



Holier Than Thou Hocus-Pocus & Homosexuality

Ralph Blair 1977

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Galatians 5

FROM LEGALISTIC PERSECUTION...

In the name of God, negative response to homosexuals over the years has ranged from killing to ridicule, always with a certain bearing of false witness. The Puritans actually tried to legislate Leviticus, albeit selectively, and apply the death penalty to “any man [who] lyeth with mankinde, as he lyeth with a woeman.” (1) Going beyond Leviticus, Puritans extended the death penalty to lesbians. (2) These killings were prescribed and enforced under the same Bible proof-texts as are cited today by opponents of civil rights protection for homosexuals. For example, the editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* editorialized: “Leviticus 18-22 not only nixes it, but Leviticus 20:13 demands death for those involved.” (3) During and following the ruckus in Dade County, Florida, bumper stickers appeared urging “KILL A QUEER FOR CHRIST.” (4) Jerry Falwell, popular Lynchburg preacher, addressed an anti-gay rally in Florida and as he was introducing Anita Bryant, he said: “So-called gay folks just as soon kill you as look at you.” (5) What did he mean? Identified only as “An Accepted/Excepted One,” a gay Christian wrote a letter to *The Other Side* in which he reported: “Less than two months ago I was told by a sincere Christian (!) counselor that it would be ‘better’ to ‘repent and die,’ even if I had to kill myself, than to go on living and relating to others as a homosexual.” (6) The person went on, “A friend of mine, told something similar by a well-intentioned priest, did just that.” Sadly, there have been others who have done just that.

Even so-called “New Evangelicals” continue to perpetuate the bearing of false witness so familiar in the hysterics of many fundamentalists. Writing in *The Wittenburg Door*, editor Denny Rydberg sounded the alarm: “Now homosexuality is becoming acceptable. Soon incest will be the theme... And the secularization process will continue.” (7) Such confusion, ignorance, and bigotry can be differentiated from Jack Wyrzten’s uncontrollable fear only by the degree of relative sophistication characteristic of the different men. Speaking at an anti-gay rights rally and showing both ignorance and hate, Wyrzten exclaimed: “Homosexuality is a sin so rotten, so low, so dirty that even cats and dogs don’t practice it.” (8) (They don’t “practice” it because they are so used to doing it that they don’t need to “practice.”) Wyrzten projected the catastrophe that if the Miami ordinance were upheld, it “could be the end of the United States of America.” C. A. Tripp quotes a Yale psychologist on reaction to homosexuality: “It brings out the very worst in the psychiatric crowd.” (9) We can add that, evidently, it also brings out the very worst in the church crowd. As noted by radio minister Oswald C. J. Hoffmann of *The Lutheran Hour*, in thanking me for my booklet, *An Evangelical Look at Homosexuality*: “I have seen very little material on this subject from the evangelical point of view. Most of that has been pejorative with little attempt to help people.” (10)

...TO PRINCIPAL LOVE

Happily, though, not all evangelicals react negatively to homosexuality. For example, I have been gratified to see the reception some evangelicals have given my booklet. One of America’s best-selling evangelical authors said: “Right on, man! Jesus Christ backs you up every step of the way.” (The publisher of this person’s books prohibits the use of the author’s name in connection with the statement.)

Helmut Thielicke, speaking of homosexuality which is understood as “unsusceptible to medical or psychotherapeutic treatment,” has written that we can “think of it [the homosexuality] as a talent that is to be invested (Luke 19:13f).” (11) Dutch Reformed pastor, Jack Rinzema, has urged that “One obligation the community has to homosexuals is the provision of places where they can come together in the open, in safe and comfortable surroundings.” (12) He has proposed that society must help to “create room” by which Christian gays “can live together in permanent relationships” under a morality which they themselves develop within a Christian context. A similar note is sounded by Fuller Seminary theologian Lewis Smedes in his book, *Sex for Christians*: “... within his [the homosexual’s] sexual experience, he ought to develop permanent associations with another person, associations in which respect and regard for the other as a person dominates their sexual relationship.” (13) Agreeing, another Fuller Seminary professor, psychologist Phyllis Hart, says: “I believe it is possible within the framework of the Scripture to see the Christian, monogamous homosexual relationship as being within the permissive will of God, and that the counselor could help a person develop the same caring unselfish love relationship that we do with other sexual relationships.” (14) Her remarks were made at the 22nd annual convention of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies meeting in Oklahoma City in 1975. The majority of panelists discussing homosexuality at the convention rejected a standard evangelical view that all homosexual behavior is sinful and agreed that “Scripture does not condemn homosexual behavior between committed Christians in a covenant relationship of love and loyalty.”

Writing of homosexuality in an Inter-Varsity publication, Margaret Evening suggests several questions for self-reflection on the maturity, emotional growth, possible self-indulgence, effect on relationship with God, and potential for becoming more fully human in a loving relationship which she sees as a “centre of healing and comfort, open and available to all amid the wounds and sores of society.” (15) Her conclusion: “If homosexual friends can, with real honesty, answer these questions to their entire satisfaction and peace of mind, then they have nothing to fear.”

EVANGELICALS CONCERNED, INC.

It is this positive point of view of concerned evangelicals, together with the need for Christian fellowship and the need for the education of evangelicals that inspired creation of Evangelicals Concerned. EC is a nationwide ministry composed of both heterosexual and homosexual evangelicals concerned about the lack of preparation for dealing

realistically with homosexuality in the evangelical community and of the implications of the Gospel in the lives of gay men, women and their families.

EC was launched at the beginning of what *Newsweek* magazine called “The Year of the Evangelical”—1976. (16) Encouraged by a nationally-known evangelical leader whose own homosexuality prompted his seeking me out for counsel and fellowship, and by subsequent counseling arising from contacts through the alumni directory of Dallas Theological Seminary (I was listed as the Director of the Homosexual Community Counseling Center in New York City) and responses to my “Evangelicals” ad in the gay newspaper, *The Advocate*, I met in Washington, D.C. with others of like mind, to form EC. Evangelicals from several states (e.g., New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Illinois, Florida, Georgia, as well as the District of Columbia) met together during the national convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, and although some of us met as members of the NAE, our meeting was not in any way officially connected with the NAE. The choice of this particular place and time was made at the suggestion of the nationally-known evangelical leader mentioned but not named above. His identity, of course, will never be divulged

During the first year and a half, EC has grown from coast to coast. We now have representatives in cities throughout the country and the country is divided into five regions, each with an EC regional director. EC is incorporated as a non-profit organization in New York. Evangelicals who make up the Advisory Board, the Board of Trustees, regional directors, and local representatives come from all over America and abroad and they are women and men from various walks of life, backgrounds, and many Christian communities (e.g., Reformed Presbyterian, Christian Reformed, Reformed Church in America, United Presbyterian, Church of God - Anderson, United Methodist, Assembly of God, Protestant Episcopal, and several Baptist, Bible Church, and Independent fellowships). We are, as Paul said, individually members one of another, sharing each other’s joy and grief, not neglecting to meet together, encouraging one another. (Rom 12:4f and Heb 10:25) We are engaged in an educational endeavor which includes regularly published periodicals and other printed materials, meetings, Bible study groups, and consultation for individuals and organizations.

HOMOSEXUALS AMONG THE EVANGELICALS

According to John Warwick Montgomery, “Religiously, the climate of opinion is going evangelical.” (17) Evangelical churches, those that emphasize a “born again” experience and the authority of the Bible, have gained in membership over the past ten years as membership in “Main Line” congregations has slipped. (18) A *CBS Reports* program, “Born Again,” has profiled what host Bill Moyers (himself reborn) calls “the fastest growing religious group in America.” (19) George Gallup, Jr. says that the United States “may be in an early stage of a profound religious revival” (20) and his Gallup Poll has found that “Nearly 50 million Americans age 18 and over—34 percent of the nation’s adults—say they have been born again.” (21) Half of the Protestants sampled and 18 percent of the Catholics sampled claimed the experience—as did Gallup, himself. Depending upon whom one is citing, it is reported that there are between 40 million and 78 million American evangelicals. (22) According to David Kucharsky, senior editor of *Christianity Today*, the country’s leading evangelical periodical, “most of the nation’s great churches are now evangelical.” (23) What is important in this growing evangelical movement is not only the *number* of individuals involved but the *kind* of people they are.

As reported in *U.S. News and World Report*, “Evangelical churches are attracting growing numbers of young, urban, highly educated and somewhat more liberal people to create a new ‘mix.’” (24) Some of those who make up this “mix” are homosexual, and unlike their brothers and sisters before them, some of these are not remaining hidden. Evangelicals are facing an important question about this part of the “mix.” The question basically is one of response to the evangelicals who are homosexuals. How many there are is one of the first considerations in the complexity of the overall question of response.

Paul H. Gebhard, Director of the Institute for Sex Research at Indiana University, reports: “There have been no studies to indicate how many U.S. citizens are self-described as homosexual” and “Existing statistical material has measured sexual activity or response rather than willingness to engage in loving relationships with members of the same sex.” (25) Institute tabulations based on only those people who, with others of the same sex, and “for at least three years between ages 16 and 55” have had “deliberate physical contact intended by at least one of the participants to produce sexual arousal” indicate that 13.95 percent of males and 4.25 percent of females, or a combined average of 9.13 percent of the total population had either extensive (21 or more partners or 51 or more experiences) or more than incidental (5-20 partners or 21-50 experiences) homosexual experience. Gebhard says that we are here “talking about something which involves millions, not thousands, of U.S. citizens.” He also says that homosexual experiences “cross all geographic, ethnic and socioeconomic barriers in this country.” This point is particularly important as we consider the homosexuals among the evangelicals.

The Institute studies published in 1948 and 1953 had indicated that 37 percent of the male and 20 percent of the female population had some form of overt homosexual experience after puberty. (26) Gebhard explains “Although these figures [37 and 20] have remained remarkably constant in subsequent research and reworking of the data, I wish to point out that our samples had an undue proportion of people of college age.” He further clarifies: “If the average age of our samples were in the forties, the figures for homosexual experience might well be higher by several percentage points. I also believe that if the same research were conducted today, the percentages would be significantly higher by virtue of the increased sexual experimentation connected with the so-called ‘sexual revolution.’”

With the statistics on evangelicals and Gebhard’s data in mind, it may be said that somewhere between 4 and 7 million evangelicals have engaged in same-sex physical contact for sexual arousal. If one then includes those who desire such contact but who believe it to be sin, or for logistical reasons have resisted such contact, the homosexual population among evangelicals is seen to be even greater.

Naturally, there are those who balk at the notion that there are very many homosexuals in the evangelical community. They say, “Impossible!” “It’s just propaganda from gay lib!” When *Time* magazine exposed the homosexuality of Billy James Hargis of Christian Crusade, these and many other people were shocked. (27) After all, was he not a “fundamentalist and anti-Communist patriot?” Hargis had written in a fund-raising appeal just a month before the expose: “Dear Friend: After years of shock and sorrow over the decline of morals and decency in our country, I thought I had become shock-proof... Can you believe it: complete color films of sexual acts between women and men, including homosexual acts, using your children. Unless you and I act today... our children and our children’s children will be exposed to perversion so sinister that good will become evil and evil will become good.” Such an appeal may well bring in financial contributions but it does nothing to address the real phenomena of homosexuality, either in society in general or in the life of an individual who is struggling with homosexual desires. Hargis’s own homosexuality, instead of being handled in a responsible and natural way, had to be mishandled within an ignorant and bigoted community which he, himself, helped to foster. Now, his homosexual activity with several of his college students is painfully out in the open and cannot be ignored. Had some of these young men not made their revelations, their own homosexuality and Hargis’s would have remained hidden from the naive Christian public.

It is fortunate for other well-known Christian leaders that their own homosexuality has not surfaced publicly. But it is there. It is there in all the daily torment of living a lie, the fear of exposure, and the possible loss of family, friends, career, “good name,” and so on. Every Christian periodical carries the writings, pictures, notices, advertisements, endorsements, and news of evangelicals who are secretly gay. In public, some of these homosexuals are just as anti-gay and homophobic as was Hargis. Virtually all major Christian organizations would be crippled, if not shut down, without the aid of the homosexuals in them. If I were to illustrate with even camouflaged material, I would run a risk of inadvertently exposing Christians known to me as homosexual. None of them deserves such a burden.

When *Christianity Today* reported that Lee Carlton, an openly gay minister, was a graduate of Northwest Bible College (28), the president of the school was very quick to protest that Carlton was not a graduate “even though he did regrettably spend some time on the campus.” (29) When *Christianity Today* reported that Metropolitan Community Church founder Troy Perry “got his theological training at Moody Bible Institute,” the MBI director of public relations, immediately protested that Perry “was a student for less than one semester.” (30) And the ostrich charade goes on.

In considering further the fact of the homosexuals among the evangelicals, surely we must take into account some effects of the “sexual revolution” even within the evangelical community. For example, Tim Stafford, senior editor of Youth for Christ’s *Campus Life* magazine, reports that homosexual problems are frequently raised in letters to the magazine. (31) Questions about masturbation are dealt with in *Campus Life* without condemnation. Evangelical authors and publishers are beginning to produce material not altogether negative and sometimes even quite positive about homosexuality.

We must also remember that for everyone who is confronted with his or her own homosexuality there are also two parents and other relatives, friends, their churches, and others who, as Paul Harvey says, “are knowingly or unknowingly affected.” (32) This forces us to begin to grasp something of the magnitude of the question of homosexuality in our society.

Noting that just the homosexuals and their parents make up a quarter of the entire population of the country, Harvey stated that these are “statistics that the ‘straight’ world, like it or not, is going to have to live with.”

The psychological and spiritual dimensions combine to magnify the situation. This is especially true of the evangelical community with its inevitably having to come to terms with a Biblical tradition and a usually rigid moral code particularly antagonistic to homosexuality. It is therefore of tremendous importance that evangelicals look as clearly and compassionately as possible at the homosexual Christians and their fellow Christians in our midst. Anita Bryant says: “This is a battle of the agnostics, atheists, and ungodly on the one side, and God’s people on the other.” (33) Not quite. It is just not that simple.

ANITA BRYANT’S HOLY WAR

There are so many unfortunate aspects to the Anita Bryant phenomenon that one hardly knows where to begin. *The Miami Herald*, which editorially opposed the gay rights ordinance, described the emotional climate during the fight as one of “hysteria more appropriate to the seventeenth century than the twentieth.” (34) Reporting in *The Village Voice*, Carl Hiaasen observed that throughout the fight, “Bryant warned that Miami would become Sodom by the Sea if the law were upheld, while gays forecast a Gestapo state if they lost at the polls. The dialogue was banal and often ludicrous.” (35)

Bryant certainly seems sincere. She apparently believes what she says and there is no reason to say that she is being deliberately nasty, even though her calling homosexuals “human garbage” is not exactly a charitable greeting. Effects of her effort, however, can be nasty indeed.

Since one can find sound treatment of relevant passages of Scripture elsewhere (e.g., Bailey, Thielicke, Blair, or McNeill) (36), I will not dwell on Bryant’s selective literalism and poor exegesis of the Bible except to say that one must be very careful not to read into ancient texts, including the Bible, any reference to a phenomenon which is only beginning to be understood in the twentieth century, namely, homosexual orientation. Questions of homosexual orientation or “constitutional homosexuality” and then questions of actual behavior are, as Thielicke has said, “for purely historical reasons... alien to the New Testament” and, of course, to the Old Testament as well. (37) In saying this, it is not at all necessary to discard a strong view of Biblical infallibility. (38) Indeed, it is because of a high view of Scripture that there should be a more serious attention paid to the very human *original languages and cultural settings* chosen by the Holy Spirit to convey God’s Word that spans time and culture. In saying this, neither

is it at all necessary to believe that modern ideology is somehow superior or normative for Christian faith and life. But it is necessary to use responsibly what with God-given minds we have been able to discover about God's creation. As we continue to carry out God's cultural mandate we learn more and more about our world, — psychologically, sociologically, anthropologically, and so on. It is our duty to apply this ever-expanding knowledge to God's demands for social righteousness.

I will not dwell on the inherent contradictions in Bryant's position: her fight against employment rights for homosexuals and her own experiencing of employment discrimination due to her involvement with the gay issue which prompts her complaint of "the price I pay: the frightening persecution... the attempted blacklisting of my career... the cancellation of my projected TV show." (39) It is ironic that she opposed and defeated the Miami law banning discrimination against homosexuals in employment, for the ordinance was designed to protect a long-persecuted minority from the very kind of discrimination which she sees aimed against her. Another internal contradiction: The claim of her organization, Save Our Children, Inc. (SOC) that homosexuals are not victims of discrimination in Dade County coupled with the SOC's vigorous crusade which defeated the anti-discrimination law protecting homosexuals in Dade County. If it was not apparent before the vote, it was readily seen after the vote: homosexuals are victims of discrimination.

Bryant is so quick to quote Leviticus that one wonders why she has said nothing about Lev 19:34. There God commands that love for neighbor extend beyond fellow-Israelites to the resident aliens within Israel's territory. These sojourners were especially helpless because they had no civil rights. God reminds Israel that she was once a sojourner in Egypt. Are homosexuals living in the Bible Belt entitled to less protection?

I will not dwell on what seems a misinterpretation of the Articles of Purpose under which SOC is incorporated in Florida. All four purposes claim to have to do with the promotion of "the mental and physical health and welfare of children." From the viewpoint of those familiar with the etiology, psychodynamics, treatment, sociology, and variety of homosexualities and gay life styles (e.g., the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Sociological Association, and other professional groups) what SOC is doing is counter to the children's welfare. Another statement in the incorporation papers of SOC: "The corporation shall not carry on propaganda or otherwise act to influence legislation." (40)

I will not dwell on Bryant's speculation that all homosexuals are *unhappy*, not "gay." Leaving aside the unhappiness that SOC has brought to homosexuals, it should be said that if she has never met the happy, functioning homosexual people who do exist, that is her own misfortune. Of course there are happy homosexuals. There are sad homosexuals, too. There are happy and sad everybody's; life is a mixed bag. Homosexuals do have certain special problems in a generally inhospitable church and society but in the midst of that inhospitality, some homosexuals have developed unusually strong self-reliance and mechanisms for coping.

I will not dwell on what can only be speculation about her inordinately negative reaction to the gay rights issue. She admits that she has "set aside for now, my personal dreams and with God's help, I will devote my total energy to this Crusade." (41)

I will not dwell on the irrelevant, though no doubt effective, star-spangled "Americanism" which she parades into the controversy, e.g., allotting half of her time in a debate to the singing of three verses and three choruses of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." (42) She told a gathering of Cubans: "It would break my heart if Miami would become another Sodom and Gomorrah and you would have to leave again." (43) Evidently ignorant of the antipathy of all Communist regimes to homosexuals and to the fact that she, Castro, and the Soviet Union are on the same side in this issue, Bryant went on to warn: "The more we let violence and homosexuality become the norm, the more we'll become such a sick nation that the Communists won't have to take us over—we'll just give up."

I will not dwell on what appear to be surplus stupidities and her naivety, e.g., that homosexuality is an abomination to God because semen is the highest concentration of blood and to ingest it is to eat life, that the California drought was God's punishment for liberal state laws protecting gay people, and that homosexuality can lead to bestiality. (44)

I will not dwell on the flagrantly misleading full-page newspaper ads of SOC except to note that the ads focused on such low blows as: "There is no 'Human Right' to corrupt our children!" One such ad was entitled: "A Mother's Day Wish" and was emblazoned with headlines such as "Police find sexually abused children," "Senate shown movie of child porn," "Boy prostitution," and "Refusal of gay's ad by newspaper stands." The impression was left that this is what the Dade County ordinance and homosexuals are all about. Not all of the reports even pertained to child—adult homosexual abuse and no mention was made of the overwhelmingly greater number of child-adult heterosexual abuses, usually within the family. It was alleged in the ad that Los Angeles Police records supported the SOC charge of the high incidence of homosexual child-adult abuse. Almost immediately, even the homophobic Los Angeles Police Chief himself denied the allegation. (45) But the damage had already been done. What Bryant seems to overlook is the fact that all gay rights organizations have been vocal in their denunciation of child abuse by anybody. U.S. Representative Edward I. Koch, sponsor of the federal gay rights bill which is a target of the SOC crusaders, has been just as outspokenly against sex abuse of children as he has been for gay rights legislation. (46) That such bearing of false witness against the majority of ordinary "garden variety" gay neighbors is clearly contrary to the Bible should hardly need to be pointed out.

I will not dwell on the violation of state/church separation inherent in the thrust of Bryant's basic appeal to what she says "God calls immoral" that runs throughout her opposition to a civil law. She says: "It's really God's Battle, not mine!" (47) Proper separation of church and state has been well-stated, for example, in the educational material of Americans United, an organization which numbers among its founders and trustees: Clyde W. Taylor, a founder of the National Association of Evangelicals, and Jimmy R. Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Convention. In one of the AU pamphlets, this point is made: "Churches have the right to teach their own moral positions and to encourage their members to accept them, but they have no right to use the arm of the state to coerce acceptance of their distinctive beliefs on the entire citizenry." (48)

I will not dwell on the role model for bigotry-in-the-name-of-God which Bryant is filling for many people on all sides of the issue. (49) During the Gay Pride Day celebration in Boston, one person was so hurt and angry about the oppression he felt that he set fire to a copy of the Bible and another gay person rushed up and grabbed the burning Bible and held it to her, smothering the flames. (50) Even Eagle Ministry's Greg Reid, attempting to take the Gospel into gay bars, has said: "I also hurt when I mentioned Jesus and the reply came, 'Yeah, you and Anita Bryant! I don't want to hear it.'" (51) Syndicated columnist Carl T. Rowan wrote: "Of all the appeals to bigotry still virulent in America, the one that shames me most is the newest: Anita Bryant's crusade against homosexuals... the lady gives religion a bad name." (52) Writing in his regular column in *Christianity Today*, Eutychus VIII put it this way: Anita Bryant has been willing "to see [her] public Christian testimony go down the tube" for what she perceives to be a Christian principle. (53)

I will not dwell on what seems to be SOC's overlooking of Paul's admonition in Romans 2:1, namely, "You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." (NIV) Paul's comment follows immediately those passages of his which people cite to prove that the Bible condemns all homosexuality. In making this point, *I myself* have no excuse either, for I too can be guilty of a "holier-than-thou" posture which so often fails to appreciate the radical nature of both my own sin and God's grace.

What I *will* focus on here are SOC's two most crucial misunderstandings. SOC's two most crucial misunderstandings are also the two most basic erroneous beliefs held by so many people today—both gay and straight. One of these errors involves the question of etiology or cause in homosexuality. The other error involves

the question of treatment or remedial response in homosexuality. Because these two errors are believed by many sincere people, it is good that they are being verbalized so widely in the Anita Bryant controversy. They can be handled rationally in open public discussion. We must begin where those people are who are the most misinformed. To pretend there is no misunderstanding and to insist that we disregard all ignorant people as simply obstructionist or hopelessly lost is to defeat the education process before it is begun.

The fundamental error in the question of etiology is Bryant's belief, expressed in her slogan, "Save Our Children," that homosexual adults procure ordinarily developing heterosexual children and turn them into homosexuals. This is something which she apparently believes is relatively easy to do since she claims it may be done by simply having a supposedly non-homosexual child in the same classroom with a teacher who is openly homosexual. She writes to her supporters: "I can no longer remain silent while homosexuals are recruiting school children... If the homosexuals have their way, my four children and your children and grandchildren will be subjected to godless deviate homosexual pressure right in the schoolroom." (54) She states in a full-page newspaper ad: "This recruitment of our children is absolutely necessary for the survival and growth of homosexuality—for since homosexuals cannot reproduce, they must recruit, they must freshen their ranks." She continues her alarmist rhetoric: "And who qualifies as a likely recruit: A 35-year-old father or mother of two... or a teenage boy or girl who is surging with sexual awareness?" (55) She was quoted in the *Chicago Tribune* as saying: "We wouldn't set before [our children] foods or garbage that was bad for them, that polluted their bodies, by the same token we don't want to create an atmosphere in a school situation where they spend a great many hours being taught by these people whether they are qualified or not." She went on: "A homosexual is not born, they are made. So there has to be some recruitment." (56)

The fundamental error in the question of treatment or remedial response is Bryant's belief that, as she puts it, "I know a homosexual can be liberated from these hideous chains." (57) Since she has been in contact with the so-called "ex-gay" ministries, it is evident what kind of "liberation" she has in mind. To her way of thinking, God is talking away homosexuality and replacing it with heterosexuality in the lives of people who are truly repentant and who seek "deliverance" from God.

ETIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Taking a closer look at the question of etiology and "recruitment," we find absolutely no scientific, experimental, experiential, clinical, or validated testimonial evidence in support of the basic contention and fear of Bryant and SOC. Her alarm is exactly what James A. Sussex, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Miami Medical School calls it: a red flag being unnecessarily waved. (58) During the days prior to the June 7 vote on the Dade County ordinance, a news conference was held at which four psychiatrists, among them John Spiegel, past president of the American Psychiatric Association, reiterated the APA's revision of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* listing of homosexuality—now viewing homosexuality *not* as a mental illness—and declared in a joint statement: "Homosexuals are not child molesters. Homosexuals as 'role models' do not influence children's sexual orientation. Homosexuals are capable of being productive and responsible members of society. The basic issue is a simple matter of prejudice and discrimination versus human rights." (59) Even conservative broadcast commentator, Paul Harvey, understands this and has told his millions of readers and listeners that "once again the gays have taken the rap for the criminal molesters who are almost always straight with wives and children." (60)

As I said in my survey of the professional literature, *Etiological and Treatment Literature on Homosexuality*, there have been many theories on the etiology of homosexuality but none is universally applicable. (61) The theories have been contradictory, incomplete, and many have been generally based on inadequate samples of patients examined and interpreted by clinicians from different schools of thought without the control of standard definitions and procedures. What they have purported to describe can be taken in many ways. There is hardly a condition of interpersonal relationship which has not been blamed for homosexuality. One sees homosexuals who "should" be heterosexuals and heterosexuals who "should" be homosexuals, if the theories are to be believed. Having assumed the abnormality of what they saw as "strange" sexual expression, some older clinicians and the public continue to

address disappointment by trying to explain homosexuality in terms of pathology. They ignore the evidence from cross-cultural and cross-species investigation—or they do not even know about it—and fail to see the homosexuality as a common variety of the ambisexuality in all mammals. Having assumed the normality of their own heterosexuality, some clinicians and the public have not raised questions about the etiology of heterosexuality. They seem to be oblivious to the fact that we know no more or less about heterosexuality than we know about homosexuality.

They also ignore the scientific evidence used by the American Psychiatric Association in revising its classification of homosexuality and they claim that the APA simply succumbed to the pressure tactics and harangue of gay liberation groups. Contrary to this and to what even some gay activists bent on taking undue credit have tried to convince their own people about, the revision in the classification of homosexuality was part and parcel of the APA's complete revision of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The APA applied to homosexuality exactly the same criteria as it did for anything else considered for inclusion or exclusion in the nomenclature of mental disorders. The APA recognized that homosexuality per se and in its full-blown manifestation does not regularly cause subjective distress nor is it regularly associated with some generalized impairment in social effectiveness. It was for this dual reason and for this reason alone that the APA dropped homosexuality as a "mental disorder."

Summarizing the etiological literature, John Money of Johns Hopkins Medical School has stated: "... the final common pathway for the establishment of a person's gender identity and, hence, his erotic arousal pattern, whatever the secondary and antecedent determinants, is in the brain. There it is established as a neurocognitive function." Money continues: "The process takes place primarily after birth and the basic fundamentals are completed before puberty." (62) This is still the position of the best in the behavioral sciences. In her letter to the *New York Times* following the Miami vote, Mary S. Calderone, psychiatrist and president of the Sex Information and Education Council of the U.S., wrote: "It is now generally accepted that homosexuality and heterosexuality both are determined or programmed in the very early childhood years by as yet unidentifiable events. Thus no one can *choose* to either be heterosexual or homosexual, neither of which states depends upon sexual acts but is specifically a state of being. Furthermore, no one who was programmed by five years of age to be heterosexual can be seduced to become homosexual, any more than the reverse." (63) The etiology of sexual orientation is clearly far more complex than is indicated in Bryant's "recruitment" theory. All the professional literature that does deal with actual cases of man-boy sexual relating indicates quite the opposite of what Bryant and SOC believe. (64) Cases of woman-girl sexual relating are extremely rare, although it may be that we just do not have data on such cases.

Probably neither Bryant nor anyone else could get people much excited over keeping heterosexuals out of teaching for fear of the "seduction" of opposite-sex children. And this is true in spite of the fact that there are far more cases of heterosexual seduction than homosexual. It is instructive to note an inconsistency in society's fears of the so-called "seduction" of boys by older men as over against that of girls by older men. Curiously, many in society warn against a young girl's sexual encounter with an older man for fear the experience will *discourage* later similar activity while they warn against a young boy's sexual encounter with an older man for fear the experience will *encourage* later similar activity. All of this is what is held in spite of their saying that heterosexuality is the natural way and homosexuality is not even natural. These simplistic fears obviously say more about the anxious society than they do about any actual outcomes of such sexual encounters.

Incidentally, SOC may be interested to know that, according to a report published in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, a group of scientists, using a phallometer to measure changes in penile volume, found that homosexual males responded less to the 9 to 11 year-old boys than the heterosexual males responded to the 8 to 11 year-old girls. (65) Also of possible note for SOC: according to Alan Bell of the Institute for Sex Research, data based on thousands of homosexuals and heterosexuals indicate that heterosexuals actually do have a greater preoccupation with sex than do homosexuals. (66) Perhaps SOC will have to wind up not allowing *anyone* to teach in the schools.

ROLE MODELS: OF WHAT? FOR WHOM?

Bryant objects vigorously to the Miami law supporters who say that there is a need for good gay role models in the persons of school teachers and others who are openly gay. In her ignorance, evidently she does not realize that what it is that her efforts are most likely to “save our children” from is exactly what they all so desperately need, whether they are pre-homosexual, homosexual, pre-heterosexual, or heterosexual. Everyone, sooner or later, is confronted with either his or her own homosexuality or that of someone else. The big question is: How will one be able to handle it?

Like it or not, there have been homosexuals all through history. Even Bryant acknowledges this. She states in an advertisement: “Homosexuality is nothing new. Cultures throughout history, moreover have dealt with homosexuals almost universally with disdain, abhorrence, disgust—even death.” (67) True. In fact, Will and Ariel Durant were unable to sum up their life-long study of *The Story of Civilization* in one sentence without reference to ever-present homosexuality. (68)

What is relatively new, however, is the appreciation of the distinction between homosexual *acts* and homosexual *orientation*. It is only in this century that behavioral scientists have begun to understand that some people naturally develop an essential involuntary sexual attraction to members of the same sex just as other people naturally develop an essential involuntary sexual attraction to members of the other sex. As Kinsey pointed out, though, “it is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects.” (69) A continuum of sexual attraction and/or behavior is expressed in the Kinsey seven-point scale (0 = exclusively heterosexual to 6 = exclusively homosexual). Thus, we learn that while a specific sex act may be quite voluntary, sexual attraction leading to that sex act, the direction of the sex drive, is involuntary and mainly developmental. And we learn, too, that people are heterosexual and/or homosexual to various degrees—from exclusively heterosexual in orientation and/or behavior to exclusively homosexual in orientation and/or behavior.

What is even *newer* is that some people are trying to facilitate better coping with an inevitable part of life and one which for a significant minority of individuals, though they did not choose the orientation, is at the very heart of what it means to be a sexual/affectional human being. Disdain and disgust have characterized the usual response of both heterosexuals and homosexuals throughout history. Now, with at least our more realistic understanding that some people do inevitably develop along a homosexual orientation, we are in a position to ease what has often been a very bad response to that natural development.

Those who so develop were children at one time. Anyone who is acquainted with homosexuals knows that, especially for male homosexuals, the *awareness* of a developing attraction to others of the same sex occurred as involuntarily and as early as the spontaneous development of attraction to individuals of the other sex occurred in the childhoods and/or adolescence of heterosexuals.

Sexual orientation development is best comprehended, as Money summarizes, as a “product of the confluence of heredity and environment.” (70) But for young people facing their own involuntary homosexual desires and then the choices about consequent voluntary behavior, it is as though they were “born that way.” For all practical purposes, they may as well have been “born that way” since the orientation is set, as we have already indicated, by the time they go off to school. The same phrasing is heard again and again in taking a history during an initial psychotherapeutic interview, for example. The words are these: “I’ve been gay for as long as I can remember.”

In my editorial in the October, 1974 issue of the *Homosexual Counseling Journal*, I said that by now, it should be evident to anyone with experience with homosexuals, an adequate understanding of human sexual development, and a healthy dose of common sense and decency, that homosexuals and their families could be better prepared for homosexuality than they have been. We should stop deceiving ourselves and them and acknowledge that to begin to

adapt to a homosexual life of one's own is of importance at an earlier age than we have been allowing for. How many more years of adolescence, young adulthood, and even middle age must be wasted in guilt-ridden and frustrating attempts to accommodate to unrealistic expectations of a society and of churches which have failed to meet the needs of those of our children who quite naturally develop homosexually. No doubt we would be appalled if someone were to suggest that we should not help young people to learn to deal realistically and responsibly and effectively with their heterosexuality, even in a generally supportive heterosexual environment. But the Bryants among us *are* appalled at the suggestion that we should help young people to learn to deal with their homosexuality as well as they can, especially because of a generally oppressive heterosexual environment. Good gay role models, whether teachers or not, are what all our children need in order to deal with their own homosexuality or that of others, including, one day, the possible homosexuality of our heterosexual children's children.

Shortly before the Dade County referendum, William Raspberry, in his syndicated column, reflected on his uneasiness over the possible bad effect homosexual school teachers might have as role models. He wondered if alarm might be better seen as "mere prudence" than as "ignorance and bigotry." He concluded: "I don't know." If he had done his homework in the behavioral sciences literature, he would have known that that alarm was coming from ignorance and bigotry. Indeed, truly informed prudence would require the provision of good role models—not to inspire non-homosexual children to a homosexual orientation but to inspire homosexually-developing children to better lives as the homosexuals they are and will be. As Eda LeShan, author of *Hew Do Your Children Grow*, helps parents to say to their homosexual children: "Be the best person who is a homosexual that you can possibly be." (71) Raspberry, who is black, perhaps would have understood the point better if the analogy were drawn between possible role models for young blacks (e.g. Stepin Fetchit vs. Martin Luther King) and possible role models for young homosexuals ("fag" stereotypes vs. decent human beings who happen to be homosexual). It is as unlikely that a person's acknowledged homosexuality can turn a heterosexual young person into a homosexual as it is that a black person's public refusal to "pass for white" can turn a Caucasian into a Negro. A decent person's being "black and proud" however, might facilitate a self-defeating "Uncle Tom's" moving to "black and proud" just as a decent person's being "gay and proud" might facilitate a self-defeating "closet case" moving to "gay and proud." Russell Baker, in his regular column for the *New York Times*, makes the point in a lighter vein when he suggests that teachers may not be functioning as role models anyway. Recalling his own teachers, he reasons that it is "curious, perhaps perverse, that I have not turned out to be a spinster." He says that "despite almost constant tutelage by spinsters, I never felt the smallest temptation to indulge in spinsterism." (72) And neither did the girls.

Studies such as Evans (73) and those of Myrick (74) for example, support the need of homosexuals for greater self-acceptance. The main problem of homosexuality has been the isolation and utter lack of preparation for it. More open discussion and observation of homosexual role models can ameliorate that situation. In their extensive study of 2,497 male homosexuals, Hammersmith and Weinberg (75) found that commitment to a homosexual identity is positively correlated to psychological adjustment and to the support of significant-other homosexuals. Commitment to a self-accepting homosexuality was found to lead to a more stable, positive self-image, fewer anxiety symptoms and less depression. Of course. Who can well sustain the living of a lie? It is the present lack of preparation for such self-acceptance and the possibility of facilitating a more realistic preparation that motivates supporters of gay rights to speak in favor of good gay teachers as positive role models for good, but role-model-deprived, gay students. What is being done in the name of "saving our children" is a refusal to see that, as the National Gay Task Force says, "We are your children." (76) These children are being forced out into still more years of isolation where they will have to try on their own to come to terms with a very real part of themselves which even their parents refuse to acknowledge and accept. They will have to search out as best they can, often all by themselves, the role models from whom their elders would not permit them to learn. God help them!

Some have and will wind up in prison, victims first of barbaric sex laws and stupid judges and then victims of brutal prisoners, bent on proving their misguided "masculinity" in power struggles for which they themselves had had no adequate preparation. Some have and will wind up outside broken marriages, having involved a now disillusioned

spouse and neglected children. They got married because that was what everybody expected them to do. They got married to hide their homosexuality or to “cure” themselves, but it did not work. Some have and will wind up bitter and hopeless after several unsuccessful relationships which family, church, and friends never allowed to see the light of day. Some have and will wind up in anger and despair, wanting nothing to do with a God who is said to cast them out for what, to them, is the only romantic involvement they can know.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ walked the hills of Galilee gently asserting not only the right but the duty to leave even parents if necessary, in order to follow a lifestyle entirely unacceptable to the religious moralists of that day. (Matt 10:35-37) Today, there are those who by their stubborn legalism seem to be trying to make life as difficult as possible for their children who grow up in ways they, the parents, find abominable. These children, too, will apparently have to make it on their own. One wonders how they feel being “saved” from homosexuals, i.e., from themselves and from others who are going through the same thing. Indeed, they need to be saved from the tyranny of their own parents, churches, and society.

PSYCHOTHERAPEUTIC HOCUS-POCUS

For some time now, the writings of psychiatrist Thomas Szasz have helped us to recognize the fact that the mental health establishment has replaced the priestly establishment for authority in human behavior questions. (77) It has been doing this, he says, with much the same arrogance that used to characterize the pronouncements of religious authorities. In doing so, and not unlike its predecessor, the mental health establishment has tended to create an often exaggerated picture of what it can be expected to do. Psychiatrist Peter Bourne, head of the White House Office of Drug Abuse, has made it clear: “One of the problems of psychiatry and psychology is an over-selling of the discipline in terms of the ability to predict or alter behavior.” (78) Through too simplistic reporting, the popular press has often raised false hopes in people who very much want to believe that somewhere, somehow, someone in the mental health field is actually turning out patients who have had their sexual orientations reversed through therapy. But as I concluded in my survey of the treatment literature on homosexuality, there has been conflict and confusion in etiological theories and consequently also conflict and confusion in the prescribed remedies. (79) After considering all variables, I found no validated evidence in even the most “promising” cases reported in the professional literature that anyone was successfully changed from homosexual orientation to heterosexual orientation.

After the disappointing results of long and expensive psychoanalysis, the public began to look to the alleged success of behavior modification techniques. Yet a pioneer of behavior therapy, Arnold Lazarus, has honestly acknowledged that “To my chagrin, I have had no enduring success with any of the methods” of behavior therapy in trying to modify homosexual responses. He admits: “In the heyday of my behavioristic zeal, I succeeded in temporarily blocking all sexual outlets for some bewildered or ambivalent homosexuals who were subsequently overjoyed to ‘relapse’ into active and gratifying homosexuality. Along different lines, I have succeeded in helping several people of both sexes accept and adjust to basic homosexual or bisexual proclivities.” (80)

C. A. Tripp, formerly associated with the Institute for Sex Research, is a psychologist whose book, *The Homosexual Matrix*, has been called “unquestionably the best book I have read on the subject of homosexuality” by Kinsey’s successor at the Institute, Wardell Pomeroy. In the book, Tripp reports that “the Kinsey Research made a concerted effort over a period of years to find and evaluate the histories of people whose sex lives had changed either during or following therapy of any kind. None was ever found.” (81) Tripp goes on: “After Kinsey’s death, and to this day, Wardell Pomeroy... has maintained a standing offer to administer the Kinsey Research battery to any person a therapist might send, and thus possibly validate a case of changed homosexuality.” He reveals: “This offer has never had any ‘takers’ except for one remarkable instance.” After promises and claims and delays of several weeks, Tripp reports, a psychiatrist finally confessed to Pomeroy that he was on such bad terms with the one and only case he thought would qualify as a re-orientation that he could not even phone this “cured” patient. Tripp goes on to report: “The efforts of the Kinsey Research to find people whose sexual response had changed as a result of therapy did

manage to turn up a few instances worthy of mention, and in a few of these, the person was quite proud of the 'progress' he or she had made. But on close examination all examples quickly failed to qualify. In most, it was a matter of sheer suppression—"I used to be a lesbian, but now I turn away when temptation knocks." Others were slightly more complicated, often involving a man's fantasizing males during heterosexual intercourse, and the like." One man, eager to tell how he was changed through therapy, said: "I have now cut out all of that and I don't even think of men—except when I masturbate." (82)

THEOTHERAPEUTIC HOCUS-POCUS

Perhaps unnoticed by Szasz and others in their attention to the mental health establishment's usurpation of the religious establishment is the religious establishment's re-emergence as a powerful instrument for dealing with questions of human behavior. Indeed, for many (especially fundamentalists), who never did buy into the psychiatric line, the religious establishment's influence never really waned. Some people now are making claims that there are those who have been changed from homosexual orientation to heterosexual through Christian conversion, prayer, exorcism, Spirit-baptism, or divine healing. Nonetheless, I have found that such truly reversed people are as rare a breed as are those supposedly changed through therapy. Put as simply as possible: there is no validated evidence that they exist.

Even though the popular Christian press has often been as naive as was the earlier popular secular press in reporting such "miracle cures" without doing some sound investigative reporting, there can be found no validated case of sexual reorientation through any spiritual means. This is not to say that the naive Christian press has not reported and even promoted stories of so-called "liberation." But then, some Christian publications, organizations and individuals have been especially embarrassed by having promoted "ex-gay" ministries and "miracle healings" which later proved not only to be frauds but were cover-ups for continued homosexual practice under the guise of a so-called "Jonathan and David" relationship. What has been found, not only involves fraud but self-deception, diagnostic error and confusion, placebo effects, psychopathological denial, disillusionment, and even eventual suicide. It has been acknowledged even by Greg Reid of Eagle Ministry (part of the EXODUS work) that "Time after time I have talked to confused torn-up people whose cry for help was met by a 5-minute 'deliverance' session to cast the demons out of them, leaving them more confused, frustrated and desperate than before." (S3)

Something that emerges clearly in analyzing all of the "ex-gay" testimonies is a common background of unhappiness running throughout the "former" gay lives. At times, stories that are reported to have been true of the pasts of "ex-gays" are made up of the most sordid and tragic situations imaginable. It becomes a sort of "can-you-top-this" confession match.

Roger Grindstaff remembers that his "whole world exploded" after he learned of what his "lover was doing," (apparently a reference to sexual relations with others). He says he turned to drugs, "speed" that "practically wrecked my nervous system," male prostitution, alcohol, three years working in a gay bath house "unable to function in society... a creature who only came out at night, stealing, drinking, and waking up in jail." With no friends, suicidal thoughts and walking around "like a robot," he concluded that "my life was meaningless." (84) Grindstaff has said that most of those who have come under his ministry—he has a number of young homosexual males living with him—have come from terribly shattered backgrounds where the only love they knew meant going to bed with strangers. (85)

Ed Johnson, in his leaflet, *GAY, But Not Happy!*, confesses that he was using drugs and drinking quite heavily, that he was "becoming a nervous wreck." He says: "If I had to live the rest of my life trapped in this body with its desires and lusts I thought that I would be better off dead... I finally ended up in Hollywood hustling the streets day and night looking and searching. I was so lonely and confused." (86) From a tract of Greatest Is Love: "I decided it was hopeless and I wanted to die. I started drinking but I didn't like it, so I started dope. I started smoking grass (marijuana) and said that's all but it didn't stop at that. I started snorting smack (Heroin), dropping acid (eating

LSD), doing any kind of dope I could get hold of.” (87) One “ex-gay” was a 280 pound “sick queen,” by his own definition, getting drunk night after night. (88) These confessions are typical of the very sad tales told by people whose “testimonies” are distributed by the “ex-gay” movement.

Confusion about homosexuality abounds throughout the churches and in the “ex-gay” movement. Some of the confusion is as primary as basic diagnostic error. For example, a leaflet from Jesus People USA is entitled: *The Gay Life: A True Story* (89) but it is actually the story of a post-operative transexual—not a homosexual at all. Others who have been “healed” were also never really homosexual to begin with. They tell of “going gay” as young adults, e.g. after the death of a parent. If these men were not “gay” until adulthood, never having any spontaneous sexual attraction to others of the same sex until adulthood, they were not homosexual in orientation in the first place. A few, indeed, may have been incidentally homosexual in terms of a specific act or may have experienced what is sometimes called “homosexual panic.” But there is a big difference between a Kinsey “1” and a Kinsey “6” though such distinctions—to say nothing of the wide middle range—fail to concern advocates of the “ex-gay” movement.

One of the most serious confusions revolves around what can hardly be interpreted as anything else but psychopathological denial. At one level, a person is so disgusted by what he or she believes about homosexuality that it seems not even to be recognized as such.

In many cases, the denial is more deliberate and is on a very conscious level. For example, in one of David Wilkerson’s Youth Crusades tracts, *Gay*, a Roger Dean (a pseudonym) gives this testimony: “I still felt and desired like a homosexual, but God’s Word said that I was a new creature and I refused to believe anything else. The battle raged so fiercely and screamed for sexual release, but I would not give it any satisfaction.” In another Wilkerson tract, *Delivered From Lesbianism*, Deborah LaGanza says: “I started to get revelations through the Holy Spirit of my death with Christ.” Then, she writes, (in capital letters): NO MATTER WHAT I WAS FEELING, I told the devil I KNOW I’m a new creature. When I was baptized in water, I prayed, ‘No matter what I feel, God, I’m standing on Your Word. I CLAIM what You did on Calvary, Lord. You died for me. I have been delivered. I AM delivered!’” She goes on: “Yes, sometimes my body feels like it’s on fire, but I know God makes the way of escape through His Word. Not only have I been delivered and set free from drugs, I’ve been set free from lesbianism. Praise God!” In an anonymously written testimony from *Greatest Is Love*, somebody states in capital letters: “I WAS GAY BUT JESUS SET ME FREE.” He admits: “Myself, it was cold turkey. I was tempted by Satan very severely to go back to my old ways but Jesus kept reminding me I was set free. Jesus gave me the power to overcome.” Urging readers to “give Jesus a chance,” he claims, “I did and it’s wonderful; I am a free man. It’s a tough fight but with God on our side all things are possible.”

The book, *The Third Sex?*, by Kent Philpott, a Baptist preacher in California, has been hawked around the country by desperate preachers as the book that *proves* that homosexuals can be spiritually changed into “ex-gays” and heterosexuals. (90) A closer scrutiny of the six cases presented in the book reveals no such thing. Even Philpott acknowledges: “Neither experience—deliverance or Spirit baptism—ends the battle the homosexual faces. This is evident in the interviews. Every one of the six experienced the need to wage a day-by-day fight against the temptations of homosexuality.” None of these “ex-gays” became heterosexual in orientation.

While speaking at a meeting of Parents of Gays in New York City, I encountered a mother and father who spoke up to say that the Philpott book proved that homosexuals could be changed. I reminded them of what Philpott himself is honest enough to admit and of my own personal experience counseling with some of Philpott’s “cases” while in San Francisco. Not convinced of what I said, these two parents wrote to Philpott’s Love in Action ministry. They received a reply from a “Brother Frank” whom they told me was “associated with Kent Philpott.” He confirmed that two of the six people now believe “they can be gay and Christian,” a third individual “is out of contact with us,” and that “the other two girls in the book are good Christians, loving the Lord, and are not in any type of homosexual activity at all.” Regarding the sixth, Brother Frank wrote: “I assure you that he has never fallen.” (92) He goes on to say that one of those who had fallen away from the Philpott group “finally saw the error of his ways. Just before he

took his own life he wrote a note to Love in Action saying that he did not buy the viewpoint of Dr. Blair and for us to keep on with our ministry just as we had been doing.” Are we to believe that people who experience the “exgay” miracle then kill themselves? Or rather, do they kill themselves, believing that they *need* that “miracle” and they do not *experience* it, no matter how hard they try. Sadly, this man was convinced that, in his own words to me, “I’m going to hell in a bucket so I’d better get it over with before I sin any more.”

An EXIT (Ex-gay Intervention Team) cassette is yet another example of the how-low-I-sank testimony, fear of growing old and fat and unwanted, and the sloppy thinking and dangling claims of the “ex-gay” movement in general. For example, nowhere in the EXIT tape do the “ex-gays” say anything more substantial than that “we used to be gay, now we’re happy!” *How* they were “delivered” is not explained. They speak of using power and self-control to curb themselves and then ask that homosexuals “Come to Jesus. He’ll clean you up.” This is their “way out.” They say: “He is offering freedom, deliverance, liberation to all. The weary and the wary must ask: Freedom, yes, but from *what*? Deliverance, yes, but from *what*? Liberation, yes, but from *what*? And, we might ask, deliverance *to* what? Somehow, these questions never quite get handled. At a conference in Oakland and at another in Atlanta, they did admit that the transformation does take a long, long time. (93)

Thus, on the one hand, some self-styled “ex-gays” claim they have been “set free” and “delivered” and on the other hand they admit that they still are “on with very strong temptations to commit homosexual acts, but have, through self-control, refrained from “falling.” At best, they are not “ex-gay” at all, but simply homosexuals trying not to follow their homosexual orientation. They are as such, also running the risks of suffering marked negative effects of involuntary sexual abstinence. (94)

What a contrast to the New Testament where, as J. Stafford Wright states: “all recorded faith-healings were virtually instantaneous, and patients did not need after-treatment.” (95) Today, even among those who believe in miracle healings of actual medical disorders, this is still a hallmark of the genuine miracle. Testifying about the healing of his four-month old daughter during a Kathryn Kuhlman “Miracle Service,” Richard Owellen (internist on the faculty of the Johns Hopkins University Medical School) writes: “...it was purely physical... And it was instant. There’s no medical term to describe it except the word ‘miracle.’” (96)

We must recognize, however, that even in the New Testament, not all Christians with even *real* diseases, were healed (e.g., II Tim 4:20) Addressing the question “Why are not *all* healed?” Kathryn Kuhlman wisely replies: “The only honest answer I can give is: I do not know. And I am afraid of those who claim they do know.” (97) She speaks of “man’s superfluity of zeal” and of “the harm” that is “done in attributing everything to ‘lack of faith’ on the part of the individual” who does not receive healing. (98) Yet “ex-gay” proponents belittle the faith of those who do not see their way clear to believe in divine intervention for sexual reorientation. Those who remain attracted to people of the same sex are sometimes told that they are not praying hard enough, sincerely enough, faithfully enough, and that they must simply “get down to business” and repent more. They are told that Christ has already done his part and that now it is up to them to die more to self, to die to the flesh, and so on. And all of this in terms of a natural psychosexual development that is a “disorder” in name only.

Unlike those reviewed so far, publicly, not all “ex-gays” even hint at their continued temptations. At least they do not mention such temptations in public lectures, in their tapes, and in their writings. For example, in his cassette testimony, one such “ex-gay” acknowledges that although his homosexuality was not changed immediately after his Christian conversion experience, and not even after a later “surrender to Jesus Christ” when, after two weeks, “I wanted to get laid,” he *does* go on to claim that slowly, “I came out on the other side.” On *what* other side? He says that he “became a heterosexual” and “no longer wanted to have sex with a man.” He claims, in his tape, to be “totally and completely free from homosexuality” and that after a three-month “burning out period,... I am not a homosexual anymore... I am the heterosexual that He wants me to be.” (99) Nevertheless, in a luncheon conversation which I had with him well after he had recorded his testimony, on May 17, 1977, he acknowledged continued sexual attraction to men. Somewhat impatiently, he said that, of course he did not know *any ex-gay* who

was not still tempted by attractive men. After I confronted him with his strange use of the term “ex-gay” to designate people still sexually attracted to individuals of the same sex, he blurted incredulously: “Do you mean to say I wouldn’t be tempted after being a homosexual for all those years?! Of course I see attractive men, but I don’t give in to it!” He used the illustration of an alcoholic who, though tempted to drink, did not take a drink and then could say: “But I didn’t. Praise the Lord!” I reminded him that alcoholics in AA, for instance, even though they have not had a drink in years, nonetheless still call themselves alcoholics. They are sober, day by day, but they do not call themselves “ex-alcoholics.” Later in our conversation, even after he admitted that he and all other “ex-gays” he knew were still sexually attracted to members of the same sex, but that this fact is often kept out of public testimony because churches “force” them to conform to certain expectations about miracles, he repeatedly spoke of himself and others as “ex-gay. He has well-integrated the phrasing.

This tactic is probably at least politically the best from his point of view—at least in the short run. Homophobic churches and church-goers are really not much interested or impressed with what appear to be complicated distinctions between acts and orientation. According to Clarence Boomsma, chairman of the Christian Reformed Church committee on the homosexual issue, this distinction was the hardest to get across to the churches. (100) To many non-homosexual church members, evidently queers are queers—practicing or not—and that’s that. In a recent survey conducted by a research division of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and reported in the conservative, *The Presbyterian Layman*, it was found that “The majority felt the church shouldn’t make a distinction between practicing homosexuals and those who have ‘strong feelings of physical love for persons of the same sex’ but do not engage in homosexual acts.” (101) No wonder they call themselves “ex-gay” and testify in public with dangling references to “deliverance” and “liberation.” No wonder they make such outlandish claims. If the churches are going to be so demanding, there is going to be continued exaggeration in “ex-gay” claims.

Another self-styled “ex-gay” who testifies to the utter unhappiness in his past also has claimed that he is no longer gay, that God has taken away “the lusts, the desires, the fantasies, and the act.” (102) This is quite a sweeping claim. It is one that is being closely examined in light of complaints by several homosexuals who had intended to become “ex-gay” through his ministry. They say that they discovered that his situation is not what he had claimed it to be. Their complaints have been taken to the editors of a Christian periodical for further investigation and reporting.

In spite of all of this, if there really is someone who sincerely believes that he or she has been transformed from homosexual orientation to heterosexual orientation by a spiritual experience, I invite that person to take advantage of the Kinsey offer to validate the claim. If such transformation has occurred and if it can be validated through the Kinsey battery, it must be recognized as something of a miracle.

Apart from testimony which is downright fraudulent, and in the absence of validated evidence of a miracle, how are we to explain phenomena that may be reported with sincerity by some people calling themselves “ex-gay” right after Christian conversion?

First of all, we must be willing to assess the “evidence” with an informed perspective. We must remember that placebo effects, (psychologic benefits not accountable in terms of intrinsic therapeutic properties of the “cure”), reflect the guilty person’s beliefs, expectations, and the suggestions or claims of dominant preachers and “ex-gay” advocates. Such healers engender expectations of release from “the dregs through which a person is going while trying to handle guilt over being involved in what is seen as an abomination to God.” The psychological state created reinforces the person’s expectations that “Christ will deliver you” but there is no real effect on the person’s psychosexual orientation. Placebo treatment has long been recognized as a phenomenon in situations similar to the “ex-gay” situations. (103) When an individual is told that he or she is going to receive a gift from God, and this is promised by the one who introduced the person to Christ the Savior—or is, at least, a fellow-believer who does not scoff at the “born again experience as others do—the suggestion is registered and the expectations are set into motion. A measure of the degree to which some people wish to believe the “ex-gay” phenomenon is the reluctance

to see even the blatant fraud in some “ex-gay” ministries. Even after being sexually seduced by an “ex-gay” advocate, some self-loathing homosexuals have chosen not to support evidence against the advocate’s claim to being “ex-gay” for fear that it would discredit the “ex-gay” movement and advance the cause of Evangelicals Concerned. (104) Thus, the expectation and the desire to become “ex-gay” is a powerful factor in producing a *sense* of a change, especially when one is told that the alternative to change is, literally, to go to hell.

What seems to be happening with some homosexuals who honestly believe that they are becoming “ex-gay” after conversion to Christ and their new Christian fellowship is not really unusual. I see much the same thing with homosexuals in my “secular” practice of psychotherapy. Both through such therapy and through Christian conversion, homosexuals can move away from lives of low self-esteem and consequent search for ego stroking in fruitless promiscuity toward greater self-acceptance. As people who are not necessarily self-identified Christians—indeed many are areligious or agnostic—learn through therapy to successfully counter beliefs about their supposed sickness and inadequacy which were based in irrationality, they lessen and even eliminate the need to use sex inappropriately, e.g. for non-sexual ego-affirmation. As people experience the love of God, they no longer need to search for love in inappropriate ways, e.g. in superficial and disposable sex. This is not to say that individuals may not lapse into such superficial sexual encounters even after a considerable experience in rational living and/or Christian walk. But as people begin to see that they can associate with others on a basis that is not just genital, either with others who are “getting their heads together” through psychotherapy or with other believers sharing Christian fellowship and the realization of God’s love for them, they are opened up to much more meaningful interaction than they have known before. In both cases, they are being met as real persons, not just sex objects, and for perhaps the first time in their lives.

It is easy to misunderstand these newer experiences as evidence of a diminishing homosexuality. In fact, my clients at some point in therapy jokingly ask if I am deviously turning them into ex-homosexuals. What they are experiencing is a diminishing of the use of genital sex for non-sexual purposes. Sooner or later, if indeed there is ever any real doubt, the person realizes that the authentic homosexual orientation remains intact. Sex can now be seen as something to use sexually and as an expression of affection. However, a person who falls under the propaganda of the “ex-gay” movement can begin to see the remaining sexual interest as the same old temptation to commit an abomination in the sight of God. It will depend on what the individual believes.

There have always been those who would presume to speak for the Lord words the Lord has not spoken (Deut 18:20). The Deuteronomic test of the authenticity of the words spoken might well be applied today: “What a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord, which is not fulfilled and does not happen, that is a message to which the Lord did not give utterance; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously; have no fear of him.” (Deut 18:22) The New Testament gives a clue, too. Jesus promised that when we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things that we really do need will be ours as well (Matt 6:33). He also promised that anything asked in His name, according to His will, He will do (John 14:14). Serious questions of the *need* to become “ex-gay” follow the “unanswered” prayers of millions of God’s children.

In view of what we have learned about the failures of the “ex-gay” ministries and in view of what is known to be the lack of any successful re-orientation therapy, it is most cruel to continue to hold out the promise of release from homosexual orientation to those who are taught that their homosexuality is an abomination to God. Yet, such false hope is being peddled everywhere. Harold Lindsell, editor of *Christianity Today*, stated unequivocally: “There is hope for the homosexual. He can be delivered just as adulterers, drunkards, and idolaters can.” (105) He has intensified his attack on homosexuals and continues his “Battle for the Bible” on the backs of all homosexuals whom he is certain “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (106) Instead of continuing to give credence to the “ex-gay” movement and its empty promises, Lindsell would do better to take a dose of his own advice from another context. Writing that an ‘economy of miracles suggests they are rare, he asserts; “The miracle business is getting out of hand. The time has come for evangelicals to adopt a cautious attitude toward extravagant claims and to reject

accounts that are unsubstantiated. Common sense and belief in miracles should go hand in hand.” (107) Failure to understand homosexuality in terms of deep-seated psychosexual orientation instead of simply voluntary acts of rebellion probably accounts for Lindsell’s not applying his own good advice to the “ex-gay miracles” he promotes through *Christianity Today*. Apparently, “ex-gay” stories, so wished-to-be-true, are hard not to believe.

MIAMI AFTERMATH

When the Miami vote was finally in on the evening of June 7, 1977, it was clear that Miamians voted more than 2 to 1 to repeal the law protecting gay people from discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation. (108) There was an unusually large turnout of voters, 45 percent of those eligible to vote. (109)

According to an analysis of the vote: “Only a small percentage of blacks bothered to vote, and those who did split their votes between retention of the ordinance and its repeal. The Jewish vote, traditionally liberal, was also light—and also divided... Bryant won enormous support from Dade County’s Roman Catholics and religious fundamentalists, as well as from the Cuban community...” (110) After the vote, the *New York Times* editorialized: “Respect for the rights of others is necessary precisely to the degree that the community fails to share their values.” (111) Robert Basker, director of the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights, reflected: “I guess it’s just no good to have a majority vote for the rights of a minority.” (112) And of course, he is right. There is probably no city in America, with the possible exception of San Francisco, where such a referendum would, at present, uphold a gay rights law.

On the night of the returns, Bryant was serenaded with a chorus of “Victory in Jesus.” What might be described as one of the most insensitive flauntings of the entire fiasco took place during the victory celebration when Bob Green, Bryant’s husband, kissed his wife for the cameras and chided: “This is what heterosexuals do, fellas!” (113) *New York Post* editorial page editor, James A. Wechsler, observed: “Some dour psychiatrist may conclude that Miss Bryant’s husband was protesting too much. But his performance was consistent with the obscene carnival atmosphere in which Anita Bryant, singer and cheerleader for Florida orange juice, hailed what she inexplicably described as, among other things, a triumph of ‘freedom of choice.’” (114)

The festive mood of the Bryant forces was in sharp contrast to the immediate shock and fear among homosexuals and their families. According to *Newsweek*: “... some homosexuals in Miami were fired or suspended the morning after the vote—one of them a lesbian who had worked as an executive secretary in the county government for fifteen years.” (115) Later, *Time* reported that there has been a “flurry of firings” in the wake of the Miami vote. (116) Even in Greenwich Village, teen-age toughs chanted anti-gay slogans and exclaimed: “Anita Bryant’s gonna get ya!” Distraught homosexuals phoned the Homosexual Community Counseling Center in New York City expressing their fear and asking: “What are they going to do to us?” and “What do they want from us? I’ve never hurt anybody in my life! What’s happening?” If this was the reaction in a large urban center such as New York City—and it was repeated in other metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Los Angeles, and Boston—one can only imagine how much greater was the terror and confusion experienced by isolated homosexuals in small towns throughout the Bible Belt and America’s heartland.

In what may or may not be a related event, a few days after the referendum, the U.S. House of Representatives cast a voice vote to nullify an HUD regulation permitting housing aid for homosexuals living together if they meet low income criteria. (117) (Incidentally, this is another indication that a homophobic public is unwilling to condone even the attempts of homosexuals to live together in what might be seen as more responsible arrangements.) Less than two weeks later, the House once again registered what was supposed to be an anti-gay vote in adopting an amendment that would prohibit use of federal legal assistance funds in gay rights cases. (118) Strictly speaking, neither of these legislative actions was just antigay; both were anti-poor-gay. Homosexuals wealthy enough to afford expensive housing (*if* they were given permission to spend their money) and homosexuals wealthy enough to afford expensive legal counsel are not affected.

The Miami vote and the immediate aftermath makes it clear that the majority of people are so lacking in good information and are so threatened by what they do not comprehend, that they probably believed most, if not all, of the lies and superstitions about “human garbage” put forth by Bryant and her cohorts. Nonetheless, it seems to me that in analyzing the results in Miami, it is realistic to consider the 2 to 1 vote for repeal as at least better than the 3 to 0 results which probably would have been registered ten years ago. Of course, ten years ago, such a progressive law would not even have been on the books in the first place. Also, it might be said that had the vote been more 50-50 or if the vote had gone against repeal, even slightly, the severely homophobic would surely have had what they would have seen as a very grave threat to themselves and to their “way of life.” Consequent backlash could have been extreme. As it is, those who are only marginally homophobic have been relieved and this allows for the time and regrouping necessary to carry forth in an even more effective way, the cause of human rights of gay people.

There is even some evidence that not all who voted against the ordinance see themselves as “anti-gay.” Some people were voicing their frustration over what they saw as an “affirmative action” measure and it happened to be the gay issue, not the issues of women or blacks or other minority-status groups, that was up for a vote. Indeed, a few days later, “Affirmative Action” was dealt a serious blow in the U.S. Congress. Some who voted for repeal did so believing any such law unnecessary or badly conceived. This time, blacks, Jews, and Cuban-Americans joined those who sometimes are their oppressors, in perceiving homosexuals as “the others,” as “them.” It was not hard to do, given the “gay” stereotypes promoted by the SOC propagandists and reinforced by some of the rather unconventional gay rights activists. As more gay people “come out” to families and close friends and associates, however, the ridiculous lies of Bryant and others will be harder to believe. Real people, known as real and decent people before they are known simply as “gay,” will take care of that.

In the long run, homosexuals have something going in favor of public acceptance and gay rights that other minorities (e.g. blacks, Jews, Hispanics, etc.) have not had going for them. With all other minorities, the majority could fortress itself with an “us-them” mentality. And this dichotomy could actually be maintained because, essentially, it was true. Clearly, “they” were not “us.” However, in the case of homosexuals, that “us-them” division breaks down completely. Blacks and Jews and Hispanics do not grow up and “come out” in the families of what Anita Bryant calls the “Normal Majority.” Somehow, the majority could try and basically succeed at staying away from “them.” Not so with homosexuals. Homosexuals grow up in the homes of the “Normal Majority.” That is the only place homosexuals come from. As the National Gay Task Force has replied: “We are your children.” Blood *is* thicker. Sooner or later, it is the strength and tenacity of the American nuclear family which will win the day for acceptance of persons who happen to be homosexual. In seven years of doing counseling with homosexuals and their families, I have never seen a case in which at least the acknowledgment that “you-are-still-our-son” or “you-are-still-our-daughter” did not ultimately prevail over initial shock, denial, anger, hurt, and assorted hassles. Admittedly, some parents have not been able to go much further than to just quietly accept what they could not change, but neither could they really mention it. Other parents, though, initially just as unprepared as anyone else for the news of their gay offspring, have gone forward to found chapters of Parents of Gays and to become involved in other educational and support groups, some even going on radio and television to help break down the public prejudice that has made the lives of their children more difficult than necessary.

When Judd Marmor, past president of the American Psychiatric Association, was asked on CBS whether he thought there might be a family in America that could lean back, relax and honestly say that they would not have to contend with homosexuality in their family, he replied in the negative. (119) Because of the *fact* of homosexuality somewhere in virtually everyone’s family, sooner or later, American families will come around and they will continue to be able to see their way clear to accept that inevitable homosexuality. Many will not only “learn to live with it” but will learn to truly take it in stride as some already have during an even more difficult era. That time will be sooner rather than later if the educational efforts before us are tackled and carried out with common sense and concern for the sensibilities of all those involved.

“UNTO THE LEAST OF THESE”

Although many people do not realize it, historically, some evangelicals played important roles in behalf of the cause of social justice and social righteousness—in particular, in the abolitionist movement, the early feminist movement, and among the poor and prison populations. (120) Of course, there were others who stood on the side of injustice, slavery, inequality and continued oppression. Today, many institutions—both secular and religious—have already recorded their support of homosexuals and are working on behalf of gay rights. Others—both secular and religious—continue to oppress. People on both sides, now and earlier, claim to be speaking for God. Both sides quote the Bible. Historically, it has always been the oppressor of others, of minorities, who has been unable to continue the oppression with support from the Scripture and/or general consensus and public policy. In battle after battle, the side of the liberator has proved to be the *right* side. Shall we evangelicals bring up the rear in the crusade for the rights and dignity of our homosexual brothers and sisters? Senator Mark Hatfield has written: “Radical allegiance to Jesus Christ transforms one’s entire perspective on political reality” which requires “uncompromised identification with the needs of the poor and the oppressed” and “fundamental opposition to structures of injustice.” (121)

In view of the misunderstandings and the hurting that have been fostered by incompetent, though perhaps well-intentioned people, and even by unethical people, it is time that Christians take an honestly realistic look at the Bible and the facts of life. For too long now, we have remained ignorant and unhelpful with reference to homosexuality. Instead of still interpreting the Bible from their ego-centric *experience* as heterosexuals or as troubled homosexuals, Christians must bring their minds into conformity to the clear and over-arching Biblical themes of God’s saving purpose and to the Holy Spirit’s continued presence in the world and our ever-expanding understanding of nature through His Common Grace in the behavioral sciences. To cite a statement from the Methodist “Good News” people: “...evangelicals believe that God’s Holy Spirit is certainly at work in the world through nature, conscience, human relationships, in truth wherever it may be found, and through all the maze of history.” (122) It is because we say we believe this, that we should, by now, start to act as though we really did.

It is time for Christians to stop “going up and down as tale-bearers among the people” (Lev 19:16), as “hypocrites with their mouths destroy[ing] their neighbors” (Prov 11:9), and as “false witnesses [who] shall not be unpunished (Prov 19:5). Let us all get back to the Bible: “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” (Exod 23:1) “You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.” (Rom 2:1)

We must stop calling homosexuals “human garbage,” stop claiming that homosexuals can or even try to “recruit children,” stop overusing terms that categorize all homosexual persons as “sick,” “child-molesters,” and the “lowest of the low,” stop insisting that homosexuals become heterosexuals through therapy, faith, gumption, or grit. Instead of heaping more and more problems on the heads of people who have already been victims of centuries of “Christian abuse,” it is time that we seek, in the spirit of our Lord, to extend ourselves, to understand and to love even “the least of these,” and thereby to love the Lord. (Matt 25:40, 45)

ETIOLOGICAL AND TREATMENT LITERATURE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

DR. RALPH BLAIR

"Dr. Blair is scrupulously thorough and shows a remarkable analytic ability in his evaluation of the research of others. Indeed, his survey on the etiology of homosexuality is to my mind the best in existence." -- Carlfred B. Broderick, Ph.D.

Editor, *Journal of Marriage and the Family*

"Ralph Blair has written a splendid survey of the etiology of homosexuality." -- Walter Alvarez, M.D.

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