

The Truth about Conversion Therapy

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Conversion can be described – wholly or partly – in many ways.

Repentance, faith in Christ, regeneration, new birth, salvation, made alive, translated, sanctified, washed... To name a few.

But a word that does not describe conversion is “therapy.”

I did an hour-long interview with Channel Nine’s 60 Minutes for an episode on “LGBT Conversion Therapy” to air over the coming weeks.

This was the first thing I had to explain.

“Conversion” and “therapy” are two different things. They do not belong together.

One is an act of God, the other is an act of man. One occurs by supernatural means, the other by medical and psychological means. One is applied by the Holy Spirit, the other is applied by a mere mortal therapist.

There could be no more misguided thing in the world than an attempt to convert via therapy.

That is why it’s a term unknown to Christianity.

Much like “marriage equality” it’s an inexact and politically loaded term which we find ourselves engaging with, though we’re not sure where it came from.

It’s a term that can mean whatever people want it to mean.

For some, it evokes visions of the movie “Boy Erased” – perverse and misguided bootcamps to knock the gay out of young men. Or tragic tales of electric shock therapy, to zap the brain into some imagined heteronormative gear.

So, we agree – that’s tragic, misguided, and wrong. Ban it.

But others use the term to refer to counselling and prayer. That’s the standard invoked in recent mainstream media reports, and the La Trobe University/Human Rights Law Centre publication “Preventing Harm, Promoting Justice.”

As far as I am aware, if someone wants to speak to a counsellor about their sexuality

or gender, that's their call. Neither am I sure there's such a thing as coerced prayer.

Are we to criminalise a pastor who prays for a church member who has asked to be prayed for? Or ban people voluntarily getting together to support each other in counselling or support groups?

It seems absurd.

But then there are policies which target mere claims that change is possible. They ban speech.

We discovered one such policy in the Australian Labor Party's platform, which was quietly changed after an ACL campaign against it.

I wonder, what qualifies as a claim that change is possible? Is it the preaching of conversion to Christ?

The themes of conversion and change lie at the very heart of Christianity. They permeate every aspect of Christian teaching and practise.

And yes, true conversion will result in transformed desires. And yes, a true convert will want to pursue God's will for their lives. That's called sanctification, and it's all through the Bible.

Maybe policy drafters could really drop the pretence of "therapy" and admit they are getting dangerously close to attempting a ban on conversion.

But still more concerning that this are the scattered references in conversion therapy policy handbooks to parents.

On parents, one policy says that actions which don't affirm a child's chosen sexuality or gender identity should be labelled "domestic abuse" and "psychological abuse."

Note this applies to gender. It is "LGBTconversion therapy."

So, a parent who wisely counsels their young son against wearing a dress and going too far down the trans pathway, is now guilty of domestic abuse?

And the person doing the gender converting is apparently not the activist who visited his school and inducted him into the world of "exploring, experimenting, and discovering" the "gender galaxy," but rather his concerned parents?

In the state of Victoria, someone under the age of 18 cannot get a tattoo, even with their parents' permission. Minors cannot vote, buy alcohol, or do a host of other things.

But apparently, we should allow them to socially transition, take puberty blockers,

progress to hormones, and flirt with (or undergo) life-altering, non-reversible “gender affirmation surgery” whether their parents like it or not.

And we are supposed to believe that the one who stands in the way, however gently – whether pastor, counsellor, or even parent – is guilty of a crime.

It sounds mad until you realise that the real objective with all of this is a thought-policing exercise.

Aggressive proponents of these laws take issue with certain fundamentals of the Christian faith.

To name a few: sin, judgment, righteousness, conversion, sanctification, holiness, sexual morality.

They believe that the existence of these ideas is oppression. They are responsible for anguish and psychological harm in LGBT children and adults.

Of course, the Christian view is exactly the opposite. There is no hope for anyone in the world apart from these ideas.

But for those who disagree with us, their solution is a totalitarian crackdown.

That’s why the aforementioned report specifically condemns Christian ideas like, “love the sinner, hate the sin” and “accept but don’t affirm.” Or, the “saturation of heteronormative sexual ideology” in Christian churches.

The real target is Christian thinking, doctrine, teaching, and practise. And by extension, the families, churches, communities, schools, and other places where this kind of thinking exists.

It sounds almost implausible for a society like ours to have come this far, but it actually makes perfect sense.

We have been drunk for some time on the notion that liberation, happiness and inner peace are found straight down the dual carriageway of sexual desire and self-expression.

And, increasingly, the things which stand in the way are oppressive, victimising, and psychologically harmful.

The biggest “thing” in the way is the human conscience.

But a close second would be lingering Christian values in our culture.

By blaming an afflicted conscience on the existence of Christian values, Christianity becomes the single big target.

We, who believe in the death of the self which is corrupted by sin, and the pursuit of Christ in His transcendent goodness, and the converting power of God which makes it possible, were always going to be the biggest and most offensive enemy in such a worldview.

“...the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” [Eph 4:21-24].