

Response to “Soulforce” and the Wider Homosexual Agenda

“Talking Points” offered by Stephen Farra, PhD

Introduction: Soulforce (an activist homosexual organization) drove their bus to Columbia International University on October 6, 2008, to present their claims of equality, and to press for an end to “religious bigotry” (defined as any religiously based point of view that does not fully affirm the open practice of the homosexual lifestyle, in all contexts and settings). These “talking points” were produced in preparation for that visit.

** While we believe the homosexual lifestyle is sinful and destructive to the fabric of society, we do not believe every person who experiences homosexual thoughts and desires is an unusually sinful person. Temptation is not sin. It is the practice of wrong and destructive actions that is sinful. While we may face different temptations from those struggling with homosexual desires, we are all familiar with the struggle to bring our private and public actions under the control of the Holy Spirit and biblically-defined righteousness.

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” - I Peter 2:11

** No one can change the fact that both the Old and New Testaments clearly define and portray homosexual behavior as sinful – and a serious sin at that. It is a sin against self, others, society, and God. Yet, we do not believe that the practice of homosexual behavior is the most serious sin. The most serious sin is the conscious and purposeful rejection of the grace of God as offered in Christ Jesus. Sinful as their lifestyle certainly is, practicing homosexuals deserve love and respect as persons, as well as a scriptural challenge to their lifestyle, and therapeutic guidance toward a better path of life. A Christian can never successfully confront sin from a position of superiority and *self*-righteousness. None of us are righteous, except by the grace of God, as extended through Jesus Christ. Scripture calls us to consistently hate the sin, but consistently love the sinner.

** Further, we believe that those who practice homosexuality are fully entitled to basic civil rights – this includes the right to work in secular workplaces and to live in neighborhoods without harassment, violence, or threats of violence. We do not accept as healthy or righteous the lifestyles of

those who regularly commit adultery, or those who regularly participate in neo-pagan religions. Yet, we often do not take special notice of them in our workplaces and/or neighborhoods, and we usually do not actively try to end the practice of their lifestyles in our neighborhoods and secular worksites. As followers of Jesus Christ, and as law abiding citizens of the United States, we need to extend a high level of interpersonal respect to homosexuals.

** Having said this, we do not need to extend, nor should we extend to those practicing homosexuality *special rights* – including letting them (at their demand, on their time-table) come onto our private university campus en masse, bringing banners and advertisements for their lifestyle (including their bus), demanding a large open forum where they can “educate” and “dialog” with our students. We do not allow this for any agenda-driven group, from either the Right or the Left of the American political spectrum, so we should not allow it for a homosexual advocacy group.

** We are troubled by some of the apparent claims and implications of the Soulforce agenda. They seem to us to be disingenuous or blatantly false:

1. Soulforce says: “It is our belief that open and honest discussion begets understanding and healing, and that philosophy is at the heart of our work.”

If this were true, there would be no need of the “take it to the streets activism” and “relentless nonviolent resistance” (acts of “civil disobedience”) frequently mentioned on the Soulforce website. Further, the founder(s) of the group would themselves come down to talk, not send a bus load of 18-28 year old “volunteers” (foot-soldiers), intent on demonstrating, pressing their case, and engaging in acts of “civil disobedience” (apparently designed to bring maximum embarrassment and bad publicity to any organization whose members dare to cling to their “religious bigotry”). To understand the true purpose of Soulforce, one needs only to “unpack” the Soulforce Vision and Mission statements, from their website (www.soulforce.org/article/7)

Soulforce Vision Statement

The purpose of Soulforce is freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance."

Soulforce Mission Statement

The mission of Soulforce is to cut off homophobia at its source -- religious bigotry. Soulforce uses a dynamic "take it to the streets" style of activism to connect the dots between anti-gay religious dogma and the resulting attacks on the lives and civil liberties of LGBT Americans. We apply the creative direct action principles taught by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. to peacefully resist injustice and demand full equality for LGBT citizens and same-gender families.

Personal Purpose Statement, from founder Mel White

"That is why we launched Soulforce," White explains. "The toxic rhetoric flows unabated, primarily from sincere but misinformed religious leaders. It is poisoning the national discourse, dividing homes and churches, ruining families and wasting lives. We must do our best to stop that flow of poison at its source, and the 'soul force' rules of nonviolent resistance show us how." (www.soulforce.org/article/12)

By calling any biblically-based teaching on homosexuality "toxic rhetoric" that is "poisoning the national discourse ... ruining families and wasting lives", and by saying, "we must do our best to stop that flow of poison at its source", White is directly threatening the free speech rights of all of us in the biblically faithful Judeo-Christian community. This is hardly the behavior that one would expect from anyone desiring "open and honest discussion" that "begets understanding and healing." We find such disingenuous "double-talk" and intensely aggressive language to be very troubling.

2. Soulforce implies: While we are an inclusive, interfaith organization, we are primarily a Christian group. You should respect us as fellow Christians.

The Soulforce website mentions Bible studies and worship services, and it highlights the biography of the Soulforce founder, Dr. Mel White, who still refers to himself as an "evangelical" Christian. Mel White has a deep (extensive) background in evangelical Christianity. Dr. White (now 68 years old), graduated from Warner Pacific College, and was trained in communications at the University of Southern California. He was a ghostwriter for those he still calls "fellow evangelicals" - Pat Robertson, Billy Graham, D. James Kennedy, and Jerry Falwell. He wrote much of the autobiography of Jerry Falwell. He received his doctorate from Fuller Theological Seminary and was Professor of Preaching at Fuller Theological Seminary, for more than a decade. Dr. Mel White claims he has now been able to "reconcile" his open practice of homosexuality with his Christian

faith (www.soulforce.org/article/11). He also freely offers a reinterpretation of what the Bible means in all its references to homosexual behavior.

The fact that Mel White has a background in evangelical Christianity does not automatically mean that Dr. White continues to hold Christian convictions, or that Soulforce is a Christian organization. One of the colleges Soulforce visited in the past was Wheaton College, Illinois (2006). Christian Psychologist and Provost Stanton Jones from Wheaton wrote a very helpful and extensive article in preparation for the visit of Soulforce. Stanton Jones' article is primarily a response to Mel White's booklet, *What the Bible Says – and Doesn't Say – About Homosexuality*. Both Dr. Mel White's booklet and Dr. Stanton Jones' careful response are available at: (<http://www.wheaton.edu/CACE/resources/booklets/StanJonesResponsetoMelWhite.pdf>).

In his response, Stanton Jones quotes from Mel White's *Six Soulforce Beliefs About Myself* which are still posted on the Soulforce website: (www.soulforce.org/article/567). Mel White / Soulforce claims these six beliefs are “the **truth** about yourself” (bold emphasis, his / theirs).

Study the text carefully. What you will see is that in point 1 the God of the universe is renamed and changed (literally “switched-out”). God is no longer God the Father (Yahweh), God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit (the Helper), but is now “the Soulforce at the center of the universe.” In point 2 scriptural standards no longer apply, but rather only self-assertion: “I am loved by my Creator exactly as I am . . . My sexual orientation is a gift from my Creator to be accepted, celebrated, and lived with integrity.” Points 3 – 6 seem to be included primarily for recruiting purposes, so young people will join the cause: “When I join my Creator in doing justice, my own life will be renewed, empowered, and made more meaningful.” Here is the full text, from the website:

Step 1 on the journey to soulforce begins when we experience the suffering but refuse to let it cripple our soul.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people often believe the untruth that they are inferior, sick and sinful, unloved by God. Real freedom begins not in the courts or the Congress. Real freedom begins in your head when you believe the **truth** about yourself. For many of us it means seeing ourselves in a whole new way. Let these six Soulforce truths help set you free

Six Soulforce Beliefs About Myself

1. I am a child of a loving Creator, a daughter or a son of the Soulforce at the center of the universe.*

2. I am loved by my Creator exactly as I am. My sexual orientation is not a sickness to be healed nor a sin to be forgiven. My sexual orientation is a gift from my Creator to be accepted, celebrated, and lived with integrity.
3. I am not an accident. I have a purpose. I was shaped by my Creator to love God and to assist in God's eternal struggle to win justice for all Her children who suffer injustice.
4. I will not discover my purpose nor realize my power (my own soulforce) until I join my Creator in doing justice (making things fair for all.)
5. When I join my Creator in doing justice, my own life will be renewed, empowered, and made more meaningful.
6. In serving others, it is as much my moral obligation to refuse to cooperate with evil as it is to cooperate with good.

Once a person has read through the *Six Soulforce Beliefs about Myself*, he or she is encouraged to print and sign a copy of the *Beliefs* – a kind of “conversion” to the Soulforce point of view. Whatever else you may want to say about this point of view, it certainly is *not Christian* in any biblical sense of that word. The Soulforce point of view could be much better characterized as New Age, syncretistic, and neo-pagan. We would appreciate greater truth in advertising and presentation.

3. Soulforce implies: You should love and respect those practicing homosexuality, because they are this way through genetics (it’s “a gift from my Creator” as Soulforce puts it – that is, homosexuality does not develop through environmental influence or personal choice). Homosexuals are like people of a different race (consistently, Soulforce equates its homosexual activism with the black struggle for equality in American society). Further, homosexual groups, like Soulforce, typically claim that there are large numbers of practicing homosexuals in society – at least 10% of the population – a commonly cited statistic, derived from the writings of Alfred Kinsey. To discriminate against them, claim organizations like Soulforce, is like discriminating against black people, or left-handers. It is foolish and wrong.

Well, we do love and respect homosexuals, but not for any of the reasons listed above. We love and respect them, because God loves them and Jesus died for them. In fact, we love them enough to tell them the truth – as well

as by treating them decently on a day-to-day basis. Here are some hard truths that those who practice homosexuality do not want to hear:

Race *is* a genetically produced trait. Race is marked by observable physical differences, not primarily by emotional / behavioral differences. Homosexuality, on the other hand, is marked primarily by emotional / behavioral differences with heterosexuality, not primarily by observable physical differences between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Homosexuality is not purely (or even primarily) genetic. Leslie Stahl of CBS News (hardly a “conservative, right-wing organization”!) presented a 03/12/2006 segment of 60 Minutes on homosexuality and twins, including identical (monozygotic) twins. Identical (monozygotic) twins have the same genetics – they are nearly “carbon copies” of one another. Yet, as the interviews indicated, sometimes one twin is exclusively homosexual in practice while the other twin is exclusively heterosexual in practice. So much for the “purely genetic” / “gift from my Creator” hypothesis.

According to the data from the Australian twin registry (over 25,000 pairs of identical twins), the actual concordance of homosexuality between male identical twins is not nearly 100% – or even 50 % or 30% – but only 11%. The eleven per cent pair-wise concordance rate simply says that when any one male twin in the registry is homosexual, his male co-twin is homosexual only one time in nine, or 11% of the time (Whitehead, 1999, 2008). Eleven percent is hardly genetic determination! Even *strong genetic influence* is hard to claim at *11 percent*.

Dr. Neil Whitehead holds a PhD in Biochemistry, and is a Research Consultant for the Government of New Zealand. His continuously updated work on genetics and homosexuality is available without charge at: (<http://www.mygenes.co.nz/>). Working from the Australian twin registry, other credible researchers (Bailey, 2000; O’Leary, Byrd, & Fitzgibbons, 2008) also cite the 11% pair-wise concordance figure.

Further, while committed homosexual activists hate hearing about it, it is possible for a person who has had a primarily homosexual orientation and lifestyle to (over time) find happiness and fulfillment in a committed heterosexual relationship. Many of us who have a background in professional psychotherapy personally know those who once were deeply involved in homosexual behaviors, but then received effective reparative therapy and spiritual guidance, and have since then been happily married --

for decades. Jones and Yarhouse (2007) have recently published a book, *Ex-Gays?*, describing a carefully conducted longitudinal study on the life experiences of many individuals of faith who used to be gay in their orientation and practice, yet now live reasonably happy heterosexual lives.

Psychiatrist Robert Spitzer (Columbia University, NYC) led the task force in 1973 that removed Homosexuality as a disorder listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association. This made him a hero in the homosexual culture. Yet in 2001, he conducted a study that indicated that “highly motivated” gays *can* successfully change their sexual orientation.

The beginning of the New York Times article is provided below:

Study Says Gays Can Shift Sexual Orientation

By ERICA GOODE (New York Times, May 9, 2001)

A psychiatrist at Columbia University who contends that the mental health profession has "totally bought the idea that once you are gay you cannot be changed" will report today that some "highly motivated" gays can become heterosexual.

The researcher, Dr. Robert Spitzer, said his study was based on 45-minute telephone interviews with 143 men and 57 women who had sought help to change their sexual orientation. He and his colleagues found that 66 percent of the men and 44 percent of the women had achieved "good heterosexual functioning," he said.

"If somebody wants to change and it's not because they are just responding to pressure, it shouldn't be automatically assumed that it's irrational or giving in to society," Dr. Spitzer said in an interview.

Not surprisingly, the same psychological and psychiatric organizations that so quickly embraced his recommendation to remove homosexual practice from the DSM list of psychiatric disorders did not a generation later embrace Dr. Robert Spitzer's qualified support of reparative therapy.

What about the percentage of homosexuals in American society? The commonly cited “at least 10%” comes from averaging Alfred Kinsey's claim that approximately 13 percent of the males and 7 percent of the females

admitted to “having been predominantly homosexual for at least three years between the ages of 16 and 55.”

In research centers, this figure from the Kinsey Institute is now almost universally understood to be wildly inflated (much too high). Friends and foes alike agree that Kinsey’s samples were not representative of the U.S. population as a whole. Almost all his subjects were young (18-35) and Caucasian. Further, he got a disproportionate amount of his information from prison populations, and even pedophiles. Famed statistician, John Tukey (ANOVA follow-up test), famously wrote “a random selection of three people would have been better than a group of 300 chosen by Mr. Kinsey.” Having interviewed several of Kinsey’s subjects personally, famed psychologist Abraham Maslow concluded that Kinsey’s samples were “biased” and “unrepresentative.”

More carefully done large-scale surveys and subsequent reports (e. g. - Michaels, 1996, American Psychiatric Press) indicate that the percentage of males and females who have actually had a same-sex partner in the last five years is quite low (males 4%, females 2%). And, this includes all those who are “bi-sexual” (who “go both ways.”) When those practicing bisexuality are taken out of the data, the numbers shrink. About 2% of the males and about 1% of the females in the U. S. population are exclusively homosexual in behavior during any given five year span.

While we disagree with the reasons often given for loving and respecting practicing homosexuals, “Just like racial differences, it’s all genetic” and “You should love and respect us, because we’re everywhere”, we do none-the-less love and respect them. We love and respect them as fellow sinners for whom Christ died.

All of us are called to accept Christ’s gift of redemption and to pursue a life of righteousness by the power of the Holy Spirit.

For Further Reading – **Printed books and articles:**

Bailey, Michael J., et al. (2000) “Genetic and Environmental Influences on Sexual Orientation and its Correlates in an Australian Twins Sample,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, March 78 (3), p. 524-536.

Jones & Yarhouse. (2007). *Ex-Gays: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic).

Spitzer, Robert. (2006) "Can Some Gay Men and Lesbians Change Their Sexual Orientation? 200 Participants Reporting a Change from Homosexual to Heterosexual Orientation," in J. Frescher, K. Zucker, eds., *Ex-Gay research: Analyzing the Spitzer Study and Its Relation to Science, Religion, Politics, and Culture*, (NY: Harrington House).

Whitehead & Whitehead. (1999) *My Genes Made Me Do It!* (Huntington House, 1999).

Online books and articles:

Fryrear, Melissa. (2008). "Are People Born Gay: Is there such a thing as a Gay Gene?" Focus on the Family: (<http://www.family.org/lifechallenges/A000000186.cfm#footnote14>)

O'Leary, Byrd, & Fitzgibbons. (2008).. Their response to the Pro-Gay "Fact Sheet" put out by the APA and 12 other organizations. They say that the "Fact Sheet" is a political statement, not a scientific one. (<http://www.narth.com/docs/nonFactSSAEducDale.pdf>)

Whitehead, Neil. (2008). His very thorough, continuously updated, downloadable book on genetics and homosexuality: (<http://www.mygenes.co.nz/>)