

Retraction of my Position on Reparative Therapy and Ex-Gay Organizations
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In 2014, I wrote this in an article published by The Gospel Coalition:

*“[Reparative Therapy], a heresy, [is] a modern version of the prosperity gospel. Name it. Claim it. Pray the gay away”.*¹

This ranks among the most misguided words I have written as a Christian.

I falsely believed that Reparative Therapy and Conversion Therapy were the same things and that they harmed people by making undeliverable promises and blaming parents for their children’s problems. I falsely believed that the darkest days of mental health—think “electroshock therapy”—fell under the umbrella term “conversion therapy.”

When I dismissed Reparative Therapy as harmful, I was running roughshod with overgeneralizations and failing to distinguish “hurt” from “harm.”

The game-changer for me was reading the work of Dr. Andre Van Mol, a California family physician. His article in the Christian Medical and Dental Association online journal, “Even Failed Therapy for Undesired Same-Sex Sexuality Results in No Harm,”² eased my concerns. Highlighting data that SOCE (Sexual Orientation Change Efforts) incurs no harm even when the patient does not meet intended goals, this current study follows up on a 2021 study showing sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) reduce suicidality.³ This article put my concerns to rest.

Anti-conversion therapy is back in the secular news and for weighty reasons. Outlawing “conversion therapy”⁴ is Canada’s bully club wielded against the proclamation of the Gospel by denying as harmful the biblical witness that homosexuality and transgenderism are sins and that in Jesus Christ there is forgiveness, hope, and transformation. Defying Canada Bill C-4 comes with the potential of six years in prison.⁵ The stakes

¹ Rosaria Butterfield, “You Are What—and How—you Read,” The Gospel Coalition, February 13, 2014. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/you-are-whatand-howyou-read/>

² Andre Van Mol, “Even Failed Therapy for Undesired Same Sex Sexuality Results in No Harm,” Christian Medical and Dental Association, February 24, 2022, <https://cmda.org/even-failed-therapy-for-undesired-same-sex-sexuality-results-in-no-harm-finds-new-study/>

³ Sullins DP (2022) Absence of Behavioral Harm Following Non-efficacious Sexual Orientation Change Efforts: A Retrospective Study of United States Sexual Minority Adults, 2016–2018. *Front. Psychol.* 13:823647. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.823647.

⁴ “Conversion therapy” was coined in 1991 by a member of the APA (American Psychological Association) to discredit the idea that homosexual orientation can change. Wikipedia lumps all change-allowing therapies under the “conversion therapy” umbrella, but this isn’t accurate.

⁵ “Canada’s Bill C-4 Banning Conversion Therapy Comes into Force,” <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2022-01-19/canada-bill-c-4-banning-conversion-therapy-comes-into-force/>. Bill C-4 defines Conversion Therapy in a way that includes the biblical witness against sexual sin and the gospel hope of grace. It is a criminal offense in Canada to offer any treatment that is designed to:

- Change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual.
- Change a person’s gender identity to cisgender.
- Change a person’s gender expression so that it conforms to the sex assigned to the person at birth.
- Repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behavior.
- Repress a person’s non-cisgender gender identity.

are high, and “anti-conversion therapy”—the moniker for anti-biblical Christianity—is coming to the US. Especially troubling is the way that children are the target when health professionals recommend “gender-affirming” surgeries and irrevocable hormone blockers to treat gender dysphoria in children. Even the American Psychological Association (APA) knows that gender dysphoria in children does not persist through adolescence in most cases—that is, unless hormone blockers interfere with the body’s normal functioning⁶. In addition, the number of adults who regret transgender surgeries and are de-transitioning is growing, with no one, perhaps except the church, to hear their cries.⁷

So, what do I believe? I believe homosexuality and transgenderism are sins, which means their root cause is sin. God’s remedy? The atoning blood of Christ is applied to those who repent and believe in Christ alone for our salvation (Mark 1:15). The Gospel compels us to love God (John 14:15) and live in the power of our new nature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our new nature in Christ empowers us to die to sin (Romans 6:2) and fight remaining sin (Gal. 5: 16-17). Pastoral teaching is crucial for the Christian, but Christian medical care comes to our aid when our bodies groan with illness and Christian counseling when our minds ail with trauma and abuse. Christians may work together to help a struggler be victorious in Christ over homosexuality and gender dysphoria. God does not leave His people defeated by sin and discouraged by facing trauma and illness alone. Seeking Christian care for mind, body, and soul is a good and godly approach.

What do I support? I support freedom in health care, including biblical counseling (biblicalcounseling.org) and change-allowing therapy for undesired same-sex attraction and gender anxiety. Living in the light of God’s natural order is good and right for believers and unbelievers alike and should not be despised or mistrusted.

For those interested in learning more about the politics behind the American Psychological Association and its rejection of change-allowing therapies, I recommend checking out *The International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice (iftcc.org)*. For those seeking parental support groups that work with local churches, please see Restored Hope Network (restoredhopenetwork.org). For those seeking a pastoral guide in helping people who want their sexuality and sexual identity to align with the good news of the creation ordinance (Genesis 1:27-28), see Pastor Christopher J. Gordon’s *The New Reformation Catechism on Human Sexuality: A Catechism Based on The Heidelberg Catechism of 1563*.⁸

Let me conclude with a word of comfort from *The New Reformation Catechism*:

“God, in the Gospel of his Son, has announced that there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Any unholy desire, even if unchosen, such as same-sex attraction, is covered by the blood of Christ (Col. 2:13). Believers who continue to struggle against same-sex attraction should trust in God’s forgiving mercies (1 John 1:9), and with earnest purpose, by the strength of the Holy Spirit, strive to live in the newness of life (Romans 6:4; Col. 3:1-5). Further, the body of Christ should not avoid or shun those who struggle against any sexual sin (2 Sam. 12:1-13; Luke 15:1-2). Instead, believers with a spirit of compassion (Jude 22; 1 Peter 3:8) should “bear each other’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2)”⁹

Please know that through the power of Christ and His gospel, anyone can experience victory over his or her sin.

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- Repress or reduce a person’s gender expression that does not conform to the sex assigned to the person at birth.

⁶ According to the DSM-5, gender dysphoria will desist on its own 85% of the time. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th Edition). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013: 455.

⁷ Andre Van Mol, “regretting Transition for Gender Dysphoria,” <https://cmda.org/regretting-transition-for-gender-dysphoria/>, June 23, 2022.

⁸ Published by Gospel Reformation Network (www.gospelreformation.net) & Abounding Grace Radio (www.agradio.org), 2022. Available for purchase from Reformation Heritage Books (heritagebooks.org).

⁹ Ibid., Question 29, pages 23-24.