

SOCIAL ISSUES BULLETIN

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SOCIAL ISSUES BULLETIN

News, Articles and Reports from the Social Issues Team

Issue 52 – March 2023

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Understanding Abuse in the Context of Christian Marriage

Abuse is not just 'out there'. It flourishes as a form of hidden evil, within family relationships, in the very heart of our Christian communities. This article is my story, so it pertains to the abuse of women, but it is important to understand that men can also be the victims of abuse (although, rarely, violence) as can children. Following recent changes to legislation, children who witness domestic violence are also now victims of child abuse in their own right.¹

Understanding abuse

What is abuse?

Abuse occurs when one person seizes, or attempts to exercise, power over another in order to control them. It can take various forms, often with two or more forms of control being employed simultaneously. The aim is to coerce the victim into compliance with the abuser's will.

Emotional abuse can be wide ranging and may relentlessly include some or all of:

- humiliation about issues such as your appearance, capabilities, parenting, weight, conversation and personality
- isolation from your family
- blame for everything that is wrong in their lives
- accusing you of having affairs
- forbidding you to leave the home without permission
- telling you what to wear, who to see and what to say
- monitoring your social media and phone activity, including using a GPS tracker to monitor where you go.

Financial abuse may include:

- controlling your money or demanding to know how it is spent
- forbidding you to work
- controlling access to food, clothes or transport.

Threats and intimidation may involve:

- threatening to hurt you or the children
- a menacing posture that includes shouting and/or swearing at you
- destroying your possessions, especially those you treasure
- reading or withholding your letters, or reading your emails
- threatening to kill themselves if you don't comply.

Physical abuse includes:

- slapping
- choking
- punching
- pushing or shoving
- beating

Sexual abuse

- pressuring you into having sex
- making demands on you with which you are uncomfortable
- demeaning you as a sexual partner

¹ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/children-classed-domestic-abuse-victims-under-new-guidance>

Any, or all, of these factors can combine, sometimes over a period of years, with the abuser shifting between different strategies of coercion and control. This list is not exhaustive – abusers are endlessly creative in finding ways to induce fear. Abuse is *not* about anger. It is *never* about anger management. Abusers are skilled in using anger to intimidate – they manage their own anger to great effect.

How can we see it?

The simple answer is, you can't. Abusers are usually narcissists who, to everyone outside of the home, appear to be good leaders: charming, attentive and articulate. They embed themselves wherever they can hide in plain sight – the only difference between an abusive Christian and any other abuser is simply the context in which they choose to operate. They will always embed themselves in a community where they can take advantage of a narrative to perpetuate abuse, whilst appearing to be pillars of their community. It is why they can go unseen, sometimes for decades. They are also very skilled in ensuring that any physical injuries which they cause aren't easily visible.

Abused Christian women are often only allowed to take the children to school, and go to church, where they can be constantly monitored. So it might help to be aware of any women who never seem to have their own conversations with their own friends within the church. Are there any ladies in your small groups who never come alone? Are there any women who always seem anxious about getting it wrong, or who become visibly distressed or shaky about common or simple mistakes that nobody else would otherwise notice? Do they often look at their husbands for tacit approval, rather like a young child might look at a parent? Are they always immaculately turned out?

But that said, these are only possible indicators of a distressed person. It may just be that the person concerned is shy or struggles with socialisation.

What can we do about it?

The most helpful thing any church can do is to demonstrate awareness of abusive relationships. In the same way that visible safeguarding protocols are more likely to deter people looking for children to harm, so visible anti-abuse signals can deter abusive men. Unless those being abused are children or protected adults, this isn't a safeguarding issue, so don't assume that your safeguarding procedures are enough. Awareness could include the books you make available on the bookstall; open discussions about the issue (particularly in marriage preparation); joining and promoting a Christian organisation such as Restored (<https://www.restored-uk.org/>) and making their contact details openly available, and being thoughtful about the language used in preaching – there is more about this in a later section.

If someone in your church discloses abuse, you will need a range of practical steps to offer. These include:

- believing her
- telling your church's Safeguarding Lead if children are witnessing violence in the home
- having contact information for the national domestic abuse helpline to hand
- providing safe homes if a woman needs to flee, co-ordinated so that one of those homes is available 24/7
- setting money aside to help with immediate food, clothing and shelter needs
- having contact with a solicitor, if a restraint order is needed
- providing a pre-paid mobile phone, topping up credit as necessary
- offering the use of a computer or taking the woman to a library to use a public computer
- making sure that the person knows how to quickly shut down a website and delete their browsing history if they use a computer at home
- going with them to their GP, a hospital or the police
- going with them to any court hearings

- offering structured childcare and a support network
- continuing to provide safe homes when respite is needed
- being careful about physical space – ask before you hug
- praying specifically – ask her how to pray and check back occasionally to see if those prayer needs have changed.

Abused women need to hear that abuse is never acceptable. It is not their fault, even though they will have repeatedly been told that they are to blame. Acknowledge that their situation is frightening. Listen and give them time to talk, but don't push.

What should we not do?

Never ask why she doesn't leave – the obvious answer to this, of course, is, 'Why doesn't he stop?' We don't leave for a range of reasons. There are specific issues – fear of losing our security, our homes and/or our children; being judged by family and friends from whom we have long since been isolated; not being believed; inability to financially support ourselves alone; because we believe in the sanctity of marriage and for a long time (sometimes years after the most horrific abuse ends) we still love the person we married, and fear of reprisal. And there are general issues – self-confidence and hope have long gone and our lives are enshrouded in fear and anxiety which knows no object but has become our way of being.

Above all, whatever you do, *never* try to persuade a woman to leave. If you do so, you join the chain of coercive control and there is a significant risk of her returning to a dangerous situation if the choice is not entirely hers. It could also put her life in more danger if she makes a risky move that provokes violence. Only she knows her situation and how to plan safely. Only she will know when it is time to go. And when that time comes, be there. One horror is ending, but many other unknown terrors lie ahead.

After she leaves, don't advise her to seek couples counselling or mediation with a view to rebuilding the marriage. This is very rarely appropriate because this is not simply a matter of a relationship that has gone wrong. It should only ever be led by a skilled professional and should only happen after both people have had time apart and they are both willing, openly, honestly and without any external persuasion, to explore the possibility of reconciliation. It would also depend on the extent and nature of the abuse and the length of time that it has endured. There is a clear path in violent abuse from the first attack, through spiralling violence to death. Abusive men are highly plausible and will agree to anything in order to regain control of their 'possession'. If you facilitate this because you believe that reconciliation is doctrinally necessary, or is somehow an aspect of demonstrating forgiveness, you could be sending someone back to their death – the rate of genuine repentance in narcissistic abusers is virtually zero.

Understanding the narratives

To understand the narrative of an abuser, you need to understand how clever they are at using the same language as you, but meaning something quite different. In the context of a Christian marriage, this becomes an issue of spiritual abuse, alongside all the other forms of abuse that victims have to navigate and endure.

In the hands of an abuser, it is common for the Bible, which you see as the precious word of God, to become another, very effective, weapon. Forgiveness is expected as a right. Submission is imposed. Obedience is demanded. Failure to comply is a sin and sinners are worthless. Marriage is a covenant made before God, so it can never be ended except in death. Men are the God-appointed leaders of their homes, so any question is a challenge to his authority and is therefore a challenge to the authority of God. That makes us sinners. Sinners are worthless. And so the cycle continues, with bible verses constantly being corrupted out of context in order to crush us into spiritual obedience.

Those in churches which embrace complementarianism, face another problem because it's their

interpretation of the dominant-male, submissive-female roles which gives the abuser church-sanctioned permission to abuse. While this may be a distortion, it's important, if you lead a complementarian church, to understand how this can be manipulated and to be thoughtful in how the doctrine is articulated. Take care that your teaching isn't inadvertently grooming women for abuse or creating a culture in which abusers can flourish.

Everything in the home (and even the church) becomes a spiritual failing which is her fault. If a child misbehaves, it's because their mother has failed in her spiritual obedience to the head of the house. If anyone gets upset, it's because of some supposed spiritual failing. If a child lies, they have learnt to lie from a dishonest mother.

These are just a few examples, which make it difficult to know how to help a victim in your church without knowing what narratives have been twisted. For some, prayer has become such a potent weapon that just the offer of prayer becomes a trauma trigger. For others, it might be specific bible verses, or maybe church itself has become an unsafe place. The language of church 'family' can be a traumatising reminder of the warped wreckage that has engulfed her personal family. Until an abused person is able to trust you and confide in you (and in abuse recovery that may take a long time) it is best to pray personally for trust to grow and for wisdom in what to say spiritually. While that trust is growing, take real care to include her in any practical way that you can – social activities, walks, trips, cooking meals – so that she can remain part of the church community.

It didn't take me long to realise that the image of our 'perfect' Christian family was manufactured for public consumption, because I grew up in a home with an abusive father who was also a church leader, so I knew what that was all about. But it was years before I realised the extent of the narrative twisting. Honesty was supposed to be the cornerstone of our relationship. There are no words to describe the brutal impact of the betrayal when, looking back down the decades of my marriage, I finally understood the depth of his carefully-concealed corruption. My freely given trust and honesty were manipulated and used by a man whose very being was toxic. All my love, trust and faithfulness were smashed up and handed back to me, gift-wrapped in violence.

Understanding divorce

I include this because, for those of us in conservative evangelical churches, teaching on divorce can lead to the church unwittingly abusing those already abused. This isn't always about the doctrinal view you hold on divorce; it can also be about the way that it is articulated.

I've lost count of the number of times I've been told that God hates divorce (and therefore, by extension, God hates me). It should come as no surprise, given that I viewed my marriage as a covenant, that I do, too. The decision was, and remains, overwhelmingly painful. But my choices became divorce or death. The lesser of two evils became a lived reality. It's important, here, to delineate between a covenant and a civil contract. I took vows before God – that is the covenant, which I did not break. Divorce was the necessary breaking of a civil contract in order to protect myself and secure provision for my future. So be precise in the language you use – God grieves over broken covenants, not negotiated contracts.

Be clear about divorce. It's never trivial. It's not a clinical paper exercise. It's an ugly process that involves having to relive the abuse time after time, with solicitors, in court papers and, for many, in court facing their abuser. It is a gladiatorial process which you have to endure when you are already traumatised and vulnerable. So it really hurts when Christians describe divorce as a 'marriage wreckers' charter'. Our marriages were wrecked long before we took refuge in legal proceedings and we didn't do the wrecking – that was done by men who used God's words as an abusers' charter. Yet we are held accountable for the divorce.

The other phrase, which hurts even more, involves deciding if we have been 'biblically divorced'. After my marriage ended, I had to move. This involved finding a new church, while I was suffering from PTSD and grieving the loss of everything I had known for nearly 40 years, including a loving church fellowship where I had been cared for and supported. When I asked to become a church

member, I was introduced to this concept of 'biblical divorce'. I was interviewed by the pastor, who asked for full disclosure of the nature and extent of the abuse. That triggered a trauma response that left me numb and functionless for weeks. He asked if he could share the details with the elders. I agreed. But without my knowledge or consent, the details were then shared with the whole church. The reason I was given for this abuse was that the church was entitled to know in order for its members to decide if I was 'biblically divorced'. I was duly given the correct label to wear and permitted entry. I fled. Is it surprising that so many of us abandon church altogether? And many of us who do stay exist in the margins.

Sadly, even though God shows me compassion, not judgement, I still have to be judged before I'm 'allowed in' to some Christian organisations beyond my church. Why must I keep reliving the trauma so that you can give me a 'biblically divorced' label to stick on myself? Who are you to judge me?

This problem, it seems to me, comes from the practice of deriving rules instead of considering principles. Marriage is a covenant. Covenants get broken. Instead of forming rules to decide who is allowed in and who isn't, look at how the covenant was broken and who broke it. And instead of applying rules and discipline, extend love and pastoral care to those of us who broke along with our marriages.

Understanding in the church

Diane Langberg, a Christian psychiatrist with extensive experience in supporting abused women right around the world, posted this statement recently on Twitter: *'Christianity does not look like praying and singing and giving money while ignoring the screams and unspeakable suffering of others.'*²

Do you hear our screams of pain?

Some churches don't want to listen because of a (mistaken) belief that forgiveness and reconciliation can restore every marriage; because it might involve the church in adverse publicity or simply because the abuser is a popular, well-respected man. Either way, anyone who doesn't want to listen is responsible in part for the conspiracy of abuse that keeps us silent.

Many churches long to listen, but don't know what to do. And to those churches I would say take on board the content of this article, and also think about the following.

Be thoughtful about the language you use – and this applies to many traumatised people, including any fostered or adopted children in your church community. Punishment for sin is a concept which we all understand, right? But for abused people, who have been told (in the case of children for all of their short lives) that they deserve the abuse because they're bad, this can reinforce what they've been made to believe – that the abuse is God's punishment of them.

We embrace hospitality as a spiritual practice. What might this mean to a woman with no home, or for whom 'home' is her only place of safe refuge? Or a woman who has been told for so many years that her cooking is inedible that she could never invite anyone for a meal?

Be careful how you talk about forgiveness to an abuse survivor. That must come in her own time, after she has come to terms with what has happened to her and God has led her gently to the point of being able to forgive.

If you are preaching on anything which you know might be a trigger, let her know in advance. This includes preaching about family, marriage or sexual abuse. Know who the people are on the margins of your church and find actions beyond words to let them know that they are loved and supported. Keep in touch with anyone who isn't able to come to church – this might seem counterintuitive to you, but for an abused woman, crowded spaces, people who all seem to know

2 <https://twitter.com/DianeLangberg/status/1520070355171295232>

what they're doing, and the need to sit still for periods of time can be beyond them. If we go to church to be honest before God, we cannot leave our pain locked in the box marked 'Do Not Touch' where it hides while we get on with our daily lives. So there is always a fear that the pain will spill out of its box and flow out of control in public. We need to know we are safe before we risk a trauma relapse in public.

I have been part of conservative evangelicalism all my life. I have heard plenty of sermons on male leadership qualities, the role of women as submissive, obedient helpers of their husbands and the reasons why a woman can't teach or lead. I have never once, in all of those years, heard anyone say that God won't hear the prayers of any man who does not honour his wife and treat her as an equal partner (1 Peter 3:7) or that a husband should love and cherish his wife as Christ does the church, even to the point of death.

Allow for interpretation of the Bible. Of course, a church must have a central set of doctrines on which its leaders agree, for the sake of order in the church. But if you aren't willing to discuss differences, then you are responding in just the way an abuser does – telling his victim that there is only one way to believe and you are its gatekeeper. Do you listen and consider views? Or do you shut down discussion because it feels like a threat to your leadership? At the next church, as very much a last-ditch hope that evangelicalism would step up, I invited the minister and his wife for dinner. Raw from my previous experience, I wanted to know what the church's position was on divorce. I grilled them more thoroughly than the food I offered. I still go to that church.

Please employ a female worker who is trained in walking alongside victims of domestic abuse and those in trauma recovery. Read the books listed at the end of this article. Appoint an elder to understand and oversee trauma care.

Understanding trauma

Anyone in your church who has experienced trauma will need help and support, sometimes for many years. This is a big topic and one which encompasses not only domestic abuse, but also victims of violent crime, trafficking, modern slavery, forced marriage and childhood neglect and abuse. In our contemporary society, it's quite likely that pastors will meet people who are victims of some kind of abuse that has left them traumatised, so it's important that churches understand the issue and know how to help, including knowing when to engage a professional counsellor.³

Personal testimony

I end with a personal testimony. My life has been defined by abuse, first at the hands of a Christian father and then for decades at the hands of a Christian husband. I didn't know what it was to be loved unconditionally by another human until I became a mother. But the promises of God are true and faithful. When I sing the hymn 'In Christ Alone' I always think of two things. The first is the line, 'Sin's curse has lost its grip on me' because I'm free now, literally, of his sin of abuse, of the grip of his hand around my throat. But much more than that, I stand.

Here, in the love and power of Christ, I stand.

The above article was submitted by an independent, bona fide contributor, who, for safety and privacy reasons, has asked to remain anonymous. We are happy to agree to this request.

³ Being trauma informed is a huge area, so this article only highlights the need for understanding trauma. To learn more, listen to Philip Swann's talk at the 2022 FIEC conference: <https://fiec.org.uk/resources/christ-trauma-abuse-and-the-church>. The Bible Society also offers a training course for churches on Navigating Trauma: <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/about-us/our-work/england-and-wales/navigating-trauma/>

Further Reading

Natalie Collins, *Out of Control: Couples, conflict and the capacity for change* (SPCK, 2019)

Eryl Davies, *Hidden Evil: A biblical and pastoral response to domestic abuse* (Christian Focus, 2019)

Helen Thorne, *Walking With Domestic Abuse Sufferers* (IVP, 2018)

Helen Paynter, *The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So, why you don't have to submit to domestic abuse and coercive control* (BRF, 2020)

Esther Sweetman (ed.), *Restored: A handbook for female Christian survivors of domestic abuse* (Restored, 2019)

Assisted dying: is society giving up on the vulnerable?

by Steve Fouch

‘You wouldn’t let a dog die like that, so why do people have to?’

I’ve heard that argument a thousand times – people are dying in agony; why can’t we just make it legal to let doctors and nurses end their suffering by ending their lives? We do it for our pets, so why not our parents and grandparents?

It’s an emotive and compelling argument. We all want to know that our loved ones will have care and assistance at the end of their lives and that we will have that care ourselves when our turn comes. Putting someone out of their misery seems like a compassionate step.

The term ‘assisted dying’ has become common in this debate. It is somewhat disingenuous. Assisting someone to die well has been part of the medical and nursing professions for millennia. In the last few decades, the science of palliative care has been finely honed to ensure the vast majority of people can end their lives with as much comfort and dignity as possible. I am sure we all know our local hospice; some of you will have visited and prayed with members of your congregations as they spent their final weeks and days there. Your church may even have supported its fundraising efforts to continue to provide end-of-life care for the local population.

Odd, isn’t it that we have to fundraise for our local hospice but not the local hospital? In most of the UK, palliative care is mainly funded by charity and not the Department of Health.

That is what we always used to mean by ‘assisted dying’. But now it means something else. It has become a euphemism for assisted suicide and euthanasia. Assisted suicide is the prescription of lethal medication to a patient at their request to allow them to end their life at a time of their choosing. Euthanasia is the prescription and administration of lethal medication to a patient to end their life.

In Scotland, we await a new draft bill to legalise assisted suicide. In the rest of the British Isles, the Department of Health and Social Care has just finished a national consultation on the topic. The Isle of Man, Jersey, and the Republic of Ireland, are all about to begin legislating for such measures. It won’t be long before yet another bill comes before the Westminster Parliament. Make no mistake, there is significant pressure to see assisted suicide legalised at the very least.

The introduction of assisted suicide and euthanasia would not simply affect a small number of patients and health professionals but all patients and all health professionals. It will be ordinary doctors and nurses who will end up delivering this. Many (and not just the Christians) want no part in it.

And while proponents argue that it is only assisted suicide for those in the last six months of life that would be legalised, the experience of every other jurisdiction that has changed the law is that it won’t stay that limited for long. The Dutch and Belgian experiments in euthanasia have seen it gradually extend from the mentally competent, terminally ill to those in comas, infants, those with dementia, and even to those with no significant health condition but who have found life or traumatic experiences too much to live with.

Canada is the most alarming example. Not only has it changed the parameters of its Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) legislation several times since 2016. Horror stories abound of people electing to end their lives when not terminally ill but living with disabilities and a lack of social support. People are being told they cannot get the help they need to live but can have help to die. And while the death penalty is illegal, prisoners can opt for euthanasia.

Furthermore, in Canada, a hospital or hospice can lose state funding if they refuse to offer euthanasia. Individual health professionals are being bullied into participating against their consciences with threats of disciplinary action or being struck off.

Worryingly, several of the main British professional bodies representing medics and nurses have moved to a neutral stance on the subject. The Canadian Medical Association did the same in 2014, and the law changed within two years. When the medical and nursing professions abandon their opposition to the legalised killing of patients, legislators often assume this means they are supportive. Legalisation often follows.

There are many arguments against legalising assisted suicide in the UK. They are not uniquely Christian. Humanist groups, disability organisations, and secular commentators are all voicing their concerns about the proposed legislation.

What we have seen worldwide is a reminder that vulnerable people will be put under pressure, real or perceived, to end their lives prematurely. It won't just be the terminally ill, but the lonely, the mentally ill, and those living with disabilities and chronic health conditions. At the same time, the perception that masses of people die daily in agony is simply not true.

The greater need is to see more and better palliative care available for those in the last stages of life. We also need better care and support for the elderly, the disabled, and those with chronic diseases. Assisted suicide could easily become the cheap alternative to properly funding palliative and social care. Do we want those with disabilities, mental illness, or other long-term problems forced to ask for death because there is no help for them to live?

The Bible is not explicit on this topic. There are at least two cases of people asking for assistance to end their lives – both in times of war, and neither are presented as good examples for us to follow (Abimelech in Judges 9:50-57 and King Saul in 1 Kings 31:1-6)! The overall biblical concern is always for the most vulnerable members of society and how such legislation would adversely affect them.

This will eventually affect your church if it ever becomes law in any part of the UK. Members of your congregation may find themselves under pressure to accept assisted suicide rather than be a burden to family. Health professionals in your congregation will struggle to reconcile their consciences with their careers, as they come under pressure to participate in ending the lives of their patients.

If you want to find out how you can engage with this topic more, visit the Care Not Killing Alliance website – <https://www.carenokilling.org.uk/> – which campaigns for better palliative care provision and against assisted suicide and euthanasia. If you have health professionals in your congregation, tell them about Our Duty of Care – <https://ourdutyofcare.org.uk/> – a health professionals' campaign. Also of interest is the All Party Parliamentary Group on Dying Well – <https://www.dyingwell.co.uk/>.

If you want a more in-depth, exploration of the topic, Christian Medical Fellowship produced a paper in 2015 that explores all the key theological and ethical points – see <https://cmf.li/2QMfuZx>

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Dealing with the hot topics of a Post-truth culture

by Regan King

It is inarguable we are living as Christians surrounded by increasing chaos and confusion. Western society sometimes feels like a real-life version of the children's story about the emperor who wore no clothes. The recent debacle of the rapist self-identifying as a trans biological male being sent to a prison in Scotland and the ensuing fallout for Nicola Sturgeon has indicated that, hopefully, boundaries do exist. All the same, it is important to take honest stock of where we are at and accept the Christian responsibility and necessity of dealing with our society's specific hot-button issues from a biblical perspective with the truth and love of Christ.

Assessing where we are at

The Oxford Dictionaries' international word of 2016, 'post-truth' points to a society or situation 'in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'.

While 'post-truth' has many political implications, commonly functioning as an expression thrown around by opposing political groups in attempts to discredit one another, the concept goes far beyond politics.

A post-truth society doesn't necessarily deny that truth exists. It simply doesn't *feel* like seeking and finding truth is overly important. There is little knowledge or appreciation for objective facts or lessons from history in a post-truth world. Indeed, in such an environment when concrete truths are clearly presented, every attempt is made to suppress, discredit, deflect or minimise any claim to exclusive, objective truth (see Romans 1). Speaking or believing 'your truth' is more important than speaking and believing 'the truth'.

Within a post-truth society exists a toxic soup of ideologies that major in self-absorption, entitlement and constant questioning of proven and credible facts, finding truth primarily in emotional reactions. Clinging to such ideologies are:

- Secularists living in the now and rejecting all forms of religious faith and worship.
- Humanists emphasizing reason, 'scientific' inquiry, and human fulfilment in the natural world while rejecting the importance of belief in God.
- Postmodernists claiming that realities are plural, subjective, and dependent on worldview.
- Relativists proposing that points of view have no absolute truth or validity within themselves, but rather only relative, subjective value according to differences in perception and consideration.
- Pluralists accepting two or more religious worldviews as equally valid or acceptable as paths to God or gods.
- Universalists believing that there are no mitigating factors against salvation – all will be right with God.

Despite the presence of people who consciously align with one of the above ideologies, I find that many in post-truth Britain have lived never considering whether they should believe much of anything and if so what to believe, or why to believe. Truth doesn't really matter. Existence and purpose in being is just day-to-day routines. Practically this has led to a range of challenges which we explore below.

Identity crisis

At even the most basic, tangible, physical level people do not know who they are. Without any grounding in truth and with the widespread embrace of the idea that truth is relative or subjective, this should come as no surprise. Previous indisputable human attributes of personhood acknowledging differences between the sexes are for many now disputable. Where 'gender confusion' was once a concern, now many celebrate 'gender acceptance'. You can be born male

and yet identify as female or vice-versa. Confusion about sexuality and questioning personal identity and purpose are extremely prevalent in a post-truth society if not in practice, in acceptance.

Dysfunctionality in relationships

While post-truth London, England (and I imagine most post-truth environments) takes pride in multicultural pluralism – the view that all beliefs and cultural behaviours are equally acceptable and right – it is a lonely city. A post-truth society lacks moral objectivity. As such, without a clear framework that values morality and honest interaction, it should come as no surprise when trust is eroded. The consequence is that normal, open, transparent human interaction is hard to find and loneliness increases.

Suppression of freedom

A post-truth society does not get on well with any claim to objective truth. Believing something that may exclude others (eg. 'salvation is through Christ alone') or that denies another's claim of reality (eg. 'someone with male body parts is male') is bad enough, saying it amounts to discrimination and prejudice. Freedom of belief and speech is protected unless your belief and speech offends, upsets or excludes. But of course, that isn't free speech at all.

Distorted narratives

A post-truth society sets up its own standard of presenting facts. Both sides of the left/right political spectrum (however that is defined) are guilty of such distortion. Truths are withheld, exaggerated or spun. Post-truth society condemns fake news but enables, endorses and embraces it at the same time as it has no standard or basis on which to judge truth. This also gives rise to increased obsession with and acceptance of ludicrous conspiracy theories that have no foundation in fact.

Selfish ambition

In a place where people lack identity, are dysfunctional in relationships, suppress freedom and distort narratives, the prevalence of selfish ambition should be no surprise. Indeed, this sin issue is at the root of many of the other issues we have addressed. A post-truth society is narcissistic and entitled. It believes itself to be superior to other societies and its members view themselves as far more intelligent than those who dare disagree with them. The impact of this if unarrested will be catastrophic.

A society where such features noted above are commonplace is undeniably sick. As with any sickness, treatment is needed. I believe that the UK is very much a post-truth society, but that there are signs of potential correction on the horizon and you and I have the privilege and responsibility of being a part of that.

Considering our response

Recognition is always the first step to reformation. Having recognised our social situation it is prudent to weigh up the options:

- Revision - Should we change our message?
- Retreat - Should we stop engaging (assuming we have been)?
- Reason - Can we break through redemptively through reason alone?
- Righteousness - Should we just try and live good lives?
- Revival - Should we wake up and strengthen ourselves, engaging in meaningful spiritual warfare?

Perhaps there are areas where we do need to revise our message. Maybe it is more culturally driven than scripture driven. In other cases, perhaps it's not so much our message, but our messaging. Our communication – yes, including sermons – may not be getting through. Perhaps

we are boring, too imprecise, too nuanced, too samey week in and week out. Maybe it's obvious we are not dealing with difficult subjects strongly yet sensitively and so people don't trust us or find us relevant. People in our post-truth context are increasingly dissatisfied with purportedly progressive, but actually regressive agendas and are looking for answers. They may come into churches looking for answers and find we are just like the world or not really addressing specific matters of concern. Where we do see 'revision' – the Church of England approving gay marriage blessings and even discussing neutering God's pronouns – we also see division and collapse into irrelevance.

'Retreat' is similarly unsatisfactory when weighed up with scripture – it is a far cry from the apostolic witness and that of the ever-active and engaging early church. 'Reasoning' is important but cultural answers provide no lasting solution to spiritual problems. It is good that righteous works accompany our words – otherwise we have no power behind what we say and these may draw people to open conversations but we must be willing to have those conversations when opportunity arises! Ultimately, I hope we are in agreement that we need a spiritual revival – a revival that only comes when we value the Spirit's words as a whole, wielding the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

Stamina, energy and strength are required for ministry in any environment; this doesn't change when serving in a post-truth culture. The challenges will at times be similar but in many, perhaps most, cases very different. In order for one to prevail and endure the discouragements, depression, difficulties and desperate situations the strength required must be other-worldly. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, writes, 'Be strong in the Lord and the strength of his might.' (Ephesians 6:10)

As we consider our response to the social situation we find ourselves in here are some principles to have in mind:

- People lack trust, so you must build trust and show yourself trustworthy.
- People lack truth, so you must expose lies and exhibit truth in word and action.
- People lack time (or think they do), so you must be flexible with yours for them and also be willing to spend longer periods of time for meaningful interactions on Sundays and at other church meetings.

Taking the bull by the horns

And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14)

The message of salvation at the heart of preaching must always be the same and consider that which is of primary importance. Paul reminded the Corinth church of this primary message:

For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,... (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

As people come to faith and as they grow in the faith, other matters can then be addressed and more difficult passages and biblical concepts expounded. This gradual process is at the heart of disciple-making – where a person grows from learning the truth to believing the truth to following the truth to, themselves, teaching the truth (Hebrews 5:12).

One feature of post-truth culture is how it champions diversity and inclusivity – often at the cost of moral and intellectual objectivity. With emotions and feelings overriding anything objectively true, religious pluralism – the belief that all religious beliefs and traditions are equally true and valid – is embraced at least verbally. Any claim to absolute, exclusive, truth is seen as 'bigoted', 'prejudiced' and 'intolerant'. In some cases, attempts will be made to shut down dialogue and discussion. This is often why we may be reluctant to preach on some subjects from the pulpit or at Bible study.

Doubtless, the claim of Christ 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father

except through me' (John 14:6) as a claim to absolute, exclusive, objective truth does not sit well with a post-truth society. Much of the moral transformation that Scripture speaks of itself is unpalatable because it assumes that our lives are in need of such transformation – that we are doing something wrong. The best response is not to shrink back and offer borderline apologetic qualifiers on one hand or to attempt to steam-roll and destroy others with the Bible's teaching on but to graciously and clearly attempt to reason and win over the individual or individuals being addressed.

Chipping away successfully at these post-truth presuppositions occurs best in the course of organic person-to-person conversation (dialogue, not monologue!). Such conversation will usefully:

- Show a healthy toleration of other religions as consisting of adherents made in God's image, seeking to find their way towards God.
- Acknowledge elements of truth in other religions, while clearly and unequivocally indicating areas of difference.
- Be honest about Christ's teaching as the one and only way to righteousness with God.
- Be unapologetic in showing and proving how Christ and his way are better than anything else this world has to offer.

This is where small groups, interactive Bible studies, and orderly allowance for interaction in Sunday services can be very helpful. Discipleship will take time, and effort, and will upend many of our culturally assumed church structural norms, but is worth it in the long run as it actively gets people to engage with the text themselves in a way that is truly powerful.

There may well be risks and some consequences to dealing with hot-button issues. But if we do not teach about bioethics, abortion, law and order, sex and sexuality, gender issues, true and false religion, financial management, environmental and social responsibility, masculinity and femininity then others will who are not doing so from the sound foundation of the Bible. The risks of not teaching on such issues are, I submit, far greater. People are crying out for answers and we have them! Let's be found faithful in giving them for God's glory.

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The Greater Love Declaration: A stake in the ground for Christian Orthodoxy on Marriage, Sex and Identity

The Greater Love Declaration is a statement by Ministers and Pastoral Workers from across the different Christian denominations as a statement of classic, orthodox Christian teaching on marriage, sex and identity. In it we affirm the essential and unchangeable place of this teaching in Christian theology, its foundation in Christ's own example of self-giving love, and our duty and commitment as ministers of the gospel to uphold, teach and proclaim it. At the time of writing over 1,500 ministers and pastoral workers have signed the declaration to signal their support. You can read it in its entirety below.

The Greater Love Declaration

Affirming Christian teaching on marriage, sex and identity

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

We, being ministers and pastoral workers in Christ's Church, affirm our faith in and loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ, who showed the greatest love of all in laying down his life for his friends, as a sacrifice for sins. He came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). Therefore, the life we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

In all areas of life, it is self-denial and self-sacrifice for the sake of God and of others, not self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment, to which Christ calls us. It is in such self-denial and self-sacrifice, in imitation of and service of Jesus our Lord, the new head of humanity, that true humanity, fulfilment and satisfaction are found. This is the Greater Love that Christ commands. Throughout history this teaching of Christ has faced opposition. In our day this is particularly focused on its application to marriage, sex and identity.

The Christian faith teaches, as it always has and will continue to do, that God designed marriage as an essential part of his pattern for human life in this world. Marriage is a witness to the eternal love of Christ for his Church; it is therefore the public lifelong covenant union of one man and one woman. Great blessings flow to all people when marriage is widely honoured. Since the Christian attitude to sex is, as in all other things, not self-satisfaction for the sake of self but self-denial for the sake of others, Christians, bearing true witness to their natural sex as God created them, are to pursue chaste singleness outside of marriage and exclusive faithfulness within it. This is the reason for the clear and unambiguous commands of Holy Scripture to this effect, and for the consistent, unchanging submission to this teaching by the Church in all ages.

Therefore, being ministers and pastoral workers in Christ's church, we commit ourselves to the following:

1. In imitation of our Lord, we will endeavour to show loving self-sacrifice in every area of life. We will strive to care for the poor and needy, comfort the abused, protect the weak, and seek the common good. We repent of our many failures in all these areas and look for God's grace to help us.
2. In sexual matters we will therefore live by, teach and proclaim the goodness of the Christian doctrine of marriage.

3. We commit to welcoming and loving all who, like ourselves, have fallen short and continue to fall short of this ideal. Christ laid down his life to save those, like us, whose lives have been ruined by sin, in sexual matters as in other ways. We will not discriminate or treat people differently on the basis of perceived sexual or gender identities, for all are men and women made in the image of God. We will show love to all as Christ has loved them and us.
4. We will call all people, as Christ did, to turn away from their sins, and find forgiveness in him through his self-sacrifice for sins past and present; and to reorder their lives according to God's created design by the power of the Holy Spirit. This includes living either in chaste singleness or faithful marriage. Since Christ calls people to heartfelt repentance, we will never coerce anyone to do this but urge them to do so out of love for him.
5. Living this way is necessary for every Christian. Therefore we will teach it in our churches to people of all ages, and support them as they seek to follow it. We see a particular need, in imitation of Jesus' love for children, to do so in age-appropriate ways to the young, to help them resist the pervasive sexualisation and risks of emotional and physical damage to which they are constantly exposed.
6. We will not surrender the 'Greater Love' that Jesus showed us, and to which he calls us, to the far lesser version of love which centres on the satisfaction and even the worship of self, the autonomy of the individual, and the belief that all sexual desires and inclinations are sacred. We will not accept that any perceived identities established by these beliefs justify departure from Christian teaching on marriage and sex. This is not, by our Lord's standards, love at all, and is profoundly harmful to many – children in particular.
7. We commit to teaching and celebrating the great richness of non-sexual love, in friendships and in families, which is made possible by refusing to act upon sexual desire outside of the marriage of one man and one woman. In particular the Church, being the body of Christ and the family of God, is the place where such love is especially found, and is to be urged, fostered and enjoyed.
8. There are no circumstances – not the threat of legal sanction, nor of financial penalty, nor of social stigma – which will cause us to abandon our Lord's call to love in this way, in sexual matters as in all others. And therefore there are no circumstances which will cause us to abandon the Christian doctrine of marriage, nor to cease teaching it, to all people of every age.

If the cost to ourselves of faithfulness to our Lord, and love for those around us, is high, we nevertheless commit ourselves to these things. For in this way too, we recognise that we are called to lay down our lives for the good of others; for there is, as our Lord Jesus Christ said, no greater love than this.

Church of England Confusion

The Church of England's 'official' doctrine on marriage is, surprising as it might be to some, entirely consistent with our own Declaration. Around a third of the over 1,500 church leaders and pastoral workers who have signed the Greater Love Declaration are from Anglican congregations. Until very recent years, official Church of England documents on the subject have espoused an overtly biblical view.

For example, in 1999, in a teaching document of the Church, the then Archbishops of Canterbury and York together wrote:

It has always been the Church's mission to proclaim the unchanging gospel to the changing world. Lifelong marriage itself represents an unchanging ideal, and one which is the bedrock of a rapidly changing society. The House of Bishops considers it timely on the eve of the new millennium to reaffirm the Church of England's teaching on marriage. We have sought to relate this teaching to the pastoral needs of people in our communities today, so that they might approach marriage with confidence.¹

Later, the same document explains:

Marriage is a pattern that God has given in creation, deeply rooted in our social instincts, through which a man and a woman may learn love together over the course of their lives. We marry not only because we love, but to be helped to love.

It affirms that marriage offers the blessing of: 'the hallowing and right direction of natural instincts and affections'. It is all rather striking language, which goes beyond even what many will hear from conservative thinkers in the church today. Perhaps we are right to be cautious that we don't portray marriage as more valuable than singleness – a view the apostle Paul would swiftly dispose of – but we must equally speak clearly to a world desperately confused about love and relationships.

Two decades later, it appears both very much and very little has changed. Officially the church's position remains exactly as it was. Technically, the current Archbishops still hold to the views expressed above.

And yet they publically denigrate these past views of the church and flatly contradict it with their new approach. The Draft 'Prayers of Love and Faith' document explains that it offers a 'variety of liturgical resources in a desire to give thanks and praise to God for the gift of a loving relationship between two people'. The Bishops appear to have given up on speaking about marriage, and chosen to refer to 'loving relationships between two people' instead.

Giving up on the Bible's teaching

This has only one direction: away from the Bible's (and the Church of England's) clear teaching that marriage is an institution given in creation and blessed by God. It is abundantly clear, and the church throughout the ages has universally proclaimed that marriage is the only right place for sexual activity, and it can only exist between a man and a woman.

Somehow the Bishops think they can maintain this teaching while seeking to bless any 'loving relationship between two people'. The Archbishop of York has said this includes sexual relationships between unmarried and same-sex couples.

There is an obvious impasse between the Bible and the Bishops, with only two possible solutions for them: be conformed to the pattern of this world, or be transformed by the renewing of their minds. We must pray for the latter; every suggestion is that the former is winning out.

Those of us – from many denominations, including the Church of England – who wrote the Greater Love Declaration have been greatly dismayed by the actions of the Church of England's leadership. They have sent a loud and clear (and wrong) signal that Christians have given up on teaching biblical marriage. Already we have heard reports of young people being asked 'so I take it Christians are okay with gay marriage now?'; and orthodox churches and their members being viewed with increased hostility by non-Christians.

At the same time, we must recognise that among our brothers and sisters in the Anglican Church, there are many mixed feelings. Some are pleased that the Church remains *officially* committed to its position on marriage. Discussions and speeches at Synod showed that still many congregations hold to a biblical view of marriage and many argue that the statistics are on the side of these

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/marriage%20-%20a%20teaching%20document.pdf>

congregations. Perhaps a negotiated freedom for their currently side-lined orthodox faith may lead to a restored Church one day soon. Further degradation, it can be argued, is not the inevitability it seems.

Yet for many others, remaining part of an institution whose leaders have shown their willingness, indeed keenness, to capitulate to those who celebrate what God calls sinful, is a difficult concept to stomach. It is both shocking and abhorrent that one can even ask whether those leading the Church remain committed to the Bible, and a gospel of salvation from sin. While they say that the official doctrine on marriage has not changed, it is abundantly clear that the new prayers of blessing will be used to indicate approval of sexual relationships that directly contradict the teaching of Scripture and the Church.

That is why the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches, which represents some of the largest Anglican provinces around the world, has already declared that it no longer recognises Archbishop Welby as Leader of the global Communion. It says it can no longer 'walk together with the revisionist provinces'. What will happen within England remains to be seen, but it seems impossible for things to remain as they are.

Marriage is just the tip of the iceberg

The press might lead you to believe that the Church of England's problems begin and end with marriage. But the Church's rejection of marriage merely shines a light on its abandonment of Jesus' own vision of love and all that means for the identity of God's people.

Christians are to love as Christ has loved us: to lay down their lives for others. The ordinance of marriage, the exclusive lifelong union of one man and one woman, has been given to us by God as the preeminent instance of this. We are to lay down our lives for our spouse, children and others, denying ourselves by refusing sexual self-indulgence.

And giving up on 'marriage' in favour of a vague and broader notion of human sexuality, not only falls short of God's word but is also devastatingly harmful for society. It is the opposite of pastoral provision.

The Bishops should know that all sexual relationships and activity outside of marriage are condemned as sinful in Scripture, and unanimously by the Christian Church in all ages because such immorality is deeply harmful. It harms those committing it, their children, their families and friends, and society as a whole.

But most of all it is harmful to the glory of God, whose absolutely faithful holy covenant love for his Church in Christ is to be reflected by us, his images, in the exclusive union of husband and wife, and chaste sexual abstinence elsewhere. Sexual immorality is a preeminent example of the love of self-replacing the sacrificial love of God and neighbour. It is therefore the opposite of the love that Christ commands.

Why the bishops are settling for this hollowed-out version of love – that isn't really love at all – is bewildering. They should see the clear error in their ways and repent. God offers a far greater picture of love than they will find anywhere else.

Why the Greater Love Declaration is needed more now than ever

The Greater Love Declaration calls on all orthodox Christian ministers and clergy in every denomination to continue to teach and proclaim the goodness of sexual self-sacrifice and self-control; the sinfulness of sexual indulgence outside of the marriage of one man and one woman; the grace of our Lord to those who have failed in this way, and his willingness to forgive those who repent; and with our Lord to affirm that here as in every part of life, there is no greater love than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

This has become more important than ever. The Church of England bishops' abandonment of orthodoxy on this will change the relationship of all orthodox Christians to our secular society. No longer will 'being Christian' explain our position; in the eyes of many secular people, Christianity has now changed its view, and those who stand by Scripture, the gospel of salvation, and the historic teachings of the church, will now be seen as a holdout minority. This is despite the fact that orthodoxy is of course a huge majority worldwide, and probably remains so in this country too.

Therefore standing firm and standing together, declaring together our commitment to the one faith once and for all given to the saints (with all its implications), is more important now than ever. The Greater Love Declaration offers a platform to do this, demonstrating a pastorally helpful way of expressing biblical sexuality to a confused world, while also helping Christians committed to traditional sexual ethics know they are not alone in standing against the tide. One of the things we thought it important to provide was an explanation of why Christians think these things; so a longer background explanation is provided on the site (www.greaterlove.org.uk/background). In the coming months, we hope to add to this various resources for churches to use as we speak of the goodness of God's design, and of believing in and following his self-giving love in Christ.

Wider implications

While the Church of England is still working out what they see as the puzzle of marriage, it is increasingly clear to those of us engaged with issues in the wider culture, is that the conversation has long moved on to wider issues of human identity – further manifestations of the same abandonment of Christian ethics. Self-ID, and the wider ideologies behind LGBT campaigning, are increasingly understood by the public to be deeply damaging to society. Christians who continue to hold to biblical principles may be surprised by how much secular support there is for their position.

But while many in the wider public might agree on obvious problems like giving hormones to teenagers, or admitting men into women's spaces, few are willing to put their heads above the parapet on the more awkward topic of 'conversion therapy'.

The Government recommitted to a ban earlier this year, but it remains unclear how a new law could avoid criminalising Christian ministers when any genuine abuse is already illegal. The authors of the Greater Love Declaration together wrote to the Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, and the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, to ask them once again to reconsider the plans:

We have every sympathy for those who have suffered genuine abuse. Christians firmly reject any attempt to coerce or abuse, as it defies Christian teaching at the most basic level. We are grateful that this is already illegal.

Instead, many of those demanding this legislation are pushing a narrative that traditional orthodox Christian beliefs are harmful. They have made clear they are unwilling to accept a new law which does not criminalise ordinary believers and Christian leaders.

We have had tremendous support for taking this position. Church leaders are not only being pressed on these issues, but they feel it immensely. What would it do to youth work and student work and all of pastoral care, if the realm of sexual ethics was always discussed under the looming threat of criminal sanctions? We all want to think the best of those in our congregations, but we all know of those who have left the church and made it a target of misrepresentation and attack.

The Greater Love Declaration is open for anyone who wants to affirm Christian teaching on marriage, sex and identity to sign, including those who are not Church leaders and pastoral workers. We also now allow individual congregations and denominations to endorse the Declaration – please get in touch at greaterlove.org.uk for more information.

It offers a concise and biblical explanation of these issues, which will help guide church leaders as they commit to teaching Christian sexual ethics in their churches, whatever the cost. It also

increasingly offers a platform for resourcing local churches to be an influence on these issues.

Greater love has no one than this: that someone lay down his life for his friends. In an increasingly self-obsessed world, that is a glorious truth that we as Christians must proclaim loudly, and proclaim together.

Andrew Tate, Christian incels, and Biblical solutions

by Regan King

Have you heard of Andrew Tate? If not yet, best to acquaint yourself, because you are about to. Recent research found that 8 in 10 boys between 16 and 17 years of age had read, listened to, or watched content online from the four-time champion kickboxer and self-described 'most googled man on the planet'. Emory Andrew Tate III – Tate's full name – was banned from Twitter for five years from 2017 after a string of tweets which led to him being accused of victim-blaming raped women.

Born in Chicago, Tate was brought up in Luton, Bedfordshire. He began to achieve broader notoriety and attention in 2016 when he appeared on Big Brother and was subsequently evicted from the reality show after video footage emerged of him beating a woman with a belt (this was said to be consensual) and in another video telling a woman to count the bruises he had given her. Following his initial ban on Twitter, Tate managed to evade that ban and set up another account briefly (but long enough to be verified), before that account was also banned in 2021. While the ban was lifted in 2022, Tate's online presence was boosted when he went viral on other social media platforms, particularly TikTok with his opinions on masculinity, women, and money garnering the most attention. Following the removal of his Twitter ban, Tate's account gained over a million followers within 24 hours. He now has 5.1 million followers many of whom actively support, defend, and promote Tate's content despite his being imprisoned in Romania for suspected involvement in human trafficking – an unsurprising charge for some of us familiar with Tate's words.

As a pastor actively engaged in my local community and deeply involved in the lives of a range of men young and old, I know the need to deal with the Andrew Tate phenomena biblically and specifically. As much as I wish it was not so, it may be that the spirit of Andrew Tate seemingly has more influence on some young men in your church than the Holy Spirit sent by Jesus. While Tate's influence is denied by some – even of those who may actively view his content – the attitudes, actions, and manner of approach promoted by Tate will be recognised in the lives of young men in particular. In the following, I seek to present a pastoral view and challenge of the Andrew Tate phenomena, presenting Biblical solutions.

What Andrew Tate gets right

It is very hard to find anything good in Andrew Tate's manner, message, and methods as a whole. That said, I believe there are some things that need to be said and approached from a positive angle to try and understand and appreciate the reason for Andrew Tate's reach. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light; he gets enough right and has enough truth in his perversion of the same that many are led astray.

Andrew Tate addresses men as men

Tate's content is primarily directed at men. He realises that the excesses of extreme feminism have at times led to the abuse and abandonment of men and the denigration of masculinity. Imagine wearing a t-shirt that says 'The Future is Male' and the backlash that such would rightly receive. And yet 'The Future is Female' is a slogan that one sees crop up a good bit without much protest at all.¹ In a world affected by extreme feminism, male leadership is often viewed as intrinsically suspicious and male voices speaking on anything related uniquely to women are looked down on regardless of expertise or qualification to the point of being silenced. Women's opinions are elevated and at times deemed superior and men's are denigrated, distrusted, or doubted as inferior. Popular media – when it portrays whole family units – often portrays the woman of the house in

¹ Michele Norris, *Why the future should be female* (<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/why-the-future-should-be-female-feature>), 15 October 2019

a positive light with the man as oafish, lazy, and stupid – think Homer Simpson or Peter Griffin. Without looking into the reasons why at present, it is not too difficult to find anti-man sentiment not just in broader society, but in churches as well. In such a climate, it is important that men have another man speaking to them, addressing them directly as men, understanding their issues and concerns, and addressing these in a clear and certain way. Without commenting at present on the substance of his content, Andrew Tate does this.

His coaching of men presents the goal of ‘empowering them to be better in all realms.’²

Here’s the reality: sometimes the portrayal of men in popular media is accurate. Whether by nature or by giving up in light of perceived societal denigration, men can and do behave poorly. Whatever the reason, many do not strive for excellence or display any motivation to improve and be better at living life, choosing to embrace oafish, laziness and stupidity. Lack of discernment, discipline, desire and drive in men across age categories cripples them from meaningful, productive, prosperous living resulting in feelings of emasculation. Is it wrong for a man to address these issues in men? No. Indeed it is needed. Men need to be trained in how to earn and budget (both saving and spending) well. Men need to be equipped with the tools and resources and knowledge to be better providers and protectors of their families. Men need to learn and grow in being better communicators, lovers, workers, sons, brothers, fathers and friends. Andrew Tate presents his method as being all about empowering men to be better in all realms, giving a sense of ownership of their lives and the personal responsibility to improve one day at a time. In a world of complexity and confusion, where men have often been very bad at living life and where some men perhaps feel the particular hurt of absent or apathetic fathers, a solution that presents itself as helping them to be different will be attractive.

There. Somehow I managed to present two positive points about Andrew Tate. And it is precisely these positives of Andrew Tate that make him so dangerous.

The perverting influence of Andrew Tate

Andrew Tate’s origin story might not come as a surprise. Born in Chicago, at the formative age of 11, Tate’s parents split and his mother proceeded to bring him up in relative poverty in Luton, Bedfordshire. Looking at various stories from Tate’s childhood gives an insight into some of his mentality. His father, Emory, was discharged from the US Air Force after being diagnosed with Narcissistic Disorder. He was a champion chess player who was in and out of Andrew’s life growing up then even less regularly after divorce. Andrew praises his parents for their influence and his father for teaching him what it meant to be a man.

After my own research, one thing is evident. Andrew Tate says he takes inspiration in how to be a man from his now deceased father;³ the same father whose mistreatment of his family, particularly his wife led to Tate’s growing up in a single-parent home. His words are charged with anger and arrogance – indicating his own sinful narcissism – and he openly portrays, promotes and praises behaviour that can only be described as abusive. I dare not sully this journal with examples of Tate’s crass, crude, sometimes incoherent rhetoric – you can go to the source yourself if you wish – but this content has garnered over 14 billion views, earning him an estimated net worth of \$20 million. Hyper-sexualised, shamelessly objectifying and misogynistic, Tate’s words with the aforementioned positive hooks appeal to disaffected, depressed young men who are often of underprivileged upbringing, broken family lives, and struggling with direction in their lives.⁴ Tate stokes the fires of their anger and outrage, tapping into legitimate felt needs and presenting warped

² A repeated slogan of Tate’s on his Twitter page @cobratate

³ Milla Sigaba, *Andrew Tate’s Parents Shaped Him & His Father Gave Him Life Lessons for*

(<https://news.amomama.com/299703-andrew-tates-parents-shaped-him-his-fath.html>), Jan 12, 2023

⁴ Vince Greenwald, *Young Men Need Better Than Andrew Tate’s Masculinity* (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/teen-masculinity-andrew-tate/>), 8 February 2023

solutions that promise to see masculinity regained. Some, applying Tate's methods, will doubtless experience greater degrees of success in some areas of their lives, but the end will almost certainly be ruin just as it is likely to be for Tate himself. There is so much material of Tate's where he brags about his coercive behaviour against women that he will almost certainly face criminal conviction whether for the human trafficking he is being investigated for or not.

Christianised Andrew Tate

Christian young men often saved from the disaffection, divided and deprived situations Tate speaks into, often fatherless themselves may well be sucked in by some of Tate's methods for self-improvement. They will try to rationalise Tate's more jarringly inappropriate statements as unnecessarily detracting from what they see as better points. Some on social media have even come to Tate's defence following his recent arrest ignoring the wealth of evidence from Tate's own testimony that he is guilty of grooming, coercion and exploitation of women. Tragically, there will be young men who try to marry a Christian lifestyle with Tate's principles in their relationships or pursuit of the same. Perhaps finding Tate unpalatable and too problematic they may well seek out professing Christian teachers who can scratch their itching ears with hyper-patriarchal language.

I have personally seen the negative impact of Tatesque Christian leaders like Doug Wilson⁵ and Michael Foster⁶ in the lives and relationships of their followers. Tragically in seeking help from such sources – perhaps even Andrew Tate – many young men lacking wisdom and balance are in serious danger of consigning themselves to live as incels, unable to meaningfully or helpfully communicate, particularly with those of the opposite sex.⁷

This can and does carry over into church life. Women will be disrespected, talked down to, ignored, denigrated and generally viewed as less trustworthy even when carrying out their God-given and ordained responsibilities in family and church life to the best of their ability. In a vicious cycle, female victims of such treatment will often begin to view men and male leadership in particular with suspicion and through the lens of their hurt and offences against them. The presentation of biblical complementarity in relationships is consequently viewed as equivalent to patriarchy and this almost always leads to a response that veers toward extreme feminism – an equally unbiblical anthropological perspective.

So what can you do?

Tragically, many cannot see that their view of masculinity and femininity is driven more by culture than by Christ. Pastors, teachers, evangelists, Sunday school teachers, members – whoever you are in the life of the local church – you have a responsibility before God to be discipled and to disciple in a way that is practical and relevant for Christian living in the present day.

Teach positively on Biblical masculinity and femininity

Men and women both want and need to know who they are. Identity, meaning, purpose and destiny are areas where we have specific questions and need specific answers for clearly directed and disciplined lives. We should sound out the clear and certain teaching of Scripture in these areas, celebrating the unique, complementary and mutually beneficial roles and responsibilities of men and women while acknowledging areas of similarity all in the context of our union in Christ.

⁵ Douglas Wilson, *That Lutheran Jezebel Lady* (<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/that-lutheran-jezebel-lady.html>), 6 March 2019

⁶ A complete analysis of the dangers of Wilson, Foster et al's teaching is not the goal of this article, but a fair treatment of 'It's Good to Be A Man' can be found at The Gospel Coalition. Alistair Roberts, *Review: 'The Men We Need' and 'It's Good to Be a Man'* (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/men-we-need-good-be-man/>), 13 June 2023 and

A Review of It's Good to Be a Man (<https://reforminganthropology.com/2022/02/11/a-review-of-its-good-to-be-a-man/comment-page-1/>)

⁷ What is incel culture - and why is it growing around the world? | ITV News West Country (<https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2022-01-18/what-is-incel-culture-and-why-is-it-growing-around-the-world>) 18 January 2022

Don't shy away from pinpointed discipleship on tough topics from the pulpit

Reasons to avoid dealing with difficult, intimate and personal areas of human relationships are fading. It is possible and, I believe, wise and helpful to address these matters from the pulpit for all the congregation. Sex, sexuality, domestic abuse, pornography, objectification, prostitution, divorce and money matters all need to be dealt with. The prophets, Jesus himself, and the apostles all did so. Is there a reason we so often do not? If we do not deal with these areas clearly, people will find themselves disciplined by others who are neither trustworthy in orthodoxy nor orthopraxy.

Introduce spaces for men and women to share openly

Transparency is key for the bearing of burdens as we confess our sins to another. Men and women will have various frustrations – sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly – often perhaps with each other. It is important for churches to have opportunities at which men can mentor and build up men and women can do the same with women. Occasionally such meetings can be joint – when dealing with marriage for example – but as a whole, at the very least I recommend operating 'pastoral surgery' times when matters can be discussed freely and openly, sins being confessed for the bearing of these burdens. When it comes to men, this can be challenging. Men can be more closed and can be good at hiding and not sharing honestly. Those affected by fatherlessness and similar traumas to their development will present a range of challenges. Seek to be equipped to speak into their lives with practical, Biblical wisdom that convicts, challenges and works to Spirit-inspired change.

A final word: live worthy of emulation

Andrew Tate is popular because he sets a model – a paradigm even – of how to live. We serve Jesus Christ who calls us to live in imitation of him. Can we, in humility, say to our young men and women like Paul says to the Philippians, 'Imitate me as I imitate Christ' (1 Corinthians 11:1)? If we strive to live in such a way ourselves, I truly believe the impact we have can provide a healing balm to the wounds caused by the harmful ideologies espoused by Andrew Tate and others. Our words alone accomplish nothing. Let's live in such a way that shows the beauty of what it means to a man or woman in Christ!

Regan King is the lead pastor at The Angel Church in Islington (London). He is married to Rachel and has two children, Randall and Arielle. He also serves on the board of Pregnancy Crisis Helpline, is an author (#TBH: Basic Challenges to Millennials Who Can't Even) and is a presenter for Revelation TV (R Mornings, Behind the Headlines, God Day, and Bible Topics).

Current Bioethics Issues - March 2023

by Dr Calum MacKellar

Scottish Parliament votes for the *Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill*

On 27 October 2022, Scottish politicians backed, at the Stage 1 debate, the principles of the *Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill* by 88 votes to 33, with 4 MSPs abstaining. A total of nine SNP politicians defied a party whip – the largest rebellion against government legislation in the SNP's 15 years in power. The bill would change the *Gender Recognition Act 2004* by removing the requirement for applicants to provide a medical opinion stating that they are affected by gender dysphoria. In addition, it would reduce the minimum age of applicants from 18 to 16 years as well as the period during which they must have lived in their acquired gender before applying from 2 years to 3 months (6 months for those between 16–18 years). Finally, it would abolish the Gender Recognition Panel with applications just being sent to the Registrar General for Scotland. In other words, it would enable individuals to legally change their birth gender without any medical or other evidence whatsoever.

The latest and most comprehensive studies to date (2022) show that a high prevalence of gender dysphoria/incongruence exists in persons with autism spectrum disorder traits. Moreover, research shows that many children with gender dysphoria have significant psychological and psychosocial vulnerabilities. Thus, without a medical appraisal, it is very likely that many young persons may embark on risky life-changing procedures which they do not understand. This is all the more concerning since follow-up studies indicate that, overall, the distress experienced by young people affected by gender dysphoria disappears in about 85% of cases either before or early in puberty though the rates in the individual studies vary widely.¹ Affinity has given another four reasons why the Scottish Bill is dangerous.²

However, on 16 January 2023, the Scotland Secretary (Mr. Alister Jack MP) announced that he would make an order under section 35 of the *Scotland Act 1998*, which would prevent the bill from proceeding to royal assent.³ If MSPs want to take the bill forward they will now need to challenge the section 35 order in the courts.

Landmark case against UK *Abortion Act 1967* over discriminatory abortion laws

A woman with Down's syndrome, Ms. Heidi Crowter (featured in Issue 49 - Spring 2022 of The Bulletin), lost a case in the Court of Appeal (which is the highest court within the Senior Courts of England and Wales) made public on 25 November 2022 against the possibility of late-stage abortions of fetuses with disabilities. She had brought the challenge alongside Máire Lea-Wilson, whose son Aidan also has Down's syndrome. The two women argued that the possibility to deselect, through abortions, fetuses with a congenital disability up until birth is an outward expression (a revelation) of a blatant discriminatory and ableist attitude in the updated Abortion Act 1967. This enables a termination up until birth if the foetus has a disorder even when the procedure is not necessary to prevent grave injury to the pregnant woman, or to save her life, but restricts abortions to 24 weeks if the foetus has no disability. In other words, a non-disabled foetus is better protected in law from being terminated, meaning that it can also be seen as having more value and worth, than a foetus with a disorder.

In a summary of the Court of Appeal decision it was indicated that the *Abortion Act 1967* did not

1 <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/consider-the-evidence-on-gender-dysphoria-dr-anthony-latham-dr-anne-williams-dr-calum-mackellar-and-dr-angus-mckellar-3891714>

2 <https://www.affinity.org.uk/social-issues/four-reasons-why-the-new-scottish-gender-recognition-bill-is-not-good/>

3 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_Recognition_Reform_\(Scotland\)_Bill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_Recognition_Reform_(Scotland)_Bill)

interfere with the rights of the 'living disabled'. The judges indicated:

The court recognises that many people with Down's syndrome and other disabilities will be upset and offended by the fact that a diagnosis of serious disability during pregnancy is treated by the law as a justification for termination, and that they may regard it as implying that their own lives are of lesser value. But it holds that a perception that that is what the law implies is not by itself enough to give rise to an interference with article 8 rights [to private and family life, enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights].

But Ms. Heidi Crowter is now considering seeking permission for the case to be taken to the UK Supreme Court. An official petition to the Scottish Parliament is also being considered on this theme.⁴

There were 3,370 disability-selective abortions in 2021, a 9% increase from 3,083 in 2020. The number of late-term abortions at 24 weeks gestation or over where the baby has a disability increased by 20% from 229 to 274. The statistics also showed a 71% increase in late-term abortions at 24 weeks gestation or over where the baby had Down's syndrome, increasing from 14 in 2020 to 24 in 2021.⁵

Assisted suicide in the Scottish and UK Parliaments

The Scottish Parliament is still awaiting the publication of Mr Liam McArthur MSP's Private Member's Bill on assisted suicide entitled the *Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill*. This is likely to be debate and voted on before the end of 2023. At the same time, Westminster Parliament MPs have begun an inquiry into assisted suicide which will consider the experience of other countries that have changed their laws. The health and social care committee of the House of Commons will aim to hear evidence from medical professionals, campaigners, and the public, and make recommendations in due course to the UK government on the issue.⁶

However, it should be noted that any legalisation of assisted suicide would support, for the first time in the UK, the concept of a 'life unworthy of life' and completely undermine the absolute equality in value and worth of all lives which is the very foundation of civilised society.⁷

Dr Calum MacKellar is affiliated to the Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies at St Mary's University in Twickenham, London. He is also a member of the United Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh.

A more in depth look at some of these issues (and more) has been written by Dr John Ling and can be found on the Affinity website.

⁴ <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1996>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/abortion-statistics-for-england-and-wales-2021/abortion-statistics-england-and-wales-2021#:~:text=214%2C869%20abortions%20were%20reported%20in,residents%20of%20England%20and%20Wales.>

⁶ <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/6906/assisted-dyingassisted-suicide/>

⁷ <https://www.scotsman.com/news/opinion/columnists/legalising-assisted-suicide-risks-the-principle-of-equality-of-all-lives-dr-calum-mckellar-3263764>

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 these cases are being handled by the Christian Legal Centre.

Izzy Montague

Mother challenges school that forced 4-year-old to take part in Pride event.

Izzy Montague is a mother whose four-year-old son was required to take part in a school's LGBT pride parade against her will. She was one of many parents who raised concern when her son's primary school began promoting LGBT issues to children as young as five, not allowing parents to opt their children out. Parents claimed that the school was forcing a very aggressive LGBT agenda onto their children. Stonewall posters were emblazoned across the school, children were shown Stonewall videos during lessons, and children as young as four were read stories promoted by the organisation aimed at normalising same-sex relationships. LGBT pride flags were spread across the school and children were encouraged to wear rainbow colours and children as young as four were shown videos of two men kissing.

Other parents also say that they were misled with incorrect statements of law when they challenged the school on the issue of the Pride event.

When Izzy met with the school's executive headteacher, another teacher attending the meeting wore a t-shirt with the provocative message: 'Why be racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic when you could just be quiet?'

Izzy said, 'It was like being bullied. They stopped treating me like any other parent but were antagonistic towards me. I believe that they retaliated against me by unreasonably excluding me from the premises, victimising my child and not taking my safeguarding concerns seriously.'

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, Izzy launched legal action against the school on the grounds of direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation and breach of statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

The case is the first time that a UK court will scrutinise the legality of imposing LGBT ideology on primary schools. The court will look at the impact it has on religious discrimination, the human rights of parents and their children, the right to opt out of sex education, and a schools' duty of political neutrality. The case was heard at Central London County Court for eight days, from 1 - 9 February 2023. No judgement has been made yet.

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, which is supporting Izzy, said:

This case epitomises the chaos we can expect to see in the coming years in our schools and is another example of the "totalitolerance" that has become so prevalent in our society. Those who preach tolerance and diversity the loudest do not appear to be interested in practising it.

Education is always a partnership between the school and parents, but the school's actions showed disrespect, dismissiveness and hostility towards these parents. A particular agenda is being forced onto children inside the school gates and parents are being given no means to ensure that their children are being taught in line with their religious and philosophical beliefs.

Matthew Grech

Christian charity worker prosecuted for ‘conversion practices.’

Matthew Grech, 33, is a Christian charity worker, a trustee of Core Issues Trust who works closely with the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCCC) and X-Out Loud.

Matthew is facing criminal charges for allegedly discussing and advertising ‘conversion practices’, after he was invited by PMnews Malta, a small free-speech media platform to share his ‘ex-gay’ testimony during an online media interview. The interview was advertised on Facebook beforehand. Matthew shared his story about his childhood and the confusion he had experienced when it came to his own sexuality and relationships. He spoke about how, as an adult, he had been involved in homosexual relationships before becoming a Christian, which changed his life dramatically.

Matthew spoke about how he does not agree with the term ‘conversion therapy’ and said that the deeper he went into his Christian faith and explored the Bible, the more:

I understood that in the Bible, homosexuality is not an identity as we make it nowadays. And neither is it a feeling, but a practice. This means that no matter what sexual feelings a man or a woman is experiencing, if they have sexual relations with a person of the same sex, they commit the homosexual act in God’s eyes, and that is a sin. Just like every other sin, one can repent from it and ask God for forgiveness and ask Him for strength to overcome... I’m talking here from a Christian perspective...

At no point during the programme did Mr Grech invite any listener to attend therapy or encourage anyone to get help for unwanted same-sex attraction. After the interview, Matthew was contacted by the police, who decided to press criminal charges against him. The order accused him of advertising ‘conversion practices and this breaking article 3 (a) (iii) of Chapter 567 of Maltese laws.’ He was told that he would need to attend a hearing on 3 February 2023 and that if he failed to attend, he would be arrested.

Assisted by the Christian Legal Centre, Matthew’s trial was held on 3 February 2023 at the Court of Magistrates in Valletta, along with the presenters of a local free speech media outlet, PMnews Malta. It will be argued that bringing these charges against Matthew breaches his Fundamental Human Right to Freedom of Expression safeguarded under Article 41 of the Constitution of Malta and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

His lawyers will argue that under Human Rights legislation derived from Malta’s obligations under the European Convention of Human Rights, as well as the free speech rights guaranteed by its own Constitution, Matthew had every right to freely share and express his story and views on unwanted same-sex attraction. They conclude that Matthew’s sharing of his own testimony was not only an expression of his own thoughts and views, but also a manifestation of his Christian beliefs, which he respectfully shared with the viewers.

There has not yet been an outcome for the trial.

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said:

Criminalising someone for telling their story of freedom and change from unwanted and unfulfilling sexual behaviours is discriminatory and violates their Christian freedoms and fundamental human right to free speech.

The domino effect of ‘conversion therapy’ bans began in Malta. If a precedent is set by this case in Malta, we will see similar cases in the UK unless, unless robust action is taken.

It is vital to win this case, not just for people in Malta, but for Christian freedoms and the freedom to leave homosexuality and unwanted same-sex attraction across the world.

Joshua Sutcliffe

Joshua Sutcliffe, 32, is a maths teacher from London. In 2017, he was suspended and dismissed for allegedly 'misgendering' a female student, 'Pupil A', that self-identified as a boy. He immediately apologised when he realised 'Pupil A' was in the group of female students he addressed. Supported by the Christian Legal Centre he took legal action against the school. The case was later settled out of court.

In November 2019, Joshua was forced to resign from St. Aloysius in North London where he had been teaching for over a year after, he had expressed his views on his personal YouTube channel, critiquing Islam. In the video, he comments that: 'I would suggest that Muslims have a false understanding of God because they've been led by a false prophet,' and that "the fruit of Islam is not peace, it's division.'

Joshua is being supported by the Christian Legal Centre, as the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) is now seeking to remove Joshua from the teaching profession. He faced a series of allegations before the TRA's professional conduct panel in Coventry from 9 to 13 January, and 27 February 2023.

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, said:

The TRA is targeting an exceptional teacher because his Christian beliefs do not fall in line with the prevailing secular orthodoxy which cannot tolerate any dissent. For loving Jesus, speaking truth in his personal time and responding to questions from students on the Christian faith, he is being hounded out of the teaching profession.

With critical shortages of teachers in the profession, why are the TRA so determined to force a high-performing teacher out for their Christian beliefs?

John Dunn

John Dunn regularly preaches despite having lost his voice box following throat cancer, is a Bible-believing Christian who preaches in Swindon town centre. He considers preaching on the streets and speaking God's truth to be an essential part of his Christian calling, which he has been doing for 15 years.

In November 2020, Mr Dunn was preaching on Swindon High Street. Dunn quoted from 1 Corinthians 6, which says that homosexuals are among those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. After an interaction with two women who said they were in a same-sex marriage, John was reported to the police. He was interviewed under caution and subsequently summonsed by the police for alleged 'homophobia' and then charged under the Public Order Act.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, Mr Dunn went to trial on 14 November 2022 at Swindon Magistrates Court.

The Crown Prosecution Service argued when charging him that there are 'references in the Bible which are simply no longer appropriate in modern society, and which would be deemed offensive if stated in public.' Prosecutors said he was guilty of hate speech.

The case was thrown out after the women refused to engage with the case, and prosecutors later admitted it was wrong to call the Bible offensive.

On 12 December 2022, in relation to John's Dunn case, Baroness Hoey asked the government 'what assessment they have made of the written statement by the Crown Prosecution that the Bible contains references "which are simply no longer appropriate in modern society, and which would be deemed offensive if stated in public".'

In response to Baroness Hoey's question, Lord Stewart of Dirleton (Con), who specialises in criminal law and is the Advocate General for Scotland, replied stating that: 'The Wessex Area of the CPS has undertaken a post-case review and acknowledges that that statement was inappropriate.'

Lord Stewart stated that:

the statement was not intended to and does not represent a change to published CPS Policy. It is not indicative of a general approach by the CPS to cases involving the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and the right to freedom of expression". He also stated that "in future...in cases where there is scope for argument to arise as to rights such as that of freedom of expression, such arguments will be submitted to the Senior District Crown Prosecutor for signing off, prior to service.

Andrea Williams, chief executive of the Christian Legal Centre, which supported Mr Dunn's case, said:

This was a clear example of overreach from the CPS and demonstrated the extent to which they misunderstand the Bible and freedom of speech. Their arguments in this case were so steeped in the prevailing secular political orthodoxy, it was chilling.

The Bible and its teachings have historically been the foundation of our society and has provided many of the freedoms and protections that we still enjoy today. It is extraordinary that the prosecution, speaking on behalf of the state, could say that the Bible contains abusive words which, when spoken in public, constitute a criminal offence.

This recognition from the government that what happened was inappropriate represents good news for UK Christians, and such arguments must never be made by the CPS again.

Calvin and Nicola Watts

Valuing All God's Children

Christian parents Calvin and Nicola Watts were forced to remove their children from a Kent Church of England primary school after discovering that their 8-year-old child and classmates were being taught that they may have been born in the wrong body.

They were initially alerted by other parents that a video of 'It feels good to be yourself' had been shown without their knowledge or consent. The book teaches children that they can be born in the wrong body and encourages the idea that 3-year-olds can declare themselves as 'non-binary'.

The couple raised awareness among other parents, who also raised concerns and complaints about the teaching, but Calvin and Nicola were then banned from trying to speak with the teacher who had initiated the lesson and the resources being used.

Yet, following parental complaints, the school justified its teaching on the subject based on Church of England guidance 'Valuing All God's Children'.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, on 13 December 2022, Calvin and Nicola wrote to the Church of England's chief education officer, Rev. Nigel Genders, appalled that the CofE's own guidance was being used against them. They are currently in discussions with Rev Nigel Genders about this matter.

The couple commented:

When we found out that extreme transgender ideology was being pushed on our 8-year-old without our consent, we were shocked and horrified. We felt very disrespected and betrayed as we had asked at the start of the year for our children not to be exposed to any LGBT

ideology.

It is tragic that Christian parents can no longer send their children to CofE primary schools in confidence that they will not be exposed to extreme transgender ideology. The CofE appears to care more about politics than biblical truth. We urge the CofE hierarchy to urgently look into what has happened and to address how its own guidance is being used to defend the promotion of what we believe to be child abuse.

Buffer Zones

40 Days for Life is an international grassroots organisation dedicated to ending abortion. Volunteers regularly offer help and information on alternatives to abortion to women outside the clinic. During the opening times of the clinic, volunteers stand peacefully, holding nothing but a couple of small signs offering help. Prayers, which are a central part of 40 Days for Life activities, are either said quietly or silently.

The 'buffer zone' has now been introduced – with no effort made to consult the pro-lifers who volunteered outside the clinic – prohibiting any discussion of abortion or offers of help within the area, banning prayer and reading from the Bible, making the sign of the cross, counselling and/or providing information and other support available to women in crisis pregnancies. Sprinkling holy water within the zone could even lead to volunteers facing six months in jail.

Birmingham

Miss Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, 45, who is the leader of the pro-life group, 40 Days for life Birmingham, will pursue a statutory review of the council's decision to force through a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in September 2022 following what has been described as an 'unlawful' and 'sham' consultation.

The PSPO, which are usually reserved for tackling anti-social behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse and dangerous dogs, surrounds the British Pregnancy Advisory Group's (BPAS), Robert Clinic in Kings Norton, Birmingham.

Since January 2020, the volunteers have been regularly praying for and offering help and information on alternatives to abortion to women outside of the clinic. Many of the volunteers have been through abortions themselves.

Disturbingly, the PSPO also now gives power to 'designated' members of the public to essentially spy on the zone and facilitate the removal of anyone perceived to be breaking the PSPO order.

The original proposals included a Catholic Church in the zone which would have made it a criminal offence to pray for a woman attending the clinic in the church grounds.

Backed by the Christian Legal Centre, Miss Vaughan-Spruce will now challenge the validity of the PSPO with lawyers arguing that the council has exceeded its powers.

They will say that the council did not have the power to make the PSPO because officials wrongly sought to prohibit peaceful and lawful behaviour which cannot properly be characterised as "anti-social", and for which there is no evidence.

Furthermore, lawyers will argue that the PSPO is disproportionate and interferes with Miss Vaughan-Spruce's human rights under Article 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Lawyers will also say that it does not appear that the Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police was properly consulted over the proposals.

The High Court will be asked to declare the PSPO unlawful, unjustified and an interference with Miss Vaughan-Spruce's and other pro-lifers' rights.

In addition to this Christian Concern has also launched a Judicial Review of the Birmingham Buffer Zone. As the buffer zone covers private land surrounding the abortion clinic, it is argued that the Council did not have the power to make a PSPO which restricts and criminalises otherwise lawful activities conducted on private land and that due process was not followed in introducing the buffer zone.

Bournemouth

Livia Tossici-Bolt, a former clinical scientist, leads 40 Days for life Bournemouth. Backed by the Christian Legal Centre, Miss Tossici-Bolt is now challenging the council and the validity of the Public Space Protection Order, arguing that the council has exceeded its powers.

It will be argued that the council did not have the power to make the PSPO because officials wrongly sought to prohibit peaceful and lawful behaviour which cannot properly be characterised as 'anti-social', and for which there is no evidence.

Furthermore, lawyers will argue that the PSPO is disproportionate and interferes with Miss Tossici-Bolt's human rights under Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The High Court will be asked to declare the PSPO unlawful, unjustified and an interference with Miss Tossici-Bolt and other pro-lifers' rights.

Miss Tossici-Bolt commented:

Everyone must have the freedom to pray quietly in a public place.

By imposing this PSPO, the BCP council is preventing women coerced into abortion from being reached and helped and denying women and couples in difficult circumstances the possibility of receiving independent information and supportive alternatives to abortion. We believe what the council has done is unlawful, discriminatory, and unethical and we are determined to fight for justice.

Additionally, Christian Concern has also launched a Judicial Review of the Bournemouth Buffer Zone. As the buffer zone covers private land surrounding the abortion clinic, it is argued that the Council did not have the power to make a PSPO which restricts and criminalises otherwise lawful activities conducted on private land and that due process was not followed in introducing the buffer zone.

Derek Timms

Derek was a chaplain at a Marie Curie charity branch in Solihull. On his jumper he wore a half-inch pin with a cross on it, not only as a manifestation of his faith, but also in memory of his marriage, having lost his wife earlier last year.

Derek was told in an email by the Methodist minister overseeing the chaplaincy that he must not wear the cross as it might 'offend' and create 'barriers' with patients. This was despite the fact that Derek had been wearing the miniature cross at Marie Curie for four years without any complaints.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre Derek wrote to the Methodist minister, stating: 'I have searched the Marie Curie Solihull website, policy documents, the NHS website and nowhere can I find where there is a written policy which prohibits the wearing of crosses in my specific situation or why it is prohibited.'

His letter was then escalated to the Marie Curie regional office, which then apologised 'unreservedly' for the stress that this put Derek through, confirming that he was free to wear his cross. The regional office responded: 'I can confirm that currently we have neither an organisational or uniform policy that would support our recent request to remove your cross while supporting patients and families in the Hospice. I apologise unreservedly for the distress that we have caused.'

Core Issues Trust

Core Issues Trust (CIT) is a non-profit Christian ministry that offers talking therapy and supports men and women who voluntarily seek change in sexual preference and expression.

On 20 July 2020, (CIT) was notified that its banking facilities with Barclays Bank would be stopped in two months, after a coordinated campaign by LGBT activists. On 3 July, there were tweets pressuring Barclays bank to stop providing CIT with services. The International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCC) project supported by CIT also received closure notice at the same time. Dr CIT has received over 300 nuisance phone calls and hat messages and its email address has been signed up to porn sites without consent. Mike Davidson, Chief Executive of CIT and Christian therapist received death threats and numerous other intimidating messages.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, CIT is challenging the decision of Barclays to close its accounts.

Since the incident, Barclays have refused to apologise, reinstate the account or even give a reason for its action. Barclays argues that it can terminate any account by giving two months' notice without explanation and has claimed there is no evidence that Dr Davidson or CIT have been discriminated against by the bank.

On 14 October 2022 Barclays bank lawyers sought to strike out Dr Davidson's case by suggesting that the court does not have jurisdiction to determine the legal action.

However, on 9 November 2022, Judge Devlin refused, ruling in an oral judgment that the case could continue in the Northern Irish courts. He also said that it was of note that no reason had been provided by Barclays Bank for the closure of two business accounts and that the lawyers representing the corporation had been given no instructions in this regard other than that there was no unlawful discrimination involved.

Barclays bank have lodged an appeal to this decision, and the appeal hearing date is yet to be released. There are also ongoing negotiations with Barclays Bank.

Hatun Tash

Hatun Tash, an ex-Muslim and convert to Christianity, is the director of the ministry Defend Christ Critique Islam, and has witnessed many Muslims turn from faith to Christianity. She is a well-known Christian preacher who regularly debates Islam and the Qur'an at Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park.

In December 2020, she was arrested by police officers using coronavirus regulations to detain her after she encouraged officers not to hinder another preacher's right to free speech.

On 23 May 2021, Miss Tash was assaulted, abused and harassed by a group of Islamic men for wearing a t-shirt with a picture of Muhammad on it while taking part in weekly debates at Speakers' Corner, known as the home of free speech. Instead of dealing with the threats and intimidation, the police chose to arrest Miss Tash for 'breaching the peace' and then she was further arrested under section 4A of the Public Order Act 1986. She was then taken into police custody and later interviewed under caution and held in custody. For 24 hours she was held before being released with the police taking no further action.

On 25 July 2021, she faced threats to her life for speaking and was attacked and stabbed for preaching at Speakers' Corner, suffering wounds to her face and hand. The police repeatedly failed to protect Hatun or make any arrests following her being assaulted and threatened.

Most recently, Hatun was arrested after her own copy of the Qur'an was stolen from her; she was detained overnight, strip-searched and interrogated. Her copy of the Qur'an has not been returned to her, despite police knowing who took it.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre, Hatun Tash, challenged her arrests and treatment by the police. The Metropolitan Police has apologised and admitted it 'fell below standards' following two wrongful arrests of a female Christian evangelist at Speakers' Corner, London. She has also received £10,000 in compensation and costs.

Book review: Biblical Critical Theory

by *Tim Dieppe*

How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture

Christopher Watkin

Zondervan, 2022, 624 pages, £24 (10 off those)

Rarely has a new Christian book received quite as much hype ahead of publication as *Biblical Critical Theory*, with many prominent Christian leaders raving about it. Consequently, I was keen to read it and pre-ordered a copy to be delivered once published.

First off, I personally found the title somewhat misleading. This is not a book about critical theory, nor is it a Biblical response to critical theory. As the author states in the introduction: 'This then, is a book about the "so what?" of Christian belief.' In fact, he suggests that alternative titles could have been: 'Know What Follows from What You Believe', or 'The Bible: So What?' As the author explains, this book: 'does not try to explain and defend the Bible to the culture, it seeks to analyze and critique the culture through the Bible.' (p.2). Perhaps a better title would have been: *How the Bible Critiques Culture?*

The book consists of 28 chapters which broadly take us through biblical theology from Genesis to Revelation. First off is a chapter on Trinity, and then there are chapters on Creation, Humanity, Sin, Babel, Abraham, Exodus, Wisdom Literature, Prophecy, The Incarnation, The Cross, The Resurrection, The Last Days, and Eschatology. In short, this book provides an overview of Biblical theology, but with a difference. The difference is the deliberate attempt to show how these theological truths apply to culture and critique contemporary cultural norms. Watkin self-consciously models this book on the second part of Augustine's *The City of God* as he seeks to show how the Bible 'out narrates' rival cultural stories.

The author likes to show how the Bible frequently critiques culture with what he calls 'diagonalisation'. The idea is that the Bible frequently cuts across cultural dichotomies to transcend the dichotomy and critique both sides. For example, in the chapter on creation, he articulates the cultural dichotomy between language creating the distinctions in reality, and reality being transparent to language. He then explains that the Bible diagonalises this dichotomy with the concept of God speaking to create the world. So, language does shape reality – but that is God's language – so it is also true that our language doesn't shape it.

Or to take another example, the cultural dichotomy over pessimism and utopianism in respect of society which Watkin explains in the chapter on Sin, Anthropology, and Asymmetry. Here Biblical anthropology diagonalises the dichotomy by at once being more pessimistic than the pessimist because of the recognition of the sinful nature of humanity that will always affect society, and at the same time being more utopian than the utopian because of the radical transformation of human hearts that is begun in this life and completed in the next (p.164).

This book is full of examples like that showing how biblical ideas transcend or 'diagonalise' cultural dichotomies. At times I felt that these 'diagonalizations' were somewhat forced though. I think my favourite chapter was the chapter on Giving to Caesar What is Caesar's. Here there is an obvious dichotomy between paying taxes and therefore collaborating with Rome, and not paying taxes and being arrested. Jesus 'diagonalises' this by telling them to 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.' Or, as Watkin puts it, 'In other words, giving to Caesar is part of giving to God.' (p.496). More generally, the principle here cuts through the broader dichotomy between radicalism and compromise. We should serve pagan governments as part of our service to God, but there are limits to the demands that pagan governments can make on Christians. In the same chapter, he highlights the dichotomy between the measure of good being found in the world, or there being no measure of the good. The Bible 'diagonalises' these alternatives by asserting that God is the measure of the good (p.503).

I found that I was already familiar with many of the points being made, but there were some great insights that I did appreciate. For a book about how the Bible critiques culture, however, it is extremely disappointing, to say the least, that there is no meaningful discussion of family, marriage, sexual ethics, transgenderism, abortion, or freedom of religion. Perhaps this is because these issues do not easily fit into his 'diagonalisation' model? These are the areas where a biblical worldview is most under attack in contemporary culture, however, failing to show how the Bible speaks into these areas seriously diminishes the value of the book in terms of equipping Christians to understand how the Bible critiques our culture.

That said, I think the book does make a useful contribution and a lot of helpful ideas are well explained. It is good to demonstrate, again and again, how the Bible 'out-narrates' cultural ideas, and transcends cultural dichotomies. Notes are at the bottom of the page for easy reference. Watkin is very widely read, and it shows. The most frequently cited authors (outside of the Bible) are Augustine, G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, Tim Keller, Oliver O'Donovan, Karl Marx, Charles Taylor, and Cornelius Van Till. Each chapter concludes with some study questions. There is also a bibliography and three indices.

Several reviewers have complained about the length of the book at over 600 pages. After all, the book does cover the whole range of biblical theology, and I found it quite readable. We must be prepared to invest in longer books if we want to go deeper in our understanding of culture and theology. This book is one worth investing in, notwithstanding the significant lacuna of avoiding discussing the most pressing cultural challenges of our time.

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Book review article: The missing Islamic dimension of 'The War on the West'

by Carys Moseley

Douglas Murray, *The War on the West: How to Prevail in the Age of Unreason*. London: HarperCollins, 2022. 320 Pages, £8.99 (Waterstones)

In 'The War on the West', Douglas Murray warns that there is a cultural war to destroy the western world and that it is framed in racial terms. The book is a well-written if rather anecdotal polemic taking on some of the key accusations made and themes favoured by contemporary anti-western pundits. These tend to be animated by the view that history shows that western civilization's failings including racism and colonialism are uniquely bad. Murray is at his best when unmasking hypocrisy, cultural self-hatred, wishful thinking and laziness among anti-western pundits as well as western politicians. The historical trajectory of his writing, however, suggests that race, or at least culture, rather than religion is the more important category for him. So rather than writing a straightforward review (it's better if you read the book than a dull synopsis), I shall endeavour to show how Murray's insufficient attention to the Islamic angle of this anti-westernism is a serious problem.

Harking back to his previous book 'The Strange Death of Europe'¹, he says that western countries are alone in being told they must not have borders and must 'swiftly and fundamentally alter their demographic makeup'. Similar excuses were made for not stopping mass migration in each western country that he visited. The author explains the current book as one 'about what happens when one side in a cold war – the side of democracy, reason, rights and universal – prematurely surrenders.' He says that this attack on the west as wholly bad and racist is too often dismissed as temporary or fringe, merely 'a culture war', when in fact it is as important as 'any fight in the twentieth century, with many of the same principles involved – even with many of the same bad actors' (p.7). He warns that 'if we allow malicious critics to misrepresent and hijack our past, then the future they plan off the back of this will not be harmonious. It will be hell.' Murray says his book explores two ideas: 1) that the critics of the west provide alternatives, namely non-western cultures, and 2) the question of why open everything in the west to assault.

In reality, what Murray does not say is that the main non-western alternative provided is Islamic culture. The vehicle for this is Islamism, which is a modern political (and partly underground) movement that attempts to subvert the west. It isn't possible to understand anti-westernism without taking Islamism into consideration. This matters because Murray is best known for his critical writing on Islam in the west. The problem is that Murray himself seems reluctant to uncover and criticise the Islamic aspect of the relentless attack on western civilization.

'The War on the West' starts with a story about himself and General Douglas Allen, the NATO Commander in Afghanistan, lecturing a London audience in 2016 about what to do about ISIS. Murray warned about how ISIS could attack the UK. General Allen was uncomfortable when Rula Jebreal, a Palestinian activist complained that the audience was 'again lectured...by two white men'. Interestingly Allen had never heard this kind of talk; Murray had, and told him to get used to it. Murray uses this story to talk about the new anti-racism rather than Islam as one of the main threats to western civilization today. The reason for citing the NATO story is that Murray opened his chapter on race by saying this: 'To delegitimise the west...it is necessary to demonise white people' (p. 13). The problem is that he never really investigates how the co-option of this new anti-racism has long been part of the Islamist project to subvert the west. It is part of the Muslim Brotherhood's 'Project'. Interestingly, Rula Jebreal was not a random protester. She is the daughter of a Nigerian imam who settled in Haifa, Israel, and worked at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.² She is an Islamic activist, from a privileged background who dated rock star Roger Waters – certainly not a

¹ Douglas Murray, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

² https://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/rula-jebreal#_

native Arab from the Palestinian territories.³ This makes her anti-colonial credentials dubious.

Rev. Jesse Jackson's slogan 'Western civ has to go', shouted at Stanford University in 1987, is taken by Murray as a turning point for universities in their slide towards anti-westernism. However, this is rather thin evidence on which to build a case. 'Western civilization' courses did not exist in the UK. Indeed it would probably be considered amateurish to attempt to pack so much into a single degree course.

The chapter on 'History' is rather difficult to make sense of given its dotting around between American controversies and western European ones. I shall focus here on the European angle. Murray's very pointed criticism of Jean-Paul Sartre and Franz Fanon's anti-western agenda completely ignores their cynical complicity with Islamism vis-à-vis the Algerian of independence. It is impossible to understand France's problems with anti-westernism without understanding its history with Algeria and Islam. Fanon's outlook in particular could be argued to be a precursor to Black Lives Matter's linkage between Islam and anti-racism. As for Murray's treatment of Edward Said's Orientalism, it is so brief and dismissive that it never seriously gets to rebut his work. Here in particular we see a sad tendency to ignore the work of those who have already criticised such anti-western reasoning. The most widely accessible example here is Robert Irwin's very historically learned, adventurous and as such devastating response *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*.⁴

Murray's section on early modern slavery refers to 'Arab' not Islamic slavery in Africa. This means that the Islamic motivation and warrant for slavery are ignored. This is what happens when race or ethnicity becomes the organising category for reasoning. This reduces the usefulness of the references to the work of historians cited such as Ralph Austen and Tidiane N'Diaye. We also do not get an explanation as to why this kind of comparative approach to slavery is alleged to be almost exclusively by French-medium scholars. I suspect the reason is in a matter that Murray does touch upon, namely the history of the Muslim Barbary pirates from north Africa. This is the key to understanding the culture war over reparations for the slave trade today, and why Murray's reluctance to investigate the Islamic angle is such a serious problem.

Between the 16th and 19th centuries, these pirates proceeded, mainly from Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, to kidnap many thousands of young adults from the shores of western Europe.⁵ They came as far as Britain and even Iceland, and took their captives back to be slaves in their galley ships and harems. The historical fact is that France – and France alone – successfully put an end to three hundred years of Islamic enslavement of western Europeans by invading Algiers in 1830 and staying there. Its occupation put an end to the rule of Islamic law over non-Muslims. There was a 2000-year old Jewish population, and the Christian population descended from early converts during Roman times had dwindled to oblivion by the 14th century due to progressive Islamic persecution. Muslims were permitted to continue using Islamic law in litigation regarding their personal status.⁶ Algeria, as the country became known, was a French colony until Islamists fought a war of independence won in 1962. However, national independence has not dampened the Islamist impetus; it has changed it. A new, subtle Islamist demand has come from Algeria to France – the demand for reparations for French colonialism.⁷ Thus far France, including its current president, has refused. There are several reasons for rejecting the case for reparations for colonialism, and they are in general similar to the ones Murray outlines for rejecting reparations for slavery. However, there is one specific to Algeria that goes unmentioned. It is that 130 years of French colonialism meant that Jews and Christians no longer had to pay the *jizya* tax to their Islamic overlords, which was really a protection racket. I believe that concern about this is why

3 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-3788626/Pink-Floyd-rocker-Roger-Waters-73-splits-Palestinian-writer-Rula-Jebreal-43-months-long-affair.html>

4 Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*. London: Penguin, 2006.

5 Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003.

6 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Algeria

7 <https://www.memri.org/reports/algerian-islamists-analysts-and-social-media-users-describe-macrons-visit-algeria-soft>

exposure of the Islamic slave trade in Africa is mainly a French-language endeavour.

All this has important implications for other western European countries, such as the UK and the Netherlands. Should other countries accede to the demand for reparations for slavery or colonialism (even though the UK actually did this in the 19th century), Algeria and its Islamist supporters would heap pressure on France to do the same. This would be a major weapon in their goal to Islamise France and Europe.

The fact is that in the USA, the campaign for reparations had Islamic links from the start. John Conyers was the US Democrat politician who first introduced a bill on the issue in Congress.⁸ He also argued that Islam needs special protection. The problem is that this would have facilitated a backdoor Islamic blasphemy law. He opposed the work of the authors of 'Muslim Mafia', who infiltrated the Council for Islamic-American Relations to find out about the current practicalities of the known Muslim Brotherhood's plot to Islamize the USA. Interestingly, Conyers' funeral was at the Greater Grace Temple in Detroit, a Pentecostal African-American megachurch. This suggests that a particular Christian theological outlook underpins the movement for reparations. It also suggests dangerous blindness to the threat of Islamism among a section of the Christian church.

In the chapter 'Religion', Murray assumes that the new anti-racism has replaced Christianity. The evidence suggests otherwise. It has come from a section of the churches. Several of the figures he refers to, such as Rev. Jesse Jackson and Ibram X. Kendi are from Christian backgrounds, though Kendi seems not to be a practising Christian. There are many important African-American religious movements. Among them is the Nation of Islam, which is key to the complex ideology that spawned Black Lives Matter. That Malcolm X toured Britain's universities in the early days to meet local chapters of the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) in 1964 is very important.⁹ For FOSIS was founded by a key member of the Muslim Brotherhood, Said Ramadan,¹⁰ and it has grown in influence in the last twenty years in particular.

More broadly, Murray rightly laments the tradition of 'using other peoples and cultures as a way to show how lacking in admirable traits we are in the west' (p.157). He cites Voltaire's praise of the simplicity of Islam. Yet what needs saying here is that this tendency was part of Deism's anti-Christian revolt. Ten pages later Murray is upset that Voltaire's statue was removed from in front of the Academie Francaise in Paris, due to information about his racism towards African people. Again what is not acknowledged is that Voltaire's racism would be linked to his Deism. The reason is that Deists rejected the assumed divine authority of the Bible as the history of the human race, and therefore the Table of Nations in Genesis, with its account of the plurality of peoples originating with one set of human parents created by God. Historically there were various ways of rejecting the Genesis account, and some of these alternatives were used to justify slavery and racism.¹¹ This is highly relevant to Islam, as the Qu'ran itself rejects the Genesis account. This is why Arabic language supremacism is central to Islam, which in turn fed Arab racism towards Africans.

Murray's treatment of Karl Marx is rather better. He holds up a long list of examples of Marx's prejudices and hostilities, showing in each case that he was just as bad if not worse than the western figures lambasted by today's critics of the west. However, in discussing Marx's anti-semitic remarks, he omits mentioning that Marx himself was Jewish. This suggests that Marx's attitudes were if not literally self-hating, part of an attitude of contempt and rejection for his Jewish heritage. This points to a gaping chasm in Murray's book, which is that in being so very keen to attack Marxism and the far left, does not properly acknowledge the very European provenance of Marxism. That the most hateful ideologies in western and European history came from the heart of Europe – Marxism and fascism – is at the core of the self-destructive tendencies in western Europe today. That they fed on various forms of anti-semitism and anti-Christian sentiment is something

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Conyers

9 <https://www.fosis.org.uk/about-us/>

10 <https://www.hudson.org/national-security-defense/uk-islamists-and-the-arab-uprisings>

11 Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

that Murray does not acknowledge.

The interlude on China is helpful as it exposes the communist regime's hypocrisy regarding racism and other matters. However this time the Islamic dimension is represented in too misleading a fashion. Murray criticises China for its oppression of the Uighur Muslims, without mentioning how China oppresses other religious minorities such as Christians. This is a problem because Islamists leverage the case of the Uighur Muslims for their own ends, for example in their criticism of Prevent. They draw a parallel between the Chinese state's handling of the Uighurs and their own claim to be victims of Islamophobia and racism. In this context, we should be asking why does the British government complain exclusively about the Chinese treatment of the Uighurs whilst staying silent about the Chinese persecution of Christians and other religious minorities? The answer is that the UK government has been bending over backwards to appease Islamists, hoping that this will keep them at bay. The UK has stooped so low that it uses only Islamic concerns to castigate China for its poor human rights record. That Murray makes no mention of this is a serious problem, as this inconsistency perfectly illustrates how the war on the west is really a propaganda war that has disgraceful consequences.

Why the inadequate handling of the Islamic angle

In 'The Strange Death of Europe', Murray did acknowledge Charles Martel, the Frankish leader whose victory at Tours in 732 is considered as having prevented Islam from overrunning western and southern Europe¹². It is interesting that the earliest reference to 'Europeans' (Latin 'Europenses') was made by the Christian Mozarabic Chronicle in the 8th century, referring collectively to the 'northern peoples' and the 'people of Austria', i.e. the Franks led by Charles Martel.¹³ Murray's discussion of Charles Martel occurs in reporting a visit to his grave in the Basilique de Saint-Denis, the cathedral where France's kings are buried. The surrounding area, Saint-Denis, is now heavily Islamised and a regular topic for television documentaries and policy debates.

Murray blames 'the death of Europe' on post-war mass immigration, blamed on labour shortages, and says that 'at the same time Europe lost faith in its beliefs, traditions and legitimacy'. This is historically implausible, given the decline of Christianity was already underway, and that Marxism and fascism had already wreaked terrible damage. The area of Saint-Denis is actually a case in point, having become heavily Communist before the Second World War.¹⁴

Murray tends to follow the line taken by western think tanks, namely that the problems with Islam in the west mostly date from the fatwa on Salman Rushdie. He wrongly claims that the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs was the first national Muslim representative organisation in the UK. In fact, it was the Union of Muslim Organisations, founded in 1970.¹⁵ The difference is that the UMO was often unsuccessful in making demands for special multicultural treatment, as successive governments rejected multiculturalism. Looking further back to the early twentieth century, even on a local level Muslim activism is coterminous with Muslim immigration. The fashionable consensus that it only followed the Rushdie fatwa, or even that it was a creature of the Thatcher and Major governments' desire for Muslim interlocutors, is simply wrong.

Exceedingly odd is Murray's total silence on the Muslim Brotherhood and related Islamist movements in the UK and western Europe. For it is impossible to understand why Islam should go with post-colonialism and the new anti-racism without considering it. Brotherhood figures were exiles from Egypt in Europe after the Second World War (some having supported the Nazi regime) and especially after the rise of Nasser. The Brotherhood's secret 'Project' agenda was

¹² Murray, *The Strange Death of Europe*, 109.

¹³ The English translator of the Mozarabic Chronicle introduces a hairsplitting distinction between the contemporary reference to the invaders as 'Saracens' not 'Muslims'. <https://www.aymennjawad.org/23270/the-mozarabic-chronicle-full-translation>

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint-Denis,_Seine-Saint-Denis

¹⁵ Pędziwiatr, Konrad. "Creating new discursive arenas and influencing the policies of the state: The case of the Muslim Council of Britain." *Social Compass* 54.2 (2007): 272.

discovered after 9/11 and made public by French-Swiss journalist Sylvain Besson in 2005.¹⁶ An English translation exists online as well.¹⁷ This makes explicit the aim to co-operate selectively with anti-racist and post-colonial movements in the west (and indeed other areas of the world), with the real aim being to undermine, destabilise and Islamise the west and to foment jihad against Israel. This makes sense of why Islamists have been getting people, in general, to complain about colonialism even though it no longer exists.

Murray is wrong to state that it was only after 1945 that Europe lost faith in its beliefs, traditions and legitimacy. On one level the Second World War is linked to a loss of faith on a disastrous level, a loss of tolerance. A neo-pagan, occult mentality is what fed the Nazi regime. Again here is where we see the lack of admission that Marxism and fascism emerged deep from within the heart of Europe. His juxtaposition of mass immigration and loss of nerve risks scapegoating immigrants for Europe's dechristianisation. This erroneous historical perspective explains why he ends 'The War on the West' by inventing a lengthy hypothetical answer to the question 'What do you like about being white?'. This was a question asked in 2021 by US television host Mark Lamont Hill to Christopher Rufo, an opponent of Critical Race Theory in US schools. Murray discounts Rufo's actual answer, wanting to disavow notions of 'whiteness' or 'blackness' when dealing with education, as ultimately evasive. He thinks this is the only acceptable response today. He then suggests going further along this road to argue that 'white culture' (by which he seems to mean modern western Enlightenment-based culture) is part of universal culture, available to everybody. Murray's proposed third alternative basically describes western culture (focussing mostly on post-Enlightenment culture) in terms of 'being white'. He says this is 'truthful'. This is rather troubling for many reasons.

However he then turns to make a concrete recommendation based on a quote from the American author Thomas Chatterton Williams:

*[we need to] develop a vision of ourselves strong and supple enough both to acknowledge the lingering importance of inherited group identities while also attenuating, rather than reinforcing, the extent to which such identities are able to define us.*¹⁸

This is the unceremonious thud down to earth that ends the book. The problem is that Islamists would exploit even this idea, not least because Islam is a multi-ethnic religion. Recommending that history be less important is a proposition fraught with problems. Islam teaches that the period before it arrived was one of pagan ignorance. At worst this can motivate the destruction of historical monuments. It could also motivate censorship of historical writing. More subtly it may motivate the rewriting of history to downplay and denigrate the Christian past and extoll the present precisely because of the increasing Islamic dimension. Indeed this has already been happening for quite some time anyway. If the west, especially western Europe, is to withstand the nihilism of anti-westernism, it must rise above the perspective offered by Murray here and value the central role of Christianity in the unfolding of its civilization. Interestingly this is a path that cannot be exclusive to the west, as Christianity is a worldwide religion. This approach, therefore, enables engagement with those who have come to live here from outside the west, not least by learning from them.

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16 Sylvain Besson, *La conquête de l'Occident - Le projet secret des islamistes*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2005. <http://www.onthewing.org/user/Islam%20-%20Muslim%20Brotherhood%20Project.pdf>

17 <http://www.onthewing.org/user/Islam%20-%20Muslim%20Brotherhood%20Project.pdf>

18 Thomas Chatterton Williams, *Self-Portrait in Black and White: Family, Fatherhood and Rethinking Race*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2020: 76.

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