

Beyond Gay,

by David Morrison

(Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, Huntington, IN)

Reviewed by Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D.

Leadership in the Catholic Church today is in great need of accurate information about homosexuality. This book is the first of what will hopefully be a substantial new body of Catholic literature giving voice to individuals who, in spite of experiencing same-sex attractions, refuse to define themselves as gay.

Such books pose a growing threat to two foundational premises of gay anthropology—the ideas that "You were born gay," and "If you experience same-sex attractions, the only authentic response is to say, 'Gay is who I am.'"

The author intelligently balances observations about his personal life with very insightful and astute social commentary. He discusses not only the politics within the Catholic Church, but also the political compromises made within the American Psychiatric Association.

He also describes the well-documented data which indicates that male homosexuality is primarily a developmental problem—that is, a gender-identity problem rooted in the child's early parental relationships. While genetic factors may predispose some children to struggle with gender issues, there is strong evidence that family (and later, peer) factors are pivotal.

In his own life, Morrison relates what reparative therapists call the "classic triadic relationship," which has been so consistently established in the psychoanalytic literature, and which I have seen hundreds of times in my own clinical practice; that is, the boy experiences his father as distant and detached, while his mother is over-involved; and in family arguments, mother and son unite against the father.

Morrison says of his father, who he remembers as generally indifferent: "He was absent much of the time and carried himself with an air of grave importance when he was at home. He looms in my memory as 'aloof and demanding.'" He recalls his father's efforts to teach him the multiplication tables, which left him feeling ashamed and inadequate. In contrast, he recalls his mother "making herself all too accessible. Where my father was aloof, my mother

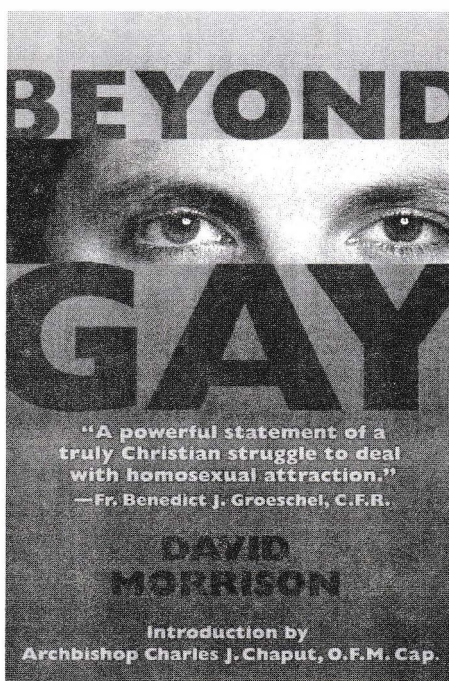
was cloying." He says, "I quickly understood that my family dynamic was she and I against my father. When my mother complained about my father – which she did with increasing vehemence as the years passed – she came to me at least some of the time. Her complaints assumed an authority in defining my father that was probably not useful."

In the author's early relationships with his peers, again we see the repeated developmental themes common to the pre-homosexual boy--shame about his body, a feeling of inadequacy, and the sense of not belonging to the company of males, who he eventually romanticizes from a distance.

Morrison sees how fortunate he was to have escaped the trap which snares so many of our young people: with the encouragement of teachers, counselors and society, such sexually confused children are self-labeling as "gay" before they are old enough to make an informed decision about such an essential issue. Without the opportunity to understand how feelings of gender inadequacy will lead to romantic idealization of same-sex peers, many young people have been led to believe the scientifically insupportable argument that "I was born

this way," or, if they are people of religious faith, they say, "God just makes some people gay."

The recent Catholic bishops' document "Always Our Children" in fact reinforces and supports this gay self-label, and many priests and bishops are now promoting--even while reiterating the requirement of chastity--this identity as valid to our young people. But Christian anthropology, backed up by science, makes it clear that God did not design two kinds of people, heterosexual and homosexual; and that when homosexuality occurs, it is not an authentic identity, but should be seen as a developmental problem, a challenge, a struggle to be endured (as Morrison has chosen, with powerful help from his faith to reduce unwanted temptations), or one which the struggler may be successful in overcoming by moving toward a heterosexual adjustment.



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In trying to pull the pieces together and explain how his same-sex attractions emerged, Morrison said, "My failure to believe I could ever please my parents, especially my father, gradually became a deep-seated attitude that spread tentacles throughout my life. My failure to lose weight, succeed at sports, and genuinely like my appearance, contributed to my feeling constantly ill-at-ease with other boys--an alien among my peers."

He speaks about the fear (so often reported by my own clients as well) of being genuinely *seen* by other boys for who he was, which resulted in the longing for a deep male friendship which never seemed to come. These longings became the foundation for later same-sex attractions: what he could not find in the usual way through friendship, he compensated for with the secret fantasy that one day he would find that one special, "best buddy." Those fantasies eventually led him into a gay lifestyle.

In reparative therapy, we call this period the Erotic Transitional Phase--the time when the boy's emotional needs for same-sex attention, affection, and approval become eroticized.

Morrison's reporting of his first homosexual experience at the age of 11 or 12 with an older teenage boy is also very typical in the formation of homosexuality. (One-third of my own clients were sexually molested as little boys or young teenagers by older males.) Their feeling of inadequacy and alienation from other males found a tension-releasing outlet early-on in their lives, and this experience confirmed their suspicion that they might be gay. At the same time, it short-circuited any future attempts they might have made to experience normal, non-erotic male intimacy through the mutuality and equality of genuine male friendship.

As a young adult, Morrison at first tried to integrate his Christian identity with a gay identity. Thus, he was at first drawn to the gay Catholic (an oxymoron) group "Dignity,"

which seeks to integrate Catholicism with a gay identity. His disillusionment with Dignity led to a final struggle which revealed to him the cost of discipleship, as he discovered those two identities (gay and Catholic) to be ultimately irreconcilable.

Morrison says:

"I can't say why I have experienced the healing I have. I don't know why others have not. I can't say I believe that dramatically diminished same-sex attraction is possible in every life...But I must testify that despite the complicated web of wounds both real and imagined, deep longings and insecurity, doubts, failures, and desires, Christ stepped forward with the knowledge, resources, and the wise and loving friends I needed to break free [from gay life]. For this I am deeply grateful."

He talks about his initial rebellion against his church's teachings, and acknowledges the Church's statement that homosexuality is an "objective disorder." Many gay ministries within the church wish to simply ignore, explain away, or rationalize that powerful term which forces the homosexually-oriented Catholic to make a fundamental decision.

But without question, acknowledgment of that statement must be the "litmus test for orthodoxy" of any Catholic ministry to homosexuals. Many unorthodox ministries are now flourishing around this country, with the support of their diocese--in spite of those ministries' failure to acknowledge that a gay identity cannot be "who a person really is" in the deepest and truest sense of human identity.

This is the first such autobiography written by a Catholic, aimed at a Catholic audience, and printed by a Catholic publishing house; it is even graced by a bishop's introduction. It's about time!

The author says he was fortunate *not* to have been encouraged to self-identify as gay when he was a teenager.

Student Research Grant Offered by NARTH

To promote research on homosexuality, NARTH is offering ten research grants of \$1,000 each to selected students whose doctoral dissertations or master's theses address issues of the causes and treatment of same-sex attraction.

Each student will receive the \$1,000 stipend along with consultation time with the NARTH Research Coordinator, Joseph Nicolosi. Those students may also avail themselves of the materials in the Irving Bieber Memorial Library.

Please submit your thesis or dissertation proposal to Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D., NARTH