitive. Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, Sarah filed a claim for unfair dismissal in the Employment Tribunal. The Employment Tribunal dismissed Sarah's claim, heard in Spring 2017, though an appeal has since been lodged with the Employment Appeal's Tribunal. A date has not yet been fixed for her appeal.



In a separate matter, a hearing will take place in the Nurses and Midwifery Council to determine whether Sarah can continue practising as a nurse. A date has not yet been given for the hearing.

### **Sharn Ashridge**

Sharn Asbridge has worked as a supply teacher for over five years at numerous schools. On 16 February 2017, she was teaching an RE lesson to Year 10 class. The topic was 'Christians helping the Poor'. On discussing the background of Mother Teresa, there was a line about how her Christian faith led her into this work to spread the gospel. Sharn touched on the meaning of 'gospel', and then on explanatory doctrines such as 'Sin, Jesus' death on the Cross, Heaven and Hell'.

Sharn was asked what Sin was, and explained about it being to 'miss the mark/standard set by God'. One female student then asked about Sharn's views on same-sex marriage, and Sharn gave what she clearly said was her personal opinion that 'the Bible calls homosexuality an abomination, wickedness and unnatural', and it was one of the reasons God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. She then went on to talk about other sins to which she concluded by quoting the Bible 'all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'. She was asked if she hated homosexuals, to which she replied no.

After the class, two members of staff questioned Sharn about her comments on homosexuality and demons. The deputy head ordered that Sharn be dismissed immediately. The Christian Legal Centre made an application to the Employment Tribunal, and we are waiting for a hearing date.

## **Right to Life (Assisted Suicide)**

### **Nikki and Merv Kenward**

Nikki and Merv Kenward, who campaign against euthanasia and assisted suicide, have been seeking to challenge the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions to change the policy on the prosecution of healthcare professionals who assist patients in committing suicide. In October 2014, the DPP amended the policy, making the prosecution of healthcare professionals in assisted suicide cases less likely. In response, the Kenwards sought to challenge the decision, arguing that the DPP acted outside of her powers by liberalising the policy and that this would endanger many vulnerable people. However, in December 2015 the High Court ruled that the DPP had acted lawfully and thus the Kenwards' application was refused.

The Kenwards appealed to the Court of Appeal for permission to appeal the High Court's decision. This application was initially refused, though the Kenwards were granted permission for an oral hearing which took place at the Court of Appeal in January 2017. Lord Justices Longmore and Kitchin heard the Kenwards' appeal application, but unfortunately refused permission for the appeal to go ahead. A costs order was made against the Kenwards, though the Christian Legal Centre are planning to file an ECHR application on the grounds of discrimination.

## **Right to Life (Abortion)**

### **Aisling Hubert**

Aisling Hubert began private prosecutions against two doctors who were caught offering sex-selective abortion for baby girls. The CPS had already investigated the case, but decided against prosecution because, whilst there was sufficient evidence, it would 'not be in the public interest'. However, Aisling's attempt to bring the doctors to justice was again halted by the CPS when they intervened and stopped the private prosecutions. As a result, costs orders were made against Aisling, in favour of the doctors. She then faced a further costs order after unsuccessfully challenging the CPS's decision to stop the private prosecutions. The costs orders against her totalled more than £40,000.

Aisling attended court on 17 January 2017 to challenge the costs orders made in favour of the doctors. After the judge ruled that the costs could not be amended, a settlement was reached regarding the amount

Aisling had to pay. She now has until mid August to pay the agreed amount (which cannot be disclosed because of the doctors' wish for confidentiality).

While we are very disappointed with the result, the case has achieved much in terms of exposing unlawful abortion procedures and the failures of the CPS to afford justice to the most vulnerable in our society. The Christian Legal Centre are continuing to support Aisling, and are challenging the costs order in an application recently submitted to the European Court of Human Rights.

## Transgenderism

### Nigel and Sally Rowe

A couple on the Isle of Wight have removed their child from a Church of England primary school pending legal review of the school's handling of another pupil's request to be recognised as 'transgender'. Nigel and Sally Rowe felt they were left with no option but to withdraw their child as the new school year began, after receiving what they describe as a 'cold and shockingly inappropriate' response to concerns they had raised. The couple, who have actively supported the school over the past four years and helped to lead assemblies, describe the step as 'deeply painful and very reluctantly taken'. They feel they cannot return their child to the school until there is a satisfactory resolution, and believe their only hope of reaching it is to launch legal action, challenging the school's behaviour and the legitimacy of national guidelines. They are taking action to safeguard the wellbeing of their own children, and also to challenge the 'aggressive new gender ideology that is being rolled out across the education system to the detriment of children's best interests'.

In a written response, the school, having taken advice from the Diocese of Portsmouth and citing County Council policy, defended its behaviour. The school made clear that it considered 'the refusal to acknowledge a transgendered person's true gender e.g. by failing to use their adopted name or using gender inappropriate pronouns' to be 'transphobic behaviour'. The Christian Legal Centre are supporting the family, and are currently drafting a pre-action letter before going to court.

### Contributors to this issue of *The Bulletin*

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