

Banning the Holy Spirit and Chaining the Word

By Peter Barnes

As Western societies lurch from one disastrous fad to another, there have been increased efforts to ban what are called gay conversion therapies. Hollywood has naturally offered its obligatory contribution with the movie *Boy Erased*, Academia chipped in with a report from La Trobe University - the institution that birthed the Safe Schools Coalition - which joined with the Human Rights Law Centre and Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria to produce research to show that 'LGBT conversion therapy remains a real problem in Australian religious communities.' The Victorian government over 2016-2017 banned such therapy, and the Conservative government in the United Kingdom in 2018 said that it would do so. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in January 2018 added to the panic by claiming that 700,000 LGBTQ adults have undergone conversion therapy. Fake figures are always handy.

The Australian Labor Party National Conference in December 2018 came close to supporting such a ban. All of its thinking headed in that direction, as the Shadow Health Minister, Catherine King, declared: 'It'll be a personal priority for me.' The actual Health Minister, Greg Hunt from the Liberal Party, has repeatedly gone to water on the issue, and almost drowned in his own vagaries. Anna Brown, the director of legal advocacy at the Human Rights Law Centre, wants the law to have the right to forbid faith communities even to pray for children who are same-sex attracted. Ms Brown expresses herself in the usual misleading terms employed by the legal elite: 'The law is only one part of the solution, because a ban will not impact on the informal practices among adults that we know are prevalent in Australia's conversion movement, and may drive them further underground in certain faith communities. We recommend a multi-faceted approach implemented in partnership with religious institutions and communities to help, not harm, LGBT people of faith.'

There is nothing new about the homosexual culture. The apostle

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: 'Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practise homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor.6:9-11). The Christian message is not that we try to improve ourselves by learning about Christ. It is good news - the Holy Spirit raises the spiritually dead to new life in Christ.

So far Western parliaments have not succeeded in expressly banning the work of the Holy Spirit, although legislation can be expected in the near future. Christians can take heart for the Spirit's work is like that of the wind, blowing where it wishes (John 3:8). Furthermore, Paul while imprisoned and facing imminent death, assured his readers that 'the word of God is not bound' (2 Tim.2:9). During the Great Persecution of 303-311, there was an onslaught on the Bible as the word of God, as the emperors Diocletian and Galerius sought to destroy it. Churches were to hand over the Scriptures to be burned; but, as we know, the attempt failed.

God has not left us without witnesses. He never does. Rosaria Champagne Butterfield has described herself as 'an unlikely convert' and her conversion to Christ as a train wreck. As a lesbian and a feminist professor of literature, she did not exercise her free will to come to Christ. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit convicted her of sin, righteousness and judgment, and she was irresistibly drawn to Christ. Such were some of you are wonderful words in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, and there are multitudes of ex-lesbians and ex-homosexuals who will add their testimony to their truth. All converts from whatever sinful state are 'unlikely' - that is part of the wonderful and hopeful character of grace.