

BFMS Press Release - 1st March 2010

Churches ‘misled’ on Child Protection

‘Recovered memory’ science unreliable, Archbishop told

Advice on the subject of memory, given to both the Church of England and the Methodist Church, is incorrect, academics and clinicians have told the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams.

In a letter to Dr Williams, copied to Methodist leaders, the writers challenge a statement by the Revd Pearl Luxon, who advises both Churches on child protection issues. Follow [this link](#) to view letter.

Mrs Luxon’s statement was in an e-mail replying to a member of the BFMS who had written to raise concerns about the inclusion of *The Courage to Heal* (Bass and Davis 1988) in child protection recommended reading. *The Courage to Heal* is a self-help book which has been condemned by clinicians and academics for containing advice that may be misleading, or even harmful, to people who do not have any memories of abuse.

In her reply Mrs Luxon wrote: ‘According to specialists working in child protection in the statutory sector and with survivors of abuse, there is no such thing as “false memory”. It is either a memory or it is not. It is quite common when people have suffered severe trauma for memory to be patchy and disjointed. This is now recognised by the police as well.’

Quoting many sources the writers state: **‘In short, Mrs Luxon’s assertion that false memories do not exist is completely at odds with the scientific literature.’**

The writers urge Dr Williams to ensure their child protection policy is informed by empirical evidence and remove the book from its list of resources, so that ‘misleading and harmful information does not appear in church literature.’

Madeline Greenhalgh, director of the Society commented: ‘As our own records testify, thousands of families have been destroyed by recovered memory therapy.’

End

Notes to Editors

For further information and to arrange interviews, please contact: Madeline Greenhalgh, Director, British False Memory Society, Tel: 01225 868682 Email: bfms@bfms.org.uk / www.bfms.org.uk

Since it was founded in 1993 the British False Memory Society has had contact with over 2000 people affected by false allegations by their now adult children who have ‘discovered’ memories of sexual abuse in childhood.

The society continues to get calls daily from parents who are devastated that they could be accused of such a heinous crime by a loved one.