

Praying away the straight

Kris King – June 4th 2011

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2011/06/praying-away-the-straight/>

Given the crazy, topsy-turvy kind of world we seem to be living in these days it's hardly surprising that it sometimes feels like it's impossible to get through a whole month, often barely even a week, without hearing yet another story about how the rights of religious people are being trampled (usually by some politically-correct do-gooder with an agenda). From adoption agencies to bed and breakfasts, the religious in general, and christians in particular, are being persecuted for their beliefs; in some instances, they are even legally prevented from exercising some of the fundamental tenets of their faith. Oh, sorry, actually, what I meant to say was that pious, sanctimonious arseholes are bitching like little girls about being told that they need to quit being intolerant, homophobic pricks.

I don't know whether you were aware of this, my dear delusional faith-heads, but the rest of the world long ago came to the consensus that the racists, sexists, and homophobes (a large quantity of whom you can find in your special club) were, in fact, the bad guys. Did you know that? Did you miss that meeting? I only ask because the way you've been behaving for the last millennium or two seems to suggest that you did or, at least, you *were* there but you simply don't give a flying fuck about anyone but yourselves and your psychotic bully of an imaginary friend. If that's the case, allow me to fill you in on what you missed (and if you still don't get it, allow me simply to fill you in).

Before I go any further with this, however, it's only right that I should fully declare my interests; I am a 37-year old bisexual man who has never seen gender as being any kind of an issue when it comes to my relationships. I like who I like, and I love who I love, regardless of what shape their bits are. For a good number of years now I have been living with my boyfriend, Raven, who, to make life all-the-more interesting (read: complicated) suffers from Gender Dysphoria. In layman's terms, Raven is transgender, FTM (female-to-male). I don't usually go out of my way to talk about my personal life so, while none of this is any kind of secret (especially to family and close friends), it may not be common knowledge to colleagues and acquaintances. It's not intentional, it just never came up naturally in conversation.

As far as I can recall, I've never really been on the receiving end of any bigotry or bullying that was centred around my sexuality (and, to the best of my knowledge, neither has Raven), but that's not to say I've lived a charmed existence; I used to get the shit kicked out of me with monotonous regularity when I was at school, although that was largely due to my being our year's resident brain-box and designated specky twat (in 1983, reading books and owning a computer were considered reasonable grounds for bestowing a frequent pummelling on someone). Not having ever experienced homophobia directly is a fact I attribute to growing up with fairly liberal-minded, tolerant parents in tandem with my having adopted at a young age the cunning survival technique of not actually telling anyone that I liked boys as well as girls. It's not that I was ashamed of my sexuality – it's more that it was almost irrelevant. As far as I was concerned, if I brought a boy home one day we could discuss it *then*.

In terms of my personal exposure to homophobia I've only ever really had it in a kind of indirect way over the years through comments made about others by my dad. Although he is a mostly tolerant and laid back sort of guy he always seemed to have, lurking just under the surface, a general distrust and distaste for the gay community; at no point have I ever ascribed this to malice or hatred (he's certainly not about to go out and join the Westboro Baptist Church) but simply to the fact that he grew up in different circumstances and in a different generation. He has often said over the years that he has tried to get rid of his prejudices and, for the most part, he has succeeded – he still has a little way to go, to be fair; he has yet to work out, for instance, that Jim Davidson is a vile little scumball who oozes misogynistic and homophobic bigotry from every pore (in addition to being arse-wipingly unfunny), and he naturally still needs to expunge the words "shirt-lifter" and "woofter" from his conversational vocabulary, but he's not a bad guy by any means ... he's just a little antiquated.

When it comes to homosexuality, and the attitudes of people towards it, nothing fosters a greater sense of ignorance, hatred, and rabid, venom-spewing intolerance than religion. Nothing inspires

such disgusting levels of bullying and violence towards the gay community than the supposed love, peace, and togetherness you hear being preached by the holy men of the major faiths. If you're lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender you will invariably find that those who are most responsible for you ever having been victimised, singled-out, or oppressed at any time in your life will have come cloaked in hypocrisy and carrying a bible. I'm not saying that the faithless can't be nasty little bigots, of course they can; it's just far less common because they, after all, don't have some bronze-age story book to drive them or a god to hide behind.

Religion's big problem with "the gay" seems rooted in the fact that religion is, and always has been, seriously obsessed with sex. Look at how many of any given faith's tenets focus on sex, reproductive rights, and what you can and can't do with your body (especially the bits that wobble). The purpose of power, ultimately, is to maintain that power and, if possible, achieve more and greater power; religion follows this model in that its primary goal is to perpetuate itself – religion makes money, shit-loads of money, and it has power, metric fuck-tonnes of power, and it got to where it is today by selling people the promise of a product it can't ever deliver. If the faithful were ever to figure out that they're paying for false hope and bullshit, the game would be up and religions would be utterly screwed.

The obvious solution, therefore, is to stop people from ever asking the questions that could lead them down that path; if you take away the desire, the actual *will* to learn more, a person's curiosity will be dead long before it can ever be satisfied, and the best time to make this happen is when that person is young. Remember the Jesuit maxim, "Give me the child until he is seven, and I will give you the man"? Religion spends a huge amount of its energy focusing on children because their minds are both highly vulnerable to suggestion and easily swayed by authority; if you can strip them of their reasoning ability early, you've got them for life. This, in essence, is chapter two of "Fusing My Religion: How To Build And Grow Your Very Own Cult!" (with a foreword by L. Ron Hubbard), so let's go back to chapter one – the obsession with sex and the urge to control it.

For any business whose survival is built around forging, and maintaining, long-term customer relationships the most annoying problem is that its customers have a tendency, eventually, to die. To prevent your customer base from dwindling over time to zero you need to at least replace every one you lose and, as the tobacco and faith industries will tell you, the young are absolutely where it's at. It's also where religion has its greatest advantage over other businesses because it has the freedom to tell people how to live their lives and, astonishingly, people *actually listen and obey*. You want more young customers to replace your dying older ones? Simple – get more young people by telling your flock to "go forth and multiply" and back it up with a few bits of scripture ... do you see where this is going?

If a religion controls reproduction and sex amongst the faithful it exerts an incredible and direct influence over its present and future customers and, more importantly, the continuing revenue-stream they represent. It's purely a numbers game, and the religion with the most adherents wins; if you can out-breed the faith next door, it doesn't matter how good their sales pitch is, or how much eternity of good stuff they promise you, they're going to have their arses handed to them. [Yasser Arafat](#), the former leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, was once quoted as saying that his greatest weapon was the womb of the Arab woman; meanwhile there is a movement among evangelical christians known as "[Quiverfull](#)" which essentially preaches the notion that women exist purely for procreation (their most well-known proponents, the Duggar family, have 19 children and counting).

More babies equals more followers, meaning religions will throw out contraception, abortion, and the idea of sex for anything other than producing more Jesus-spawn. Even though they could conceivably (no pun intended) result in more children, pre-marital and extra-marital sex are off the table because these happen outside of "holy matrimony", i.e., outside of a god-sanctioned framework and, therefore, outside the sphere of influence of the church. Right from day one religion has dictated the motive, means, and method for sex amongst its members (again, no pun intended), and nowhere is this more obvious than how it treats women and their role in life; they're for breeding, pure and simple, and they have no sexual or reproductive rights whatsoever. It's not *your* body, sweetheart, it belongs to your **man**, so shut up, lie down, obey your god, and let your man use you in the name of Jesus.

Homosexuality is the biggest fly in religion's baby ointment because it usually doesn't result in any children, hence the reason so many faiths have such a massive problem with it. There have always been other considerations, other reasons why people have a problem with homosexuality, but these

have generally been individual or cultural; to some people it's just plain icky, but that doesn't mean fuck all apart from the fact that you're straight – if you're biologically hard-wired to like members of the opposite sex, you're *bound* to find the idea of same-sex relationships a bit icky! Similarly, some cultures are a-ok with the gay, and others not so much, but this has varied wildly throughout history; Isaac Newton, for example, was far more worried about being exposed as an alchemist than he was of people discovering he was seeing a nice Italian gentleman – fifty years ago, it would have been the other way around.

When faith gets its hate on for something it gets it on big-style, and it gets it on old-school, and there are some horrifying examples of the religious persecution of homosexuals. There are more than 70 countries where same-sex activity is illegal (in 7 of them the death penalty may be applied), and I'll *guarantee* you that in pretty much every one of those 70 countries that the law has both a religious underpinning and a religious agenda that prevents it from being repealed. This, by itself, should be enough, but it doesn't just end with how a *country* treats homosexuals – in many developed, Western nations, where same-sex activity is both legal and supported (to an extent) with certain rights under the law, there are still plenty of cases of members of the LGBT community being attacked or bullied for being who they are. While the tragic case of Matthew Shepard, who was robbed, beaten, tortured and left to die, was not specifically religiously motivated one cannot ignore the part that religion likely played in helping to define his murderers' attitudes and opinions of gays.

The biggest problem religion faces with homosexuality these days is when it happens to one of their own. As the world becomes more accepting of the gay lifestyle, and coming out is far less likely to end one's career or destroy one's family, LGBT theists are finding it easier than before to speak out because they no longer have to deal with society as a whole, rather just the small segment of it that represents their sky-fairy worship club of choice. For the club, though, this is a massive pain in the arse; "How can it be that this person who we all thought was good and right with god has turned out to be a fag or a dyke?" After they've gone through the usual rigmarole of blaming culture and a society drenched in violence and porn (by the way, please donate to help us fight this evil!) they're still left with the problem of having a parishioner around who likes life to be pink and rainbows.

It was then they struck upon the idea of conversion therapy. That's right, you can pray the gay away and be the red-blooded, baby-wanting, god-loving straight man or woman the lord wants you to be (and he'll torture you forever if you don't). I'd heard of this particular brand of abuse some time ago, but it was Patrick Strudwick's [recent article in The Guardian](#) that inspired this week's post. Strudwick went undercover to expose psychiatrists and other therapists who offer conversion services and claim that homosexuality can be "cured", as if it were some kind of disease of the mind (this in spite of the fact it was long ago removed from the DSM as being any kind of psychiatric disorder). And what was the exact nature of these kinds of therapy? Yup, you're way ahead of me, they were very much religiously-based.

With the exception of people like Patrick Strudwick or Ted Cox (whose "[My Journey Into Manhood: Undercover at a Gay Conversion Camp](#)" is very much worth reading), everyone who goes in for these therapies is doing so as an obvious victim of abuse, but not of the kind that Strudwick's therapist tried to imply. The abuse here is that of having grown up in a faith that hammered into someone from a young age the idea that homosexuality is wrong, that it is unnatural, or that it is evil. At some point in their crucial, formative years these poor sods are not only having to discover themselves and their sexuality but they're also suddenly confronted with a dilemma where they are forced to choose between who they truly are as a person, and who their faith tells them they should be. Sadly, faith tends to win out in the short term and, since you can't ultimately hide from who you are, this problem never goes away.

This is why, in a way, I kind of feel sorry for Ted Haggard. Yes it was funny for a while to see such a pious, bible-thumping hypocrite get exposed, but in the end it's quite hard to hate the man because, to a certain extent, it's not his fault; this is how he was *raised*. Haggard would have had it drilled in to him (oo-er, steady!) his whole life that being gay was an abominable sin to such a degree that he would have come to believe it enough to preach the same appalling message from his own pulpit. The terrible dichotomy of who you are versus who your god says you should be is what would have driven Haggard to a gay prostitute and a meth habit. Even the implosion of the world around him when he was exposed wasn't enough to shake his faith; its grip is still so tight that he ended up in conversion therapy, after which his wife proudly announced that he was "[completely heterosexual](#)".

This is the icing on the cake when it comes to religion's disgusting attitude towards alternative sexualities. It hates people for what they are, makes them feel ashamed, dirty, wrong, unnatural,

and then has the audacity to say that it can change them into better people; "You can be more like us – right, godly, holy, and straight!" If you play along you sacrifice the quintessential aspect of who you are as a loving being for the illusion of love offered by a corporation that needs you to produce the next generation of its customers. If you refuse and stick resolutely to being true to yourself then you're an outcast, you're *sick*, and they will do everything in their power to hurt you; they'll fight changes in the law to stop you getting married, or adopting children, or even exercising your love for another human being.

To every person who has ever individually, or as part of a wider group (especially a religion), oppressed anyone over their sexuality I say simply this: how fucking dare you? Who the fuck do you think you are treating people like this? Who the fuck are you to tell people who they can and can't love? How dare you tell any consenting adult, who harms no-one by his or her actions, that they can't be in love with someone because they're the same gender? How dare you wield your power and influence to change laws in order that you might further restrict the rights and freedoms of people just because you don't like who they fuck? How dare you tell anyone that they are sinful, unnatural, wicked, and wrong? Who the fuck are you to threaten someone with eternal torture for daring to love another human being? What, or who, gives you the fucking right to tell... ah, yes, of course.

That's right, it's not *you* doing this, it's **god**. It's not *you* that thinks faggots, dykes, queers and trannies are sick and evil, no, not at all ... it's that almighty nothing you worship that hates us, and you're just obeying his will, like the sycophantic, toadying little bitches you are. Yeah? Well, I've got news for you Jesus-sucking, holy spirit-swallowing, god-fuckers – it's not *us* who are sick and wrong, it's **you**. It's your petty, disgusting prejudices that make you treat the rest of us like shit and, because you *know*, deep-down in the depths of your shrivelled, black little fucking hearts that you're wrong, you turn to the invisible man you invented to justify and reinforce your nasty, perverted hatred.

Admit it – you're wrong, and you *know* you are. Admit that you don't have a leg to stand on in this argument. Admit that you don't have any evidence that your god even exists, let alone that he takes an interest in what any of us do with our genitals (or who we let play with them).

Stop hiding behind your bibles and your qu'rans, you fucking cowards. Stop telling other people who they can fuck and, instead, do the rest of us a favour and go fuck yourselves ...

