

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Ninevah, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Ninevah, according to the word of the LORD. Now Ninevah was an exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown. So the people of Ninevah believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not.

Jonah 3:1-10

St Pauls Church Matters for Collective Prayer during December

Matters in brief:

- 1)** Christian Concern's website reports that street preacher Shaun O'Sullivan has been cleared by a jury at Swindon Crown Court after a trial that raised serious questions about freedom of speech and the policing of so-called "hate claims."
- 2)** Christian Concern reports that the UK Supreme Court has ruled that the Christian-focussed religious education and collective worship in Northern Ireland's state funded primary schools is "unlawful". Christian Concern's Head of Education, Steve Beegoo has written an article in point 2 (below).
- 3)** Christian Concern reports that innocent young lives are at risk of being harmed again as Dame Hillary Cass has welcomed a new clinical trial on puberty blockers for children and teenagers. To read Christian Concern's Public Policy Researcher Carys Moseley's article from her website see point 3 (below).
- 4)** The Christian Institute website carries the following report which you can read in full below in point 4: 'Politicians and church leaders gathered in Westminster this week to mark the launch of The Christian Institute's Street Preacher's Charter'.
- 5)** Christian Concern has published a report by Dr Mark Durie who argues that the religion of Islam is more connected with UK grooming gang criminality, than ethnicity. To read the article from Christian Concern's website see point 5 below.
- 6)** Barnabas Aid reports that 55 Christians have been slaughtered in a wave of violent persecution that has swept across the Lubero District of North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), recent days. Read the full report in point 6, below.

Matters in full:

1) **Christian Concern's** website reports that street preacher Shaun O'Sullivan has been cleared by a jury at Swindon Crown Court after a trial that raised serious questions about freedom of speech and the policing of so-called "hate claims."

Mr O'Sullivan, 36, who is being supported by lawyers at the Christian Legal Centre, faced charges of religiously aggravated intentional harassment under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, after being accused of saying "We love the Jews", Jew haters," and "Palestine lovers," at a group of Muslims in Swindon town centre on 15 September 2024. The family claimed they felt targeted because they were wearing hijabs. During their 999 call, the complainant said, 'We just felt very unsafe... calling us Jew haters, Palestine lovers.' The call handler immediately replied, 'No, I'll put a hate claim on,' categorising the incident as a hate crime without any supporting evidence.

The case unfolded in the weeks leading up to the one-year anniversary of the 7 October attacks when there were frequent pro-Palestine marches in Swindon town centre. The case relied heavily on the Muslim family's testimony, yet before a full judge and jury, the weaknesses in the prosecution's case became clear. There was no audio or video evidence of the alleged remarks, and CCTV showed the family walking past in seconds, with no prolonged confrontation. The only footage showed a brief encounter between the groups which was mostly hidden by some town centre modern art sculptures. Witness recollections were inconsistent, including details such as clothing and whether a microphone was used.

Under cross-examination from Mr O'Sullivan's solicitor advocate, Michael Phillips, the complainant admitted she had not heard the full message and that her recollection was shaped by strong views on the Gaza conflict. She also admitted that she was simply not happy because Mr O'Sullivan 'spoke directly to us.' The defence argued that any remarks were part of a general theological and political message, not personal abuse, and warned that prosecuting robust public debate risks criminalising protected speech under Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Shaun O'Sullivan's own story added a powerful dimension to the trial. Once living a life marked by violence and crime, he experienced a radical conversion to Christianity that transformed his character and purpose. Since then, he has devoted himself to preaching the Gospel in public spaces, sharing a message of hope and reconciliation.

Expert testimony from Dr Martin Parsons, a leading authority on Christian and Islamic theology, reinforced the defence. Dr Parsons had given a report that street preaching is a historic and constitutionally significant practice in Britain, central to the development of freedom of religion and speech. He warned that criminalising such speech risks undermining fundamental liberties and noted that the alleged remarks could be understood as expressions of religious conviction rather than hostility. His report highlighted the dangers of conflating criticism of ideas with hatred of people, particularly in an era when definitions of "Islamophobia" have blurred these boundaries.

He also explained that the Qur'an contains verses which encourage Anti-Semitism, for example Q5:51 which forbids Muslims to be friends with Jews. Further that Muhammad at certain times in his life showed significant hostility to Jews; such as killing and enslaving a whole Jewish tribe at Medina. Speaking after the not guilty verdict, O'Sullivan said: "I was once lost, but Christ changed everything.

My heart is to share the good news and love all people. I never intended harm. This case shows how vital it is to protect freedom of speech and Christian freedom.”

The six-day Crown Court trial had an estimated cost of £20,000 at the taxpayer’s expense.

Andrea Williams, Chief Executive of the Christian Legal Centre, which supported O’Sullivan’s case, welcomed the verdict: “Shaun’s case highlights the dangers of policing ‘hate incidents’ based on perception alone. We must ensure that robust public debate, especially on matters of Christian faith, is not silenced.

“In this instance, the decision to log a “hate claim” was based solely on a single phone call. This was another example of police overreach and the chilling effect on free speech. The acquittal is not just a personal vindication for Shaun but a reminder of the fragile state of fundamental freedoms in our country right now. “Shaun loves Jesus and he wants to reach the public with the hope that has transformed his life. He, and other Christian preachers, must have the freedom to do that without fear of being prosecuted and dragged before a judge and jury.”

2) **Christian Concern** reports that the UK Supreme Court has ruled that the Christian-focussed religious education and collective worship in Northern Ireland's state funded primary schools is "unlawful". Christian Concern's Head of Education Steve Beegoo has written the following article on their website:

The UK Supreme Court has ruled that the Christian-focused religious education and collective worship in Northern Ireland’s state-funded primary schools is “unlawful.” This is a direct assault on the Christian foundations of the education system, but has been coming for some time. It is a stark warning of what happens when a nation abandons truth for relativism in its schools. The ruling claims that the current RE curriculum fails to be “objective, critical and pluralistic.” But what does that really mean? It could mean that Christianity will be treated as just one option among many and given less priority, stripped of its rightful place as the moral and spiritual bedrock of our culture, where Christ was once the focus of children’s worship. It will mean that Christian teachers in Northern Ireland, even where there are a majority of Christian pupils, will not be able to teach biblical truth as truth, but only as one perspective among countless others.

Human Rights

To rely on ‘Human Rights’ is to relativise Christianity. This decision was made on the basis of human rights law. But when human rights become the main lens through which education is judged by a nation, they inevitably relativise all values. They elevate individual autonomy above communal tradition, and devalue the Christian heritage that has shaped our laws, schools, and the national identity. Human rights, originally sourced from a biblical foundation, is now becoming a tool for erasing moral absolutes and advancing a secular worldview, which may be a desired outcome for the atheists who brought the case. Laws based on human rights, and not on biblical law, cannot protect truth. They have been used to protect the right to reject it, and silence it, in state funded schools. In this case, they have been used to undermine the right of Christian parents and communities to pass on their faith through the state education system. Many Christians would disagree with Peter Lynas

of the Evangelical Alliance who asserts, “Nothing in this ruling diminishes the freedom of Christians to articulate, celebrate and pass on their faith.”

Erosion

The Court’s claim that withdrawal from RE or worship is “not an adequate safeguard” is deeply troubling. It implies that Christian teaching itself is harmful for those pupils who do not believe, unless it is substantially diluted or even avoided. Do not be fooled by the propaganda. This is not about inclusion; it is about exclusion of Christianity from schools and the increasingly secular public square. Effective biblical teaching will always make sure that all children feel included, no matter the background. This is what has persisted for decades in Northern Ireland.

Both Northern Ireland’s school curriculum and daily worship, have long reflected the Christian values that underpin its society. This ruling exposes the continued hollowing out of Christian influence in state schools. If the long tradition of Christian Religious Education in Northern Ireland can now be seen as unlawful, then what remains is a secular sanitisation of RE, where Jesus Christ is less and less welcome. We must remember his words, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them”. (Mat 19:14)

As Humanists UK explain, “The UK Government must urgently review the RE and collective worship laws in England and move to replace them with inclusive assemblies.” We already know where this will lead. As Melanie McDonagh in the Times explains, “What the justices seem to have missed is that children will now not be taught Christian truth; they will be taught a different kind of truth.” “They will still be indoctrinated, but with a humanist indoctrination which holds that God probably doesn’t exist and if he does there is no difference between one sort of belief or another.”

Moral Freefall

The call for curriculum revision may sound reasonable and is already being accepted by Christian commentators, but it demonstrates another stage in the capitulation to secular ideology. The idea that Christianity should remain in state schools, but only in a pluralistic and non-committal form, is a significant departure from the gospel and Jesus Christ’s Great Commission teaching mandate. It is a surrender to the belief that no faith can claim truth, and that all must be reduced to mere opinions protected to be expressed or taught by human rights-based relativism. Jesus Christ claims to be the Truth. This is not progress; it is moral freefall. It is the fruit of a society that has replaced God’s Word with the shifting sands of human rights jurisprudence in its decision making.

Stephen Daisley’s excellent article in the Spectator explains, “The inevitable consequence of this judgment will be the weakening of Christian instruction and worship in Northern Ireland schools. By its very nature, Christianity is an absolute truth claim: Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God who died for our sins. To teach Christianity is to teach the objective and eternal truth of salvation through Christ; to teach that this is merely one of many religious viewpoints is to teach about Christianity. The former is religious education in the true sense: the cultivation of a Christian soul through doctrinal instruction, spiritual reflection, and a wider school ethos. The latter is a mere academic exercise in comparative religious studies.”

Silence?

This ruling demands a response. Christian parents, teachers, governors, and church leaders must speak out. We must refuse to accept the lie that Christianity is too biased to be taught, too exclusive to be celebrated, and too dangerous to be believed. Dangers remain with the potential changes coming into force across other parts of the UK through the recent curriculum review by Professor Francis. We have long warned of this trajectory. The progressive removal of Christian worship and teaching is not an isolated event, it is part of a broader campaign to secularise state education, and silence the gospel. This is not the immediate death of Christian worship in schools unless we allow it to be. Praise God that many Christians are active in our schools, and making a positive difference, sensitively leading children to the truth. To Jesus Christ. The Supreme Court may have ruled, but the Church must now decide whether it will retreat or resist with bold and courageous action in his name.

3) **Christian Concern** reports that innocent young lives are at risk of being harmed again as Dame Hillary Cass has welcomed a new clinical trial on puberty blockers for children and teenagers. Christian Concern's Public Policy Researcher Carys Moseley has written the following article on their website:

Dame Hilary Cass [has welcomed a new clinical trial on puberty blockers](#) for children and teenagers. King's College London will be running the trial on more than 200 children, some as young as eight. This has sparked outrage and concern across the board, but the truth is that it was to be expected. I warned that the Cass Review was commissioning more research into puberty blockers [as far back as 2022](#).

Dissenting psychotherapists plead for trial to be stopped

Two psychotherapists who used to work at the Tavistock clinic, Marcus and Susan Evans, have written [a letter to Wes Streeting](#) pleading for this clinical trial to be stopped before starting. They called it a 'shallow, harmful medical trial', and warned that lessons needed to be learnt from 'recent medical failures'.

Follow-up of children limited to two years

The psychotherapists warn that the trial will only allow follow-up on the children involved for up to two years afterwards. They warn that this is too short a time period, because only once they are adults would it be possible to assess the effects of puberty blockers. These include 'sterility, impaired sexual function, lifelong dependence on medical care, and the psychological impact of irreversible physical changes.'

Undermining the ability to start a natural family

The psychotherapists warn that these young people subjected to puberty blockers may not be able to start a family naturally. "As they age, their peers might be building families, and the reality of permanent losses and potential sterility becomes undeniable." In other words, those who were subjected to puberty blockers may become infertile and live a life marked by avoidable loss.

Undermining psychological treatment

At the same time, the psychotherapists warn that the clinical trial and short-term follow-up will create another problem. “The question of whether they would have learned to accept their bodies through psychological support becomes unanswerable.” As an alternative, they call for study into psychological treatment for children with gender dysphoria to be restarted immediately.

The social harm of a clinical trial of puberty blockers

The two psychotherapists delve into the deep social harm caused to children and teenagers by this proposed clinical trial. This is important because a lot of the coverage of the issue has been dominated by warning of the physical harms. They emphasize that the trial is flawed because it only intends to find certain things out.

“The trial overlooks how the very prospect of medical intervention affects their mental state during assessment, and it fails to consider what this communicates: that their distress is unbearable instead of something they might be supported to work through.” In other words, the whole aim of puberty blockers is to stop the distress associated with being unhappy as a member of one’s sex.

The psychotherapists go on to warn that the clinical trial would actually leave these young people behind their peers developmentally, intensifying their confusion and isolation. “While their friends face the social and psychological challenges of puberty, forming new relationships and shaping their adult identities, these young people remain frozen at an earlier stage. This divergence from their peers may worsen their difficulties rather than help, reinforcing their feeling they cannot manage what their peers are handling, at the very moment when connecting with peers matters most.”

Using Cass to undermine Cass

It is significant that in their nine-page letter to the government, these psychotherapists deploy the tactic of quoting the Cass Review to undermine the clinical trial. This is despite the fact that it is Dame Hilary Cass who recommended the clinical trial in her review. Commenting on the inadequate design of the clinical trial, they say this:

“This is not the ‘careful, clinical research’ Dr Cass called for; it is research aimed at answering the wrong question at the wrong time. Any reported ‘improvement’ will be because the child has been enabled to avoid the physical and psychological conflicts of adolescence and ordinary human development, but where will this leave them?”

Back in April 2022 I warned that the Cass Review’s Interim Report [barely paid attention to the role of psychotherapists](#) on gender-confused children. It promised a literature review when in reality such a review of the historical literature on psychotherapy with gender-confused children should have been the first piece of work completed.

Two years later in May 2024 I warned that the completed Cass Review [actually recommended no lower age limit](#) for children’s ‘options’. In the last section on the Service Model, Cass said some children ‘may benefit from puberty blockers’, and recommended a clinical research trial for young children to assess this. It is pointless for opponents of the clinical trial to try to quote the Cass Review to undermine what it in fact recommended, namely a trial of puberty blockers. We are long past the point where it is acceptable to continue with such compromise tactics.

Clinical trial designed without consultation with whistleblowers

The psychotherapists appeal to Cass' documentation of the 'systematic silencing of the debate' in the mental health field. They are aggrieved that the new clinical trial 'has now been designed without consultation with the clinicians who initially raised the alarm.' Is anybody surprised by this? They shouldn't be. Dame Hilary Cass is not a psychotherapist or psychiatrist; she is a paediatrician who [accepts puberty blockers 'may' be suitable for some children](#), not someone who objects to them due to seeing gender dysphoria as the sole province of mental healthcare.

The letter ends with a plea to Wes Streeting to be aware of how few mental health professionals 'with this level of knowledge and experience have been asked to contribute or comment'. Sadly, this is unsurprising. For the reality is that only a brave minority of clinicians at the Tavistock Clinic blew the whistle and resigned over puberty blockers. There can be little doubt that their more compliant colleagues will mostly be only too happy to support the clinical trial and the new gender hubs in NHS England.

Lessons to be learned?

The Cass Review is morally unreliable in two respects. First, in that it did not initially start with [considering the history of psychotherapy](#) with gender-distressed children and teenagers. Second, it left the door open for puberty blockers and proposed a clinical trial, and for 'social transition' for children. All this is echoed by [the discrepancy between Wes Streeting's public and private or secret comments](#) on the topic which I highlighted in September. In private he lamented the ban on puberty blockers, while in public he claims to support the ban. He gets away with this because only a minority of psychotherapists involved in this field, at least at the NHS level, have objected to puberty blockers.

There simply is no point in trying to inhabit a putative middle ground on this issue. Puberty blockers are very likely to make things worse for the children and teenagers who receive them. The government has not really listened thus far, it has only pretended to listen. The Cass Review seems clearly intended to preserve the status quo one way or another. This is what we would expect in a post-Christian society which rebels against the created givenness of our biological nature as male and female. There is only one way forward here: campaign to scrap the clinical trial by standing apart from the compromised Cass Review's overall philosophy.

4) The Christian Institute website carries the following report:

Politicians and church leaders gathered in Westminster this week to mark the launch of The Christian Institute's Street Preacher's Charter. The event was hosted by Lord Jackson of Peterborough, and he was joined on a panel by Baroness Fox of Buckley and the Institute's Solicitor Advocate Sam Webster to explain the significance of the new resource, as well as emphasising the importance of freedom of speech and expression in our society. The Charter sets out the rights and responsibilities of individuals who engage in public preaching or share their beliefs on the streets of England and Wales. It is endorsed by both Open Air Campaigners GB and Open-Air Mission, who had representatives at the launch.

Freedom and order

Mr Webster, the Charter's primary author, told those assembled: "Our Charter seeks to remind police and local councils of the freedoms that street preachers have enjoyed in this country for hundreds of years, whilst at the same time capturing a sense of the often difficult but important job performed by police and local officials in keeping order on the streets." He added: "Our hope is that over time, we will see more and more street preachers who make the Charter their own." He explained how, in due course, he "would love to see police forces and councils who might be prepared to formally endorse the Charter".

Free speech

The former Director of Public Prosecutions Lord Macdonald of River Glaven KC supplied the foreword to the Charter, in which he wrote: "The emergence of free speech in our society was partly forged amid the legal persecution of Christian open-air preachers." He continued: "Today, both our common law and modern human rights instruments uphold those hard-fought freedoms, and they are routinely used and enjoyed by those of all faiths and none.

"If conducted responsibly, street preaching can enhance the vibrancy of our public squares and serve to remind us that we are a society where free speech is valued and different opinions and beliefs are tolerated." At the weekend, it was announced that Lord Macdonald has been commissioned by the Government to review the law on hate crime, with a focus on the impact on free speech. The Christian Institute will be contributing to the review.

'A timely shield'

Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee attended the event because of her concerns about the wrongful arrests of street preachers. She said: "Free speech, the right to voice your opinion, should be protected."

The former Northern Irish First Minister commented: "I think this will be a very useful tool, actually, for the police. And I do hope it is disseminated across the UK for police officers to have a look at".

And Mike Judge, Editor of the Evangelical Times and a trustee of The Christian Institute, described the launch as a "rip-roaring event", adding that the Charter "asserts not only the legal rights of those who preach, but the civic principle that free speech belongs to everyone — preacher and passer-by alike. It places responsibility where it belongs, both upon those who proclaim and those who police". He added: "This Charter is a timely shield for those who dare to speak — and a timely corrective for a society tempted to silence them. I commend it to you."

5) **Christian Concern** has published a report by Dr Mark Durie who argues that the religion of Islam is more connected with UK grooming gang criminality, than ethnicity. The following article is from Christian Concern's website:

Commentary on the grooming gangs has at times focused on ethnicity, while avoiding reference to religion as a potential driver of the abuse. The "Asian" ethnic label has been misleading as both too broad and too narrow, obscuring the actual pattern of abuse. In reality, the Islamic religion has a

stronger correlation than ethnicity with grooming gang criminality: there is prima facie evidence that in the majority of cases the abusers have been Muslims.

Dr Mark Durie, is a Senior Research Fellow at the Arthur Jeffery Centre for the Study of Islam at Melbourne School of Theology. A theologian, author and Anglican pastor. He has published many articles and books on linguistics, Islam, Christian-Muslim relations, mission and religious freedom. His books on Islam include *The Third Choice*, *Liberty to the Captives* and *The Qur'an and its Biblical Reflexes*.

Eight aspects of Islamic law and theology

The report identifies eight aspects of Islamic law and theology that are proposed to influence and enable the grooming gangs' criminality. It is emphasised that religious drivers can motivate behaviours which are strictly speaking prohibited by the religion's teachings.

The eight factors are:

- i The doctrine of the superiority of Muslims over non-Muslims.
- ii The doctrine of loyalty and disavowal, also known as 'love and hate for the sake of God'.
- iii The superiority and dominance of men over women.
- iv The mandated seclusion of women by men.
- v The religious practice of forced marriage, and the lack of a concept of an age of consent.
- vi The perceived threat of dangerous female sexuality.
- vii The practice of sex slavery as an aspect of the laws of jihad.
- viii Dhimmitude and the treatment of conquered non-Muslim peoples in Islamic law.

The report concludes with the following recommendations:

- 1 Fears of stoking Islamophobia should not be allowed to skuttle transparent investigation of the grooming gangs' religious cultures.
- 2 The religious identities of both perpetrators and victims should be rigorously recorded.
1. Police should be trained to interview grooming gang suspects concerning their religious beliefs.
2. Police should also be trained to investigate religious aspects of the testimony of victims.
3. The state should enforce a legal prohibition of unregistered sharia marriages.
4. The role of abusers' family members in enabling abuses must be considered.
5. certain religious beliefs which have enabled grooming gang activities.
6. Politicians should refrain from making dismissive but ignorant claims concerning what Islam does and doesn't teach about human sexual relations.
7. It must be publicly acknowledged that there are Muslims who reject key elements of the grooming gangs' religious cultures.
8. The UK Forced Marriage Unit should remove statements on its website that there is no religious basis to forced marriages in Islam.
9. Awareness training should be provided to vulnerable white working-class communities who are being targeted by grooming gangs. (The Sikh community already have programs which could be used as a model.)

'Any inquiry must honestly and openly consider the religious motivations'

Andrea Williams, Chief Executive of Christian Concern said: "Grooming gangs were allowed to operate for decades because those in authority were concerned about political correctness.

"If we are serious about learning these lessons and tackling these gangs, we have to talk openly about how they are influenced by Islamic doctrine and culture. It is just not good enough to call them 'Asian' grooming gangs, or even 'Pakistani grooming gangs'.

"This report shows how much Islamic theology can be used to justify the abuse of grooming gangs. People should be able to discuss this without being accused of being Islamophobic. "This government has resisted a national public inquiry into grooming gangs and resisted acknowledging any connection with Islam. We need to see a full national inquiry chaired by a judge which takes into account the findings of this important report on the Islamic connections.

"Any inquiry must honestly and openly consider the religious motivations and justifications of grooming gang abuse. "The government must not adopt an official definition of 'Islamophobia' which in any way hinders open discussion on the religious aspects of grooming gangs. "By avoiding discussing the religious aspects of grooming gangs, politicians and the media have perpetuated the problem of not properly listening to survivors. It is time for this to end. "I hope that this report is widely read by politicians and media commentators and by all those involved in any inquiry into grooming gangs."

6) **Barnabas Aid** reports that 55 Christians have been slaughtered in a wave of violent persecution that has swept across the Lubero District of North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), recent days. The attacks were all claimed by Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP).

In the worst single incident, on 14 November, at least 28 were killed in an armed assault on the town of Byambe. The death toll included 17 killed at a health centre, among whom were four breastfeeding mothers in their hospital beds. Many of those in Byambe have already been displaced once by the violence that has plagued north-eastern DRC in the past year. The Islamists also burned down over 50 houses.

The following day ISCAP reported that "the soldiers of the Caliphate" had beheaded "11 Christians and burned 20 of their houses...praise be to God". ISCAP has claimed the killing of at least 720 "infidel Christians" since Christmas 2024.

In a propaganda film released in late September, the Islamists reiterated their their loyalty to Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh). An ISCAP spokesman reminds the "infidel media" that the group should no longer be referred to by its former name of Allied Democratic Forces. The terrorist group also boasts of having "ignited wars on the Christians and their armies in the DRC and Uganda over the past decade, killing them, expelling them, setting fire to their churches and barracks, and cutting off their means of trade".