

Christianity and Homosexuality Reconciled! Audio Series

PART ONE

Hello, this is Dr. Joseph Adam Pearson, International President and Chief Executive Officer of Christ Evangelical Bible Institute. Welcome to Part One of my audio series entitled, “Christianity and Homosexuality Reconciled!” Truly, this is “New Thinking for a New Millennium!”

What a privilege it is for me to have the opportunity to share this truth by way of an audio series. In the early 1990s, I began teaching a seminar and workshop on this topic through Christ Evangelical Bible Institute. The seminar and workshop became so popular that I eventually received invitations from many churches throughout the United States and throughout the world to present it to their congregations. Congregations need to understand the scriptural basis for the affirmation that God loves and accepts both heterosexuals and homosexuals alike. They need to learn that God does not view one as better than the other. Since 1999, my free E-book on the topic has been available online and has had at least 100,000 downloads since then. I say, “at least,” because many churches and organizations have made my book available on their own websites. My free E-book is available at www.cebiaz.com. Why is it free? I have taken to heart Proverbs 23:23, which states that we should be willing to buy the truth but not to sell it.

Recognizing that it is time for new thinking and new ideas on the issue of Christianity and homosexuality to be presented to a significantly greater number of people for this new millennium, I am pleased to be part of an effort to disseminate this reconciling information. It is important for more people to be exposed to this information in order to better facilitate discussion, dialogue and respectful debate, and eventual understanding and acceptance that Christianity and homosexuality are, indeed, reconcilable to one another.

I have developed this audio series for three major reasons: 1) to help resolve conflict within people's minds concerning the reconcilability of Christianity and homosexuality; 2) to better equip all people to combat tyranny from those who would try to rob homosexuals (as well as their loved ones) of what is rightfully theirs through Christ Jesus. (What is rightfully theirs is salvation, spiritual power, peace, joy, faith, hope and love. Everyone is entitled to all of these things.); and, 3) to bring more honor and glory and praise to our Creator, Savior and Sovereign King, Jesus Christ, by drawing more people closer to His cross and, thereby, closer to each other.

There are many homosexuals throughout the world whose guilt has been etched deeply by the official positions of various Christian denominations. And, there are many homosexuals throughout the world whose pain has been exacerbated by the unkindness shown to them through the actions and reactions of church-goers. These include family-of-origin members, co-workers and longtime friends. It is my hope and prayer that the seeming dilemma between homosexuality and Christianity be resolved, and that a higher spiritual understanding of sexuality be settled within their minds, once and for all, both now and throughout the rest of their earthly days.

This audio series also attempts to provide a rationale for traditional churches to become open, affirming and reconciling.

There are at least seven reasons for churches to become open, affirming, and reconciling:

First, churches need to more effectively reach homosexual Christians as well as their loved ones who may have erroneously concluded that God does not desire to have a relationship with them.

Many homosexuals and their loved ones have been driven out of local churches by hateful sermon messages and some have even been politely asked to leave by church leadership. This is not Christian, at all.

Second, churches need to become open, affirming and reconciling to more effectively reach nonchristians who believe that accepting Christ is

not an option for them. Recently, I conducted my seminar and workshop in San Francisco [California]. At the end of the session, someone came up to me and expressed gratitude. Although he was not Christian, he attended the seminar to find out if Christianity could be an option for him. He was grateful for the seminar, because he learned through it that Christianity was, and is, an option for nonchristian homosexuals.

Third, churches need to become open, affirming and reconciling to better minister to homosexual people already in their congregations. Recently, when presenting my seminar and workshop at a non-affirming church in California, I was told by church leadership there, “We know what to do with homosexuals who no longer wish to be homosexual, but we do not know what to do with those who do not desire to change.” This view, of course, is born of ignorance by those who think that, in order to not be homosexual, all that is required is to not have sexual intimacy with someone of the same sex. Such people equate homosexuality with a sexual act and not with a psychosocial orientation. It was very telling when the same church leadership told me that they had “ex-gays.” To them, however, “ex-gay” meant to refrain from sexual expression. The leadership acknowledged that the so-called “ex-gays” still had the same desires for people of the same sex. They just did not act on those desires. In the final analysis, there is no such thing as “ex-gay” for truly homosexual people. Perhaps there is such a thing only for bisexual people or for others on a broad gay-straight sexual continuum, who choose someone of the opposite sex as their lifelong covenant spousal partner. Again, there is no such thing as “ex-gay” for truly homosexual people.

Fourth, churches need to become open, affirming and reconciling to more effectively demonstrate Christian love and inculcate morality throughout the whole population.

It is no wonder that many homosexuals have decided that, if they are going to hell (an erroneous assumption, of course), then they might as well do whatever they like. Churches unwelcoming to homosexuals actually promote promiscuity within the homosexual community.

Fifth, churches need to become open, affirming and reconciling to help activate and better utilize the spiritual gifts God has given to homosexual people.

Homosexual people have substantial God-given gifts and talents that need to be used for the greater good of the Body of Christ — which is, of course, the Church.

Sixth, churches need to become open, affirming and reconciling to continue to meet the needs of the changing landscape of the local church.

Today, there are more divorced people than ever attending churches. If church leadership continued to harp on the sinfulness of divorce, divorced people would be driven out of the church in droves in the same way that homosexuals have been driven out. Let it be known that God requires mercy from local church congregations and their leadership, not condemnation!

And, seventh, churches need to be open, affirming and reconciling to help heal and unite the Body of Christ. From beginning to end, this audio series is meant to present a body of evidence to Christian “jurors,” so to speak, who have mostly, or only, heard the prosecution’s side of the story. I present this audio series as a body of evidence in defense of reconciliation, — not “reconciliation” between sinner and God (because the blood of Jesus Christ does that), but “reconciliation” between the seeming incongruity of Christianity and homosexuality that still exists today because of unchallenged traditional thinking. This series is intended to challenge such thinking.

Sometimes, Christian homosexuals think that their dilemma is unique to them. They need to know that there have been other historically controversial human rights issues within the Christian Church.

Over the centuries, there have been at least five major controversial human rights issues that have developed in the Christian Church, including:

First, Judaization and the rights of Gentiles;

Second, Anti-Semitism and the rights of Jews;

Third, slavery and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities;

Fourth, female clergy and the rights of women; and,

Fifth, homosexuality and the rights of gays and lesbians.

Unfortunately, at different times in history, what many people have done relative to these issues is to select out particular verses and passages from the Bible to support less than whole and less than circumspect views on Gentiles, Jews, racial and ethnic minorities, women, and homosexuals. Have all such people been malicious and stupid? Unfortunately, no. Many were well-intentioned and earnest in trying to apply what they thought the LORD God Almighty wanted them to believe and how the Lord wanted them to practice their faith. I said, “unfortunately,” because it would be so much easier to attribute all anti-homosexual attitudes and biases to malice and stupidity.

To be sure, some readings of Scripture can result in two or more different conclusions even amongst intelligent people of good will. However, it is important to also remember that, although Christians of good will can disagree on an interpretation of Scripture relative to a serious issue, they should still remain in fellowship as they await a more perfect and complete understanding of their Lord.

Relative to the five major controversial human rights issues that have developed in the Christian Church, let us first consider:

Judaization and the rights of Gentiles

Because the earliest converts to Christianity were Jews, many of them struggled with the role of Gentiles in the church and the degree to which they would be permitted to retain their non-Jewish cultures, mores, and customs. When the twelve Apostles were sent out to preach, Jesus himself gave them these instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or

enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” (Matthew 10:5-6 NIV)

Because Jesus also taught that “Salvation is of the Jews,” (John 4:22 KJV) many early Jewish converts to Christianity believed that in order for Gentiles to be received into the body of Christ, they would first have to convert to Judaism.

The twelve Apostles had also heard Jesus refer to Gentiles as “dogs” (that is, lawless pagans, barbarians, and idolaters). Consider what Jesus said when the woman of Canaan had sought a healing from him for her daughter. At first, Jesus ignored her. However, after his disciples asked him to make her stop bothering them by sending her away (Matthew 15:23), Jesus told her that he had been sent to the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24) and not to the “dogs.” Jesus said to her: “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” (Matthew 15:26, RS)

Students of the Bible know that the Canaanite woman’s response to the Christ was most worshipful: “Yes, Lord,” she said, “but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” (Matthew 15:27) He marveled at the faith behind her answer and, in response, he healed the daughter based on her mother’s faith. So, too, today, Christians who happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender are considered “dogs” by many mainstream Christian denominations. (As a side note here, transgender is a word whose meaning is still in flux and currently is used as an umbrella term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviors, and groups, involving tendencies to vary from the usual gender roles.)

Like the Canaanite woman’s daughter, all exceptions to the mainstream norm are being healed now by Christ Jesus, not of their sexual orientation and not of their gender identification but of their pain of rejection from fellow Christians who think of them as modern day “dogs” — which is to say, rejected by God, incapable of receiving salvation, and unable to take a place among God’s elect. This thinking, of course, is erroneous and incompatible with the entirety of Holy Scripture.

Early in Church history, the Apostle Peter also believed that Gentiles were unclean and impure. However, the Apostle Peter was then taught directly by God not to demean the people God chooses to save. The Apostle Peter was told, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” (Acts 10:15b NIV) Later, as recorded in Acts 10:28 (NIV), that Apostle recounted his revelation to Cornelius, a Gentile at whose house Peter had been invited to stay. Peter said:

“You are well aware that is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any person impure or unclean.”

Even though our Lord had ministered to the Apostle Peter personally and directly when Peter “fell into a trance,” (Acts 10:10 NIV) Peter eventually succumbed to his old way of thinking as well as to the peer pressure from the legalists of his day. To be sure, without guidance from Christ, the human mind cannot escape accommodating and assimilating legalism. It’s impossible.

The Apostle Peter himself could not resist the thinking that Christian Gentiles needed to be fixed. To be sure, many other early Christians tried to impose Jewish traditional laws and customs on Gentile converts to Christianity, even going so far as to convince them of the necessity for all believers to follow Jewish practices, including circumcision.

In Acts 15:1 (NIV), it is recorded:

Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

This is just like the men and women who currently teach the church that, “Unless you are heterosexual, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”

In Acts 15:5 (NIV), it is recorded:

Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees [who were the extreme legalists of that day] stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses.” [brackets mine]

This is just like the men and women who currently teach the church that, “Homosexuals must be [made] heterosexual and required to obey the laws of Moses. They must be changed.

The Apostle Peter’s entrenchment in legalism, nationalism, racism and elitism eventually became so detrimental to the early Christian movement that the Apostle Paul opposed the Apostle Peter to his face, because “he was clearly in the wrong.” (Galatians 2:11 NIV)

Today, Christians who happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender need to respectfully oppose those who are clearly in the wrong about who they are and what they can do, or cannot do, in the body of Christ.

Just as the Apostle Paul had to admonish the Apostle Peter almost 2,000 years ago for his unwillingness to follow and fellowship with Gentiles (The Apostle Peter was told by the Apostle Paul, “he was clearly in the wrong.”), so, too, should enlightened Christians rebuke the preachers, pastors, teachers, evangelists and so-called prophets of today for their unwillingness to allow full participation and involvement by Christian gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the modern Church.

When the Apostle Paul described his evangelistic team as co-laborers with mainstream leadership in the Lord’s ever-so-great harvest field, he acknowledged that the hardships they endured included being regarded by the Church as “imposters” even though they were “genuine.” (2 Corinthians 6:8 NIV)

Although Paul was personally called by our Lord to be an Apostle, he was regarded as suspect, because he had not been discipled by Jesus

Christ when Jesus was in the flesh. He was also regarded as suspect, because he was called to minister to Gentiles, who were the “dogs” of his day. The Apostle Paul was part of God’s elite and, yet, he was often viewed by his fellow church leaders, at best, as a second class citizen of the Kingdom of God or, at worst, as no citizen at all.

Today, Christians who happen to be gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender can relate to how the Apostle Paul and his evangelism team were viewed two thousand years ago. Today, Christian gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgenders are:

- 1) rejected outright as imposters, even though they are genuine; or,**
- 2) they’re assigned to a second class citizenship within the local church, permitted to sit in pews and donate their financial resources, but not permitted to minister to others with their God-given, and unique, talents and gifts.**

Do you see how Judaization and the rights of Gentiles in the early church is applicable to the plight of modern day Christian homosexuals? It is every bit as relevant to Christianity and homosexuality as the very Bible passages that are used against homosexuals. Don’t run to the verses in the Bible that are used against homosexuals without first running to the rest of the Bible. In order to be a good student of the Bible, you must hold the whole Bible while you simultaneously attend to its various parts.

Relative to the five major controversial human rights issues that have developed in the Christian Church, let us next turn to . . .

Anti-Semitism and the rights of Jews

Later in church history, as Gentile Christians gradually overtook Jewish Christians in number, there was a shift from the Judaization of Christianity to its de-Judaization. In a book entitled Our Father

Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith, the author Marvin R. Wilson notes:

Although a few Jewish Christians apparently still attended synagogue in [St.] Jerome's day [which was the fourth century A.D.] the parting of the way seems to have been largely finalized by around the middle of the second century. By [that time] a new attitude prevailed in the Church, evidenced by its appropriating the title "Israel" for itself. Until this time, the Church had defined itself more in terms of continuity with the Jewish people; that is, it was an extension of Israel.¹

The author Wilson goes on to trace how de-Judaization gradually gave way to anti-Judaism and even anti-Semitism:

In the fourth century, when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire, Jews experienced a further wave of discrimination and persecution. They lost many of their legal rights; they were not permitted to dwell in Jerusalem or to seek converts. In 339 [A.D.] it was considered a criminal offense to convert to Judaism. Several decades later the Synod of Laodicea ruled against Christians feasting with Jews, classifying those that did so as heretics. Around 380 [A.D.], Ambrose, bishop of Milan, praised the burning of a synagogue as an act pleasing to God.²

To be sure, Jesus addressed the Jews of his day as if they were illegitimate heirs to the promise given to Abraham:

"If you were Abraham's children," Jesus said, "then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.

¹ Wilson, Marvin R. Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1989, page 83. [brackets mine]

² Ibid., page 95. [brackets mine]

You are doing the things your own father does.”

John 8:39-41 NIV

Jesus also said to the Jews:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire.”

John 8:44 NIV

Jesus also said:

“The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

John 8:47 NIV

Yes, there is a rather sharp and bitter polemic in the New Testament against unbelieving Jews, but, when found, it is spoken or written by other Jews (that is, those who believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah). As such, it was a family fight. Consequently, Gentiles should not take those passages and others like them out of their historic context and use them to justify their own anti-Semitism. They need to remember that in Romans, Chapter 11, the Apostle Paul teaches that God has not rejected the Jews (verse 1) and that all Israel will eventually be saved (verses 25-26)

It is recorded in Scripture that the chief priests and Jewish elders persuaded the crowd in Pontius Pilate’s presence to ask for the prisoner Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus and to demand the execution of Jesus. (Matthew 27:20) Finally, when Pilate washed his hands concerning the fate of Jesus, it is recorded in Matthew 27:24 that the Jewish crowd who condemned Jesus then responded, “Let his blood be on us and on our children [or, in other words, on our ancestors]!”

Unfortunately, some nominal Christians have distilled from the Bible the idea that Jews are Jesus-killers and used it as their foundation for anti-Semitism. However, true Christians should be strongly opposed to

anti-Semitism, since the family of Jehovah (that is, Yahweh) includes our brothers and sisters who happen to be Jews. (By extension — so, too, must seemingly anti-gay passages be interpreted in their historic context and never used to bash gay people.) Be reminded that “there is neither Jew nor Gentile for we all are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28 NIV)

God is not done with the Jewish people or the nation of Israel. They are still among God’s chosen. Just as Christian homosexuals number among God’s chosen.

Do you see how anti-Semitism and the rights of Jews in the church is applicable to the plight of modern day Christian homosexuals? It is every bit as relevant to Christianity and homosexuality as the very Bible passages that are used against homosexuals. Don’t run to the verses in the Bible that are used against homosexuals without first running to the rest of the Bible. You must hold the whole Bible while you simultaneously attend to its various parts.

Relative to the five major controversial human rights issues that have developed in the Christian Church, let us next turn to the issue of slavery and the human rights of racial and ethnic minorities . . .

Slavery and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities

Concerning slavery and human rights, students of the Bible could look at different passages in Scripture, especially within the first five books of the Bible to find verses that support slavery. As a side note, the first five books of the Bible are called Torah by most Jews and the Pentateuch by most Gentiles.

For example, in Leviticus 25:44-46, it is stated:

Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. You can will them to your children

as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.

In Exodus 21:20-21 NIV, it is stated:

If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished, but he is not to be punished if the slave gets up after a day or two, since the slave is his property.

And, in Exodus 21:26-27 NIV, it is stated:

If a man hits his manservant or maidservant in the eye and destroys it, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the eye. And if he knocks out the tooth of a manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the tooth.

It is absolutely phenomenal that on the floor of the United States Congress in the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s many congressmen were in support of slavery. For example, on February 1, 1836, United States Senator James Henry Hammond said the following on the House floor concerning Black Americans:

The doom of Ham has been branded on the form and features of his African descendants. The hand of fate has united his color and destiny. Man cannot separate what God hath joined.³

In order to bolster their case that slavery should be the law of the land in the United States, many elected representatives held up passages like those just quoted from Leviticus and Exodus, as well as those written by the Apostle Paul that express his tacit approval (or, seeming endorsement) of slavery. *For example*, the Apostle Paul stated:

³ Miller, William Lee. Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1996, page 139.

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.”

Colossians 3:22 NIV

The burden of my argument is not to point out how horrible or immoral slavery is. Civilized and cultured people already know that. Rather, it is to point out that, for the majority of time that Christianity has been on the earth, there has also been slavery and that many Christians either owned slaves themselves or condoned slavery (and even been part of slave trading), and that nowhere in Scripture are Christians specifically forbidden from owning slaves.

This illustrates that a majority of Christians can be wrong a majority of the time, just as they have been wrong about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Nonetheless, as the children of God mature in Christ, each and every Christian can come to a more enlightened moral understanding relative to specific human rights issues involving racial and ethnic minorities as well as homosexual people.

Why should slavery not be the law of our land or any other land? Because it is inconsistent with the entirety of God’s written Word. God has no preferred socioeconomic status and God makes no social distinction:

There is neither slave nor free for we are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:28 NIV

Likewise, why should anti-homosexual feelings not prevail within the Christian church? Because they are inconsistent with the entirety of God’s written word.

Do you see how slavery and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities in the church is applicable to the plight of modern day Christian homosexuals? It is every bit as relevant to Christianity and homosexuality as the very Bible passages that are used against

homosexuals. Don't run to the verses in the Bible that are used against homosexuals without first running to the rest of the Bible. In order to be a good student of the Bible, you must hold the whole Bible while you simultaneously attend to its various parts.

Relative to the five major controversial human rights issues that have developed in the Christian Church, let us turn to the fourth one ...

Female clergy and the rights of women

Concerning female clergy, even in this day and age there are some individuals who will not enter into a church where a woman is preaching, because they feel that it is against God's written Word and codified Will. Often, to justify their misogynistic position, they quote Bible passages such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 NIV:

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

Also, in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 NIV, it is stated:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I [meaning, the Apostle Paul] do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

Those who would quote such passages to support an anti-feminist viewpoint fail to realize that the distinct separation of the sexes in the Apostle Paul's day not only determined where women sat within the synagogue but also curtailed their opportunities for education and leadership as well. All society was distinctly different then. It was still a mostly patriarchal, male-dominated and male-dependent society that had been born out of hunter-warrior days, when brute strength alone provided the survival advantage and edge. However, things are much

different now, at least in some parts of the world.

When I went to Brazil to do my seminar and workshop, a newspaper reporter asked me what I thought the future held for homosexual people in Brazil. I answered that not until women had equal rights and parity within the country could I hope for much progress to be made in the area of God-given human rights for homosexuals. When I go on missions trips to Tanzania in East Africa and to India, I note that men and women still sit in separate groups. To be sure, different cultures and societies throughout the world are at different stages in their development concerning these issues.

Whatever the Apostle Paul was addressing in the passages just quoted, because Scripture cannot contradict Scripture, these difficult passages must be interpreted in the light of other Bible passages, which indicate parity of the sexes in God's eyes.

To be sure, the Apostle Paul's actual practice, which included an extensive use of female co-workers in the gospel, as well as the whole Bible's understanding of human, as both male and female made in God's image, must be factored in:

Genesis 1:27 (NIV) states:

So God created man [not one male, but humanity] in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

An enlightened view of gender includes an understanding of

Mark 12:25 (NIV):

[Christ Jesus said] "When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven."

During the 1950s and 1960s, I regularly attended the services of the then well-known female Evangelist, Kathryn Kuhlman. She would come to the McCormick Place Convention Center in Chicago a few times a year. Every time that I saw her, she was flanked on the stage platform by as many as 100 seated males from the Full Gospel Businessmen's Association. She would say to the audience, "I know that some of you are wondering why I am standing here instead of one of these men." (She knew that there would be some in the audience who would object to having a female in such a prominent Christian leadership role.) She would then say, "If God can speak through a donkey, then He certainly can speak through Kathryn Kuhlman." (She was referring to Numbers 22:28-30, where it recounts that the Angel of the LORD spoke through Balaam's donkey.)

God is not a sexist. God has no gender preference. Consider the Old Testament roles of Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah and the New Testament role of Anna as well as other female prophets referred to in the Holy Bible. Indeed, "there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28 NIV)

Once, when I was doing my seminar and workshop, a male attendee responded when I reached this point, "Well, I tend not to count the Scriptures about Deborah because she was an exception." My response to him and to you is: "As we build our own personal theology based on Scripture, we must remember to factor in all exceptions."

Do you see how female clergy and the rights of women in the church is applicable to the plight of modern day Christian homosexuals? It is every bit as relevant to Christianity and homosexuality as the very Bible passages that are used against homosexuals. Don't run to the verses in the Bible that are used against homosexuals without first running to the rest of the Bible. If you are going to be a good student of the Bible, you must hold the whole Bible while you simultaneously attend to its various parts.

Relative to the five major controversial human rights issues that have developed in the Christian Church, let us now turn to . . .

Homosexuality and the rights of gays and lesbians in the Christian Church

To be sure, individual Bible verses have been used to foster ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism. However, it should be clear that only half-truths are presented when the Bible is not taken in its entirety. That is why, rather than building church doctrine upon only a few selected verses, Christians need to hold the whole Bible while they simultaneously attend to its various parts. They must do this as they seek to understand the fundamentals of their faith. They must understand that the Bible is a divinely inspired book, and that there is a continuity in it unequalled and unparalleled by any other book, especially when one considers the number of individuals who were involved in its production. It is only when Scripture is taken in its entirety that one comes to a more perfect and complete understanding of the whole truth on any particular topic or issue.

Our approach to Bible study, interpretation, and application needs to be hermeneutically-sound. It needs to be hermeneutically-sound if one is to derive and practice the truer, or higher, meaning of Scripture. For the sake of clarification, hermeneutics is defined by Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary as "the science and methodology of interpretation, especially of the Bible."⁴ In other words, students of the Bible must resist using only a few words or verses of Scripture to represent the entirety of God's Word, just as they should resist only using a half-truth to represent the whole truth: "Study" it says in the KJV of 2 Timothy 2:15, "study to show thyself approved unto God, a worker who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Quality study involves time, effort and energy and a consistent interpretation based on the entirety of God's written Word.

If we selectively pull out a verse here or there, and build a theology around it, we really are not bringing honor and glory and praise to the LORD God Almighty. What we are doing is furthering a personal, political or social agenda that cannot be pleasing to the LORD. Such has been the case with Bible passages that have been used to support Judaization, anti-Semitism, opposition to female clergy, slavery and the general idea that one group of human beings is superior to another. Though I believe that the writings of the Bible were under holy

⁴ Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, Riverside Publishing Company, 1984, page 577.

guidance (meaning, that it was authored by the Holy Spirit), dependence on some single verses or passages will lead to error in its overall interpretation and general application. While individual Bible verses express absolute truth, sometimes they may not have universal application.

For example, the Bible verses that are commonly used against homosexuals to tell them that their sexual orientation is an abomination to God have been interpreted out of context. Their historical and literary contexts are ignored. In other words, they have been interpreted without holding the whole Bible while simultaneously attending to its various parts. This, of course, I will attempt to prove in following parts to this audio series --- through careful analysis and synthesis of those passages viewed against their historical and literary backdrops (that is, in their true historical and literary contexts). This will indicate and include an understanding of passages immediately adjacent as well as those located in other parts of the Bible **[corrected from the audio]** that provide insights to their intended, as well as actual, meaning(s). Sometimes, when there are not adjacent verses or verses elsewhere in the Bible that will help with meaning, we must turn to historical context in order to elucidate the truer meaning.

Today, we have gone through Judaization and the rights of gentiles, anti-Semitism and the rights of Jews, slavery and the rights of racial and ethnic minorities, and female clergy and the rights of women.

Discussing these issues and related passages in the Bible is just as important as explaining the so-called clobber passages that are used against homosexuals, against homosexuality and against the homosexual orientation. Sometimes, those of us, who use Christian apologetics to defend the doctrine of reconciliation between Christianity and homosexuality, are accused of having our own so-called “gay theology.” Not true, we have theology and our understanding of it. Rather, it is those who accuse us of having a gay theology that are the ones who have a gay theology, because it is so important to them to convince others that what they believe about homosexuality is true.

If you are a Gentile Christian and a Jewish Christian came up to you and began to focus on passages in the Bible that put Gentiles in a second

class status, you would know immediately that the person had his or her own personal or political agenda.

If you are Jewish and a Gentile Christian came up to you and began to focus on passages in the Bible that put Jews in a bad light, perhaps relative to their disobedience to Yahweh or relative to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, you would know immediately that the person had his or her own personal and political agenda.

If you are a racial and/or ethnic minority and someone from the racial or ethnic majority came up to you and began to focus on passages in the Bible that directly or indirectly support a caste system or slavery, you would know immediately that the person had his or her own personal or political agenda.

If you are a female and a male came up to you and began to focus on passages in the Bible that directly or indirectly support women as second class citizens or, even worse, as the property of males, you would know immediately that the person had his or her own personal or political agenda.

Likewise, if you are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender and a heterosexual comes up to you and begins to focus on passages in the Bible that they interpret are against homosexual, bisexual or transgender people, you would know immediately that the person has his or her own personal and political agenda.

Do I have an agenda in presenting this audio series? Yes, of course. This work is dedicated to the untold number of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people who have been rejected, abused, tormented and murdered in the name of the LORD and to those who have injured themselves or taken their own lives because of the pain from their rejection and victimization. The message of this work is simple for those who are still alive: Take back your lives through Jesus Christ and be triumphant. Today, in Jesus Christ, you can have new hope!

Sometimes, when I share my seminar and workshop with groups who believe they already know all there is to know about the topic of Christianity and homosexual, attendees want to get immediately to the

half dozen or so passages in the Bible that seem to be anti-homosexual. In their zeal, they often fail to gain insights from other passages in the Bible that are **EQUALLY IMPORTANT** to this issue. For example, 1 Corinthians 1:27-29 states:

{27} But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. {28} God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are, {29} so that no one may boast before the Lord.

According to God, no flesh should boast, neither heterosexual flesh nor homosexual flesh. Boasting is an outward manifestation of pridefulness. And, God hates pridefulness.

What do the Anti-Gentile Church, the Anti-Semitic Church, the Racist Church, the Misogynist, or Anti-Female Clergy, Church and the Homophobic Church have in common? The sin of arrogance. Arrogance is also a manifestation of pridefulness. God hates all forms of pridefulness. And, God hates all forms of arrogance, including doctrinal arrogance. We are to love and respect our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters. We are to love and respect our Baptist brothers and sisters. We are to love and respect our Pentecostal brothers and sisters. And, every other Christian denomination and group that I have not named here, we are to love and respect.

I would now like to share with you how the God of the Bible is no respecter of persons.

One of the things that the Lord has taught us through His Holy Word is that He is “no respecter of persons.” To be sure, this is a commonly-used phrase in the King James Version of the Bible. Other translations render that phrase as God does “not show favoritism” or that He has “no partiality.” In other words, the Godhead is not even impressed by our outer human appearance. (Really, the Creator is not even impressed by our individual human personalities.)

As a trained biologist,⁵ I can attest that much of human personality is biochemically-inclined, physiologically-predisposed, and endocrinologically-predetermined. Indeed, genetically-determined hormone levels impinge upon our brain and cause it to act and react the way it does. That is one of the reasons that children are very much like their parents relative to personality and temperament. More often than not, adult children display virtually the same animated behavioral profile, or lack thereof, as their parents or at least as one of their parents. Regardless, in the final analysis, there should be no value judgment associated with whether somebody has an “animated” or a “low key” personality. God really does not care. He understands that much of the human personality is predisposed and not chosen.

Indeed, what God cares most about is what is within our individual hearts. We find this as a good object lesson in 1 Samuel 16:1-13. As recorded there, the prophet Samuel evaluated the sons of Jesse relative to whom God was going to choose as the second king of the nation of Israel. As the first son, Eliab, passed by, Samuel looked at him and said, “My, this is an impressive individual. Surely, this is *the* one whom the LORD is going to choose! This must be the one!” (1 Samuel 16:6) However, the LORD responded to Samuel by instructing him that He is “no respecter of persons,” and that He does not evaluate outward expression as human beings evaluate it:

The LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:7 NIV

In other words, the LORD looks at the inner core of an individual and the intent of his or her heart. According to God, the true nature — or, measure — of a person is determined by how much love is in his or her heart. It is very important for us to understand that our human person

⁵ B.S. and M.S. in Biology from Loyola University (Chicago), one year in a doctoral program in Anatomy at the University of Illinois Medical Center, and one year in a doctoral program in Biology and Biochemistry at the University of Chicago. My earned doctorate is a Ph.D. from Arizona State University and is in Education with specialization in Language, Literacy and Linguistics.

is merely an outward expression that may or may not reflect our inner core, attitude, or intent accurately. That is why God is not impressed by our outward appearance, and that is why He shows no favoritism based on it.

Indeed, our physical appearance is not impressive to God. Our personality is not impressive to Him. Additionally, He is not impressed by our sexual orientation. He does not really care about any of these things, unless, of course, we are not acting in a godly manner in relation to them, or we are not acting in keeping with what it is that He would have us to do relative to them. To be sure, abuses related to our physicality — such as vanity, self-loathing, deception (that is, presenting ourselves as other than who or what we are), and sexual addictions — are repugnant to the LORD.

Human personhood includes outward expression, physical appearance, genetic makeup, personality, and sexuality (that is, sexual identity, gender identity, sexual orientation and, in the case of bisexuals, sexual preference). Spiritually speaking, *true man* is really the expression, or person, of God, since, collectively, we are the body of His Christ. What I mean by the last statement is that, though we are not God and can never be God, when we invite Him into our lives through Jesus Christ, and when He lives within us and we do His Will, then He really is our true self. In other words, our true *being* and only real identity come from Him. As the Apostle Paul clearly stated, it is in God that “we live and move and have our being.” (Acts 17:28 NIV) And, as John the Baptist declared when he saw Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30 KJV) Paradoxically, it is in losing ourselves to God that we find ourselves in God.

We need to come to a better understanding — or, an enlightened view — of gender, which includes understanding these two verses from the Bible:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus. [emphasis mine]
Galatians 3:28 NIV

When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

Mark 12:25 NIV⁶

Ultimately, God does not evaluate us in terms of our physical reality. To be sure, He is aware of who and what we are, but He does not evaluate us on the basis of features or characteristics that have neutral value. He does evaluate us in terms of our reactions to our environment and earthly circumstances. More importantly, however, as Christians the LORD looks at the righteousness that has been imparted to us through the shed blood of His only-begotten Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When we go to heaven, we are not going to be gendered males and females. Rather, we will be “like the angels in heaven.” Often, this boggles our minds, because as human beings we have a tendency to think only in terms of images and allusions that relate to human referents — or, in other words, in terms that relate to what we now see and with which we are currently familiar. Of course, such thinking is understandable, but we really do need to elevate our thinking by focusing on things supernal:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated [on] the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4 NIV

Let me ask this of you: In the reality of God, are we spiritual beings or physical beings or both? In 1 Corinthians 15:49-50 (KJV), we read:

And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now, this I say, [brothers and sisters], that flesh and blood cannot inherit the

⁶ See also Matthew 22:30 and Luke 20:35-36

kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit
incorruption. [brackets mine]

To be sure, the testimony of the whole Bible is that human beings are both spiritual and physical. However, what we now wear is a corruptible body, a body that perishes. But, one day we will have a new body, a body that is incorruptible and that does not perish. And, that body will be glorious, for we will be wearing the glory, or brightness, of God (that is, we will be reflecting His glory)!

I believe very strongly in the triune nature of God: God as Father, God as Son, and God as Holy Spirit. As I have searched the Scriptures, I find everything that points to this particular doctrine being sound as well as providing a solid foundation for understanding the one Godhead. Some people misinterpret the phrases “God the Father,” “God the Son,” and “God the Holy Ghost” to mean that Christians are polytheistic, because they worship three gods. That could not be farther from the truth. All authentic Christians, regardless of what they call themselves, believe in one God, regardless of semantics or how they express their beliefs.

I also believe that there is a triune nature to His created (we are “His created” collectively as well as individually), and that the triune nature for each individual consists of “spirit, soul, and body,” as described in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NIV).

Thomas L. Constable, Professor of Bible Exposition at Dallas Theological Seminary, defines this threefold nature as follows:

The *spirit* is the highest and most unique part of [a human being] that enables [the human being] to communicate with God. The *soul* is the part of [the human being] that makes [the human being] conscious of himself [or herself]; it is the seat of [the] personality. The *body*, of course, is the physical part through which the inner person expresses himself [or

herself] and by which he [or she] is immediately recognized.⁷

So, the body is the form in which the individual takes shape — that is, the person’s appearance. We know what shape we are in right now (that is, how we presently appear), but we do not yet know what we will look like in heaven. In response to the question of our heavenly appearance, the Apostle John wrote:

Dear friends, now we are the children of God, and what we will be [meaning, what we will look like] has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [meaning, Christ Jesus] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. [brackets mine]

1 John 3:2 NIV

In other words, one day we will have a glorious body and heavenly form just as our Lord and Savior now has a glorious body and heavenly form. In this way, we await the redemption of our bodies:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the [children] of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one [that is, God] who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the [Holy] Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as [children], the redemption of our bodies. [brackets mine]

Romans 8:20-24 NIV

⁷ Constable, Thomas L. “1 Thessalonians.” In The Bible Knowledge Commentary by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (eds.), Victor Books, USA, page 710.

A few verses farther, Scripture states that God’s servants are “predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son.” (Romans 8:29) That is exciting! Praise the Lord! Praise God that we have this to look forward to!

God relates to His people in terms they can understand. The invisible God does not have a penis and testes (or, testicles). In all probability, He presented Himself to primitive people in masculine terms so that they (who easily understood the concept of strength as in brute strength) might better relate to His power and might. My point in this section is that God is not as gender-focused as we happen to be.

In closing Part One of this audio series, I would like to read a message from Jesus Christ to all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Christians:

Though members of My Church have rejected you, I have not rejected you! Though you have been persecuted unjustly by members of My Church, I ask that you forgive them for their trespasses against you, just as I have forgiven you of all trespasses. Since you have accepted me as your Savior, Lord and Sovereign King, then reflect Me in all of your daily social and sexual attitudes and behaviors! Hold tightly to the faith and righteousness you have in Me, for I am returning soon. At that time, all things wrong will be set aright.

I would now like to pray with you . . .

This concludes Part One of the audio series entitled, “Christianity and Homosexuality Reconciled.” Truly, this is new thinking for a new millennium. If you would like a transcript of Part One, please send an Email to drjpearson@aol.com. If you would like a full copy of the textbook, Christianity and Homosexuality Reconciled, visit www.cebiaz.com and download the entire book for free. Until next time, I stand on the Rock of Jesus Christ in full knowledge that our Lord will continue to provide for you, continue to reward you and

continue to bless you. How do I know? It is our Lord's nature to provide, reward, and bless His creation. You are one of His created! This is Dr. Joseph Adam Pearson, International President and CEO of Christ Evangelical Bible Institute, signing off for now. God bless you, and God bless us all. Alleluia and Amen.