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THE
CHRISTIAN
INSTITUTE

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD

Update

FREE

The UK-wide newsletter of The Christian Institute



GM humans

New Bill allows the creation of animal-human embryos

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CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE IN A SECULAR WORLD

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Update

Cloning Humans

Everyone agrees. Stem cells are most remarkable cells. Many have the capacity to develop into any cell of the human body. One day such cells could be used to develop pioneering medical treatments. Here an ethical problem arises. Some stem cells are found in the human embryo. Scientists have specifically created human embryos in the lab so that the stem cells can be removed from them. This process destroys the human embryo. This would be a criminal offence in many countries, but not in the UK.

'Adult stem cells' by contrast, can be obtained without destroying human life. They are found in certain parts of the body such as the bone marrow or the nasal cavity. Back in 2000 Government Ministers were saying the science was "very obvious": there'd be no breakthrough with adult stem cells until research on embryonic stem cells had been done first.¹ This claim was used to help justify legalising human cloning for research (so-called 'therapeutic cloning'). By cloning human embryos in the lab more stem cells could be harvested.

That was the theory. But the Government has been proved wrong. Research into embryonic stem cells has so far cured no one. Adult stem cells on the other hand are now being developed for 73 medical treatments.² The Government had predicted that one day research using embryonic stem cells would help treat spinal cord injury and heart disease. This has not happened, but today both conditions are being treated by adult stem cells.

The Government's predictions were wrong. So too were its ethics. It can never be right to kill one person to help another. For Christians who believe in the sanctity of life from conception, the embryo must be treated as a human person. Since Jesus Christ became man at his conception, and he was made in every way like us yet without sin (Hebrews 2:14,17 ; 4:15), then our

humanity begins at conception. Experiments on embryos create human life only to destroy it.

The Human Tissue and Embryos Bill

Human cloning has not created enough stem cells for the scientists. They now want to obtain stem cells from animal-human embryos. The Government brought forward a Bill to legalise this procedure and many others. Hybrids, cybrids and chimeras – whatever the technique to combine human and animal material the ethical problem is the same.

Manufacturing new creatures out of humans and animals is deeply repugnant. It offends against the principle that human life is uniquely made in the image of God. It offends against the created order that humans and animals are of different kinds. Mixing them has rightly been called 'in-vitro bestiality'.

The Government wants to go even further than this. Its Bill creates an exception to the ban on reproductive cloning. It permits the replacement of mitochondria in order to combat the transmission of hereditary disease. Under this proposal babies will be conceived with genetic material from two mothers and a father.

Instead of being 'begotten' children will be made. Made to order. With certain hereditary conditions parents can already choose the sex of their baby. Now human genes will be mixed up in the lab. This is to usurp God, to break the link between procreation and sexual intercourse, and to turn children into commodities.

Colin Hart
Director



¹ House of Commons, Hansard, 19 December 2000, col. 260

² <http://www.stemcellresearch.org/facts/treatments.htm> as at 16 July 2007

Smacking review could reopen full ban debate

■ By Mike Judge

Changes to the law on smacking in England and Wales – introduced three years ago – are to be reviewed, the Government has announced. The review is likely to reopen the debate for an outright ban on smacking.

Parliament overwhelmingly rejected such a ban in 2004. At that time the Labour Party told its MPs to vote against a ban. But Cabinet ministers have recently been calling for MPs to have a free vote on the issue. This increases the risk of an outright ban. The new Prime Minister's views are unknown. Under Blair the Government said they were not minded to press for a full ban.

The law on smacking was changed three years ago when



Children's minister, Beverley Hughes

Parliament voted to remove the defence of 'reasonable chastisement' for any smack which leaves more than a transient mark on a child.

Critics on both sides of the debate said this law was too vague and pointed out one child's skin marks more easily

than another. Supporters of smacking say the former law worked well. It allowed the courts to weigh the evidence of individual cases and judge whether a parent's actions were reasonable. There have been no documented court cases of a parent successfully relying on

'reasonable chastisement' when there was genuine child abuse.

But opponents – including Britain's four Children's Commissioners – say that no form of smacking is 'reasonable'. They want an outright ban which would criminalise any parent who smacks their child.

In Scotland, smacking is allowed but use of implements, shaking or blows to the head are outlawed. Northern Ireland has the same law as England and Wales.

Beverley Hughes, the children's minister when the review was announced, said: "Parliament did not go as far as to ban all smacking because it didn't want to see decent parents criminalised. We have no reason to believe that the current law needs to be changed. However, in 2004 we made a proper commitment to examine the practical consequences of the changes to the legislation and this consultation is fulfilling that commitment. We also said we would be separately seeking parents' views on physical punishment and this will [be] done through a parental survey."¹

Her counterpart in the Conservative Party, Tim Loughton, said: "Even though this issue was debated barely three [years] ago, Labour ministers cannot resist meddling in how parents look after their children. Bringing up children is a big enough challenge already without opening up this can of worms, which is all about nanny state rather than trusting parents to bring up their children as they see fit."²

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6757041.stm> as at 3 July 2007

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6757041.stm> as at 3 July 2007

Coming up in Parliament

Embryos

The Human Tissue and Embryos Bill will allow scientists to grow combined animal-human embryos which will be destroyed at 14 days of development. It will also end the requirement for doctors to consider a child's need for a father when referring women for fertility treatment. The Bill allows the creation of a genetically-modified child who has two mums and one dad. The Bill may also be used to open up debate about abortion laws.

Prostitution

The Criminal Justice Bill includes changes to the law on prostitution. Under the Bill the term 'common prostitute' will be scrapped and, instead of fining those guilty of soliciting for prostitution, courts will be able simply to order them to attend counselling sessions. Further consultation will be undertaken on whether to allow 'mini-brothels'.

Smacking

The 2004 law on smacking – which bans any smack leaving more than a temporary mark – is to be reviewed by the Government. This could open the way for another attempt at an outright ban. Some Cabinet ministers have been calling for Labour MPs to have a free vote on the issue.

Equality

The Government is holding a review of discrimination law with a view to introducing an overarching Equality Bill. It raises several consultation proposals which affect religious liberty including plans to outlaw discrimination against transsexuals in the provision of goods, facilities and services; placing a duty upon public bodies to actively promote equality based on sexual orientation; and making 'harassment' based on sexual orientation or religion unlawful.

Home office plans to relax prostitution laws

■ By Simon Calvert

The Government is relaxing some of the laws on prostitution. Under the latest Criminal Justice Bill the penalties for soliciting for prostitution are being liberalised.

Instead of imposing fines on those convicted of soliciting, a court will have the alternative of a "rehabilitation order". This means requiring the prostitute to attend three counselling sessions.

These orders seem to be

far weaker than robust drug treatment orders like those which require a stay in a residential drug treatment centre to seek to cure someone of their addiction. Such orders have been effective in getting many people off drugs.

Drug addiction is perhaps the most common reason cited for going into prostitution. There may well be cases where a drug treatment order is appropriate but there is no case for progressively decriminalising prostitution through wholly inadequate

counselling sessions which are far too limited to do any good.

Government ministers have said they will carry out further consultation on their controversial idea of allowing mini-brothels, where two prostitutes and a 'maid' could lawfully operate from one premises.

Other countries which have relaxed their laws in this area have seen an increase in the number of women involved in both legal and illegal prostitution.

Pagan quits Charity Commission after he is caught giving tips on how to damage Evangelical group

The Christian Institute has exposed the activities of a pagan activist working at the Charity Commission who solicited complaints against a Christian charity. He told fellow pagans to say the charity's activities were not "in the public benefit".

During May 2005 Stephen Wilson, a Charity Commission caseworker and pagan activist, used a website to offer advice on how to complain to the Commission against an evangelical Christian charity.

He suggested methods for wasting the particular charity's resources by inundating it with fake requests for help. He also joked about burning down evangelical churches because of their views on homosexuality.

Mr Wilson copied information from the Charity Commission's database and disseminated it online. He hinted that he had discussed matters with colleagues at the Commission and that his advice for how to complain about this particular charity was based on their responses.

Mr Wilson specifically stated that "the best approach is to complain that this [particular charity's] activity cannot be in the public benefit".¹

We drew these matters to the attention of the Commission which carried out an investigation. Mr Wilson subsequently resigned from the Commission.

¹ <http://www.pagan-network.org/forums/showthread.php?t=14295&page=3> as at 20 June 2006



Important new laws for Christian charities

■ By Dave Greatorex

New guidance which could affect the charitable status of Christian groups has recently been consulted on by the Charity Commission.¹

The Charities Act 2006 removed the presumption that groups existing for the advancement of education, advancement of religion or relief of poverty provide public benefit.

From early 2008 onwards such groups, including existing charities, must demonstrate their public benefit to obtain or maintain their charitable status.

The Charity Commission guidance will be crucial in administering this new law. Concerns have been raised surrounding how public benefit will be interpreted – particularly where cross-cultural missionary organisations or charities which hold to traditional Christian belief on abortion or human sexuality are involved.

It could be argued by secularists that such bodies are not in the public interest. The guidance seems to increase the scope for spurious claims to be made against religious charities by raising questions as to whether or not they provide sufficient public benefit.

If nothing else, this can create an additional burden on charities' limited resources as they defend themselves against such accusations.

The issue of public benefit has been made more controversial by the Charity Commission's approach. The Commission has said it will interpret public benefit in light of "modern social conditions", which are in turn indicated by public opinion.

Charities which hold traditional moral values may struggle to maintain their charitable status if such a decisive role is placed on modern social conditions. Religious organisations often consider themselves to have a counter-cultural role.

As religious beliefs are concerned with what is timeless, 'modern conditions' are unsuitable for assessing the public benefit of a religious organisation. There is a body of opinion which feels that the draft guidance needs to be changed to ensure that churches and religious charities are not pressurised to adopt secular beliefs.

Critics' fears are exacerbated by the way in which the draft guidance gives a prominent role

Possible problems with the new law:

Proselytising

An organisation which exists solely to convert those of another religion could be said to fall short of providing public benefit because it causes friction between religions that is contrary to the public interest. This might be said to be enough of a detriment to outweigh benefits.

Work abroad

The guidance states that purposes involving damaging UK relations with a friendly state would not be charitable. This could mean that a charity involved in smuggling Bibles into a foreign country which is considered friendly at a given point in time could have its charitable status threatened.

Morality

Society's moral views can change over time, but the teaching of the Bible remains the same. Teaching that homosexual activity is morally wrong could be considered to be a 'disbenefit' in the light of 'modern conditions', leading to the removal of charitable status.

to public opinion, which can be unreliable and changes quickly. It is argued by opponents of the new scheme that public opinion has no role at all in assessing the public benefit of a religious belief. They question whether the charitable status of religious organisations should be determined on the basis of results in opinion polls.

The concept of 'disbenefits', a term borrowed from Scottish law, is also introduced in the guidance. This requires an assessment to be made as to whether an organisation's benefits outweigh its harms. Some of these disbenefits include subjective and fluctuating categories such as something that encourages or promotes hatred towards others, or promoting something that is widely regarded as immoral.

Religious beliefs are inherently controversial because many different religions each make exclusive claims to truth, but it is argued by religious groups that this should not be taken to nullify public benefit. Those involved in evangelism and missionary work could be protected if the guidance included an assurance that these activities are considered charitable.

From a religious perspective, the Charity Commission's approach to the determination of public benefit seems to be distinctly secular and does not take account of the nature of religious charities.

Religion offers people a set of values by which to live and make decisions and which offer guidance as to how people should interact with others. Through religion, people are given opportunity and encouragement to look beyond their selfish selves to the needs of others and religious belief is therefore a major motivation for charitable activity.

The Charity Commission plans to publish the final wording of the guidance in October and it is scheduled to come into force in early 2008.

The Charities Act 2006 removed the presumption that groups existing for the advancement of religion provide public benefit.

¹ Consultation on Draft Public Benefit Guidance, Charity Commission, March 2007

12-year-old girls to be given sex jabs

■ By Mike Judge

Pre-teenage girls are set to be vaccinated against HPV, a sexually transmitted infection, the Government has said.

Ministers have agreed "in principle" to advice given by a Government panel which recommended immunising 12-year-old girls against the human papilloma virus (HPV) – a major cause of cervical cancer.¹

The treatment is expensive – about £250 per vaccination – and the Government's decision is subject to a cost-benefit analysis which is expected later this year. Some doctors believe that vaccinations for teenagers will more than double the cost of cervical cancer control programmes for "little or no gain".² North of the border, the Scottish Executive says it hopes to start vaccinating in late 2008.

Whilst parents have the right to withdraw their children from the immunisation programme, critics have said the Government's decision sends out the wrong message to young girls.

The Christian Institute opposes the Government's plan. Speaking in *The Daily Telegraph* the Institute's Director, Colin Hart, said, "It's basically a sex jab, encouraging the view that girls can be sexually available."³

Dr Helen Watt, the director of the Roman Catholic Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics, said, "A massive public health programme which targets girls as young as 10 or 12 may well create more problems than it solves... sending out the message that promiscuity is normal and expected."⁴

It is feared that the immunization programme may lull girls into a false sense of security which could cause an increase in risk-taking behaviour.

This has been true in relation to condoms. Research from Nottingham University found that condom promotion actually *increased* STI acquisition, probably by increasing sexual activity through the false hope of consequence-free sex.⁵

An HPV immunisation programme would only protect girls against some strains of the virus and would do nothing to protect them against other STIs which may also cause some cancers as well as



infertility and, in some cases, deaths from ectopic pregnancy.

The failure of 'harm reduction' approaches to reduce under-age sex have been well documented. Despite explicit sex education at ever younger ages, widespread availability of condoms and over-the-counter sales of the morning-after pill, STIs have soared amongst Britain's teens and teenage abortions recently hit a record-breaking high.

Meanwhile abstinence approaches which empower teenagers to remain sexually inactive until marriage have been successful in cutting teenage pregnancy and STI levels.

When it comes to smoking, the Government has embraced a hard-hitting abstinence approach. Rather than handing out cigarette filters in schools it tells children 'say no to smoking'.

Merck & Co., the company behind one of the vaccines, stands to make a significant amount of money from a UK-wide immunisation programme. A major US Christian group claims that up until February this year the company was lobbying US state legislatures to make vaccination compulsory. The *Baltimore Sun* reported that Merck was part funding a non-profit group which was spearheading that lobbying.⁶

¹ Department of Health, Press Release, 20 June 2007

² *The Lancet*, 369, 3 February 2007, page 368; and *The Financial Times*, 30 June 2007

³ *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 June 2007

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ See discussion in Ling, J R, *The Morning-After Pill: Uncovering the Truth*, The Christian Institute, 2007, pages 9-11

⁶ <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=PV07D03> as at 20 June 2007

Brighton council spends taxpayers' money on party for LGBT group

Brighton and Hove taxpayers footed the bill for a gay Christmas party which heterosexuals were banned from attending.

The party – which cost Brighton and Hove taxpayers almost £1,000 – was for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender workers of the city council.

A freedom of information request revealed that the amount of money spent by the LGBT Workers Forum for its 2006 Christmas Party was £901.50. This was for publicity, a buffet and entertainment.¹ The party was held at a nightclub in Brighton.

Under the new Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007 special events like this from which heterosexuals are barred are probably covered by an exemption. Government guidance says "The Regulations do not make it unlawful to do anything by way of meeting people's special needs for education, training or welfare on grounds of their sexual orientation, or providing ancillary benefits in connection with meeting such needs."²

A council spokesman said, "The event is there to enable a group of minority staff, who may be isolated at their work places, to meet other people from across the council."³

¹ Correspondence from Brighton & Hove City Council, 13 February 2007

² *Guidance on New Measures to Outlaw Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation in the Provision of Goods, Facilities and Services*, Department for Communities and Local Government, April 2007, page 23

³ *Daily Express*, 6 January 2007

We were wrong about cannabis, says newspaper as 10,000 teens are treated for dope addiction

■ By Simon Calvert

The Independent on Sunday has issued an apology for its 1997 campaign calling for the legalisation of cannabis.

In an edition of the newspaper, published on 18 March this year, it claims to have changed its mind due to 'new' evidence of the harm caused by cannabis.

Cannabis has been shown to cause mental illness and the strength of today's cannabis is known to be far greater than in the 1960s. There are also links to cancer.

In addition, evidence suggests that softening the law on cannabis has led many young people to believe that the drug has been legalised. The number of teenagers being treated for cannabis addiction has increased ten-fold since 1997.

However, those who opposed softening the law

At the time of going to press the Prime Minister announced a review of the cannabis laws which may restore cannabis to class B status.

on cannabis were pointing out these arguments more than ten years ago.

Shortly after *The Independent on Sunday* launched its campaign, The Christian Institute issued a *Drugs Bulletin* dismantling the pro-cannabis arguments. It focused on the harmful effects of cannabis use, citing medical evidence of cardiovascular and pulmonary hazards, cancers and, in particular, the mental health dangers. We also cited evidence from the US Drug Enforcement Agency that cannabis is "currently up to 25 times more potent than it was in the 1960s, making it even more addictive and harmful to health".¹

Interestingly, the newspaper now specifically



cites hazards to the heart, the risk of cancers and, in particular, the mental health hazards. They also refer to the fact that the drug now is "25 times stronger".² All these things were known in 1997 when the newspaper embarked on its campaign.

The paper claims to be responsible for the Government's downgrade of cannabis from a class B to a class C drug in 1994. The downgrade means that personal possession of cannabis is not normally an arrestable offence.

In September 1997 *The Independent on Sunday* ran a front page banner headline saying "The time is right to decriminalise cannabis". The newspaper boasted, "This is the first time a national newspaper has sought the lawful use of cannabis for medicinal and recreational purposes."³

But now the newspaper's apology includes a 'special report' carrying the headline, "Were we out of our minds? No, but then came skunk."⁴

Yet skunk – a particularly strong type of cannabis – is not a recent development. Medical journals, such as the British Medical Journal, were publishing articles on topics such as "Psychosis due to 'skunk'" as long ago as 1995 – two years before the newspaper's campaign.⁵

This evidence has been confirmed by newer studies and *The Independent on Sunday* has decided to change its stance.

In the meantime much harm has been done. Thanks to the catastrophic decision to downgrade the drug, many thousands of young

people have experimented with cannabis and become regular users. The cost to them, their families, and society, can no longer be ignored.

The Independent on Sunday points out that 10,000 teenagers are currently being treated for cannabis addiction – that is ten times as many as in 1997 when they launched their campaign.⁶

¹ *Drugs Bulletin*, The Christian Institute, Winter 1997/1998

² *The Independent on Sunday*, 18 March 2007

³ *The Independent on Sunday*, 28 September 1997

⁴ *The Independent on Sunday*, 18 March 2007

⁵ Wylie A S, Scott, R T A and Burnett, S J, 'Psychosis due to "skunk"', *BMJ*, 311, 1995, page 125

⁶ *The Independent on Sunday*, 18 March 2007

CANNABIS STATISTICS

■ Cannabis-related admissions to mental hospitals have risen by 85% since Labour came to power according to Government figures.¹

■ A study lasting 27 years involving 50,000 people showed that smoking cannabis trebles the risk of a young person developing schizophrenia.²

■ There are now more than 22,000 people a year, almost half under the age of 18, being treated for cannabis addiction. In 1997 the number was 1,600.³

■ Cannabis has fallen in price dramatically, from about £120 an ounce in 1994 to £43 today.⁴

■ According to the British Lung Foundation the average cannabis cigarette smoked in the 1960s contained about

10mg of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the main psychoactive ingredient of cannabis – compared to 150mg of THC today.⁵ Experts in the US put the figure higher – see main article.

■ In a 2002 report, the British Lung Foundation estimated that three to four cannabis cigarettes a day were associated with the same amount of damage to the lungs as 20 or more tobacco cigarettes a day.⁶

■ A British study by the Transport Research Laboratory in 2000 found drug-related road deaths were six times higher than the mid-1980s. The study showed that 18% of road deaths had traces of illicit drugs in the body, of which cannabis

constituted two-thirds.⁷

■ In the year following declassification of cannabis drug offences increased by 23%, mostly due to increases in possession of cannabis offences.⁸

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6732005.stm> as at 5 July 2007

² <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/4425730.stm> as at 5 July 2007

³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6464149.stm> as at 5 July 2007

⁴ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6464149.stm> as at 5 July 2007

⁵ http://www.lunguk.org/downloads/A_Smoking_Gun.pdf as at 5 July 2007

⁶ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/6551327.stm>

⁷ Sexton, B F, Tunbridge, R J, Brook-Carter, N et al, *The Influence of Cannabis on Driving*, Transport Research Laboratory, Report 477, 2000

⁸ <http://www.crimestatistics.org.uk/output/page16.asp> as at 5 July 2007



MP's bid to limit abortion law fails



In June of this year, backbench Conservative MP Ann Winterton was defeated in an attempt to introduce tighter controls on abortion.

MPs voted 184 to 109 against her proposals to introduce counselling sessions and one week's cooling off period for a woman considering an abortion.

Ann Winterton told the BBC, "[A woman] should be armed with the facts about the possible dis-benefits for her in later life. It's not patronising, it's actually being kind to the young woman."¹

Lady Winterton's 'Ten Minute Rule Bill' also sought to compel doctors to specify the precise justification for recommending an abortion under ground C, which allows abortion if a pregnancy is under 24-weeks and its continuation would be believed to cause "injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman".

"Injury to the ...mental health of the pregnant woman" has been widely used as the ground for 'social abortions'. In 2006, the latest figures available, 97% of all abortions were carried out under this ground.² Critics of abortion say this is effectively abortion on demand for pregnancies under 24 weeks.

One in five pregnancies in England and Wales ends in abortion.³ Since the 1967 Abortion Act over six million babies have been aborted.

¹ *Guardian Unlimited*, 5 June 2007

² *Abortion Statistics, England and Wales: 2006*, Department of Health, June 2007, Table 3, page 12

³ *Health Statistics Quarterly*, Office for National Statistics, no.34, 2007, page 63, Table 4.1 This excludes miscarriages

Doctors' group calls for easier abortion laws

■ By Alasdair Armour

The group which represents Britain's doctors has called for abortion to be made quicker and easier.

A conference of The British Medical Association voted to accept proposals which called for valuable abortion safeguards to be removed because they believe they are outdated.¹

According to a briefing paper produced by the BMA's ethics committee, women in their first 13 weeks of pregnancy should no longer have to seek medical justification for an abortion.

In practice this means that a woman would no longer have to consult her GP to be referred for an abortion. Instead, the BMA claims, women would "be allowed to decide for themselves, on the basis of informed consent, whether to continue an unwanted pregnancy in the first trimester..."²

The BMA recommendations also suggest removing the need for two doctors to consent for a woman to have an abortion; arguing that this causes unnecessary delays. This however, as the BMA acknowledges, removes the cooling-off period that women currently have whilst waiting for two doctors to approve the process,³ and may mean that women could be more likely to rush into an abortion without having had time to think through their actions.

In 2006 over 89% of abortions were carried out within the first 13 weeks of pregnancy.⁴

Meanwhile, it seems that fewer and fewer doctors are willing to perform abortions. According to *The Independent* newspaper the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists has warned that there will be an increase in the number of doctors who are unwilling to refer or perform the procedure.⁵

Richard Warren, honorary secretary of RCOG commented, "There is an ethos that people go



into medicine to save lives and look after people... [Abortion is] upsetting work and it is done with obvious reticence. We are seeing more doctors who are reluctant to be involved in the process and this is happening in the context of growing demand."⁶

¹ *First trimester abortion: A briefing paper by the BMA's medical ethics committee*, BMA, 2007, page 2

² *Ibid*, page 3

³ *Ibid*, page 4

⁴ *Abortion Statistics, England and Wales: 2006*, Department of Health, 2007, Table 7a

⁵ *The Independent*, 16 April 2007

⁶ *Op Cit*

US Supreme Court backs partial-birth abortion ban

In April the US Supreme Court voted to ban 'partial birth' abortions by 5 votes to 4. Judges presiding over *Gonzales v. Carhart* upheld the federal ban on the procedure passed in 2003.

The practice is gruesome, involving pulling the baby's torso down the birth canal so that it is partially born then collapsing the skull by removing the baby's brain. The dead body is then removed.

Pro-life groups have heralded this as a small victory in the fight to overturn the controversial *Roe v. Wade*

ruling which in 1973 legalised abortion throughout the US.¹ Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council welcomed the move; "the partial-abortion ban is the first meaningful limitation on abortion in over thirty years... [Partial birth abortion] is a violent and inhumane act that is never medically necessary..."²

When drawing up the Act to ban partial birth abortion, Congress found that "moral, medical, and ethical consensus exists that the practice of performing a partial-birth

abortion... is a gruesome and inhumane procedure that is never medically necessary and should be prohibited."³

The British abortion law does not restrict the surgical methods which may be used to carry out legal abortions, though the Government says it is "not aware" of partial birth abortion being used in Great Britain.⁴

¹ *The Times*, 19 April 2007

² See <http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=PR07D09> as at 21 June 2007

³ *Gonzales v Carhart* [2007] Nos. 05-380 and 05-1382 at page 10

⁴ *Lords Hansard*, 21 July 2005, col. WA262

Super casino plan is a busted flush

■ By Mike Judge

Government plans to establish Britain's first super casino are "dead in the water" following a re-think by new Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. But he still plans to press ahead with eight 'large' and eight 'small' casinos – all of which will be larger than any current British casino.

The re-think on a super casino was forced on the Government by a surprise vote in the House of Lords in March which rejected the proposal by 123 votes to 120. The Christian Institute wrote to Peers, briefing them on the dangers of the casino plans and urging them to vote against the measure.

The Las Vegas-style complex covering some 5,000 square metres was planned for Manchester but Peers voted for an amendment tabled by Liberal Democrat Lord Clement-Jones which called for the Government's casino plans to be reconsidered by a joint committee of peers and MPs.



As a result of that, Downing Street says it will not proceed with a super casino. But it will press ahead with its other

proposals for 16 new casinos, each larger than any existing casino in Britain. On hearing the news that

The link to poverty:

In essence, gambling is not an activity of the rich. It is the poor, those with the least disposable income, who are disproportionately most affected.

The dream of winning huge sums of money and escaping poverty is ruthlessly dangled before them. The vicious circle is that they end up losing what little they have, resulting in further poverty and further gambling in the hope of escape.

Results from the British Gambling Prevalence Survey in 2000 showed there were three-and-a-half times more problem gamblers among persons earning less than £15,600 compared to those earning £31,200 or above.¹

¹ Sproston K, Erens, B and Orford, J, *Gambling Behaviour in Britain: Results from the British Gambling Prevalence Survey*, National Centre for Social Research, 2000, Table 6.7, page 71

The link to crime:

Gambling is associated with crime in two ways. Firstly, gambling addicts may steal to pay for their habit. A Home Office research study into youth

crime concluded: "On the whole young people who gambled were more likely to be offenders than those who did not."¹

Secondly, the link between gambling and organised crime has been a major concern to successive governments. Such concerns were expressed in the Gambling Bill's Regulatory Impact Assessment: "There is a risk that increasing the opportunities to establish casinos could increase the risk of illegal gambling, criminal infiltration and money laundering into casinos."²

¹ *Home Office Research Study 209 – Youth Crime: Findings from the 1998/99 Youth Lifestyles Survey*, Home Office Research, Development and Statistical Directorate; Crime and Criminal Justice Unit, 2000, page 40

² *Gambling Bill: Regulatory Impact Assessment*, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2004, page 45, para. 4.25

▲ Our press release was issued on Wednesday before Thursday's Daily Mail was published

the Government was ditching its super casino plans The Christian Institute issued a press release with the headline, "Super casinos: a busted flush" which received national press coverage.

The gambling plans have drawn widespread criticism. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Williams, said that too little attention had been given to the addictive effects of gambling. He accused the Government of "sleight of hand" in linking gambling to the regeneration of deprived areas.¹

The Christian Institute will continue to call on the Government to drop its plans for regional casinos.

¹ *The Times*, 29 March 2007; *The Daily Mail*, 29 March 2007

The Guardian criticises the new gambling laws

The left-wing press, normally supportive of an increasingly liberal social agenda, is now speaking out against Labour's new gambling laws.

An editorial in *The Guardian* demolished the argument that casinos act to regenerate communities, stating that they will increase the volume of cash changing hands, "but so would the arrival of drug dealers".¹

Journalist Polly Toynbee, writing in the same newspaper, said: "The more gambling there is, the more addicts are created. Why would a Labour government committed to abolishing child poverty encourage yet more?"²

¹ *The Guardian*, 29 March 2007

² *The Guardian*, 27 March 2007

Law Lords rule on case with implications for religious liberty

A case with important implications for religious liberty has been decided by the House of Lords.

The ruling by Law Lords means that an organisation which receives public funding should not necessarily be treated as part of the state when spending that money.

The case involved a private care home which received public funding. Birmingham City Council, which funded the care home, wanted it to be treated as a public body for the purposes of the Human Rights Act.¹ The council said this would ensure better conditions for residents.

But the majority of the Law Lords decided that elderly people living in privately-run care homes are protected by legal minimum standards of care, and the court said that any further protections needed could be introduced by statute. The court confirmed that the care home was operating under a commercial contract for profit and therefore was not a public authority.

If the case against the care home had been successful it would have meant that any organisation receiving public funding could have been treated as a public body. This is significant because the Human Rights Act places much more onerous duties on public bodies regarding 'equality' and 'diversity' issues. This would have had serious implications for the religious liberty of faith groups which receive public funding.

Birmingham City Council's unsuccessful case was backed by the Government. Having lost the case, ministers suggest that they may introduce legislation to widen the definition of a public authority.²

¹ *YL (by her litigation friend the Official Solicitor) (FC) v Birmingham City Council and others* [2007] UKHL 27

² *House of Commons Hansard*, 15 June 2007, col. 1046

Court hears how 'gay rights' regulations threaten religious liberty

■ By Dave Greatorex

A High Court judge is set to decide whether the Sexual Orientation Regulations in Northern Ireland are unlawful. The judge's decision, which is expected after the summer, could lead to the regulations being struck down.

If the judge agrees with the case against the regulations he also has other options short of a complete strike-down. He could decide to remove the harassment provisions and/or make a declaration that parts of the Regulations are incompatible with religious liberty as protected by the Human Rights Act.

This follows a 'judicial review' in the High Court in Belfast. A judicial review examines whether a public body has acted unlawfully. The case could set a precedent for the UK.

The Christian Institute and others launched the legal action arguing, amongst other things, that the regulations unduly interfere with religious liberty contrary to the Human Rights Act. The case was heard in Belfast in June.

The Sexual Orientation Regulations outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services. The Christian Institute and others believe that the regulations elevate the rights of homosexuals over those who believe homosexual behaviour to be morally wrong.

In certain situations, it will be unlawful for Christians to act in accordance with their religious beliefs on sexual ethics. A publicly-funded Christian nursing home could be sued if it refused a double



Christian Institute staff with legal paperwork outside Belfast High Court. From the Left: Humphrey Dobson, Dave Greatorex, Callum Webster, Matthew Jess and Colin Hart

room to a homosexual couple. A Christian printing firm could be taken to court for refusing to print literature promoting homosexual behaviour. A school could be fined if a teacher says homosexual sex is wrong.

In Northern Ireland a major concern is the inclusion of a 'harassment' clause which is extremely loosely worded. Critics say this could lead to spurious complaints against Christians, particularly because the religious liberty exemptions do not appear to apply to harassment.

The Christian Institute also believes that the regulations were rushed onto the statute book without adequate consultation. The Government department, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister – which was under the control of Peter Hain at the time – only allowed eight weeks for consultation. This contradicted official guidance stating that twelve weeks should be considered the minimum.

The Institute's legal team led by James Dingemans QC put our case very well. The hearing was originally scheduled for three days but in the end ran across six because of the number of intervening parties.

During a judicial review interested parties can apply to the court to submit evidence in the case, and four groups did so. The Roman Catholic Northern Bishops presented evidence against the regulations, adopting the legal arguments made by our QC.

Three other parties (The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and a gay rights group) intervened to oppose our case.

The judge, Mr Justice Weatherup, asked many questions throughout the hearing about the effect of the regulations on religious liberty and free speech. The particular focus has been on the impact of the harassment provisions on churches and schools.

The judge will now deliberate on the case, probably for a period of months. It is up to the judge when he announces his decision, which might be in September after the summer court recess.

Three key areas of concern where the regulations interfere with religious liberty

1 Publicly funded Christian work
There are a number of faith-based welfare projects around the country that receive public funding. The religious liberty exemptions are disqualified where public money is being used. So, for example, a Christian adoption agency which receives public money and only places children with married couples could be sued for discriminating against homosexuals.

2 Christians in business
The exceptions for religious organisations in the regulations do not apply to an organisation whose sole or main purpose is commercial. So, for example, a Christian wedding photographer could be sued if he refused to take photographs of a civil partnership ceremony.

3 Education
A Government Minister claimed "how the curriculum is taught ... is caught by the regulations."¹ This would mean that there could be litigation against schools, backed by homosexual activist groups.

¹ House of Lords, Hansard, 21 March 2007, col. 1330

Embryos Bill: Government wants to let scientists grow animal-human embryos

By Mark Richardson

The Government wants to permit the creation of embryos which are part human and part animal.

In what some have labelled 'in vitro bestiality', the draft Human Tissue and Embryos Bill proposes to allow animal-human hybrid and chimera embryos to be produced for research purposes.

In doing so, the Government has bowed to pressure from scientists who want to use the technique to produce large numbers of embryonic stem cells for research.

They want these embryonic stem cells because they claim they can develop treatments to cure a number of diseases and replace damaged tissue. However, after more than ten years of research no successful treatments have been developed.

Meanwhile, the use of adult stem cells taken from a person's own body has produced significant benefits in patients.

Previously the Government had outlined in a white paper its intention for a general ban on animal-human combinations. But the draft bill published in May opens up the possibility of a variety of unnatural animal-human embryos for research.

The form most sought by scientists is a cytoplasmic hybrid (cybrid). Cybrids are created by removing the nucleus from an animal egg cell and replacing it with a human nucleus. The resulting embryo will genetically have one human parent and one animal parent, with around 99% of the DNA coming from the human nucleus. A small

amount of animal DNA will remain in the egg in the form of mitochondrial DNA.

The Government is also promoting the creation of chimeras and other forms of hybrids. Chimeras are created by bringing together a set of human cells with a set of animal cells during early stages of development. The resulting embryo will be a patchwork of human and animal. Hybrids are created by mixing human DNA with animal DNA, with the resulting embryo being a new part-human species.

By succumbing to the demands of scientists working with embryonic stem cells, the Government is blurring, legally and morally, what it means to be human. Human rights and human dignity are dependent upon the distinction between human and animal that is being eroded. The very image of God in humanity is being denigrated through splicing it with genetic information from animals. Furthermore, these embryos will be destroyed on their fourteenth day of existence at the latest.

Even if the moral objections are left to one side, there are numerous scientific reasons for opposing the development of animal-human embryos. Such embryos are not likely to develop in the same way as human embryos, and so will yield little knowledge of the process by which human stem cells develop.

The Government is currently considering evidence submitted to the Joint Committee on Human Tissue, with the Bill expected in parliament in a matter of months.

CHIMERA



'Geep' - a goat/sheep chimera

HYBRID



'Zorse' - a zebra/horse hybrid

Why do scientists want to create animal-human embryos?

Scientists want to mix human nuclei with animal eggs because there are not enough human eggs to produce the volume of stem cells they want for research.

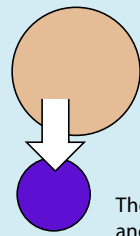
They want the stem cells because they claim it should be possible to turn stem cells into a 'repair kit' for the body, healing damaged tissue and disease.

But after more than a decade of work, no successful treatments have been developed from embryonic stem cell research. Meanwhile, the use of adult stem cells taken from a person's own body has produced significant benefits in patients.¹

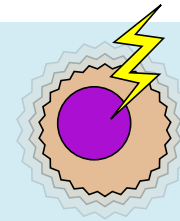
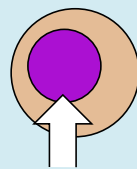
¹ <http://www.stemcellresearch.org/facts/treatments.htm> as at 16 July 2007



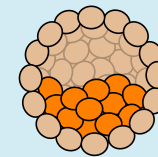
How Cybrids are created



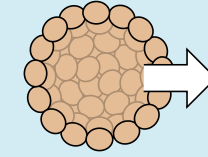
The nucleus is removed from an animal egg and replaced with a human nucleus. The nucleus of a cell contains 99% of its DNA.



The egg is stimulated and begins to develop.



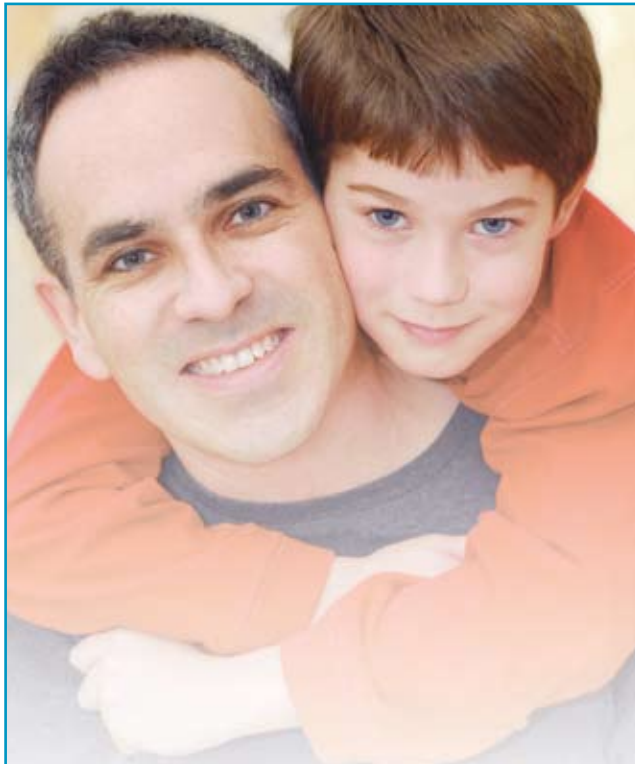
The embryo, which is largely human, grows and develops stem cells.



The stem cells are removed and used for stem cell research. The embryo is destroyed.

Embryos Bill: GM humans who have two mums and one dad

Image is for illustrative purposes only



No need for fathers

The Government is planning to legislate against the importance of a father to a child's wellbeing.

Under the current law doctors have to consider "the need of the child for a father" when carrying out invitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment.

The draft Human Tissue and Embryos Bill removes this requirement

before allowing a woman to undergo assisted reproduction.

The move will allow single women and lesbians greater access to IVF treatment.

This flies in the face of the weight of evidence which emphasises the important role a father plays in a child's development.

By Mark Richardson

Human reproductive cloning, previously banned in the UK, may become legal in some circumstances under new Government powers introduced by a forthcoming embryos Bill.

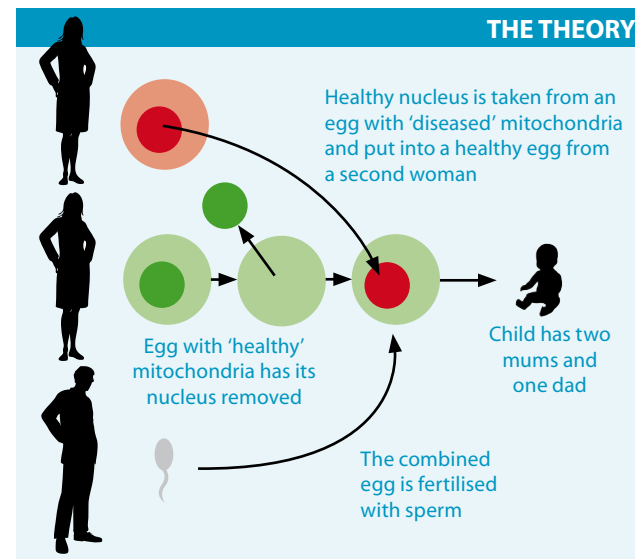
The draft Human Tissue and Embryos Bill will allow the Government to introduce regulations in the future which permit a specific form of human reproductive cloning.

Cloning is a process that seeks to make exact replicas of genetic material. Previously, a cloned human embryo had to be destroyed at 14 days. But this new Bill changes that in some circumstances.

The Government wants to do this because some cloning scientists say it could help prevent the transmission of certain 'mitochondrial' diseases.

In terms of human reproduction, mitochondria are contained within a human egg outside the nucleus. The mitochondria carry a small amount of genetic information. Their function is to produce energy so that the egg can develop. But if the mitochondria contain a genetic disease this can be passed on to the child.

Scientists want to take the nucleus from an egg which has diseased mitochondria and put it into a healthy egg of a second woman (after its nucleus has been removed). The combined egg is then fertilised with male sperm and the embryo is implanted into the original woman's womb.



The result of this process would be a child who has most of its DNA from its mother and father, but a small amount of DNA from a second woman.

The implications of such a process are manifold. For a child to have three genetic parents may well have psychological implications, understanding themselves to be the product of an unnatural process.

It is not clear what the medical implications of such a process may be. Experiments in animals are not always sufficient evidence to demonstrate the suitability of the human body for a similar process.

Whilst there may be immediate relief from a specific mitochondrial disease, the transfer of mitochondria might introduce susceptibility to other diseases. This susceptibility could

become a problem for the child itself as it grows older, but may only present itself in successive generations as a mitochondrial flaw becomes increasingly active.

The Bible teaches that human reproduction should occur by sexual intercourse within the context of marriage.

Worryingly, the decision to allow three-parent children would be contained in secondary legislation, offering far less parliamentary scrutiny.

The acceptance of such treatments for mitochondrial diseases represents a dangerous legal anomaly, and it is not difficult to envisage a situation in the future when claims are made for the acceptability of other genetic 'treatments'. The door, once opened for one form of reproductive cloning, might be very difficult to close.

Redefining parenthood

Moves are afoot to redefine what it means to be a mum or dad, creating a separate category of 'parent' for those who do not fit the description mother or father.

The draft Human Tissue and Embryos Bill encourages the creation of families in which there is no genetic link between parent and child, creating in law a family which could never exist in nature.

Homosexual couples, male and female, will be able to become parents as a result of assisted reproduction and surrogacy.

The proposals mean that any two women can become parents via assisted reproduction, and two men can become parents via a surrogacy arrangement.

Under the bill, if a woman has assisted reproductive treatment using another man's sperm, her husband will automatically be labelled as the father unless he can prove he did not consent to the treatment.

In this way assisted reproductive adultery has become a very real prospect, men discovering that their wives are pregnant with another man's child.

Bishop sued for not employing homosexual

In an astonishing judgment a homosexual man, backed by Britain's biggest homosexual rights group, Stonewall, has won an employment tribunal case against a Church of England Bishop for not employing him as a youth worker.

At the time of going to press the grounds on which the case was decided are not clear. Nor is it known whether the Bishop will appeal.

In April the Right Revd Anthony Priddis, the Bishop of Hereford, faced an employment tribunal over the matter.

The homosexual man claimed that he was discriminated against contrary to the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003.

The employment regulations include exemptions to protect religious liberty. To protect its ethos, a religious organisation may refuse to employ a homosexual if the post in question exists for the purposes of organised religion.

The homosexual man recently ended a five-year relationship with another man and claimed he would remain celibate while in post, but would not accept that homosexual practice is wrong.

The Bishop said "...Mr Reaney's lifestyle had the potential to impact on the spiritual, moral and ethical leadership within the diocese."

This is the first time that these laws have been used against the Church of England.

There were unique factors in this case. Mr Reaney was recommended as outstanding by a church board and accepted even by the Bishop as a Christian believer.

Reacting to the ruling, Director of The Christian Institute, Colin Hart, said: "A church is entitled to require a deep personal acceptance of its beliefs and to require public endorsement of that position by its youth workers and clergy. You cannot have a position where a church worker says 'do as I say but not as I do'."

Defend your liberty to evangelise in public or on campus

■ By Alasdair Armour

The Christian Institute is increasingly involved in defending religious liberty. We have recently published material to help Christians understand the laws which protect the liberty of University Christian Unions and the liberty to evangelise in public places. The information is available for free from our website (www.christian.org.uk) or by telephoning the Institute on 0191 281 5664. Here is a brief summary of the material:

Christian Unions

Several CUs have come under attack from student bodies which have threatened to restrict their access to campus facilities and privileges because of the CU's religious beliefs. In some cases, this has included denying a CU the right to advertise its meetings, or attend a freshers' fair, or hire rooms on campus.

But there are several laws which specifically protect free speech and religious liberty on campus. In many instances student bodies have acted unlawfully in their dealings with CUs.

Our leaflet outlines the most relevant laws relating to these matters. It includes case studies of CUs that have successfully defended their liberty. It also encourages students to recognise the importance of defending the liberty of CUs – not only does it protect gospel freedom for the generations which follow, but it also acts as an intrinsic witness to the importance of the gospel message.

Street Preaching

Some Christian street preachers have faced unlawful restrictions by some public officials. In some cases this is because there is an ignorance of what the law actually allows. We have published legal advice given by a solicitor to the Open Air Mission on the law relating to this matter. We are grateful to OAM and its solicitor for giving us permission to do so.

The information analyses the criminal and civil considerations when street preaching. It examines the implications of a significant case, Redmond-



Bate v Director of Public Prosecutions [1999], and explains how the ruling upholds important freedoms to preach in the open-air.

The second half of the document examines the civil considerations that it would be wise to take into account, such as obstructions, human rights and codes of practice.

Handing out tracts

Recent legislation has caused confusion between public authorities and Christians over the legality of giving out free literature (such as Gospel tracts) in public.

The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 (CNEA) gives power to local authorities to control distribution of free literature in places such as town centres. This legislation is intended to control litter caused by commercial groups who hand out advertising leaflets in the streets. It applies to England and Wales only.

However, the CNEA 2005 specifically exempts religious or political literature. Therefore Christians can distribute tracts, Bibles and Christian books in their town centres without having to seek permission from the local authority. We have produced a brief document which provides a simple explanation of the law and gives two helpful case studies.

Australian pastor vindicated as Muslim group drops case

■ By Humphrey Dobson

The legal case against Pastor Daniel Scot is finally over after the Islamic Council of Victoria dropped its action against him.

The case goes back to March 2002 when Daniel criticised fundamentalist Islam at a church seminar for Christians. In response, the Islamic Council of Victoria made a legal complaint and in 2004 a judge ruled that he was guilty of 'religious vilification'. Daniel was ordered to apologise and banned from making any similar comments in the future.

Daniel's ordeal became famous throughout the world. In 2006 the Victoria Supreme Court

overturned the original decision against him and ordered a retrial with a different judge.

Following talks at official pre-trial mediation, the Islamic Council of Victoria dropped the action.

A joint statement was issued with Pastor Scot which recognises "the dignity and worth of every human being" along with the right to "robustly debate" and "criticise" religious beliefs.¹

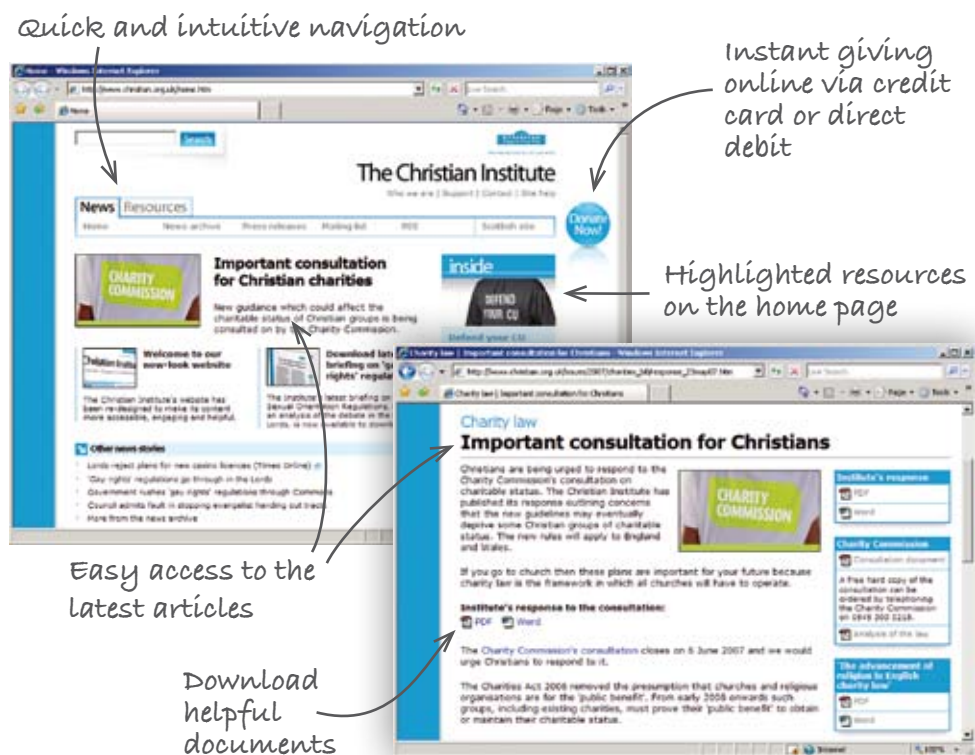
We thank God for Daniel's faithful witness and pray for the success of his ministry in the years ahead.



Pastor Daniel Scot

¹ Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, Press Release, 22 June 2007

Our new website is bigger and better



By Dave Hewer

The Christian Institute's website (www.christian.org.uk) has recently undergone a significant redesign. The website, which has over 800 pages of information, contains the same reliable content but is now even more accessible. Under the new navigation system users can quickly find out the latest news as well accessing a host of relevant resources.

The site is regularly updated with news stories of particular interest to Christians in the UK. Our online resources (including MPs' votes, apologetics, publications and audio recordings) are quickly and intuitively available. The website now also includes areas dedicated to certain issues, such as religious

liberty casework, Christian Unions and the Sexual Orientation Regulations.

The audio archive has proved very popular since its arrival in 2005, averaging almost 150 downloads per day. The archive contains over 100 lectures and talks across a wide range of topics, including theological subjects, biographies and recent Christian Institute meetings.

The website hosts over 20 separate apologetic documents on areas such as the sanctity of life, marriage and the family, and Christian freedoms. There is also a thematic publications archive containing over 10 years worth of thoroughly researched material, including the latest newsletters, Update magazines and Annual Reviews.

Radio interview system installed at Wilberforce House



The Christian Institute has installed cutting-edge audio equipment which will allow us to give studio-quality interviews to any radio station anywhere in the world without leaving our building.

It is essentially a mini radio studio which a radio programme, such as Radio 4's *Today*, can connect to for an interview. To the listener it sounds as though we are right there in the same radio studio.

This will greatly increase the Institute's opportunities to speak out in the media and make maximum use of staff time.

A brief two-minute video about this new equipment can be viewed on our website (www.christian.org.uk)

The equipment was paid for thanks to a specific donation from a supporter, for which we are very grateful. The Institute has other capital equipment needs and if you are interested in helping us in this area, please contact The Christian Institute for more information.

Five new members of staff join Institute team

By Humphrey Dobson

With the summer come more staff to join the team at Wilberforce House. After interviewing an exceptional field of candidates, we were glad to offer five people positions with the Institute.



Matthew Jess Jessica Khan Elizabeth Rome



Gerald Wood Jennifer Davis

Matthew Jess, Jessica Khan and Elizabeth Rome join us as research assistants. Matthew, from Lisburn in Northern Ireland, holds a degree in Modern History from Queen's University, Belfast, and has recently completed a Certificate in Biblical Studies at Belfast Bible College. Jessica is from Garforth, West Yorkshire and has just graduated in Maths from Newcastle University. Elizabeth comes from Bedfordshire and graduated in Maths and Philosophy from Jesus College, Oxford, in 2006.

Gerald Wood is to hold the post of Assistant Office Manager. A long-standing supporter of The Christian Institute, Gerald is married with five children

and was previously head of economics and business studies at a local secondary school.

Jennifer Davis will hold the new post of Assistant News Editor. Jennifer graduated in English from the University of Durham in 2006 and comes from Kent.

In May we were sad to say goodbye to research assistant Jonathan Johnson, who is getting married in July and going abroad for a year. We give thanks to God for Jonathan's contribution for nearly three years and for the new staff. We would value your prayers for them in the months and years ahead.

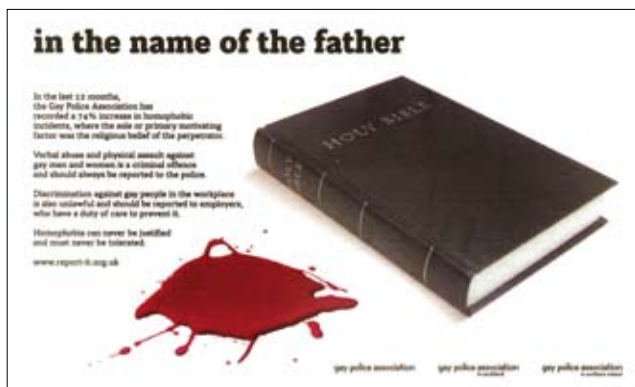
Gay police advert was 'worst' of 2006

■ By Alasdair Armour

An advert placed by the Gay Police Association which falsely accused Christians of causing violent attacks against homosexuals was the most complained about advert in 2006.

In a record year for complaints to the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) the GPA advert was the most controversial, attracting more than 500 complaints. The ASA upheld the complaints about the advert which appeared in a national newspaper in June last year. The regulator found that the advert was untruthful, unsubstantiated and breached industry rules on decency.¹

The Christian Institute was alerted to the advert in June of last year by a supporter who spotted it in a supplement within



The advert attracted more than 500 complaints

The Independent newspaper. The advert effectively accused Christians of a wave of violent attacks on homosexuals.

The advert referred to a 74% increase in 'homophobic incidents' reported to the GPA. However, when the advertising regulator asked for evidence

to back this claim, none was produced.²

It is worth noting that a 'homophobic incident' is not the same thing as a crime. It is an administrative record of a complaint to the police (not the GPA). The technical definition of a 'homophobic incident'

given by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) is "Any incident which is perceived to be homophobic by the victim or any other person."³ So merely saying that homosexuality is wrong could constitute an incident if someone perceives it to be 'homophobic'.

The Christian Institute believed that the advert stereotyped Christians as violent and hateful people. We were concerned because the Police are there to protect our liberty, yet an officially recognised Police group is parodying Bible-believers as violent thugs. There was no acknowledgement that violent or abusive behaviour towards any person, homosexual or otherwise, is totally incompatible with the Christian faith. A violent person cannot be a Bible-believing Christian.

Tens of thousands of Christians are thought to have complained directly to the Police. But an investigation into the possibility that a faith crime had been committed was dropped by the Metropolitan Police.

The successful ruling from the ASA shows the value of Christians making use of democratic means to protect our liberty. When such outrageous claims, like this advert, are made they need to be confronted and proved to be false.

¹ See http://www.asa.org.uk/asa/adjudications/Public/TF_ADJ_41843.htm as at 22 June 2007

² Op cit and see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/6640005.stm> as at 22 June 2007

³ *Hate Crime: Delivering a Quality Service*, Association of Chief Police Officers and Home Office Police Standards Unit, March 2005, page 11

Lords back Belfast sex shop ban

■ By Callum Webster

The House of Lords has upheld a decision by Belfast City Council not to license a sex shop.

The owner of the Miss Behavin' shop first applied for a licence five years ago. The Christian Institute was involved in objecting to this, and five other sex shop applications in Belfast. Belfast City Council refused to grant a licence because there were schools and areas of family shopping nearby.

The owner of Miss Behavin' went to The Court of Appeal, claiming that his human rights had been breached. But now the UK's highest court, the House of Lords, has ruled in favour of Belfast City Council.

Baroness Hale, one of the Law Lords, said: "There are far more important human rights in this world than the right to sell pornographic literature and images in the back streets of Belfast city centre."¹

The ruling underlines the fact that councils do have legal powers to refuse to licence sex shops.

Councils can also prosecute sex shops that are trading without a licence. Such shops could face fines of up to £20,000 each.²

¹ *BBC News*, 25 April 2007, see http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6590155.stm as at 30 April 2007

² *Belfast Telegraph*, 27 April 2007

BBC airs 'gay' *Sunday Worship* programme



In April the BBC chose to broadcast a 'homosexual service' from a gay-rights activists' church in San Francisco in its Radio 4 *Sunday Worship* slot.

The Roman Catholic Church of the Most Holy Redeemer, San Francisco, is well-known for its controversial activities. Last September a transvestite group calling themselves 'Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence', whose official slogan is "go forth and sin some more", held a bingo night at the parish hall. Sex toys and pornographic DVDs were handed out as prizes.

The preacher at the service broadcast by the BBC was Fr James Alison, a London-based theologian who has described himself as a gay priest. The service was led by Fr Donal Godfrey, from the Society of Jesus. Commenting on the service he said he was delighted the BBC was "exploring how gay people fit into the perspective of the Christian narrative."¹

The service was not authorised by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco. Spokesman for the Archdiocese, Maurice Healy, said, "It was not an archdiocesan function and the archdiocese was not aware of the BBC broadcast."²

The Christian Institute urged supporters to complain to the BBC about the broadcast and many did. A Radio 4 spokeswoman defended the broadcast saying, "The strength of *Sunday Worship* is its diversity... As far as we know, this is the first time the subject of being gay and Christian has been explored by the programme."³

¹ *Daily Mail*, 27 April 2007

² <http://www.lifeste.net/ldn/2007/apr/07042705.html> as at 18 July 2007

³ *The Times*, 28 April 2007

Review of discrimination laws planned

■ By Dave Greatorex

The Government has published proposals for a huge review of discrimination law. This review will reopen many of the religious liberty debates that have taken place over recent years.

Discrimination law has developed over the last 40 years and is spread across at least nine different Acts of Parliament. The Government wants to bring all discrimination legislation together into a Single Equality Bill for Great Britain.

The proposals come in a document entitled 'A Framework for Fairness' and aim to simplify discrimination law. The scope of the eventual Bill will be enormous and touch almost all areas of life.

Under existing equality legislation there are some limited, but important, protections for religious liberty. Some opponents of these protections may use the discrimination law review to argue that they should be watered down. It is essential

that these protections are not eroded. The review also presents an opportunity for Christians to press the Government for greater protections where they feel the law inadequately safeguards religious liberty.

In addition to all this, there will be attempts to extend the reach of discrimination law on grounds such as sexual orientation and transsexualism. This would undoubtedly have yet further implications for religious liberty. Of particular concern are the issues of harassment and duties on public authorities to actively promote equality.

Harassment as defined in other equality laws is not the same as criminal harassment. It is much more loosely worded. If a person can show that he perceived that an 'offensive' environment had been created for him then that can be sufficient to establish harassment – regardless of the intention of the alleged culprit.

The Government proposes to create such a harassment law on grounds of transsexualism

and is considering whether to extend it to the grounds of sexual orientation or religion. Such a highly subjective law, if introduced on these three grounds, will be a significant threat to religious liberty.

Other proposals include placing a duty on public bodies to actively promote equality. There is a particular concern that there could be a duty on public bodies, including local councils and the police, to promote equality on grounds of sexual orientation but not on grounds of religion. This would establish a hierarchy of rights to the disadvantage of religious people.

More information can be found at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1511245>. The Christian Institute is still examining the proposals in detail. It will be important for Christians to respond in due course, and the Institute will be sending out more information in the coming weeks.

Christian Institute meetings around the nation

Since the last *Update* magazine the Institute has spoken at **75** venues throughout the UK. In total the events have been attended by over **4,000** people.

We work hard to make our meetings professional, encouraging and informative. If you would like The Christian Institute to visit your area, please get in touch. We cannot guarantee to accept every invitation, but we will consider each one carefully.