

“Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: Kentucky’s Gay Teens Don’t Need Conversion Torture” by Daniel M. Beasley, *The Lexington Herald Leader*, February 4, 2021, updated February 6, 2021. “Prohibiting Prayer in Australia” by Carl R. Trueman, *First Things*, February 8, 2021

**B**easley identifies as, “an out gay Black man raised by two Pentecostal pastors who believed in the literal interpretation of Scripture to vilify members of the LGBTQ+ community.” He shares: “Thankfully, I never experienced the barbarism of conversion therapy but from an early age I was taught being gay was a sin, and gays would go to hell.” Aware that he was sexually attracted to other boys and not to girls, and growing up in the home of two *antigay* Pentecostal pastor-parents, was enough of a “hell” of its own. Their view was exegetically sloppy and pastorally careless, but a young boy was not able to detect *how unbiblical* it was. And, he knew of no other boy with his secret.

He speaks for thousands when he says: “Hearing these messages of exclusion from my childhood profoundly impacted my mental and physical health.” Finally, and happily, he reports, “I reconciled with my family and regained my faith in God, a God I once believed saw me as flawed and unloved.” *Many thoughts about God are flawed.* But the Good News is that God *loves* us enough to *redeem* us in Christ, *whatever* our *flaws!*

In Beasley’s effort to educate the public, and now, also as a social worker, he asks the readers of this Kentucky newspaper to, “imagine for a moment that parents could legally hire a licensed therapist to engage in a ‘therapeutic method’ that leaves lifelong scars and trauma. Sadly, there is no need to stretch your imagination because this atrocity is a reality for many Kentucky youth. Thousands of Americans have been subjected to conversion torture (CT)”, Beasley’s apt revision of the term, “conversion therapy (CT)”. He points out that, “all mental health organizations – including the National Association of Social Workers, American Medical Association, American Psychological Association [and, the American Psychiatric Association] – oppose CT and view it as discredited, and harmful on the underdeveloped brains of children.”

From a photo of Beasley, published with his essay, one concludes that he wasn’t even born until at least a quarter century *after* there *already* was plenty of evidence that all efforts at sexual *reorientation* by medical, psychiatric, psychological, or spiritual interventions were *totally useless* and *even damaging*, though, of course, there were plenty of demonstrably *false claims* of “change”, as I discussed in my doctoral research and critique of etiological and treatment data on homosexuality back in the mid-1960s.

Beasley, himself, correctly states: “Conversion torture is a non-evidence-based practice, and any implication that CT is effective is disingenuous at best and, at worst, wholly unethical.”

He goes on to relay: “The adverse effects for minors subjected to CT result in higher rates of depression, anxiety, and increased substance abuse.” And, it should be added, as an alert to those who so bull-headedly or naively push CT, that there’s plenty of sad evidence that many young Christians who’ve been exploited by the harangue and false promises of change have been so disillusioned with this so-called “Christian guidance” that they want nothing more to do with either “Christians” or an even truly biblical faith.

He says that the Kentucky’s General Assembly’s “Senator Alice Forgy Kerr (R), a pro-life conservative, believes banning CT is a pro-life issue. She introduced a bipartisan bill, The Youth Mental

Health Protection Act, to ban conversion torture on children up to age 18 by licensed mental health professionals.” Beasley says, “a favorite scripture of mine and one Senator Kerr references when explaining her support of the bill, is Psalm 139:14. In a recent *Courier-Journal* article, she said, ‘In my Christian faith, I am taught that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made’, and I believe that very strongly.”

Trueman’s *First Things* essay also deals with the CT controversy, but his focus is not Beasley’s. A UK native, now teaching here in the US, he admits that CT “has proved controversial in the U.S.” It’s “proved controversial” *everywhere*, including in his native UK. Yet, he here objects to “prohibiting prayer” for CT, *by law*, in Victoria, Australia.

As indicated above, CT *attempts* to change homosexuality to heterosexuality, but it’s never *accomplished* this *promised* “change”. All former leaders of the defunct “ex-gay” efforts admit, now with profound apologies, that *nobody* “*changed*” sexual orientation by any of the many different “ex-gay” efforts.

My mid-1960s doctoral dissertation research and critique of etiological and treatment data on homosexuality, was done *a decade before* the 1976 founding of the *major* “ex-gay” network, Exodus, and nearly half a century before Exodus finally *closed* in 2013, in humble confessions of failure. But this history hasn’t stopped the willfully ignorant and the naïve from refusing to learn these lessons. So, governmental efforts to *ban* these useless, even quite damaging, efforts at sexual orientation “cure”, make good sense.

Trueman doesn’t mention that Victoria, Australia’s penalties for violating proscribed CT are now \$10,000 fines or up to 10 years in prison. Instead, he *complains* that *this ban prohibits prayer*. Well, *who*, pray tell, can “prohibit prayer”? Jesus said prayer is a quiet meeting with God. Prayer shawls, prayer postures, posing and loud lip service attract *others’* attention, as Jesus said, the *hypocrites* do. But Jesus told *us* to pray *in private*, “in your closet” as the KJV puts it. Jesus said that our Father *hears us there*.

Doesn’t Trueman realize that, long before CT, all of the *earliest, earnest prayers for deliverance* from homosexuality *were already and are already prayed in* “closets”, *in private*, as were Jesus’ earnest prayers for *deliverance*, “Take this cup from me.” As Jesus’ prayers *were answered, otherwise, their prayers are answered, otherwise*.

Trueman teaches Bible and related studies to undergrads at Grove City College, a fine Christian school. Among his students, some, no doubt, *are gay* and in *closets*, some are just “*coming out*” and some may try to “*be delivered*” by CT. What he does so well in teaching his classes has influence. But his public opinion of “reparative therapy” may be *far more significant* for the everyday future *lives* of some of his own students.

