

Brief to the Justice Committee on

Bill C-6: An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)

Submitted by:

David Cooke, B.A., M.Div.(Hons.)
CEO, Baptist House, a Canadian Christian Publisher
Baptist Pastor and Missionary

38-596101 Hwy. 59
Woodstock, ON N4S 7W1

Dear Honourable Members of the Justice Committee:

As a Christian publisher, pastor, and individual, I would like to explain several serious flaws in the wording of Bill C-6 (the conversion therapy ban).

According to Bill C-6, “conversion therapy means a practice, treatment or service designed to change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour. For greater certainty, this definition does not include a practice, treatment or service that relates (a) to a person’s gender transition; or (b) to a person’s exploration of their identity or to its development.”

Bill C-6 includes penalties for everyone who “advertises an offer to provide conversion therapy,” and for everyone who “receives a financial or other material benefit, knowing that it is obtained or derived directly or indirectly from the provision of conversion therapy.”

Based on the plain reading of this Bill, the Bible itself, along with other pieces of Christian literature, would be deemed “conversion therapy” and thus treated as suspect. Advertising and selling the Bible and these works of Christian literature would become illegal. Christian writers would be silenced. Churches, also, would be participating in illegal activities.

How is the Bible “conversion therapy”?

First, according to both Roman Catholic and Evangelical Christian teaching¹, the Holy Bible forbids both homosexual and transgender acts. Sacred Scripture literally states that those who practise homosexuality and transgenderism cannot enter God’s kingdom and will experience eternal damnation in hell. Consider the following verses:

“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.” Leviticus 18:22².

“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.” Deuteronomy 22:5.

“God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” Romans 1:26,27.

“Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” 1 Corinthians 6:9,10.

¹ Please see the supporting ecclesiastical statements listed further in this paper.

² All Scriptures, unless otherwise noted, are from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible.

“Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” Jude 7.

Second, the Holy Bible also states that those who practice homosexual or transgender acts may experience forgiveness, redemption, and transformation, if they so choose. The Bible unambiguously teaches that, by means of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the help of prayer, counsel, and instruction, homosexual and transgender persons are able to experience conversion in their desires and self-conception. Homosexual and transgender persons *can* and *should* change. Consider the following Scriptures:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” Acts 3:19.

“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” Romans 6:5-13.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. *And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (emphasis added).

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Under Bill C-6, this biblical message of transformation (i.e. conversion), when directed towards homosexual and transgender persons, would render the Bible itself (and other books based upon it) as “conversion therapy”. The biblical message, given by God to a sinful world, is certainly a “service designed to change a person’s sexual orientation to heterosexual or gender identity to cisgender, or to repress or reduce non-heterosexual attraction or sexual behaviour.”

How do churches practise conversion therapy?

Christian churches practise conversion therapy by ministering and promoting the message of the Bible as summarized above. This is essential to their faith, practice, and community. To support this assertion, consider the following ecclesiastical statements from both the Roman Catholic and Evangelical Christian churches.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the official summary of Roman Catholic doctrine and practice:

“Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.” They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.”³

“By creating the human being man and woman, God gives personal dignity equally to the one and the other. Each of them, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity.”⁴

It is important to note that the Catechism of the Catholic Church is endorsed and propagated by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁵

According to the Nashville Statement, a summary of essential Evangelical doctrine and practice on matters relating to sexuality and gender:

“WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness. WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.”⁶

“WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.”⁷

It is important to note that the Nashville Statement is endorsed and propagated by leading Canadian Evangelical theologians and church leaders, including J.I. Packer, Michael Haykin, and Charles McVety.⁸

³ Paragraph 2357, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

⁴ Paragraph 2393, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

⁵ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is available here: <https://www.cccb.ca/faith-moral-issues/church-teachings/catechism-of-the-catholic-church/>

⁶ Article 10, *Nashville Statement*.

⁷ Article 12, *Nashville Statement*.

⁸ A full list of signers of the *Nashville Statement* can be found here: <https://cbmw.org/nashville-statement>

Besides the Holy Bible, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the Nashville Statement, there are myriads of Christian books and resources that promote and encourage what Bill C-6 defines as “conversion therapy”. These books are sold and promoted by Christian publishers in Canada.

For just one highly influential and popular example, consider the *Billy Graham Christian Worker's Handbook*, a standard for professional and lay biblical counsellors across Canada. In its section on homosexuality⁹, it asserts: “It is not God’s will that anyone should be bound by homosexuality. His grace is sufficient to bring victory to those who are willing to submit this area to Him.” It proceeds to set out a strategy to help willing homosexuals to experience conversion.

Concluding Remarks

If Bill C-6 becomes law as written, the Holy Bible itself will fall under the definition of “conversion therapy”, along with other Christian literature. The churches, ministries, publishing houses, pastors, counsellors, and average Christians who proclaim, promote, advertise, and profit from the sharing of the message of the Bible will be criminalized and face prosecution. There are no exemptions included in Bill C-6 to avert this outcome. One must assume that the police will follow the letter of the law and begin a campaign to eradicate the promotion of conversion therapy in Canada, including within religious contexts.

This is not only an affront to our constitutional freedom of speech and religion, but it is an affront to international human rights standards. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”¹⁰

Bill C-6, as written, must be recognized for what it is – unconstitutional and harmful respecting Canadian churches, ministries, publishers, and Christians in general.

Sincerely,

David Cooke, B.A., M.Div.(Hons.)
CEO, Baptist House

Baptist House is an independent Canadian publisher of Christian literature in the Reformed Baptist tradition.

⁹ Charles G. Ward, ed., *The Billy Graham Christian Worker's Handbook*, World Wide Publications (Minneapolis, 1996), pp. 171-177.

¹⁰ Article 18.