

Mohler would favor altering 'gay' fetus: A modest proposal

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A prominent Southern Baptist said he would support medical treatment, if it were available, to change the sexual orientation of a fetus inside its mother's womb from homosexual to heterosexual.

The idea of a hormonal patch for pregnant women was discussed by R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, on his blog, www.almohler.com, on March 2.

"If a biological basis is found, and if a prenatal test is then developed, and if a successful treatment to reverse the sexual orientation to heterosexual is ever developed, we would support its use as we should unapologetically support the use of any appropriate means to avoid sexual temptation and the inevitable effects of sin," Mohler wrote.

The ruminations by Mohler, whose theologically conservative comments are widely quoted, were called "manipulative" by a bioethicist and "playing God" by a human rights activist. Mohler also upset conservative allies who do not believe gays and lesbians are born as homosexuals but rather choose that orientation.

In an interview March 13 Mohler said he was referring to a possible hormonal treatment and not arguing for genetic therapy. He said he would also support other hormonal modifications.

"If we found out there was a prenatal test to show that a baby would have poor eyesight but a hormonal treatment . . . would restore full eyesight, what parent would not use that?" he asked. "That's not genetic treatment. We do want healthy babies."

On his blog, Mohler said there is "no incontrovertible or widely accepted proof" that sexual orientation is based in biology, yet "the direction of the research points in this direction."

Even though such treatments—if ever developed—could be years away, they are not out of the realm of possibility, said Nigel M. Cameron, president of the Institute on Biotechnology and the Human Future in Chicago.

“Certainly interventions of this kind are going to be possible,” Cameron said of the potential orientation-changing patch. “This is certainly the time to have the conversation of what we’re going to do with them.”

Mohler cited recent articles in *Radar*, a pop culture magazine, and the *London Sunday Times* that suggested the potential for hormone patches for pregnant women. The *Times* story was retracted, and a researcher involved in sexuality studies of sheep told the *Oregonian* newspaper that it was “the most ludicrous thing I’ve heard of.”

Mohler noted on his blog that he opposes aborting fetuses or embryos who “are identified as homosexual in orientation,” but said advancement on determining a biological basis for such orientation should be used “for the greater glory of God.”

Cameron said Mohler was “venturing on very dangerous ground. Ultimately, we [would] have people who essentially are the Lego products of other people who tried to put them together,” said Cameron, a member of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). “I’d be very wary of using these manipulative technologies.”

One prominent gay rights group, the Washington-based Human Rights Campaign, was outraged by Mohler’s suggestions. Harry Knox, who directs the group’s Religion and Faith program, accused Mohler of “playing God.” He added: “Sexual orientation is an immutable, unchangeable gift from God.”

If such a treatment existed, his organization would oppose it, Knox emphasized. “The gifts of LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] people to the realm of God and to God’s church . . . should not be forfeited,” Knox said.

Tim Wilkins, the founder of Cross Ministry in Wake Forest, North Carolina, which promotes the belief that gays can change sexual orientation through faith in Jesus Christ, said he concurs with Mohler that a medical “remedy” may be needed. But he said he favored religious persuasion over possible medical methods. “The answer to our sinfulness is not in a patch but in a person, and that remedy is Jesus Christ,” he said. —Adelle M. Banks, *Religion News Service*