

## The New State Religion

*By Peter Barnes*

Political leaders down through the ages have been subject to all kinds of delusions. In the sixth century B.C. Darius the Mede listened to flatterers who talked him into passing a decree which made petition to any god or man except Darius himself illegal for the next thirty days. Anyone who disobeyed this would be cast into a den of lions. This could not be changed as it was the law of the Medes and Persians (Dan.6). The ageing Daniel, still in exile from Judah, replied by continuing to do what he had always done – kneeling down and facing Jerusalem, he prayed three times a day (Dan.6:10).

Victoria has now been afflicted with a Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Bill, which looks rather more long-ranging in its intentions. It even wants to punish offenders who live outside Victoria, provided a Victorian is deemed to be upset. In a culture where words are debased, and everything is hyperbolic, it has become difficult to describe this bill. Just as well that it can speak for itself. It reflects a new dimension to the religion of the state.

There are new laws to obey. The Attorney-General, Jill Hennessey, has decreed: 'We're sending a clear message: no one is "broken" because of their sexuality or gender identity.' The premier may have forgotten some things during the quarantine inquiry but he wanted to make it very clear that 'there is absolutely nothing wrong with being who you are.' Some things are, it seems, sacrosanct, even in a secular society. Given what has been said thus far, those into paedophilia and bestiality should feel a measure of protection. Polygamists too can breathe a sigh of relief, and so might serial adulterers. Drag queens too have been given a new status, which cannot be questioned. Today I listened to an expert on the ABC who explained that human nature is

essentially good, with just a few aberrations. One wonders why there is such a burgeoning industry in producing civil laws. More realistic, even peer-reviewed, is the biblical teaching that our hearts are desperately corrupt (Jer.17:9; Matt.15:19).

There is a bizarre aspect to all this. Sexuality is changeable in that a heterosexual can come out as a homosexual. Whether it works the other way is problematic. Gender, however, is extraordinarily fluid. What matters is not your body but your thinking. If you have a male body and think you are female, you are female. This is free will understood in a way it has not been understood before. Sin enslaves but those enslaved often do not realise it (John 8:32-36).

Yet, under this Victorian bill God will not be allowed to predestine anyone, but Mother Nature or whoever has apparently predestined our sexual preferences and our gender identity. Those converts in Corinth would be in real peril because they were changed by the justifying and sanctifying work of Christ and the Holy Spirit (1 Cor.6:9-11). However, Christ and the Holy Spirit will not be allowed to operate according to this legislation. There does remain the possibility of rehabilitation. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission will have the right to offer targeted education to persons or organisations reported to have engaged in change or suppression practices. The prodigal's pig sty might seem preferable to dealing with these state-subsidised experts but re-education camps have had a significant history in many twentieth-century regimes.

Heretics will not be tolerated. In October 2019 Charlie Evans from Newcastle in the United Kingdom reported that he had been born female, but identified as male for nearly ten years before deciding to identify as female again. She was astounded

at the hundreds of people who contacted her for advice. Transitioning and detransitioning has led to far more problems than the Victorian government wants to acknowledge. More than one has spoken of their life being ruined, and one American has written of having suffered 'a Frankenstein hack job'. The story of Walt Heyer – a man turned woman turned man again – ought to be enough to pause such procedures. Presumably, such expressions of regret will be outlawed in the new Victoria.

Even prayer for God to act in a person's life to transform his or her disordered sexuality will be banned. This will be so even if the person requests prayer. What is more, informal conversations which encourage change or suppression of sexual orientation or gender identity are to be outlawed. In the 1960s libertarians argued that governments should stay out of people's bedrooms. Now we are supposed to welcome the Thought Police in every area of our lives. The premier has no time for what he calls 'bigoted quackery'. He ought to start with his own bill; there

is no bigotry quite like his brand of state-sanctioned bigotry.

It is a common tactic for governments to float something completely ludicrous, then soften it slightly so as to appear reasonable, and this becomes law. My guess is that this is what will happen here. One problem is that the whole bill is so coercive, so opposed to common sense, and so anti-Christian that nothing can be salvaged from it. The other problem is that society has become so used to this kind of propaganda that it has well-nigh lost any discernment or will to oppose it. So it is back to Daniel – the prophet, not the premier.

*Peter Barnes is the editor of AP and pastor at  
Revesby Presbyterian Church NSW.*