

A Summary and Analysis of

The War on Psychotherapy: When Sexual Politics, Gender Ideology, and Mental Health Collide

by Christopher J. Doyle

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The War on Psychotherapy: When Sexual Politics, Gender Ideology, and Mental Health Collide is Mr. Doyle's first book. Dr. Michelle Cretella's superb preface to the book is worth the purchase price. Regarding transitioning and the institutions which promote it in children, Cretella says, "These harms constitute nothing less than institutionalized child abuse." In the forward, Dr. Michael Brown makes it clear that Doyle is approaching this issue from a Christian viewpoint. Doyle, who fifteen years previously experienced a shift in his sexual orientation, proclaims, "As a licensed psychotherapist, I have dedicated my life's work to helping individuals and families come to terms with their sexual and gender

identity and be able to understand how to make choices in their sexual behavior without compromising their personal and spiritual values."

Doyle considers the relationship between a psychotherapist and his client as a sacred trust, which is being violated for political reasons by laws that ban certain types of therapy. He wants to make the case that therapy for sexual and gender identity conflicts should be available and legal for all who seek it. In chapter one we get an idea where politically correct counseling may be headed in light of regulation and insurance constraints. In chapter two, Doyle highlights California Law SB 1172, which banned therapy for minors claiming 28 health risks

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for such therapy without a single scientific study to back these up. When this law was challenged in the Ninth Circuit Court and upheld by claiming that counseling was medical conduct and only included incidental speech, there was disagreement with this rationale from a case in New Jersey, which went to the Third Circuit Court. This opens the door for an appeal to the Supreme Court. Chapter two ends with Robin's story of leaving the lesbian lifestyle after fifty years and finding peace and hope through a religious conversion. Chapter three follows the history of the homophile movement starting with Stonewall in 1969 that details how the psychiatric, legal, and finally religious institutions were subverted. This has happened because the major mental health and medical organizations have morphed from scientific to political organizations that compromise facts for political correctness. One important component to this change involving inside manipulation within the APA was missed by Doyle, and this is detailed in the following audio segment, <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/204/81-words>.

Chapter four opens with quotes from Sigmund Freud and Irving Bieber, which display their keen insight—even seventy years ago in the case of Freud or fifteen years ago in the case of Bieber—prior to the 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association to make homosexuality a non-pathological disorder. They each viewed the nature of homosexuality as a developmental adaptation which now forms the basis for current therapeutic strategies for treating unwanted same-sex erotic attraction. In covering the removal of homosexuality from the DSM and the ex-gay response to this, Doyle mentions Robert Spitzer's 2003 scientific study of change and shows that there were multiple test points built into the study that suggest participants were not lying. This was the charge gay activists used to try

to discredit the study. Doyle contributed to the response to the APA task force *Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation* in an article in the *Journal of Human Sexuality*, which pointed out four major flaws of the report. Doyle correctly points out the straw man argument for banning conversion therapy wherein an idealized harmful mode of practice is created and given the name of conversion therapy which should be banned when indeed therapy which actually does result in sexual orientation change is largely akin to mainstream traditional forms of talk therapy and does not employ harmful practices. Chapter four concludes with references to studies that indicate harm from therapy in regard to changing sexual orientation and references to sexual fluidity and a reference to the National Task Force for Therapy Equality report.

In chapter five Doyle highlights how the mainstream media engages in “jamming” techniques, which link abusive techniques in groups unrelated to therapy with legitimate certified professional therapy attempting to get the public to believe that professional therapy is abusive and timing these reports just prior to the opening of state legislative sessions in the hopes of influencing legislators. Sensational false narratives highlighted by the mainstream media are detailed and debunked. Scientific reports are slanted and sensationalized by the media in an inappropriate manner. The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLADD) has published talking points for the media, which demonstrate the propaganda like narrative that they wish to convey. Chapter five concludes with a review of two recent movies about conversion therapy—one which was pure fiction and the other which involved a religious program without licensed therapists run by a man who had never effectively dealt with the conflicts he held about his own same-sex attractions.

Chapter six deals with legislative tricks used by LGBT activists to attempt to ban talk therapy. When bills banning aversive techniques are proposed, activists suddenly switch sides, claiming that the ban does not go far enough and instead should include talk therapy. Doyle effectively explores terms related to talk therapy for sexual orientation change and how conversion therapy has become a pejorative term. He also reviews sensationalized stories that are purported to be conversion therapy, which never involved licensed, regulated, professional therapists. The chapter ends with how activists intend to silence any religiously motivated actions to help people move away from homosexuality or biological gender congruity.

Chapter seven deals with the war in the courtroom and opens with a discussion about the use of language in propaganda and the born-that-way myth. The reader's attention is then directed to the only successful prosecution of an organization offering change therapy, which was Jews Offering New Alternatives to Healing (JONAH). Following this is an interesting historical review of the use of nudity in therapy discussed because one of the most controversial pieces of evidence presented at trial was the use of nudity with a JONAH client by a life coach in their employ. The book gives the first account I have seen of this life coach's rationale for the use of nudity in sessions. It also explains how nudity can sometimes be beneficial. However, the problem arises concerning the possibility for the therapist to be able to know whether or not the client is making the right associations regarding nudity and reaching acceptance of himself as a man among men and not either increasing his shame related to inadequacy or sexualizing the encounter. It would take a remarkable client, in my view, to be open about their real feelings and to be able to process these types of encounters in a

positive way if repeated. It is important to note that in JONAH's case the life coach never became nude and the client was free to choose how much clothing he chose to discard and whether or not to proceed to full nudity. Doyle's coverage of the JONAH trial is extensive and worth the read for those who are interested in how the legal system can be manipulated and misused.

Following this, People Can Change, an organization that provides experiential weekends for men with unwanted same-sex attractions, received a complaint by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) charging them with providing conversion therapy. Doyle's response to this was to form a National Task Force for Therapy Equality to counter the false claims of the SPLC and to accuse them of fraudulent and illegal practices before the same FTC. As of the date of this review no action has been taken by the FTC.

Finally, Doyle tackles legislative efforts in California to ban therapy for adults, which so far have failed, and concludes with a positive note in the Supreme Court's intimation that medical speech is protected as free speech and cannot be considered conduct, which was the rationale for allowing the original California law banning therapy for youth to withstand a legal challenge. This opens the door for laws banning therapy to help those with unwanted same-sex erotic attraction to be ultimately overturned by the Supreme Court.

In chapter eight Doyle looks at public education and states, "LGBT activists have infiltrated the system through key positions of power to advance their political agenda—and it's gone far beyond issues such as tolerance, equality, and anti-bullying—it's gotten to the point of indoctrination and recruitment." The very interesting history including court cases involving discrimination against ex-gay groups within

the National Education Association (NEA) at national conventions is detailed. Another very interesting part of this chapter is how Doyle went undercover to discover how “safe spaces” functioned for students experiencing unwanted same-sex attraction and gender confusion on campuses in Virginia.

Doyle turns his attention outside the United States in chapter nine. He presents examples from South Africa, Lebanon, the United Nations, Brazil, Columbia, and Ecuador. An internal evaluation by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) is detailed, showing that the organization was described by terms such as “judgmental,” “exclusionary,” “sexist,” and “homogeneous”; and that top executives are exclusively white gay males. Gay groups in the United Kingdom discriminated against ex-gay groups when they tried to counter a bus advertisement campaign with the slogan “Not Gay! Post-gay, ex-gay and proud. Get over it!” This speech was banned as hateful.

A positive outcome of this incident, which became a lawsuit, was that for the first time in England, discrimination against ex-gays was legally recognized as sexual orientation discrimination. A 2018 survey of 108,000 LGBTQ individuals in the United Kingdom only found two individuals who had undergone conversion therapy and five who had been offered it. While it is unfortunate that any person should be harmed, this survey seems to indicate that little harm is occurring and the need to ban all therapy is ill-founded. The story of Michael Davidson, an English psychodrama therapist in training who was terminated in his pursuit of licensure due to gay discrimination, is detailed. Davidson has now founded the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice (<https://iftcc.org/>), which will train professional and lay religious counselors to offer skilled and compassionate help to those desiring to align their sexual feelings with their deeply held religious

beliefs. The story of Matthew Grech, a singer who in 2018 was discriminated against by artistic television for publicly stating that he had walked away from homosexuality after finding Christ, is also featured.

In chapter ten our attention is directed to the war within religious communities. Here we find a complete spectrum regarding approaches to the issue of homosexuality and gender confusion, which can often pit Christian brother against Christian brother in most disagreeable ways. A chart by Jason Thompson of Portland Fellowship, which more neatly categorizes the four main ways groups approach these issues, is presented. These groups are identified as Revelers, Resisters, Renouncers, and Rebuilders. Regrettably the infighting between these groups is fierce, and unless one understands the divisions and closely held beliefs claimed by each of them, confusion and hurt is likely to result. Nowhere are the divisions more clearly demonstrated than within the now defunct Exodus North America, and Doyle chronicles how a much too powerful president was able to pack the board and essentially lead this organization from the Rebuilders camp toward the Resisters camp before it finally fell apart in 2013. Out of this breakup two networks formed: (1) Restored Hope Network, which is clearly in the Rebuilders camp and featured in chapter ten, and (2) Hope for Wholeness, which is largely Renouncers (not mentioned in Doyle’s book).

Doyle concludes chapter ten with a description of his understanding of his work: “I have come to understand in my thirteen years of personal healing and professional work in the behavioral and mental health field, that science, psychology, and even the Bible cannot fully explain the complexities of our sexuality and gender identity or the depths of our capacity, as humans, to experience brokenness. But what I do know is that God heals and redeems us, even when

we cannot fully fathom or grasp how He does it.”

In chapter eleven Doyle describes attempts to bridge the gap between gays and ex-gays. The Reconciliation and Growth Project formed in Salt Lake City, Utah, was an attempt to find common ground between these groups and to promote better understanding. Commenting on what he learned by being involved in this, Lee Beckstead, a gay psychologist and one of the original members of the APA task force report in 2009, admitted after meeting with change-oriented therapists, “Above all else, I have learned that sexual and religious conflicts are not just a religious issue or a psychological issue, but a relational issue. *How* we respond to these conflicts and to others will influence what happens. Our communities, our leaders, and we ourselves have been acting aggressively, passively, compartmentally, and passive-aggressively in dealing with these issues. And this has kept us in a stuck and fragmented place. If we are ever to resolve these conflicts, we need to approach each other with more skills, more openness, more compassion, respect, and more curiosity.” Doyle then lays down some ethical principles for both change-oriented and gay-affirming counselors. This section of the book alone is also well worth the purchase price for anyone desiring to do this kind of work. Doyle concludes this chapter with advice regarding ethics for advocates, media, and concerned citizens.

In chapter twelve we revisit Dr. Politically Correct again—only now he is Dr. Politically Incorrect. We learn how a therapist often must function if they desire to be involved in change-oriented therapy.

Doyle begins chapter thirteen with his recollections of meeting and getting to know Joseph Nicolosi, the founder of reparative therapy. Doyle characterizes Nicolosi’s position as “homosexuality was essentially

an emotionally based, maladaptive condition caused by various forms of childhood trauma.” Doyle tells about the work he did with a client called Nathan and therapy with his family, which was filmed by a supposed “neutral” filmmaker. Regrettably the filmmaker edited the film to attempt to depict what was done as negative conversion therapy, despite the fact that Nathan retained his Catholic faith and was reconciled to his emotionally dysfunctional family.

The War on Psychotherapy concludes with a rich Resource section that those working in this field will cherish. For instance, Appendix A provides further information on the JONAH case and the irregularities and biases engaged in prejudicing the jury. Charles LiMandri, the JONAH defense attorney, commented on the case in “hindsight as nothing short of a charade and legal travesty.” In Appendix B Doyle details his interactions with James Madison University, which was practicing viewpoint discrimination in his request for help with unwanted same-sex attractions at their Resource Center. Another rich resource is Appendix C, which includes a bibliography of peer-reviewed books and journal articles that include measures of harm (which is nine pages long!).

Closing with a quote from David Pickup, a co-founder with Doyle of the National Task Force for Therapy Equality, “Christopher Doyle’s *The War on Psychotherapy* presents a fearless, evidence-based exposé of the truth about the efforts of LGBT activists to change the very nature of the United States culture Mr. Doyle demonstrates how the Constitutional right of free speech, religious rights for licensed therapists who are employees of churches, and the right of all clients to receive the kind of professional therapy that works for them has been betrayed.”

