



CHURCH INVESTMENT & PORNOGRAPHY & THE MEDIA

Some Questions & Answers

How does the Church of England define pornography?

Definitions pose problems, especially in a time of rapid social change, and none more so than when applied to pornography, the erotic and the obscene. The Church's Council for Mission and Public Affairs has averred that pornography refers to the representation of sexual relations where the stimulation of the reader or viewer is an integral part of the representation, and where a context of compassion, personal caring and affection is absent. It therefore represents the opposite of the sacred, private and intimate view of sex in which love, marriage and human commitment are pre-eminent.

What is the Church of England's policy towards investment in companies that are involved in pornography?

Our policy is not to invest in companies a major part of whose business is engaged in the production, transmission, publication or distribution of pornography.

Has this policy recently changed?

No. We have recognised however that the complex dependency of the modern media on sex, together with the blurring of what constitutes pornography in a culture that has become increasingly sexualised, raises ethical dilemmas for the Church that requires a framework upholding Christian values whilst meeting fiduciary duty.

What does this mean in practice?

Our investment policy supports the contention that the media can and does have a positive influence on society in terms of educating, entertaining and uplifting individual experience, and investment in mainstream media companies is allowed. However, the media can also be prurient, invasive and promote lifestyles inconsistent with the Christian message. The attractive presentation of a degraded humanity that rebuts the Judeo-Christian tradition of attributing intrinsic dignity to men and women is therefore to be resisted.

What policy criteria have been formulated?

Our framework supports a case by case approach. In addition to avoiding companies whose major business activity is pornography, there are likely to be cases where the degree or type of activity will be unacceptable, even if it is a small part of the overall business. Examples may include owner publishers of "top shelf" magazines, owners of pornographic television channels or media production facilities and media

conglomerates whose focus and strategy is to develop pornographic media or cross-media formats, and where the business is growing.

Are there any other areas covered by the policy?

Companies wholly or mainly engaged in manufacturing goods or providing services to the sex industry (excluding health and family planning products) would also normally be avoided.

How will individual investment decisions be reached?

The EIAG will review specific cases, apply our policy criteria, and make recommendations. Decisions on whether to hold or avoid a particular stock remain the preserve of each of the three central Church investment bodies.

Why isn't avoidance based solely on the level of revenue derived from pornography?

Investment avoidance based on the level of revenue derived from pornography is inappropriate, as for the majority of mainstream media companies the degree of exposure will be slight. Examining each case against the framework allows integrity and consistency to be observed.

In cases where disinvestment is not recommended, how can the Church uphold its values?

In balancing fiduciary duty with our Christian values disinvestment may not always be the appropriate solution. In such cases the Church seeks, through positive engagement to press its concerns and to uphold its witness. A suitable context for engagement might include non-educational sexual content in teenage magazines, retailing of "top-shelf" magazines, protection of taste and decency standards on television and protection of the watershed and a responsible approach to the protection of minors by Internet Service Providers.

Does the Church currently avoid any companies because of pornographic business activity?

Yes, both in the UK and overseas.



The Church of England Ethical Investment Advisory Group was established in 1994 and includes representation from the Church Commissioners for England, the CBF Church of England Funds, The Church of England Pensions Board, the General Synod, the Archbishops' Council, and the Council for Mission & Public Affairs

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