

Once Gay, Always Gay?

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“**F**ACT: Sexual orientation is neither a choice, nor is it something that can be changed through prayer or therapy. All attempts to do so are rooted in shame, religious bigotry, political propaganda and ignorance.” This was the declaration of Wayne Besen, an American homosexual rights advocate who is the founder and executive director of Truth Wins Out, the Center Against Religious Extremism; and author of the book *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth*. Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the homosexual debate is the question of whether homosexuals can change their sexual orientation. Many ministries and organizations exist to help those who wish to change their orientation away from homosexuality, such as:¹

- The National Association of Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH)
- Jews Offering New Alternatives to Healing (JONAH)
- The Presbyterian organization, OneByOne
- The African-American Christian organization, Powerful Ministry Change Group
- The Mormon organization, Evergreen International
- The non-religious organizations, Gender Menders, People Can Change, and German Institute for Youth and Society

Of course, organizations also exist which help those who wish to change their sexual orientation away from heterosexuality, although they would never describe their efforts in this way. Organizations such as the GLBT National Help Center and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network provide literature designed to encourage the heterosexual to question his sexual orientation, and they are happy to assist and provide those questioning with support, advice, and resources. There also exists a pool of gay-affirming therapists. An advertisement for psychotherapist Dr. Fran Brown on the website Gaylife read, “Quick therapy tips for gay men struggling with heterosexual to gay transitions, same gender parenting and coming out.”²

Despite the fact that there is a concerted effort on both sides to change people’s sexual orientation, the standard mantra is, “Once gay, always gay.” This stems from the belief that people are born gay; therefore, they have no choice in the matter. In other words, the once gay, always gay argument is the practical application of an unsubstantiated theory that people are born gay. Nevertheless, it is common to hear dogmatic declarations such as in Kevin Naff’s *Washington Blade* editorial “Lock Up the ‘Ex-gays,’” “[T]here is no such thing as ‘ex-gay.’ There is ‘repress-my-innate-immutable-characteristics-and-deny-their-existence,’ but no such condition as ‘ex-gay.’ ... Right-handed people can’t choose to be lefties, those with brown skin can’t choose white and gays can’t choose to be

¹ Brown, *A Queer Thing Happened to America*, 451.

² Ibid, 424.

straight.”³ Similarly, Eric Marcus wrote in his book *Is It a Choice?*, “[N]o matter what anyone claims, you cannot change a person’s sexual orientation.”⁴ And Robert Goss wrote in his book *Jesus Acted Up*, “All ecclesial attempts to change gay/lesbian sexual identities to heterosexual or demand that queers practice celibacy disembody them as human beings.”⁵

Homosexual activists afford absolutely no possibility of change in one’s sexual orientation provided that the change is from homosexuality to heterosexuality. Beyond this, they are determined to silence all talk regarding such a possibility. To bolster their position, these activists frequently call upon the mental health community for support. A representative example comes from the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network’s publication *Just the Facts*:⁶

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The most important fact about “reparative therapy,” also sometimes known as “conversion” therapy, is that it is based on an understanding of homosexuality that has been rejected by all major health and mental health professions. The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, The American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, and the National Association of Social Workers, together representing more than 447,000 health and mental health professionals, have all taken the position that homosexuality is not a mental disorder and thus there is no need for a “cure.”

Impressive as this list of authorities may be, it is negated by the history of their decision in 1973 to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, which is considered to be the Bible of psychiatry and psychology. Dr. Simon LeVay summarized this history in his book *Queer Science*, “Gay activism was clearly the force that propelled the APA to declassify homosexuality.”⁷ Through militant, but non-violent, confrontations and threats, homosexual activists pressured the American Psychiatric Association into capitulating to their demands, and this in turn led to the other mental health organizations accepting this diagnosis in order to maintain unity. Professor Ronald Bayer, author of the definitive work on the events surrounding the APA’s 1973 ruling, explains:⁸

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In 1973, after several years of bitter dispute, the Board of Trustees of the American Psychiatric Association decided to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and*

³ Ibid, 420-421.

⁴ Ibid, 421.

⁵ Ibid, 418.

⁶ Ibid, 422-423.

⁷ Ibid, 454.

⁸ Ibid, 459-460.

Statistical Manual of Psychiatric [sic] Disorders, its official list of mental diseases. Infuriated by that action, dissident psychiatrists charged the leadership of their association with an unseemly capitulation to the threats and pressures of Gay Liberation groups, and forced the board to submit its decision to a referendum of the full APA membership. And so America's psychiatrists were called to vote upon the question of whether homosexuality ought to be considered a mental disease. The entire process, from the first confrontation organized by gay demonstrators at psychiatric conventions to the referendum demanded by orthodox psychiatrists, seemed to violate the most basic expectations about how questions of science should be resolved. Instead of being engaged in a sober consideration of data, psychiatrists were swept up in a political controversy. The American Psychiatric Association had fallen victim to the disorder of a tumultuous era, when disruptive conflicts threatened to politicize every aspect of American social life. A furious egalitarianism that challenged every instance of authority had compelled psychiatric experts to negotiate the pathological status of homosexuality with homosexuals themselves. The result was not a conclusion based on an approximation of the scientific truth as dictated by reason, but was instead an action demanded by the ideological temper of the times.

Professor Bayer concludes, "It now seems that if groups of people march and raise enough hell, they can change anything in time."⁹

For the first time, a mental health diagnosis was determined by popular vote rather than by the empirical data. To make matters worse, even this referendum is tainted by a scandal. Dr. Michael Brown explains in his book *A Queer Thing Happened to America*:¹⁰

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Understandably, gay activists were alarmed by the call for a vote, and behind the scenes, the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) helped compose and fund a letter to be sent out to all APA members, urging them to back the Board's decision. But the NGTF was careful not to let the APA members know that it had anything to do with the letter since to do so would have been suicidal.

The letter stated that

“It would be a serious and potentially embarrassing step for our profession to vote down a decision which was taken after serious and extended consideration by the bodies within our organization designated to consider such matters.”

⁹ Ibid, 460.

¹⁰ Ibid, 461.

And so, a critically important letter ostensibly conceived and mailed by its signers (all of whom were key members of the APA's Board of Trustees) was in fact the brainchild of gay activists.

Beyond all this, an editorial published in the peer-reviewed journal *Marriage & Family Review* detailed how the key scientific study used by the APA during this process was, in fact, fraudulent. Known as the Hooker study, this study has been used in textbooks and court proceedings to prove that homosexuality could not be detected using standard psychological tests. In reality, Hooker's test subjects "were unable to stop talking about homosexuality during the testing—a clear indication of obsessive compulsion!"¹¹ According to a report by the Family Research Council:¹²

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“This may be the first fraud committed by a scientific organization. As the Hooker study is so central to the ‘homosexuals are normal’ argument, its exposure reopens the question of whether homosexuals are mentally disturbed,” said Dr. Paul Cameron, one of the study's authors. “The American Psychiatric Association defines a mental disorder as ‘associated with... a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, [or] disability....’ Given that homosexuals are at significantly greater risk of suffering mental and physical diseases—and this apparently leads to their shortened average lifespan—homosexuality would appear to qualify as a mental disorder.”

Regardless of whether homosexuality ought to be classified as a mental disorder, it is clear that citing the authority of the mental health community as evidence that homosexuality is normal and that individual sexual orientation can never be altered is, at best, misleading. If anything, the mental health community has provided ample reason to believe that sexual orientation can be changed. In 2009, the American Psychological Association released a two-year study that concluded there is insufficient evidence to determine whether or not conversion therapy works. Significant is the fact that the task force was comprised entirely of activists in gay causes—most of whom were themselves gay.¹³ Reporting on this shocking reality, Kathleen Melonakos warned, “Active homosexuals can hardly be objective about an addictive behavior they engage in themselves.”¹⁴ Dr. Joseph Nicolosi explains:¹⁵

¹¹ “APA Fraud - Hooker Study did Not Prove Homosexuals are Normal.”

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Brown, *A Queer Thing*, 479-480.

¹⁴ Ibid, 478.

¹⁵ Ibid, 478.

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The fact that the Task Force was composed entirely of activists in gay causes, most of whom are also personally gay, goes a long way toward explaining their failure to be scientifically objective.

To be “gay-identified” means to have undergone a counter-cultural rite of passage. According to the coming out literature, when a person accepts and integrates a gay identity, he must give up the hope of ever changing his feelings and fantasies. The process is as follows: the adolescent discovers his same-sex attraction; this causes him confusion, shame and guilt. He desperately hopes that he will somehow become straight so that he will fit in with his friends and family. However, he eventually comes to believe that he is gay, and in fact can never be otherwise. Therefore, he must accept his homosexuality in the face of social rejection, and find pride in his homoerotic desires as something good, desirable, natural, and (if he is a person of faith) a gift from his creator.

The majority of the Task Force members clearly underwent this same process of abandoning the hope that they could diminish their homosexuality and develop their heterosexual potential. Coming to the Task Force from this perspective, they would be strongly invested in discouraging others from having the opportunity to change—i.e., *“If it did not work for me, then it cannot work for you.”*

Despite the inherent bias in favor of the homosexual position regarding whether sexual orientation can be changed, the best that this task force could do was cite insufficient evidence to determine the effectiveness of conversion therapy. In other words, if there were any evidence at all to suggest that conversion therapy does not work, we can be certain that this study would have concluded such. Of course, this is how the media attempted to spin the results of this study with headlines such as “APA Exposes Ex-gay Myth,” and “Psychologist Group Rejects So-called ‘Gay Therapy.’” Nevertheless, the very fact that this decidedly pro-gay study could not disprove conversion therapy essentially disproves dogmatic assertions that there can be no such thing as an ex-gay. Put another way, this study concluded that it may be possible for a person to change his sexual orientation—there simply is not enough evidence to be certain.

Once again, we discover that the findings of recent scientific studies are in harmony with the Word of God. Long before scientific task forces and psychological associations, the Holy Spirit used the Apostle Paul to teach that no person must remain enslaved by homosexual passions. [First Corinthians 6:9-11](#) says, *“[D]o you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such **were** some of you. **But** you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”* (emphasis added)

This Corinthian congregation sounds like something we might find in any given prison, not within the walls of a church. Yet the Apostle Paul reminded this congregation that they were no longer identified by their past sins. In God’s eyes, the sexually immoral person is no longer identified by his illegitimate child, his sexually transmitted disease, or his tally of one-night stands. In God’s eyes, the idolater is no longer identified by his obsessions which consumed his time and attention. In God’s eyes, the adulterer is no longer identified by the relationships he destroyed through his infidelity. In God’s eyes, the thief is no longer identified by the objects of which he has deprived others. In God’s eyes, the greedy person is no longer identified as a workaholic, or by his stinginess. In God’s eyes, the drunkard is no longer identified by his foolish and shameful acts while under the influence of alcohol. In God’s eyes, the reviler is no longer identified by his tirades and by those he has verbally abused. In God’s eyes, the swindler is no longer identified by his victims and by ruined lives. Regardless of the sin, and regardless of the effect of that sin on the life of the individual and the lives of others, God is both capable and willing to offer forgiveness. Therefore, it is not surprising to find within this list the sin of homosexuality. In God’s mind, the homosexual is no longer identified by his sexual orientation. He, like the others in this church, had been forgiven of his sins. By applying the ministry of Jesus Christ on the cross to his own heart in belief and repentance, his spirit had been washed by the Holy Spirit, as [Titus 3:4-7](#) says, *“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”*

Because of passages like [1 Corinthians chapter 6](#), some people accuse the Apostle Paul of being homophobic. The Apostle Paul was not homophobic. Rather, he recognized the enslaving power of homosexuality and its ultimate reward of death and destruction. Having been personally enslaved by sins that haunted him throughout his life, the Apostle Paul was intimately familiar with the guilt and despair that can come from one’s past. Yet he was also intimately familiar with the forgiveness and hope that can come from Jesus Christ, and he devoted his life to sharing this truth with others. It is precisely because the Apostle Paul had himself sinned beyond measure that he spoke so boldly about the sins of others—not to condemn them but to point the way to forgiveness. In [1 Timothy 3:12-17](#), the Apostle Paul wrote:

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I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

It is precisely because the Apostle Paul had himself sinned beyond measure that he spoke so boldly about the sins of others—not to condemn them, but to point the way to forgiveness.

Scripture is filled with examples of God not only forgiving people, but of God transforming lives. The Apostle Paul is quite possibly the best example of this. God took Paul—a blasphemer and one of the most ardent persecutors of the Christian church—and transformed him into one of history’s greatest Christian missionaries who could instruct the church at Corinth in [1 Corinthians 11:1](#), *“Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”* Moreover, God used the Apostle Paul to pen 13 books of the Bible. Similarly, God took Jacob—a liar and a cheat who deceived his father into giving him his brother’s birthright—and transformed him into a man of faith who fathered the 12 tribes of Israel. Throughout Scripture, God refers to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Another example would be David who not only committed adultery, but engineered the death of the woman’s husband in order to hide his sin, and yet God promised David that his lineage would reign eternally in the Millennial Kingdom and that Jesus the Messiah would come from his line. We could continue and look at Moses, a murderer whom God used to free His people from slavery and lead them to the Promised Land; Gideon, a coward whom God used to defeat an oppressive army as numerous as the sand on the sea shore; Peter, a man who denied Jesus, and yet Jesus gave him the keys to the Kingdom; or any number of other examples in Scripture.

God is in the business of transforming lives. The church is filled with ex-sinners. There are ex-liars, ex-cheats, ex-addicts, ex-adulterers, ex-gays, ex-you-fill-in-the-blank. Given that man is naturally bent toward doing evil, it is probably true that none of these would have overcome their temptation in their own strength. It is only through the transformative power of the Holy Spirit that anyone is capable of overcoming his greatest temptations. It is only when a person relinquishes his sinful identity and turns to Jesus Christ in humble repentance that the power of sin is truly broken in an individual’s life. No longer must he be identified by his sin. Instead, he is identified as a child of God. This is the good news of Jesus Christ! [Galatians 4:4-7](#) says, *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”*

Works Cited

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