

TO: The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
FROM: The Rev. Mario Bergner, Redeemed Lives, Inc.
REGARDING: Addressing Unwanted Same-Sex Attraction for Public Debate
DATE: September 29th, 2009

Fundamental Freedoms I:

Freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

Follow up of the 2009 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedom of Religion.

Central Recommendation: That participating States of the OSCE draft legislation to safeguard the freedom of men and women with unwanted same-sex attractions to seek out reparative therapy or pastoral care.

There are at least three spheres of justice: economics, politics and human self-emancipation. One definition of justice applicable to each of these spheres is *giving to each man or woman his or her due*. And what is due to each man and woman in the sphere of justice for human self-emancipation? Freedom. The freedom to become our truest self.

When addressing same-sex attraction in pluralistic societies, we encounter divergent definitions of freedom with respect to human self-emancipation. For some, freedom to safely self identify as gay or lesbian is emancipation. For others, like myself, freedom from unwanted same-sex attraction is emancipation. My emancipation from same-sex attractions came primarily through my Christian faith. But this freedom that led to my emancipation is in danger. I would draw your attention to the recent investigation of a Church of England priest for hate speech against gays and lesbians because he simply mentioned to a university student that men and women with unwanted same-sex attractions should have the freedom to seek change through reparative therapy or pastoral care.

Pluralism is a safeguard of both civil and religious liberties. Liberty, either civil or religious, is lost when a singular ideology is imposed as the only way to freedom. Twentieth century Marxist socialism is a prime example of declaring the freedom of humanity from the constraints of religion and capitalism, while imposing a bondage to the communist state on the individual. Marxism, as expressed in the Soviet Union, sacrificed individualism to the needs of the state. But not only was individualism sacrificed, individuals were sacrificed. Marxism resulted in an even more systematically oppressive system than the economic injustices it was attempting to combat. Likewise, the Pagan religions of antiquity sacrificed humans to appease angry gods. In an attempt to free the whole, not one, but many lives were lost on the altars of pagan temples. Again, the very process of seeking freedom unjustly took it away from some.

Both civil and religious liberties rely on a definition of freedom for all, not some and not some special interest group. In this sense the community, be it the state or the church, is the context within which genuine freedom is acquired for the individual. Christianity in all its expressions has a central belief that the reason Jesus Christ came was to set us free. St Paul writing to a community that tried to impose legalism on all wrote in Galatians 5:1 *It was for freedom that Christ set us free*. The concept of freedom in Christianity and in civil government is the setting of *us* free. Freedom for all. Not setting most free. And not setting *me* free at the expense of another's freedom.

Within this framework of justice and freedom I pose this question to you. Should governments protect only the freedoms of men and woman who self identify as gay and lesbian but not the freedom of people with unwanted same-sex attraction? Again, my intervention this morning is *to appeal to participating States of the OSCE to draft legislation that safeguards the freedom of men and women with unwanted same-sex attractions to seek out reparative therapy or pastoral care.*

When addressing unwanted same-sex attractions for public debate, we need to responsibly engage at least three questions. Is there a biological basis to same-sex attractions? What are the prevailing viewpoints in the field of psychology about same-sex attractions? What are the differing viewpoints about same-sex attractions from a Judeo-Christian worldview? All three of these questions I will address in my afternoon side event today at 1PM in Meeting Room 2.

First, is there a biological basis to same sex attractions? Studies on the search for a biological basis to homosexuality have centered around three areas of research; the hormonal milieu of the child in the womb, brain structure and genetics. To date, none of the scientific studies conducted have produced conclusive evidence for a biological basis for same-sex attractions. However, all researchers agree on two things. First, correlation does not imply causation. Second, sexual behavior is multiply determined and cannot be reduced to one singular biological feature.

Second, what are the prevailing viewpoints of homosexuality within the field of psychology? The guiding principle is that homosexuality is a condition that only requires treatment if the patient so desires. Consequently there are two forms of therapy offered. The first is gay affirmation therapy that helps the client to integrate their same-sex attractions into their concept of personhood. The second is the model of reparative therapy. Toward that end, in 1993 the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) was founded in the USA. NARTH is a professional, scientific organization that offers hope to those who struggle with unwanted homosexuality. NARTH respects each client's dignity, autonomy and free agency. They believe that clients have the right to claim a gay identity, or to diminish their homosexuality and to develop their heterosexual potential. In recent years, NARTH helped to form The International Federation for Therapeutic Choice (IFTC). The IFTC was established because of international reports of increasingly aggressive opposition to the rights of clients to seek treatment for unwanted same-sex attractions.

Third, what are the differing viewpoints about same-sex attractions from a Judeo-Christian worldview? There are at least three. First, homosexuality is to be understood as culturally not morally. Hence self identified gays and lesbians should be included in all spheres of the church, including leadership. The second viewpoint is a qualified tolerance of same-sex relationships. While homosexual partnerships are not God's intention for sexual intimacy, the Church should provide the most moral context within which such relationships can be lived out. Third, all people, regardless of their sexual affections are offered three contexts for their sexuality: abstinence, lifelong heterosexual marriage and in some cases holy celibacy.

Justice is giving each man and woman his or her due. True justice does not come at the expense of freedom to any man or woman. Therefore, I appeal to participating States of the OSCE to draft legislation that safeguards the freedom of men and women with unwanted same-sex attractions to seek out reparative therapy or pastoral care. In one sense, it does not matter whether people seeking to overcome same sex attractions are religious or not. Not all people who seek to change their unwanted same-sex attractions are religious. My recommendation is about freedom for all people.