

## **Christmas: to be remembered for the wrong reasons?**

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For those seeking its deeper meaning, Christmas celebrates forgiveness of human weakness and the possibility of change. Jesus invited those 'labouring and heavily laden' to 'come unto Me' and find 'rest'.

Christmas declares human behaviour, though flawed and sometimes dreadful, may not be immutable.

The spirit of the Victorian 'Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Bill 2020' disagrees. It is convinced that 'sexual orientation' is immutable and that all attempts for change are so dreadful they must be forbidden 'whether (administered) with or without the person's consent'.

The Bill's creed defines 'orientation' as 'a person's emotional, affectional and sexual attraction' to 'persons of a different gender or the same gender, or more than one gender', but goes on to include a person's 'intimate or sexual relations', in other words, behaviour.

Everyone suffers temptations: Jesus, himself, was 'tempted in every way as we are'. The point is, can behaviour be curtailed?

On the assertion behavioural change is impossible, the Victorian Bill denounces modern attempts to influence it as 'conversion therapy', conjuring up the Medieval spectre of torture said to have been employed to 'convert' homosexual to heterosexual orientation.

Though such condemnable attempts may have never occurred in Australia, the Bill will proscribe supportive, compassionate, current psychotherapy or counselling of any form from anybody, anywhere (on-line or interstate), under any informal and formal circumstances and in any manner that might even 'induce' someone to seek help somewhere, sometime in the future, if they intend to reside in the enlightened state of Victoria.

Invocation of the help of the Man responsible for Christmas on behalf of the person freely seeking help is included in conduct that will be criminalised by the Bill.

Such is the ferocity of the crusade against the chance of change, resisting infidels may be entombed in prison for up to 10 years, and crippled with hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines.

To enforce compliance, a Commission will be empowered 'to investigate' whether a 'person or organisation' is practising or promoting 'conversion therapy' to an 'individual' or a 'class' of people.

The Commission will receive complaints, assess the extent of 'injury' incurred by counselling, and may report findings of the inquisition to the Victorian Police or regulatory authorities.

The Commission will also produce 'educational programmes' to enlighten miscreants and propagate the aims of the Act. Unlike Scripture classes, attendance is not expected to be voluntary.

While a deeper meaning of Christmas invokes forgiveness and the possibility of freedom from unwanted behaviour, it does incur obligation. The 'burdened' are invited, by Jesus, to 'take my yoke upon you, and learn of me'.

What that yoke might entail was revealed in the parable of Jesus about a man who was beset by bandits and left half dead beside the road. Some, who might have been expected to help, walked by but a man from a despised race stopped and provided sacrificial care.

This story of the Good Samaritan is the obligation for *agape* love: non-judgemental, self-sacrificial commitment to the needs of others.

For those involved with gender confused children and adolescents, from paediatricians to parents, the Victorian Bill imposes a huge dilemma. The power of the State seeks to impose the therapy of 'affirmation': social incorporation of a gender contrary to chromosomes, with hormonal and even surgical remodelling of the body towards the new sex.

The power of epidemiology, however, declares almost all confused children will re-orient perceived gender to chromosomes through puberty. The power of research declares puberty blocking and cross sex hormones are not 'safe and reversible' but inflict sustained damage on brain structure. And, everyone knows the scars of mastectomies do not disappear, and castration is irreversible.

After this Christmas, if the Victorian Bill becomes an Act, what will a medical practitioner (or social worker, or teacher, or parent) do when confronted by a gender confused child? Walk on and leave the wounded to the hormonal mercies of the State? Or follow *agape* Love to the crucifix? In other words, bravely employ individual and family psychotherapy, augmented by appropriate psychiatric and social intervention in a programme of 'watchful waiting' in expectation of natural recovery through puberty...and go to jail?

And what about the man wounded with unwanted behaviour raising a hand for help on the roadside of life? Should those inclined to a deeper interpretation of Christmas walk on, pretending they don't see?

Or should they bend to propagate the Good News of the Victorian state that such behaviours should be Celebrated, not rejected? Or should they lend a psychotherapeutic hand and risk going to jail? If the wounded seeks prayerful counselling, should it be denied in fear of the Inquisition?

For Victorians, at least, this Christmas is pivotal. It may be remembered as the time of incarnation of the ideology of gender fluidity in the criminal code. Of the advent of imposition of a yoke of obedience to a creed which knows not free will and forgiveness, and prohibits the possibility of change. Of the descent of a crisis of conscience on those charged with the care of confused children and despairing adults.