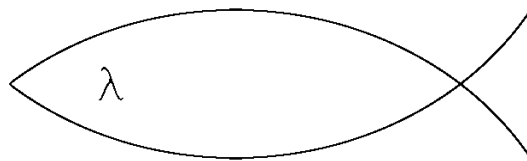


***Loving Gay
Relationships
and the
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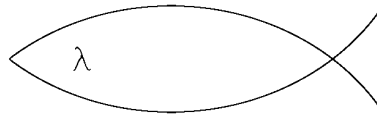
***A pro-gay
Biblical-Christian
perspective***



by
Thomas L. Larsen

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Cover Design: The fish emblem is the worldwide recognized symbol for Christianity, dating from the early days of the church when Christians were persecuted. With non-believers unaware of its meaning, Christians displaying this sign could meet other believers for support and growth, thereby enabling them to coexist in a world where many did not accept Jesus Christ. The Greek letter lambda (λ) was adopted by the ancient Greek Spartans as a symbol of their unity. They believed that the demands of society should never interfere with each person's right to be totally free and independent. They recognized that only in a common bond could they hope to preserve their existence as a free and equal people. In 1974 the lambda was adopted as the international symbol for gay & lesbian unity and equality by the International Gay

Rights Congress. As a symbol of freedom, it has come to represent the “light of knowledge shed into the darkness of ignorance,” a promise of hope and a new future, with dignity, for gay people everywhere. Many gay people meet together regularly for support and growth to help them coexist in a predominantly non-gay world. Both symbols have been combined here into a gay/Christian logo to signify the establishment of a unity between gay people and Christians, which, Praise God, should be able to abide together in harmony — giving new meaning, richness, and appreciation for life. The achievement in combining these two aspects of life is a personal triumph. The lambda symbol in the fish appears to look like the eye of the fish and this signifies the ability to “see” the true meaning of Scripture in its proper context.

Dedicated to:

My loving parents, who since the time of my disclosure have educated themselves to better understand this unique lifestyle. Their deepest wish is for me to have a healthy, happy, and successful life. The support I've received over the years has been beyond expectations in so many ways.

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PREFACE

It is my hopeful prayer that this book will help gays and non-gays alike to:

Understand this harmless feature of the personality that is naturally occurring in at least 10% of the general population around us.

Understand their part in God's divine plan.

Give growing gay Christians a Biblical way to clarify their identity and pursue opportunities for happiness and success in life.

Give defeated gay Christians a boost by redefining their life options.

Greatly increase the number of people who are able to harmonize their gay identity into a Christian belief.

Develop a Biblical understanding of and support for gay people, their identity, and their responsible loving relationships.

Incorporate gay thoughts and feelings into traditional values of Christian teaching in order to allow the two to coexist in harmony.

Gain a deeper, clearer understanding of God's Word as it relates to gay people.

Come of age in the modern Christian world and become a healthier happier child in God.

Understand, feel good about, and appreciate gay identity as natural, spiritual, and viable.

Respect natural differences in *all* people while realizing oppressive attitudes of *any* kind are not helpful to anyone.

Allow non-gay family members to find pride in sharing love and caring with someone gay.

Create a social environment that encourages individual development and participation in Christian activities open to everyone.

INTRODUCTION

Sex has always been a touchy subject among Christians, but for those Christians among us that happen to be gay, it is more so. If you are gay yourself or care about someone who is, and have difficulty incorporating these thoughts and feelings into traditional conservative Christian teachings and beliefs this book is for you.

The term gay, as used throughout this book, is defined to include both males and females of any age who are attracted to others of the same gender (sex). Some gay females prefer to be called lesbians, while others are content with the term gay. And certain individuals of either gender prefer no labels at all under any circumstances. When I use gay here, I include females and males in total equality.

In many cases, I avoid using the word homosexual — a medical term for a sexual condition — in order to shift emphasis from the time we were considered “sick” or “deviant” in some way by psychiatrists. Gay tends to include much more than just sexual feelings for others of the same gender, and that defines us more accurately anyway. (Another comparable term popular in years past before gay was widely used was homophile.) Likewise, I have shied away from using “straight,” preferring to use non-gay instead. This gets away from thinking that if we’re not straight, we are bent or defective in some way. By the same token, “we are not average” more politely describes us rather than “we are not normal.” Until we define our existence in words we ourselves accept we will continue to be oppressed and will never be free.

Those younger gay people and others new to acknowledging their identity will find the material presented here particularly helpful whether they are religiously oriented or not. Our study takes readers beyond the Bible, Christianity’s sacred book — towards an understanding of the gay lifestyle and the positive aspects of responsible loving interpersonal relationships in general for both Christians and non-Christians.

Considerable distinction is made between a responsible loving gay relationship containing deep emotionally powerful positive feelings of exchange and mere fleshy sexual lust without love. Rather than separating and then defining individual Scripture verses in a very narrow and out of context fashion, as some have been inclined to do, the reader is encouraged to view these verses within the framework of the *entire* Bible in order to get a wider and truer perspective. When studied in this manner, we are able to see clear indications that responsible loving same gender relationships are not abominations, but are actually in complete conformity with Scripture. Being gay and being a Christian can peaceably coexist together, and coexistence *is* the real world. Gay Christians need not deny being gay to be a true Christian, but rather he or she should be fully himself or herself in order to be fully Christian. By using down-to-earth examples we show how to begin to understand what the Bible really says in a more liberal way.

Examination will show that each Biblical condemnation pertaining to homosexuality is limited to behavior of a lustful nature only, while same gender feelings of love, emotional attraction, and affection for one another are not condemned, (see 1 Samuel 18:1-4, 19:1-7, 20:17, 20:41-42, and 2 Samuel 1:26). Religious homophobic dogma is behind the condemnations of these kinds of loving relationships, not God. “...We ought to obey God rather than men.” — Acts 5:29 (KJV). The only thing that separates the Christian and the gay community is an imaginary man-made, *not* God made, line. It’s time we recognize that distinction.

In Chapters one and two the reader acquires an increased consciousness for the many facets of this unique and harmless orientation beyond sexuality, and in the process has a deeper appreciation and understanding for gay people and their special kinds of relationships. Ideas and suggestions are presented in a positive way to aid these rich and varied people in raising their self-esteem and acquiring solid values that are important to everyone. The richness and respect of our identity and feelings is emphasized with encouragement to be true to ourselves and our feelings. Different kinds of feelings are not bad and do not disadvantage, exploit, use, or abuse anyone else — but rather actually add a dimension to human-kind. Diversity equals richness. Our special capabilities are seen as assets rather than liabilities that help us to be more rounded, sensitive, and creative than many others — while allowing us to contribute positive things to the world in our own special ways.

Intertwined within this presentation is information for the reader to help him or her acquire as rich and rewarding a life as possible by taking a holistic health approach; including the body, mind, and spirit equally as Biblically proclaimed (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The gay person is shown how to appreciate his or her uniqueness because it is a special God given gift that is all part of His divine loving plan in the grander scheme of things. “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” —John 1:3 (KJV). “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” —Colossians 1:16-17 (KJV). “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good...” —Genesis 1:31 (KJV). “Everything that God has created is good; nothing is to be rejected, but everything is to be received with a prayer of thanks, because the word of God and the prayer make it acceptable to God.” —1 Timothy 4:4-5 (TEV). We may not fully understand God’s purpose and plans for us, but we can be rest assured they are *good!* We *are* here according to His will. It should be comforting to know that God had a divine purpose in creating human nature where a certain percentage of human beings are more attracted to those of the same gender.

We should all use our different gifts and abilities to help others understand God’s many kinds of blessings in their various forms. “Each one, as a good manager of God’s different gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God.” —1 Peter 4:10 (TEV). “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” —Ephesians 2:10 (NIV).

That is the message — to make the gay person and those that care for us rejoice in this identity and look on it as an added ability of expression with a purpose, and not something contrary to nature and the divine to be ashamed of. Emphasis is placed upon advocating the gay person to seek out happy, stable, healthy, committed, responsible, constructive, and positive relationships — based on trust and love — which do follow Biblical principles and to have love, respect, understanding, and support for our fellow man.

It is my deepest conviction that only with moral values of this nature can a positive understanding of the phenomenon of gay identity be achieved — an understanding which can effectively destroy the grounds of prejudice, injustice, and persecution and liberate gay people to make positive contributions to the development of a more humane

community. If this isn't Godly, what is?

Along with information about how we can have an enriching joyful life, the reader sees the pain of being gay. There is no doubt that the anti-gay movement in its various disguises, has invaded America. But what is this movement all about, and how do intelligent people get lured into it? Much of the pain gay people have experienced through the years has been caused by condemnatory preconceived opinions and negative pastoral attitudes. Anti-gay views derive the most credibility from their ancient heritage, even if the customs of old have long since changed. This is a kind of abuse known as spiritual abuse — more damaging than a mutually desired sexual interaction should ever be considered. It's hard to believe that in this day and age, in this country, what, in effect, amounts to religious-sanctioned abuse could still be possible — yet it is alive and well! Truly, we have our work cut out for us.

One basic goal of this book is to educate, enrich, and enlighten the reader, while increasing the public's awareness, that these oppressive attitudes are not helpful to anyone. Sometimes a person's mind is stretched by a new idea and never goes back to its old dimensions. We need to stretch these ideas. After all, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he — change the way a person thinks and you change the person; change the thinking of enough people and you change the society; change the thinking of enough societies and you change the world. This is our ultimate goal. People tend to be the most cooperative when the evidence and logic of the situation is explained to them — evidence that has led many gay people to conclude that we are part of God's creative wisdom and children of Christ's redeeming love.

In order for *all* people to have growth-full experiences in life, *all* forms of oppression and prejudice must be removed as Scriptural teaching indicates; "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." —Proverbs 3:31 (KJV) and "...relieve the oppressed,..." —Isaiah 1:17 (KJV). Although, in all likelihood the authors of these and other verses condemning oppression did not have the gay community as such explicitly in mind when they drew up their manuscripts, yet much of what they had to say about proper and improper actions applies to the situation of the gay community. When community members from all groups are allowed to play a constructive role in society without oppressive attitudes getting in the way we are *all* enriched. The message of love in the Bible implies an absolute demand for the recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Prejudice is viewed as an infectious disability that needs to have its symptoms treated, not homosexuality. It is the child of ignorance we need to work on. When readers integrate the meaning of the present teachings with an eye to the past, truer understanding is realized.

Maybe this is one of the special gifts gay people have been endowed with. Maybe we have a divinely appointed task in the construction of a truly humane society — a society that fully realizes the wrongfulness of oppression in *all* its various forms. From Christianity which grew strong in its fight from the shackles of oppression, gay people are still fighting for their freedom. In this way we are more closely related than traditional-minded Christians are willing to admit. For one thing, like our Christian brothers and sisters, our adversity has united many of us more closely to God. We are not alienated from Him as some would want society to believe. By using this closeness as an example, our community may be able to help others see the wisdom of finally growing out of these attitudes of the past and towards attitudes signifying a truly humane society — a society very much cradled within the hands of God. We will be doing only what the

Christian community has done in the past on bringing believers into oneness with God, we just do it from a slightly different angle.

To understand the real meaning of something in the Bible and gain insight into the text we must first understand the historical and cultural customs of the time and place and then be mindful of limitations as it relates to us today — one cannot merely transpose a text of Scripture to the contemporary circumstances of our world. Our study contains some preliminary information and insight about Scriptural teachings and meanings — including the languages used in the original texts — the Bible’s authors and translators, the Bible in general, and the ancient and much different Biblical world. Learning about ancient people and the origins and lore of their beliefs adds extra dimensions to our understanding and enjoyment.

The culture of a people influences greatly the manner in which they express themselves and interact with each other, therefore understanding that culture gives great insight as to why certain things were done and not done in given situations. This information is able to provide valuable insights into the people that created some of our most profound moral beliefs, ideas, and teachings today. By tracing the evolution of the concept of homosexuality and the torturous road to its acceptance by many, we are then able to see there are intriguing possibilities of its role as containing unique members of God’s family. Our examination of history at the same time brings into perspective the rivalries and controversies we have inspired.

By surveying mankind’s relationship and historical tendency to project human experience against the framework of ancient cultures, mythology, history, and literature we are able to examine the direction modern teaching should take to transform and clarify our understanding of some of what was relayed to us from God in the Bible and how it should be interpreted in a freer manner in today’s world. The Bible is a tool of God’s Word. We have to know the proper way to use that tool. The Bible reflects ideas, beliefs, and concepts current in their own times.

The whole problem with our understanding anything about homosexuality in earlier times is that we have approached it almost invariably in the light of the way it has been understood — or misunderstood — in our own culture. If we want to understand homosexuality in the Bible, we will have to approach it as Biblical men and women understood it, not with an understanding which, because of thousands of years of homophobia in Western culture, is more than slightly warped, to say the least. Biblical teachings gauged to a first-century audience should not haunt twentieth-century Christians.

Clear and proper understandings make it possible to accept scientific theories and conclusions of historical research without fear of contradicting God’s Word. Creationist and evolutionist theories — much like non-gay and gay people — can coexist in harmony. Evolution may not be directly related to gay people, but it is tied to — comes under attack by — religious fundamentalists in a similar way. First it was evolution that came under attack by Christian fundamentalists; now that same crowd, using the same techniques, is attempting to sink its hooks into gay identity.

By delving into “traditional” values, the reader is able to see from a historical perspective how and why same gender sexual condemnations came to be preached in the ancient world, what led up to them, and why it is that same gender loving interpersonal relationships are absent from these condemnations. The message here is that Biblical teachings are intended to be a comfort and not a burden for believers. In the end, readers

are able to couple the culture of ancient times with the true attributes and intentions of God — especially His attributes of holiness, justice, and love.

For those with traditional values we'll look back and see what some of the first deplorable traditions set up by men were. Truly, traditional is nothing to be proud of when we study its origins. As far as values, we'll see that many gay people do have very high values — the important ones, the fair and honorable ones, the ones that care about human rights and equality for everybody, the ones that care a great deal about planet Earth in general which we all share with God's numerous other living organisms. Many of us in fact have a special sensitivity beyond average for these important and valuable issues and this can be readily observed in those of us free to be our true selves.

You know, many of the fine qualities attributed to our community are very Christ-like — they are qualities which distinguished Him from the ordinary man. He had an extraordinary ability to meet the individual as a unique person; where others saw a class, a type, an inferior, Christ manifested the ability to encounter the person with understanding and love. He also frequently expressed the desire to free His disciples from stereotypes and cultural prejudices. The point of this brief summary is that Jesus was an extraordinary full human person and an extraordinary free human being. The fact that our important values are similar speaks highly of the gay community. We have a wonderful confidant on our side — we need not falter.

As expected, these new ways of seeing a beloved work and notable values upsets many traditional assumptions and puts Christian leaders on the defensive. Well so be it. The truth has to be told. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." —John 8:32 (KJV). For almost two thousand years the evidence and arguments for the acceptance of gay people in the Bible have been largely ignored or concealed. Now the full story can be told. Later on we use the church's own moral teaching to refute its immoral views of homosexuality and that really stirs up fundamentalist thinking Christians. Well, it's a tough job, but somebody's gotta' do it!

Chapter three delves directly into Scripture — chapter by chapter, verse by verse, with comments on those chapters and verses of interest to our study here. We'll look at the few Biblical references traditional Christians refer to when condemning even ethically responsible, unselfish, loving, and long term gay relationships. They're worth examining because they're good examples of bad reasoning. As it turns out, they really aren't arguments anti-gay Christians can use at all, but rather mere statements intended to leave a bad impression.

Of all the references to homosexuality in the Bible, two statements in the book of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) raise the most problems. When read alone and out of context these verses sound unequivocally damning, especially for Biblical literalists who do not subject their Scriptural references to any kind of criticism, let alone scientific and historical literary analyses.

In our study we are able to examine many of the religious and social customs, beliefs, traditions, rituals, rules, and commands of the ancient Biblical world and get a "feel" for the times and cultures involved. In the process we even unravel some of the mistranslated Greek and Hebrew words in the original texts. Only with this knowledge can we hope to appreciate the true meaning of the Sacred Scriptures. Some behavior that was quite common then is rather unusual and extreme in comparison to modern standards. Readers will notice the limited amount of basic human rights, democracy, civil

rights, or equality of the sexes — some of our most prized values today — within Biblical teachings.

While Scripture appears to be rigidly interpreted whenever a gay issue is addressed, a number of ancient rules and commands, not expected to be adhered to today, are “conveniently dropped” by Christian leaders. Here is just a sampling of some of these ancient practices and teachings we will be examining:

- Slavery was accepted and slaves were commanded to submit themselves to their masters (which were always men) and respect them whether they were gentle or harsh. (Exodus 12:44, 21:1-11, Ephesians 6:5-9, Colossians 3:22-25, 4:1, 1 Timothy 6:1-2, Titus 2:9-10, 1 Peter 2:18-20, et al.)
- Infants and children were bought and sold as slaves. (Genesis 17:12 & Leviticus 25:44-46) (In modern day society it's hard to imagine a world that would accept baby selling and/or slavery but would condemn warm, loving, gentle same gender responsible relationships. Truly the Biblical world was quite different.)
- Stubborn and rebellious sons that refuse to obey, even after punishment, are taken by their parents to the town leaders and the men of the city will stone them to death to get rid of the evil. (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)
- If a man's brother dies without first having a son the living brother is to marry and have intercourse with his widowed sister-in-law. Her first son is to carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. (Deuteronomy 25:5-10)
- Those who speak lies, an abomination to the Lord (Proverbs 6:16-19 & 12:22), shall perish. (Proverbs 19:9)
- Death was also the penalty for those who curse their fathers or mothers, (Exodus 21:17 & Leviticus 20:9) or commit adultery. (Leviticus 20:10 & Deuteronomy 22:22)
- Women were second class citizens under their husband's authority. Man was created first to have supremacy and woman was to be his helper. (Genesis 2:18) Man was to rule over woman as part of the curse against her (Genesis 3:16 & 1 Timothy 2:14), because she was deceived and Adam was not deceived. Older women were told to teach younger women they were supposed to remain in the home. (Titus 2:3-5) In church women were to have their heads covered to show this authority. (1 Corinthians 11:1-16) They also had to remain silent in church and if they wanted to learn something they were to ask their own husbands at home later, because it was a shame for women to speak in church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35) Besides submitting to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22 & Colossians 3:18), women could not teach or have authority over men. They should not use outward aids to make themselves beautiful. They should not have fancy hairstyles, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes. Instead they were to have the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. She is to learn in silence with all subjection. (1 Timothy 2:9-15 & 1 Peter 3:1-7) She could teach her own male child though. (Proverbs 1:8) It was an abomination if they wore men's clothing. (Deuteronomy 22:5) (Pants are common today for both sexes.) For purification after giving birth women were required to bring to the priest a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or dove for a sin offering. (Leviticus 12:6) They were recognized as the “...weaker partner...” —1 Peter 3:7 (NIV) and in turn husbands were told to respect them. But a second wife was permitted; even one not loved. (Deuteronomy 21:15-17) If a man was caught raping a girl not engaged to someone else he must pay her father the bride price of 50 shekels of silver and she will be his wife. He can never divorce her. (Deuteronomy 22:28-29) (Today, Christians so against abortion as murder, will sometimes allow it for a rape victim. Can we even imagine making her marry this guy and she would have no say in the matter? What a different

world indeed. No longer is the man rewarded with a wife for such abhorrent behavior — thank God!)

- It was a shame, even unnatural, for a man to have long hair. (1 Corinthians 11:14) (All the pictures and statues I've ever seen of Jesus as an adult show him with long hair. Should we consider Him un-Christian for not following Scripture? Of course not!)
- Men could not cut the hair at the sides of their head or trim the edges of their beard. (Leviticus 19:27)
- We are *not* to tattoo ourselves. (Leviticus 19:28)
- People could not wear clothes made of two different kinds of material (something common today) or plant two different kinds of seeds in the same field (gardeners beware!) (Leviticus 19:19 & Deuteronomy 22:9, 11)
- We're told to put tassels on the corners of garments and put a blue cord on each tassel for all time to come as reminders to obey all the commandments. (Numbers 15:37-41 & Deuteronomy 22:12)
- Under penalty of death, we're prohibited from doing *any* work on the Sabbath day now and for all time to come. (Exodus 31:14-17, 35:1-3, & Numbers 15:32-36)
- When we build a new house we are to put a railing around the edge of the roof so we're not responsible if someone falls off and is killed. (Deuteronomy 22:8)
- If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them grabs the other man by his genitals in order to help her husband she is to be shown no mercy and her hand is to be cut off. (Deuteronomy 25:11-12)
- Animal sacrifice rituals common then would be quite unorthodox today — even unlawful.
- Some foods we would be prohibited from eating today if we followed the rules pertaining to foods would be: pork, rabbit, shrimp, shellfish, lobster, scallop, clam, oyster (Leviticus 11:6-12), and even blood red rare steaks. (Leviticus 17:10-14) (Some of these were even considered abominations to eat, but it sure hasn't stopped Christians with a fundamentalist theology from eating ribs or shrimp at the Sizzler or rare steaks if they like — nor should it.)

While some of these practices seem severe to us today, if we could be transported back to the transgressions of Biblical days we could see why it was necessary to have such strict rules and laws. The message here is that the world was so much different then, and these rules and laws were not meant to be literally adhered to for all times.

If we are to interpret the few “condemnations” against homosexuality in the Bible to literally prohibit responsible loving same gender relationships, as some say we should, then should we not consistently adopt the rest of the Biblical pronouncements? Can one just claim that a few tiny verses are eternal truth and all the rest are culturally relative and not applicable to our world today? How come Christians *conveniently* forget about these things? Hmmm. Truly, the person who desires to be a literalist, if entirely consistent, encounters a number of problems. Let the one who has never eaten shrimp, shellfish, lobster, scallop, clam, oyster, or even regular old pork cast the first stone.

Gay people need to realize that traditional Christians have dozens of charges up their sleeves, and they produce them whenever they think they can make an impression on people who know even less than they do. These off-the-wall allegations sow confusion in gay people's minds. After all, most gay people aren't conversant with the finer points of church history or practice, and a confused gay person is a ripe target for spiritual abuse. Those of us who do not have a good grounding in our own beliefs of ourselves often find

we cannot answer the accusations even to our own satisfaction, let alone to someone else's. So much of this kind of thing has been going on over the last few years that many gay people come to believe it and, worse yet, non-gays who have already been uneasy about us become confirmed in their antagonism against us.

As it turns out, average literal thinking Christians have not been trained to think through a particular verse or passage in relation to its context either; whether that be a few verses or a few chapters. Nor do they customarily appraise it in the light of its particular place and time of origin, which is scientific historical criticism. No one ever said that a high degree of technical scholarship was required to enable ordinary people to understand the central themes of the Bible. Anyone can be expected, however, to use all of his or her intelligence and learning when interpreting the Bible. Granted that any kind of specialized knowledge presupposes specialized training, it is understandable, for example, that the average person would not be familiar with all the Biblical background presented in this book. Nevertheless, it should be repeated that no intelligent reader, gay or not, should *ever* try to interpret a Biblical verse out of context. Having an appropriate “feel” for the times allows us to put all of Scriptural teachings and meanings into the proper perspective as to what God intended and I truly hope *all* readers can arrive at proper conclusions.

Clearly not every Scripture is meant to be interpreted in a literal sense and valid in all ways for all times — some would be downright silly or even illegal to follow today. While it is clear from Scripture that God does not change, (“For I *am* the LORD, I change not;...” —Malachi 3:6 [KJV] and “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” —Hebrews 13:8 [KJV]) we do see how He taught differently. Between the time span separating the Old and New Testaments rules and commands have been changed. An “eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” teaching (Exodus 21:24 & Leviticus 24:19-20) gave way to “turn the other cheek.” (Matthew 5:38-39).

Our approach to the Bible is not to accept everything literally, but to hold it up against historical and cultural backgrounds and interpret it in the context of contemporary situations. Many of the subtle and direct implications that the Bible is against all same gender sexual interactions can be laid to rest. The Bible can be interpreted in a freer manner and still be followed in its principles. There is not a conflict when we are able to look at Scripture in a more liberal way as it was meant to be. Gay people can affirm their orientation in their faith, express their responsible loving relationships in Scripturally acceptable ways consonant with Jesus’ teaching of love, and of course be welcomed into the Kingdom of God. Gay people can be born again, and gay believers can be in full and equal fellowship with God and other believers in the Body of Christ. As Bible believing gay Christians we can reconcile and integrate our sexuality and our Christian lives. There is no need to have an inner conflict between Christianity and same gender feelings of love and affection. Maybe this work will help make that a little clearer. Let us now sample the riches of modern Biblical studies.

PRAISE GOD!!!

and may His loving presence be
with you throughout your study



CHAPTER 1

Having been raised as a Roman Catholic since birth I found it difficult in the mid-1960's, while going through puberty, to accept my new found inner attractions towards others of the same gender. It took a lot of soul-searching, reading, and friendly support to allow my Christian upbringing to peacefully coexist with my inner natural and inborn feelings. Many of us then did not have support and consciousness-raising groups to help us understand and explore this particular aspect of our lives. Often in our walk we'd come across people who would try to implant fear in us as we searched out the truth. Frequently they succeeded because we were unfamiliar with our feelings, and unfamiliar always seems to get resisted whether it's people, ideas, or whatever.

New windows of understanding are now opened to us and we are slowly growing and making progress by questioning old assumptions. It is these valuable windows that should now serve as the basis of moral evaluation. Today gay people just becoming aware of their orientation, no matter at what age in their life, have available more growth and support groups, positive reading material, and educationally oriented television shows to help them through this sometimes difficult time. All of this has helped many to avoid self-destructive stages and has brought about more enlightened attitudes. Although those just becoming aware are not stigmatized nearly as badly as we were previously, there is still a lot of room for improvement.

Some of us have overcome the pain and suffering we've experienced and, like a cat that lands on its feet, we've come out on top. We have paid our dues. Now we have a responsibility to those with less emotional stamina who are not as comfortable with their gay orientation to show them encouragement, sympathy, direction, and guidance at a time they need it most critically. We need to help change attitudes and create an environment of understanding so that all gay people can live with dignity and respect. By emphasizing positive aspects about our lifestyle we can alleviate many of the needless fears, personal guilt, shame, hostilities, anxieties, resentments, depression, and the stigma that follows. Those raised in homes with traditional conservative Christian values should not have to experience these feelings of pain. We need to help others build self-esteem, to become more aware of their consciousness, and *encourage* them to develop stable, healthy, and happy personalities and relationships. Words of wisdom give the perspective to allow that to transpire. We are then following Biblical pronouncements in helping our fellow man. "...if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so..." — Romans 12:7-8 (TEV) and speak in talk "...only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs..." — Ephesians 4:29 (NIV). All that is essential for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing. No one can do everything, but *each* of us can do something.

All people need and have a right to have a positive sense of self-worth, self-concept, and self-image, along with a healthy view of themselves and personally satisfying values. We all have a God-given desire to be somebody. "Let us not give up meeting together,...but let us encourage one another..." — Hebrews 10:25 (NIV). Gay people can support one another, survive, and grow stronger. Non-gay people who love someone gay can also help. Let's associate with family and friends who are positive, who enjoy life, and who delight in the wonderful varieties of people God has put upon the face of the Earth. We should celebrate and affirm natural human differences in *all* people, because

we are one planet, one people.

Those of you who are having a difficult time with your orientation should concentrate and meditate on God's grace, love, and acceptance — not on the criticisms from other people. The basic message in the Old and New Testaments of Judeo-Christian history is that God loves people, *all* people. Being gay is an asset, not a liability. It is a natural and unique gift given to some of us at birth. "...each one has a special gift from God, one person this gift, another one that gift." —1 Corinthians 7:7 (TEV). "Each one should go on living according to the Lord's gift to him, and as he was when God called him...." —1 Corinthians 7:17 (TEV). Every child of God has specific qualities unto which they are called. God doesn't give you something he doesn't want you to have. If God hath called gay people — who are these homophobes to recall them?

Don't apply ugly labels to yourselves in negative hurtful ways, because if you do you'll tend to become the labels you give yourselves. Don't compare yourself with others. "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else," —Galatians 6:4 (NIV). Eleanor Roosevelt once said; "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." You are a unique person; no one else is quite like you. Your place can be filled by no one. It is this personal uniqueness of every individual which forms the necessary basis for the possibility of true human love. God enjoys you in your uniqueness, so have a similar attitude toward yourself. Be proud of some of your differences. Life is like a flower, it just keeps blooming — so blossom where you are planted. You *are* somebody. You have a right to be the real you!

Sometimes we help ourselves by helping others to see themselves as God sees them. We can do this by accepting, loving, and encouraging them. Have the confidence and dignity you deserve as one of God's unique human creatures. Recognize the goodness of your identity and feelings and appreciate those differences. Enjoy *yourself* as the gay person you happen to be. Don't be shackled into a life which is unnatural for you. Don't get tied up with the bigotry and hatred others may have. That is not God's way. Live with honor, free at heart and in the Spirit. After all, honor is the strength of the human soul, nurtured in the inalienable right that *every* human being is *somebody* in God's eyes. We *are* His creation. His loving presence is with us, and within us. When we walk with Him as we naturally are we demonstrate our love for Him. It is all right to be whomever you are, regardless of gender and/or sexual orientation.

Our orientation is a normal variant in a wide range of viable options. Although it is natural and normal, it is certainly not the norm. All of creation has exceptions to the norm — while most people are right-handed, some are left-handed; although most people have two eyes of the same color, some have a different color in each eye; some people possess a gifted and natural talent for music, art, dance, or athletics while others do not. One person may have a strong desire to study the microscopic intricacies of insects as a devoted lifetime profession and hobby while someone else can care less.

When we are ourselves, we are doing what is right and pleasing in the eyes of God. When our lives reflect God's character, we are a lot happier and it affects our attitude about ourselves. In the simplest terms, just be kind to yourself when you judge your lifestyle. Accept your own natural feelings in small steps at a time. Just for today, deal with today's problems. Just for today, accept where and who you are — share, care, and hug. It is the dignity and quality of your life, your capacity for trust and love, the way you

honor God *as you understand Him*, and how you serve and are responsible to your fellow man that counts; not the gender of the person with whom you involve yourself romantically and intimately with. When God made the Sun, Moon, and stars He made no distinction between race, creed, color, or sexual orientation. He's interested in deeper philosophical issues. God has *no* sexual preference.

Growth and acceptance sometimes takes time. Positive aspects about our lifestyle, after all, haven't been around all that long. They're still evolving, as are the abilities of society to understand them wisely. So just relax, be patient and take it easy, acceptance will come. Time is a great teacher. Be gay on your own terms. You are not alone. Many other gay people also share your same values. "To know you're not in a perfect situation is human; to know you're not alone is divine." —author unknown. You'll recognize acceptance when you obtain it — it's sort of like the peace of an inner awakening. "True peace is the presence of justice." —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We also have a responsibility to each other to act in a way that will show the general public, the 90% non-gay community, that we are worthy of their respect. Always behave in a manner that will enhance the image of the gay community in the eyes of the public. The whole community would really be seriously in trouble if you removed all the gay people who are making enormous contributions to everybody. Many businesses, corporations, and public and private organizations would suffer enormous economic losses, and some may even cease to function altogether, if every homosexually inclined professional person were to be dismissed. Many great discoveries are made by non-conformists. Some of the most creative and productive people in the community are gay — in fact some vocations require qualities that gay people have a particular abundance of. Creativity makes the unusual possible, and it is the unusual that advances our civilization. These brave ideas could very well frame the future structure of reality and perhaps shatter some bad myths along the way.

We must all do our part to enlighten and educate those less informed that homosexuality is on a continuum with heterosexuality and that it is well within the range of the variation of creative nature possible among all human beings. God presents us with many varieties of life every day — gay people are just one variety to experience, appreciate, and value. Just one harmless feature of the personality that some people have; that's really all there is to it — surely nothing to get all bent out of shape about!

Some societies and cultures have been more accepting of us than others. We too need to shift our thinking to new and exciting viewpoints. That thinking clears the mind. It is interesting to note that those cultures that were relatively tolerant of male homosexual practices were also inclined to combine that quality with an enhancement of the status of women, whereas those cultures that viewed male homosexual practices with repression and horror combined that with a subordinate view of women. Tragically, the culture that brought us our Bible, the male-centered patriarchal one, shared the more repressive views and today we are still feeling the fallout. Just look at the inequity of women in the work place. It wasn't too many years ago when some high level job positions were totally off limits to women. Have you ever thought before where such a repressive doctrine originated? It's sure time we do because only when we do will we all work toward putting an end to it. Making ourselves aware of our country's repressive and homophobic heritage is the first step in changing it.

Whatever we do, we must not leave it to the other guy. "Do not allow what you

consider good to be spoken of as evil.” —Romans 14:16 (NIV). We all have it within our power — God given power — through education, to make the world a little better, or at least keep it from getting worse. With unity this can be accomplished. We may not always succeed — but unless we try, we cannot *possibly* succeed. We must not reject our gay Christian brothers and sisters. They need not suffer theological guilt any more. Situations like the AIDS crisis may make our educational efforts more difficult, but if we wait for perfect conditions we’ll never begin.

As part of a person’s sexual education and training they should be made aware that it is possible to be attracted in various degrees to different individuals of either gender, and even to individuals of differing ages or races. Some people have different tastes in the people they prefer to become intimate with, just like some people have different tastes in the kinds of foods they are fond of eating. For some very liberal independent thinking individuals — gay or non-gay — it doesn’t matter if their partner is closely related; while for many this is considered a taboo, and a line they would never cross under any circumstances, no matter how attracted they may be to each other, whether they are religiously oriented or not.

Being gay does not mean having *only* sexual feelings for someone of the same gender either. We are *not* that limited. The landscape of the heart is a big place. It also means that we are able to involve ourselves fully — emotionally, spiritually, sensuously, erotically, and intellectually with someone of the same gender. Each person can interrelate in a whole and satisfying way. We are not fixated at a stage far short of full emotional and sexual development as some “shrinks” have claimed. We fully understand and appreciate the differences between mere sex and responsible loving relationships. Both are equally possible in the gay and non-gay worlds.

Likewise, being gay does not mean we cannot interact sexually with someone of the opposite gender either. It just means we find those of the same gender more exciting. The gay person may be more attracted to persons of the same gender in general, but a particular sexual relationship is based on individual attraction, not general attraction. We must not forget those who find the opposite sex more exciting and only have some attraction for those of the same gender, or those bi-sexuals who have equal or near equal attractions for both sexes. The various degrees in the wonderful world of human love and sexuality are infinite. Our world spins on a very diverse axis. Love truly does come in all kinds of packages.

Homosexuality and heterosexuality are not absolute independent phenomena, but rather the two are bridged by a large bi-sexual segment of the population that harbors different degrees of bi-sexuality. The matter is somewhat clearer when we illustrate it graphically and assign values to these degrees. For this example, let’s use a volume control marked from 0 (no sound) to 100 (maximum volume) and call these numbers percent. Now let’s assume a person’s range of sexual orientation is displayed someplace along this scale. Let’s place a totally non-gay person (one with no attraction for someone of the same sex) at 0 percent, a totally gay person (one with no attraction for someone of the opposite sex) at 100 percent, and a bi-sexual person (one attracted equally to both sexes) at 50 percent. The point of our interests is not limited to one of the three categories (0, 50 or 100) as many think, but, like a volume control, can actually lie anywhere along

the scale.

Those, like me, with a small amount of attraction for some people of the opposite sex could be placed at the 95 percent spot. The term I use for this range of sexual orientation is the gay/non-gay ratio. Although I consider myself gay, as anyone more highly attracted to those of their own gender does, that does not accurately define a person's sexual orientation. My gay/non-gay ratio is 95/5, and that defines me more accurately than just saying, I am gay.

And should this range surprise anyone? Why should it? We see examples of infinite variations every day in nature. Some people have a very light skinned coloration while others have very dark skin tones. And in-between these extremes we see every variation possible. So just why should we be surprised to find our sexual orientation also has ranges between two extremes?

Unfortunately, too many people, even professional therapists, often aren't aware of these infinite variations. They assume you're either gay, bi, or non-gay; no acknowledged concept of gray areas in-between is recognized. (They don't even realize they possess their own ratio.) That's as silly as saying the sky has to be either totally clear, exactly half clear/half cloudy, or totally cloudy — yet we all know the infinite variations in-between. I once answered a therapist's inquiry as to whether I was gay by saying, "I'm 95/5." Then it took me awhile to explain, at my expense, what someone trained in such matters should have known.

Many people will be surprised to learn that a good deal of those considered "straight" by all who know them are often a few percentage points up from 0. They would never admit it — often not even to themselves — and would surely never act upon their feelings, but for these people, they find some members (usually those that fit within a very narrow range of characteristics) of their own gender sexually attractive. These people can sometimes be discovered because they are the worst offenders who participate or initiate fag jokes, or worse yet, wish to beat up gay people. Although this is not directly related to our subject of Christianity we have to be aware of this aspect of some people as it may relate to us.

For certain people, their range of interests along the sliding scale we describe above may fluctuate back and forth in varying amounts at different times in their lives. Sometimes this fluctuating can be measured in days, at other times, years. It could become relatively fixed at one point for a long time, even at a point considerably different from where the person was previously. This is easier to appreciate when we understand it is not unlike people acquiring or losing a taste in certain food items. I hated pizza as a child, nothing my parents did could get me to even try such a "gross" looking thing; now I love it. I don't know why my taste changed, nor does it really matter — but I do know I didn't consciously try to start liking it. There's no use getting bogged down worrying about it. I just accept it, enjoy it, and move on. This same philosophy pertains to any shift in interests we may have — whether it's people we wish to interact with, hobbies we wish to engage in, kinds of TV shows or books we wish to enjoy, or whatever. It's all part of God's infinite variability.

Of course, it's just as viable to be *invariable* in some matter in our lives. I always hated seafood and still do. Like any other innate part of my true self, I accept it and move on without getting bogged down.

Being we are made in the image and likeness of an infinite God ("And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:..." —Genesis 1:26 [KJV]), we are able to

see how our range of interests can be infinite. Let us not think of ourselves above or beneath another, but be kindly and affectionate to each other. We should not conceive this idea to be inconsistent with what we know of the attributes and operations of the Almighty.

Beyond all that, some people are interested in people that only fit within a very narrow range of specific characteristics such as age, physical appearance and/or having certain physical features, personality etc. Others have a broad range of attributes they find attractive. Here again the range is infinite and may fluctuate. Some physical features I now admire were once viewed with less enthusiasm. There should be no problem in showing these enriching and wondrous ranges in which sexuality manifests itself on this planet.

One of the best ways to reduce misinformation, misconceptions, and myths about sex is to openly discuss such matters in our schools. Young people may be the best emissaries for peace between our gay and non-gay brothers and sisters, prejudice has not yet solidified in them. "...God has called us to live in peace." — 1 Corinthians 7:15 (NIV). However, teaching younger people the honest and positive aspects of gay people has become a captive of politics, held hostage by various pressure groups — particularly the conservative thinking Christian community. The notion that the way to protect young people from something is to keep them in ignorance of it betrays not only a strange lack of confidence in the good sense of the younger generation, but also goes contrary to what we know about the learning process.

There will always be people who are afraid that if their children learn some basic concepts of natural differences in human nature they will draw away from various faiths, or worse yet "catch" it. That mentality can't be helped. There will be fierce arguments over open, honest, and liberal teaching, unavoidably. To its credit, the gay community seems to be trying to increase the role of natural variations in the curriculum — and its quality. With this knowledge to draw from, the next generation will be able to show kindness and hospitality to gay people they will meet many times throughout their lifetimes. Hmmm, kindness and hospitality — isn't that what Jesus teaches? Youth who are adequately educated in an unbiased, varied, and enriched intellectual environment will develop the unique capacity to think independently. These efforts need to be backed strongly and more public attention needs to be focused on the issue.

Gay people don't bite. In our own unique way we can make the beauty of the world that much more beautiful. I wish I had learned that simple fact when I was younger, in an environment that nurtured my unique and natural difference. But that's past. What counts now is that tomorrow's developing gay people should have that chance too — and right now they're being cheated out of it.

There are as many different kinds of gay people as there are different kinds of people as far as tastes, personalities, and other aspects about people are concerned. We are as varied as any collection of human beings can be. The one thing gay people have in common is an awareness that they are attracted in all ways, including sexually, to some people of the same gender. What they do with this awareness varies. Deep loving, intimate, caring, sharing, and responsible interpersonal relationships can be just as strong,

healthy, and conducive to growth in the gay population as they can be in the non-gay population. These natural qualities are shared by many of us and they're a part of what makes us such a wonderful and varied people. We need to be proud of that. But to truly love someone, we must first accept and love ourselves, and shed preconceived negative ideas we may have.

On the darker side, no more important fact needs to be established than the fact that gay people are no less varied than their non-gay counterparts. There are violent gay people as well as non-violent; there are sensitive and insensitive, selfish and unselfish, religious and irreligious, moral and immoral, weak and strong, promiscuous and faithful. We are as varied in our qualities and sensitivities as is humanly possible. These are facts of life in *any* community or culture; some people are just dirty rotten scoundrels, there is no getting around that. I sure don't want to lead anyone astray that we're all angels — I just want our non-gay brothers and sisters to understand we are not devils either or afflicted with the devil as some "learned" Christians claim.

The moral here is to meet each individual person on his or her own merits without regard for prejudicial views others may have about people just because they are associated with some group. Identifying a person by his or her sexual orientation does not automatically stress certain qualities and eliminate others the person has. It goes without saying, that being without prejudice is the Christian thing to do — that spiritual message is taught throughout the Bible.

One of the myths that has been perpetuated by our anti-gay society is that all gay feelings are sexual feelings. We are told we are capable of only shallow affection and that our lives are enslaved and ruled by unnatural sexual desires. Or that we all are so totally preoccupied with the pursuit of sex that we are incapable of controlling ourselves. This is not true. Although gay people can lose control of their sexual powers, this condition is also shared by non-gay people. Unfortunately this is what is often focused on when we are thought of because it is the facet of our difference as gay people that is noticed most by the world in general. We are actually much more than that. Being gay is just as much an emotional attraction as a sexual attraction. Gay feelings can run as broad and deep a range as non-gay feelings. For many they encompass passionate love, sensitivity, compassion, joyful caring, warm and gentle tenderness, sympathy, respect, reliability, responsibility, understanding, and altruism. Sexual interaction helps to express these feelings in honest and moral ways where words fail. This is possible when our interacting is an instrument within our control for the true expression of human love.

Gay people do express their gay feelings non-sexually as well, but the internal struggle with gay feelings is apt to focus more on sexual feelings and sexual behavior because sex has been made the all-too-visible center of the sexist taboo. Other parts about the person are just as important as having a pleasing to look at body. It is only possible to love a person because of the way the whole person is.

This book places a lot of emphasis upon encouraging growth oriented same gender responsible loving relationships. We will be pointing out that same gender demonstrations of affection are not condemned in the Bible. In the case of Jonathan's deep emotional attraction and love for David (of David and Goliath fame), it is mentioned only in the briefest sense. While there are no indications of interacting

behavior beyond kissing, David's beautiful lament about Jonathan's death in battle leaves no doubt as to the intensity of these feelings of affection. "...very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." —2 Samuel 1:26 (KJV). Merely kissing alone sheds no light on the subject because a kiss on the cheek among males was and is a common courteous practice in Middle Eastern cultures and does not indicate homosexuality. Jesus Himself kissed others as Matthew 26:48-49, Mark 14:44-45, and Luke 22:47 attests to. Christians will be quick to point out that David was a direct ancestor of Jesus and ordained by God to be king. We're not saying that David was predominantly gay — just that Jonathan had an especially intense crush on him and the Bible never condemned these feelings of affection. Whether there existed a relationship of physical love between the two cannot be demonstrated with certainty. However, the right words are there. Hundreds of years later, in the early 16th century, the great gay sculptor and painter, Michelangelo, immortalized David's vibrant and magnificent beauty in marble as a nude adolescent figure. This of course is only the artistic imagination at work, but artists do have a way of seeing more than ordinary persons can see.

The suggestion that the Bible contains an account of a noble love affair between two males, one of whom is the Old Testament's greatest hero, is an idea that will be unacceptable to some. Their loving words are denied — or simply called metaphors — by those who believe that the people of the Hebrews could never have been so drastically influenced by the peoples around them to the extent that they would succumb to such an "undignified" and "unmanly" type of love. But this is contrary to the point; it *was* both dignified and manly — in fact, often associated with heroes — in the cultures that surrounded Israel. And how could Israel not have been influenced by these cultures? How could it have adopted an entirely different sexual ethic, living as close as it did to foreign influences where homosexuality to some degree existed right alongside heterosexuality? Israel had only recently begun to move in the direction of becoming a nation and it is natural that it should look to its neighbors for models. Whether one believes Jonathan and David's relationship progressed beyond spoken words or not, there is enough evidence for that possibility that it should be given consideration. We'll address their relationship in more detail later on in our study of 1 & 2 Samuel.

Current history books used in our schools do not even go that far. By purposely leaving out the homosexual or bi-sexual orientation of some of the most important and famous people in the world, gay people are systematically robbed of history and denied the chance to share in or know our rich cultural heritage. In doing so, students are given the mistaken belief that they are all heterosexual. We cannot ignore that some of the heroes of past and present are gay or bi-sexual.

Why this double standard exists for gay people has never been honestly explored. If a person is Jewish or Jehovah's Witness or Hindu, divorced or married or single, Asian or Icelandic or Kenyan, those personal and private facts are duly reported. Only in the case of gay people does this silly rule of invisibility apply. It seems to be based on the hackneyed non-gay assumption that, somehow, being a gay person is innately bad. Never mind that such a person may be well-bred, well-educated and has done a terrific job, is a pillar of the community, has had a stable romantic and responsible relationship, even attend church every Sunday. If he or she is gay, history pulls a pious veil of privacy around that face. Why? Because doing otherwise would confirm the terrifying (to non-gay folks) truth that gays are normal, happy, well-adjusted, hardworking, capable and

everywhere.

Such information must not be hidden any longer because these lies of omission are outmoded, dishonest, defeat true understanding, and leave an imbalance in education. Any mis-information is an unworthy act of man that must be challenged. It is not true to say that this false teaching, or any primitive logic, harms no one. Not only are gay people harmed, but it harms all of society by destroying the basis of trust and mutual confidence on which society must rest if it is to survive. We should not be limited to reading a book specializing in our history and culture in order to rediscover and restore that part of our lost heritage and know the truth. We now have an obligation to rescue that heritage for *all* humanity and to share it with pride. Only by learning of our roots and acknowledging the truth can we understand our true selves.

Many in the past — including many who made great contributions to humanity, the arts and sciences — were forced to live out their lives in the closet. Countless others, open in their day, have been relegated to the closet of oblivion or denigrated by falsely heterosexualized biographies, often provided by closeted homosexual friends and historians. Their letters, memoirs, poetry and memorabilia have been destroyed, mistranslated, hidden, falsified or written off as “mere flowery language” to hide evidence of gay inclination. And when evidence has been unmistakable, the subjects have been made into non-persons.

Many of our brothers and sisters are lost to us forever — the record sealed — and even today, the same cover-up techniques are being used. (One detailed article about Sir Isaac Newton in a recent scientific publication mentioned only a “lack of involvement with women” in his life.) Fortunately, some records have survived. For some the evidence of their gayness is unmistakable, for others it is much more closeted, but still evident beyond a reasonable doubt. It’s hardly an exaggeration to say that today’s homophobic plague is robbing us of our gay heritage. Here are just a few of those who have contributed to our multi-faceted heritage — a few whose gayness or bi-sexuality was well evidenced, even if it was not always publicly expressed. We celebrate them with pride: Alexander the Great, Hans Christian Anderson, Susan B. Anthony, Aristotle, Francis Bacon, Lord Byron, Julius Caesar, Emily Dickinson, Amelia Earhart, Malcolm Forbes, Rock Hudson, Langston Hughes, Joan of Arc, Janis Joplin, Helen Keller, Leonardo da Vinci, Liberace, Abraham Lincoln¹, Martina Navratilova, Michelangelo, Napoleon Bonaparte, Sir Isaac Newton, Plato, Cole Porter, Eleanor Roosevelt¹, William Shakespeare, Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Andy Warhol, Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, and Tennessee Williams. The list could go on and on, scores of ancient Greek poets, philosophers, sculptors, kings and queens from every country, writers, musicians, inventors, rebels. This is only a very *small* sampling from more extensive notes.

Gay people are in *every* facet of government and society — including the United States military services, which continues to be very homophobic in their attitudes. Few heard about gay people in the Persian Gulf War (or any other past war for that matter), yet we were there right alongside our non-gay brothers and sisters contributing in equally dedicated and patriotic ways. Yes, it takes dedication to work for an organization that will spend millions of taxpayer dollars to expose and discharge suspected gay people —

¹ For evidence on this see Michael John Sullivan, *Presidential Passions* (136 West 22nd St., New York, New York 10011: Shapolsky Publishers Inc., 1991), pp. 215-218 (Lincoln) & 145-151 (Roosevelt).

people who have done an outstanding job for our country despite having the extra and unnecessary burden of worrying if they are going to be found out. To homophobic military officials this outstanding service doesn't matter. For them loving your country and being willing to die for it isn't enough — they want you to be sexually “correct” also. They'll spy on and threaten military friends and co-workers of a suspected gay person, if necessary, for information in order to expose such “incompatible behavior” — a violation of Department of Defense Directive 1332.14.

In the 1980's while many institutions were becoming more tolerant of homosexuality, the military was actually moving in the opposite direction. Let's hear what Sam Donaldson said on the April 15th, 1993 edition of ABC-TV's *PrimeTime Live* about this subject: “There is a country where citizens still fear a knock on the door in the middle of the night. A place where people are ordered to denounce their friends and threatened with prison if they don't confess. This country is the United States, and the subjects under attack are people who have chosen to serve their nation. They are homosexuals in the military, and the hunt for them is leaving a trail of broken careers and damaged lives.” *PrimeTime* reported that “according to government records, between 1980 & 1990 17,000 gays and lesbians were hunted down and kicked out of the military with a zeal with which the government often conducts the search is to some reminiscent of the communist witch hunting days of the 1950's.” Readers wanting more details on *PrimeTime*'s story can obtain a transcript of the episode by sending \$7.00 to: Journal Graphics, 1535 Grant St., Denver, Co. 80203, or by calling: (303) 831-9000. A video cassette is also available by calling the same number.

If this isn't bad enough, the May 13th 1993 episode of *PrimeTime Live* and the June 14th 1993 episode of *The Maury Povich Show* reported that while all this gay and lesbian witch hunting was going on, the U.S. Navy for over 30 years condoned and promoted prostitution between “clean” Filipino women and sailors stationed at Subic Bay in the Philippines. As it turns out, to be sure there was a supply of disease free women the U.S., at taxpayer's expense, medically examined, registered, and issued work permits to the Filipino women so our servicemen would know they were with someone “clean” and safe. And now on top of all this, now that the base is closed the Navy is doing *nothing* for the 8,600 Filipino-American children our sailors left behind. Instead of getting on the dead beat sailor dads as they should, it seems they would rather spend their time aggravating innocent gay and lesbian service people just wanting to live within their own nature and serve their country in peace and with pride. Don't believe such brazen misdeeds? Check out a transcript for that episode of *PrimeTime Live* too.

Public pressure may speed along the process of bringing the military to its senses, but, as we approach the end of 1993, this is still the tragic and costly official policy. In February 1992, then Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Colin Powell addressed the issue by saying that gays in the military is “inconsistent with maintaining good order and discipline.” He further said how non-gay soldiers would be uncomfortable working around gays and that separate showers and living quarters would be necessary if they were serving together. It's noteworthy to mention that some of his reasons to exclude us are the very same ones that were used earlier in the 20th century to justify why blacks should not be allowed in the military. What is especially tragic is to hear these same “reasons” spoken by a black man. Sometimes it makes one wonder how they can speak the two words — military intelligence — together in the same sentence and keep a straight face.

President Clinton has taken the first brave steps toward leading the military out of the dark ages. Unfortunately, with extensive and widely publicized homophobia from backward thinking conservatives interfering with his efforts, he backed off his original campaign promise of allowing openly gay and lesbian people to serve in the military. I'm sure this is only a temporary setback though. Even the civil rights' movement, which faced resistance from those not wanting fairness for all people, progressed in small steps at a time and is still progressing to this day. Whether conservatives like it or not, and we sure know how much they don't, some day this outdated expensive policy will be a thing of our past. Then we'll be truly free to open the closet door and show everyone how many of us have been there serving right alongside all along.

Someday we'll look back with shame why we needed to have such reasoning about gay people much as we now have shame why we thought black soldiers would be a problem. We know those "problems" with black soldiers were really fantasies — something that was no problem at all for open-minded Godly people, but was perceived as a concern for those closed-minded folks that seem all too frequently to get elevated to positions of power. When will we progress to that point in our attitude where gay soldiers are just soldiers? When will we be *more* worried about heterosexual Tailhook '91 kinds of misbehavior, hazing of newer soldiers as reported on the October 28th, 1993 edition of ABC-TV's *PrimeTime Live*, inherent racism as reported on the October 31th, 1993 edition of CBS-TV's *60 Minutes*, and military sanctioned dead beat dads being allowed to still shirk their responsibilities? Be the best we can be? Sure, but only if we don't have to hide part of ourselves from our supervisors and worry whether we'll be "discovered." Remember one planet, one people! "...all men are created equal,..." —Declaration of Independence. And nobody's free until we are *all* free.

Powell did acknowledge that gay soldiers were in the Persian Gulf War and did do an excellent job, but how about citizens in other countries contributing to their homeland's well-being. Few of us are aware I'm sure that gay Soviet citizens were quite instrumental in putting down the Soviet coup in August 1991. One can only imagine the outcome had these brave concerned citizens not been there to help out. That should be a lesson to everyone. In a time of economic concerns, as the early '90s so far are, shouldn't we stop neglecting the potential contributions which the gay community can make to the human community as a whole? This is a resource which society desperately needs at this point in history. We are one planet, one people. Let us show it — let us contribute our God given gifts.

To our rich cultural melting pot we must add thousands of respected public and elected officials, ranking military officers (even high-level Pentagon officials with access to top military secrets), judges, lawyers, doctors, police officers, athletes, teachers, scout leaders, counselors, members of the clergy, celebrities, and every other job imaginable. We are an enormously diverse group of people. Some of us may be in the closet (often out of fear for our jobs or housing), but we're out there all over the place — everywhere and part of everything in every time; doing outstanding service to society. These people are stars in their own rights. Their brilliance continues to light our way towards inspiration and knowledge. Truly, we are in good company.

The companionship many of these and other gay people form could stand as an archetypal example of the bond many non-gay people have shared with some special person who affected them profoundly. To find this kind of companionship together — what two cannot find alone — is truly God-like. For companionship brings meaning and

direction, dispelling our darkness with the enduring light of love and commitment. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. We become two of us, not, one of “them.”

Our young people need to know about gay people and their role in the growth of America. Some may ask why should non-gay people need to know about us. Each of us is unique in our own way. Only by understanding all kinds of people can we get a complete picture of all mankind — God’s mankind. To comprehend the present and build a future we have to understand our past — our *true* past.

Gay students, like anyone, need respected role models — to see what it means to live out a full human life as a gay person, to show them how to integrate spiritual and moral values into their life-style. To really appreciate a gay lifestyle they should have a knowledge of our own people and their place in history as they are growing up. Printing the truth will liberate everyone. Publishers *should* take notice. Until they do, interested students wishing to explore our past history can contact the: International Gay & Lesbian Archives, P.O. Box 38100, Hollywood, Ca. 90038-0100. This private library (currently located at 626 N. Robertson Blvd., West Hollywood, Ca., second floor, side entrance) houses the largest known collection of materials on gay and lesbian life. Because they are open to the public on a limited basis visitors should first call (310) 854-0271. For correspondence please direct mail to the P.O. Box only. Learning about our “family” history and the cultural situation in which our gay ancestors lived in can help bind us more closely together as a group. To know *your* history is to know *yourself*. Gay people have a right to their heritage and tradition as much as anyone of a given race or national origin has to theirs. If nothing else, this information provides us with a sense of belonging.

Recently we have become aware of other famous and/or respected people still with us that have had the courage to come forward. Some have become known to us because others saw fit to publicize the facts on their own without permission. To do this “outing” to a person not yet comfortable with his or her own identity or ready is a form of emotional abuse that should be strongly discouraged. Only when you are comfortable with who you are should you offer this intimate side of yourself (which is no one’s business anyway) — and then only ever so slowly and cautiously. It’s harder for people to maintain homophobic ideas when they know real live gay people. It would be nice if good role models did come forward so young people could see there are a lot of respectable gay people out there — and I know of some I would be very glad to see come out — but they alone should make that decision. Every year on October 11th, National Coming Out Day, I look forward to seeing which celebrities will be next to make their ways out in the open.

The only time a person’s gayness should ever be “outed” to the public without his or her permission is if that person speaks out and/or acts anti-gay or by acts of omission allows prejudice to continue by those under his or her supervision. In that case “out” them immediately before they can do any more damage!

Some non-gays judge us all in terms of the more noticeable stereotypical flamboyant type and when doing so look at us *all* in unfavorable ways. Those who do not favor a

flamboyant personality should be encouraged to understand that most gay people are not at that end of the continuum. Contrary to popular mythology, most of us do not fit the stereotypic effeminate man or masculine woman image, nor is there any reason we should if that is not our natural self. Variations range from extremely masculine to extremely feminine, for either gender, and anywhere in-between. When we become free from the need to conform to narrow stereotypes we will be free to develop all the qualities that belong to the fullness of the human personality.

Many gay people are middle-class, well-educated, and well-paid, and except for their sexual orientation, they're conventional. This variation of the lifestyle is more typical of the gay world than the very visible stereotypical scene often publicized. Some of us have the most respected positions possible as mentioned above. We should each be judged on an individual basis as people in society, and when we are, our bedroom activity should not be a critical factor.

I can recall years ago as a teenager denying I was gay because I thought all gay males were very effeminate and I wasn't like that, so I must not be gay. A few pages ago I mentioned how growth and acceptance sometimes takes time; well I was a classic case. It is vitally important to be the unique individuals we *really* are and not pretend to fit any prefabricated image. We do not have to move or speak in a particular way. Life is far more meaningful when we are natural — when we are ourselves; and of course, accept ourselves. That is the greatest gift of heaven.

This is what it means to be natural. We should not dig up the more limited and primitive definition our ancient ancestors were shackled with where life according to nature was understood as “submission to the divinely appointed order of the world.” The Fathers of the Church in the first two centuries of the Christian era held the position that the male is by nature superior and the female is inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled. Surely we do not want to return to this definition of natural do we?

Things that are natural are never without a certain grace and excellence. “We cannot command nature except by obeying her.” —Francis Bacon. Individuality is one of the biggest assets we have. When we stop looking at the human race as individuals is when we are in trouble.

We teach others about ourselves not only in informal ways by our actions and reactions in public, but in more formal ways by writing or speaking. In this capacity we all need to be aware that old habits, customs, and prejudices are slow to change. Extra care and patience are needed with some so we don't give them more of a reason to dislike us. Just remember to have expectations of others which are realistic, taking into account each person's specific talents, gifts, abilities, and potential — including weaknesses. “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” —Colossians 4:5-6 (NIV).

“It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell.”² We must not give up on those homophobic holdouts. With enough positive information to dwell upon they too can change their minds. Just remember to be

² Norman R. Gulley, *Final Events on Planet Earth* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1977), p. 50.

gentle with our opponents as you correct them and give encouragement with all patience. Be assertive, but not aggressive. Help them to be broad enough in their thinking to take homosexuality into account as a viable alternative. Show them we are honorable people who are considerate of others and worthy of respect. Encourage them to read uplifting and positive material on the subject. Sex is not a shameful thing people do to one another, rather it is an emotionally powerful and positive natural exchange. Help them to see how they cheat themselves when they devalue someone for being different. It is nothing to be ashamed of.

William Penn (1644-1718), a Quaker and outspoken defender of religious freedom who was repeatedly imprisoned in England for his beliefs once said, “O Lord, help me not to despise or oppose what I do not understand.” If a few problems remain unsatisfactorily explained, let’s not lose faith. Let’s have faith that God will eventually clarify that which is not yet clearly understood.

Progress has been slow and we’ve had set backs, but a major step forward was achieved in the early to mid ’70s when both the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association, in historic decisions, officially removed homosexuality (and gay identity) from their diagnostic list of emotional and mental disorders. They declared themselves ready to view homosexual interests as “different from” but not better or worse than heterosexual interests; “homosexuality per se is one form of sexual behavior and, like other forms of sexual behavior which are not of themselves psychiatric disorders, is not listed in this nomenclature of mental disorder.” Our orientation no longer implies an impairment in judgment, stability, reliability, or general social or vocational capabilities. It is just considered an alternate lifestyle or normal variant of sexual orientation — it’s as innocent as that. We are simply a minority group in need of equality and worthy of protection. One sometimes wonders how such a modest definition took so long to be reached, and why a mis-diagnosis needed to cause so much pain and suffering to so many.

Their professional opinion seems to accept the fact that we are a naturally occurring phenomenon in at least 10% of all the world’s people — those currently living, those in centuries past, and those yet unborn who will follow in the future — who possess a natural inborn tendency for some amount of attraction towards some others of the same gender. Unlike people, gay identity does not discriminate in any way. We know we will always have citizens of all ages, upbringing, cultures, religions, races, ethnic backgrounds, nationality, geographic locations, classes, political beliefs, and levels of socioeconomic status who are gay to some degree — and it’s nothing to be ashamed of. We must be prepared for this particular aspect of reality everywhere in our community — even in the midst of our most conservatively religious communities of America. This attitude is more compatible to an enlightened society. When we see “them” in our neighborhoods, we must understand who “they” are — our sons and daughters, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers. We must give “them” our very best.

Unfortunately, educational institutions and religious leaders a hundred years behind the social times, continue to deny the presence of gay children in their schools and congregations. They fail to understand we are a lot like that beautiful orange flower, the California Poppy. We’re apt to pop up anywhere — in a trampled field or a well cared for garden. We keep blooming with a beauty that is there to be seen and admired by anyone

willing to appreciate it. Believe you are beautiful because that which is greater than you knows it!

Even though officially we are as emotionally respected, responsible, and mature as anyone else, the oppression is too ingrained in our society to die away easily. Beliefs — that which we hold to be true — form the basis for our inner security, and changing our mind about a widely-accepted belief is one of the most stress-inducing activities in which a human being can indulge. It's even difficult to get people to change old habits, beliefs, and customs when we don't know the reason why they were originally in effect.

How many know the reason why we dress up in scary costumes at Halloween or carve grotesque faces in pumpkins and illuminate them with candles placed inside? These practices evolved from customs originated by the ancient Druids to ward off hosts of evil spirits believed to have been called forth by Saman, the lord of the dead, to visit their earthly homes on that evening. Treats originated when people put food out on their porches at twilight to keep ghostly visitors well fed so they would not come indoors with “tricks” on their minds. Today we carry on the festive traditions in a harmless fun way without realizing the serious nature of this activity in days past. Other traditions against gay people, which have their roots in antiquity, are, unfortunately, not so harmless.

People often steadfastly have a blind need to adhere to human made traditions even when known to be rooted in a social position from a time no longer valid. An understanding of people's resistance to change is helpful in our re-educating efforts. Because old beliefs, along with traditions, rituals, religious and social customs, and habits are always slow to change, it's not surprising to find some still seeing our lifestyle in a negative light. This is somewhat understandable when we examine it from a historical perspective intertwining today's teachings with ancient beliefs.

The Bible is a compilation of many ancient documents stemming from a time and culture which is rather alien, and even hostile, to our own. Recounting the history of God's relationship with the Hebrew and Christian people, it was written in several languages and embraced many literary forms. These are important considerations for properly understanding the Bible in its context.

This brings up the question; why study the Bible in order to understand ourselves and our feelings? Why not just read contemporary literature on the subject, which is more relevant? We share a rich Judeo-Christian civilization. Our language, many of our customs, public opinions, and laws — both civil and criminal — and often our outlook about ourselves as gay people are conditioned by that Judeo-Christian heritage in which we are so deeply rooted. We cannot possibly understand them without knowing the Judeo-Christian classic which influenced them the most — the Bible.

The primary source of the traditional condemnation of homosexual activity as contrary to the divine will has been the interpretation of certain texts in the Old and New Testaments which have been understood as dealing with this subject. In some cases, the guilty culprits responsible for these condemnations have been mistranslations of the original Greek and Hebrew texts themselves. Simply reading the Bible passages generally cited in connection with homosexuality in any good modern translation is not enough in these cases, since many of them make the references appear worse than the original

language intended. Where this problem exists we delve far enough into the original Greek and Hebrew texts themselves to clarify the inspired authors' true meanings and intentions.

Unfortunately, when Christian folks use Scripture to address us they often use a text-picking approach even though scholarship has advanced beyond this method in most other areas of Biblical interpretation. I almost fell into that trap when I first began my study of Scripture. To get at the true message of Scripture we must consider individual texts in their larger context, and at the same time we must also consider the cultural and historical circumstances of the time. When we look at so called "traditional" values we find that tradition relies on both this questionable text-picking and on a relatively unexamined cultural inheritance. We will be addressing these proper methods of understanding our most beloved Book and our value system in more detail later on, but for now let's realize that new levels of understanding are slowly emerging among some Biblical scholars and we are slowly beginning to benefit. From our most ancient roots, we can understand ourselves — Hallelujah!

Besides all that, studying God's Word enhances our spiritual abilities and growth, regardless of where we may currently be with the Lord. Additionally and equally important, by having this knowledge we can respond to verbal attacks we all have flung upon us at times in a more corrective and proper way.

Astrology, astronomy, religion, and medicine arose together thousands of years ago and were apparently embodied in a highly revered priesthood. All four have been intertwined in popular myth, tradition, and superstition ever since. Astrology appeared in different forms among the various Eurasian cultures. Early people believed that as the Sun, Moon, and planets wandered along the sky, they exerted their vast heavenly powers to cast sins and virtues on the newborn. Ancient writers often wrote fanciful stories to coincide with natural happenings. Constellations of stars were seen as creatures, serpents, people, or things that had interesting stories to explain them. Various religions held strong beliefs that natural objects and phenomena possessed souls, consciousnesses, and indwelling spirits.

Ancient history is filled with examples of beliefs that no longer have a reasonable or sensible place in our society today. In 16th century Europe, it was believed that the sudden appearance of a great comet presaged death and pestilence. These "hairy stars," as they were called with their long tails, were seen as objects that brought evil, giving rise to myths and portents around the world over the centuries. While to many they were a sign of impending doom, to others they were a sign of good fortune. Today we admire and study these beautiful celestial wonders of nature and understand what they truly are. They are not something to be feared and hated as they once were — as gay people still often are. When will those remaining holdouts come out of the dark ages?

Among ancient peoples, solar eclipses too were regarded as serious challenges to the prevailing order of the cosmos. When the Moon blocked out the Sun our ancestors actually believed the Sun was under attack by some demon or beast usually intent on making a snack out of the Sun. Fearing their gods were upset or the end of the world was at hand as the sky grew dark, people would dance around and make noise in order to get the "dragon" to spit the Sun out. Magically it worked — every time; the Sun always returned. Some of these ancient fears remain today in less advanced countries, testimony to the fact that ancient irrational beliefs and habits die hard — and enlightened people,

destined to bring about change, have their work cut out for themselves. Before we leave this connection between the sky and Biblical culture let's become enlightened on one character of the Bible we hear an awful lot about.

Algol, a famous medium bright star that varies in brightness or “winks” regularly in just under 3 days, was known as the “demon star” by various cultures. The Hebrews of the Biblical world knew Algol as *Rosh ha Satan*, “Satan’s Head.”³ Known by several different names, its reputation in folklore as “the most dangerous and unfortunate star in the heavens”³ aligns it with Satan, demons, specters, and corpses. All this just because innocent Algol varies from the “normal” stars in an unexplainable way. Sounds familiar doesn't it? Be different in an unexplainable way to the *current* culture and get condemned. Shame on this kind of thinking. It's time we appreciate being different is often a wonderful thing, as astronomers many hundreds of years later realized. When early 17th century astronomers became aware of unusual fluctuations in another star they honored it with the name Mira, “the Wonderful.”⁴ Ah — how times change!

Today we understand Algol's variations and know it has nothing to do with Satan. Its fluctuations are caused by merely two stars eclipsing each other as one orbits around its companion, something quite common — in fact it turns out most stars are not single. And today we recognize gay people as merely two people of the same gender with common interests interacting with one another in a very special way, something also quite common — and also something not to be associated with the devil. It's time gay people are treated as such — “wonderful stars” in our own way.

It's interesting to note that a 17th century Christian view also held that thunder was produced by the devil. It seems that the poor devil gets blamed for everything out of the ordinary, whether it be variable stars, thunder, or even good ol' innocent gay people. Today we understand the true nature of the first two very well. Let's make sure society now understands the true nature of gay people with equal comprehension.

Every culture had a way of forming stories to explain what they saw in and beyond the world about them. Some Biblical stories are no different, whether we're dealing with the creation story of Genesis 1 or Jonah being swallowed in a whale. Further along in our study we'll examine more Biblical ideas of the worlds above that today are understood in the light of truth. “And God said, Let there be light:...” —Genesis 1:3 (KJV).

Throughout history every age has been beset with false ideas by people who were blind, tragically so, to truths we presently take for granted. Just because most people believe in something does not necessarily make it true. In the “scientific” and religious community before the 1600's it was firmly believed that the Earth was located in the center of the universe. It was a universe of perfect structure and order with Earth at its core and the Sun, Moon, planets, and all the stars circling around it. The celestial bodies were considered “perfect orbs.” This was universally accepted and taught as an established “fact” of science in much the same way that gay people are plagued with errors today. Nicholas Copernicus inaugurated a new era by toppling that centuries old belief.

³ Robert Burnham, Jr., *Burnham's Celestial Handbook: Volume Three* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1978), p. 1409.

⁴ Burnham, *Volume One*, p. 633.

In 1610 Galileo found enough evidence to confirm what Copernicus had earlier published — that the Sun was actually at the center of the solar system. With his primitive telescope he saw that the inner planets have phases just like the Moon; the Moon has great craters, towering mountains and deep valleys; the Sun has spots; and there in the distance glowed Jupiter, the giant planet of the solar system with moons of its own showing that it is possible for objects to revolve around something other than the Earth. It seemed that the observable universe beyond Earth wasn't so "perfect" after all and the impact of this knowledge would change religious orthodoxy forever. As Galileo ventured across the threshold of discovery, a universe emerged that was far more vast than anyone had ever imagined. His discoveries revolutionized the way humans felt about themselves.

Think for a moment the magnitude and impact of these discoveries. Whole systems of ideas and beliefs and even a few theological dogmas were proved wrong. After Galileo, entire world views fell by the wayside. This experience of discovery — of seeing the world from a new perspective — is not something limited to a fortunate few. Each of us can make our own personal journeys of discovery, one of the most important being that we are *all* unique in God's eyes. Fresh new information like this about ourselves can do the same for not only us gay people, but also for those who love us.

By yanking astronomy out of the grasp of antiquity and unfolding a new universe viewable in the eyepiece of every telescope, man's central place in the scheme of things was, for the first time, questioned. These finds were in contradiction to the firm beliefs of the churches of the day. Galileo had overthrown ages of scholastic philosophy, won himself fame and fortune — but when he, a devout Catholic, crusaded to gain church acceptance for his finds he also incurred the wrath of the Roman Inquisition. He attempted to convince the skeptical prelates (high-ranking church officials), but when they learned of his discoveries he was accused of heresy by the Inquisition who forced him to admit "errors" to avoid torture.

After Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, heresy was regarded as a crime against the civil as well as the canon law. Heresy "is thinking anything different from what the [church] Pope said think; for the accomplishment of which anything was justifiable, deception, immorality, vice, even murder."⁵ The Inquisitors did in fact torture others for their beliefs, while believing they were acting in the name of Christian love.

In Galileo's case, Roman churchmen believed that motion of the Earth around the Sun was contrary to their literal interpretation of Scripture ("He set the earth on its foundations; it can never be moved." — Psalm 104:5 [NIV]) and therefore it undermines Catholic tradition. As a consequence Galileo's discoveries could not be defended, held, or taught and his observations were called "devious illusions" created by the telescope. Despite all these attempts by many officials to seek refuge in traditional beliefs and hide the truth, new discoveries forced us to realize that man did not occupy a unique position in the center of the universe.

With science in its infancy and religion trying with all its might to strangle it in its cradle other scientific discoveries were even slower to gain acceptance. For many years theologians would not believe the great distances to even the nearby stars, which were

⁵ Dr. Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, 1924, 24th ed. 1965, 52nd printing [large print] 1984), p. 780.

measured mathematically, because a perfect Creator wouldn't be so wasteful as to leave so much useless, empty space in the Universe. It's really something to think how they justified to themselves what they wanted to believe. Over the years, the impact of true scientific facts were slowly accepted by the churches, but it took awhile.

Dr. Henry H. Halley writes about the Inquisition in his respected and informative book, *Halley's Bible Handbook*:

"The Inquisition, called the 'Holy Office,' was instituted by Pope Innocent III [in 1229 A.D.], and perfected under the second following Pope, Gregory IX. It was the church court for detection and punishment of heretics. Anyone suspected was liable to torture. [Some were imprisoned for life or burned alive at the stake. Burning was a common criminal punishment imposed upon individuals in the Middle Ages.] Think of monks and priests, in holy garments, directing, with heartless cruelty and inhumane brutality, the work of torturing and burning alive innocent men and women, and doing it in the name of Christ, by the direct order of the 'Vicar of Christ.' [Pope Innocent III, the most powerful of all the Popes claimed to be 'Vicar of Christ,' 'Vicar of God,' and 'Supreme Sovereign over the church and the world.'] The Inquisition was the most infamous and devilish thing in human history. It was devised by Popes, and used by them for 500 years, to maintain their power. For its record none of the subsequent line of 'Holy' and 'Infallible' Popes have ever apologized. Later on the Inquisition was the main agency in the Papacy's effort to crush the Reformation."⁶

They clearly wanted things to remain as is and had the power to make sure they did. Some may be inclined to believe the Popes could be excused in this matter because it was the "spirit of the age." Hogwash! Whose age was it? And who made it so? The Popes. It was their world. For 1000 years they had been training the world to be in complete subjection to them. It's too bad they didn't avoid the pursuit of secular power, and instead confine themselves exclusively to their original policy of winning converts to Christ and training them in His ways. It seems inconceivable that men could take the religion of Christ and develop it into an unscrupulous political machine on which to ride to world power. However, all statements made herein may be verified by reference to books like *Halley's Bible Handbook* or to any of the other exhaustive church histories available.

As an added point of information, just like witches, gay people were also burned at the stake in Earth's past history, solely for being gay. The sticks used as fuel for the fire were called faggots, hence the origination of the derogatory term for gay people. Just wearing clothes of the opposite sex brought you in danger of this tragic end at the hands of the church, despite Deuteronomy 22:5 *not* commanding the death penalty; "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so *are* abomination unto the LORD thy God." —(KJV). This "offense" got Joan of Arc executed in 1431 by Pro-English churchmen.

"In the charges against her [heresy and sorcery in an ecclesiastical court] she was censured for wearing masculine dress and for believing she was directly responsible to God rather than to the Roman Catholic Church. The court condemned her to death, but she penitently confessed her errors, and the

⁶ Halley, pp. 776-777, 785.

sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Because she resumed masculine dress after returning to jail, she was treated as a relapsed heretic, was again condemned to death, and was burned at the stake in the Old Market Square at Rouen [France].”⁷

Copernicus, by the way, was a scholarly and unassuming administrator in the Roman Catholic Church who for religious and political reasons delayed publication of his Sun-centered theories until the year of his death in 1543. This timing was no coincidence. Copernicus knew the magnitude of the controversy that would follow and wished to spare himself from persecution.

You should also know that in October 1992 Pope John Paul II formally concluded a 13 year investigation of the whole Galileo affair by proclaiming that the Roman Catholic Church erred in condemning him. The Pontiff stated that theologians at the time had erred in thinking that Scripture explains the physical world. Further he went on to say that faith and science are distinct but not necessarily opposite, ironically a position not very distant from the one Galileo used in his defense at the time. Finally we get official word admitting that Galileo had been wrongfully condemned. But why did it take so long? And why did it take 13 years of an official investigation by a series of papal commissions to get the Pope to admit it? It seems they just can’t give up a long held belief, no matter how wrong it is, can they? Let’s pray it won’t take so long for our position to be officially recognized and accepted.

Theological authority, as it was understood, played a large part in how people were *supposed* to believe. We are no different or exempt from such folly today. Fortunately, present writers can clear up blunders without fear of hazardous consequences. While this work is nowhere near the universal magnitude of Copernicus’ treatise, I will endeavor to demonstrate that Christian blunders are still the case-in-point.

There is nothing to fear from scientific discoveries. On the contrary, history has shown that such fears are themselves a danger, and, if indulged, may hinder both the spiritual as well as the material advancement of mankind.

The scientific view of the world grows and changes, always responding to fresh observation and experiment. Humans have always wanted to understand the universe, but only in terms of their current science, technology, and philosophy. Thus the universe of the ancients was typified by gods driving chariots across a heavenly vault. To enjoy the adventure of discovering our universe requires seeing clearly — and keeping our minds open. Gradually such ancient concepts gave way to the more scientific, explaining traditional views of the heavens and Earth as working on a different plan. Likewise, our traditional view of mankind must now yield to the current evidence and knowledge of science. This is a human story that affects everybody because the confrontation with old beliefs in the face of new knowledge or insight is one that touches us all.

Religion also must periodically adapt to keep pace with new insights and perceptions. Our inability over the centuries to resolve that argument has created the very religions that many of us now profess. Christianity which evolved from Judaism, Protestantism which broke away from Catholicism. Sometimes the trend is from orthodoxy toward a more liberal interpretation but just as often the move toward reform

⁷ “Joan of Arc” *The New Funk & Wagnalls Encyclopedia*, 1951 ed., Vol. 20, pp. 7328-7329.

causes traditionalists to break away. Some of our bitterest wars have been and continue to be fought between reformers and fundamentalists. One such struggle gay people face daily, although it is very far from having degenerated into a war, is still a struggle with sometimes as tragic results. The real tragedy is this struggle would not be necessary were it not for the repressive attitudes of some members of our society — and we all know the primary teachers of these shameful attitudes.

The scientific and medical community have determined that our lifestyle alone should not preclude us from being viable, productive, and respected members of society. There is no reason we shouldn't be as happy or as satisfied in life as anyone else. Unlike Biblical days, we are now able to acknowledge a difference between positive loving aspects within sharing gay relationships and mere lust. The problem of gayness comes from a punitive society and how they view sexuality — not from our identity, desires, or behavior. The majority of states have legalized most of our consenting mutually desired behavior, and hopefully, others will follow.

The major obstacle gay people face is religious teachings that brand us as outcasts. Just as during Galileo's time when the religious community would not accept God's true creation of a Sun-centered solar system or accept what God truly meant and created ("THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork." — Psalm 19:1 [KJV]), today gay people face a similar dilemma — we are "tortured" for our beliefs while our "tormentors" believe they are acting in the name of Christian love. It's amazing how some can sleep at night.

In fact Biblical history is filled with bloodshed caused by people honestly believing they were acting in the name of Godly love. More battles have been fought, and currently are being fought, over the Bible — sometimes for the slightest disagreement or difference in theological interpretation — and trivial doctrinal differences than any other book in the entire history of the world. It's amazing to me that a difference of opinion upon subjects that we know nothing with certainty about, should make us hate, persecute, and despise each other. Why a difference of opinion upon predestination, or the Trinity, or even gay people, should make people imprison and burn each other seems beyond the comprehension of man. And yet in all countries where God believing folks have existed, they have destroyed each other to the exact extent of their powers. I haven't seen any battles or wars fought over *Playboy*, the *Advocate*, or the work you're reading right now — Praise God!

Despite less helpful views being soundly discredited by the medical profession, some churches and clergy continue to be influenced by the idea. Theologians attempt to buttress their judgment with no longer valid "evidence" which once came from the psychiatric community how gay people are necessarily mentally ill and all homosexual relationships are humanly destructive. We are called sick, sinful, predatory, and devious people who have feelings not in line with what God created. The fly in the ointment is the belief of traditional conservative religions that our behavior is an abomination. We are offered redemption if we repent and confess our "sin" of homosexuality with true remorse and pray and work for the miracle of salvation by becoming a heterosexual. We are told we are deficient, unable to do something, on the trail of an evil empty life, and then are cruelly teased with the "hope" that we may make it and be honored as a

heterosexual if only we can and will forsake the forbidden homosexual interest. If a heterosexual has a temporary homosexual interaction he or she is told they have yielded to the devil, while a homosexual who temporarily becomes heterosexual is said to have been nearly “saved” before backsliding. Some even go as far to say that caring families are sinners too if they help their gay loved one be true to him or her self.

Despite the fact most psychiatrists no longer share this ancient view, traditional-minded Christians still try to use this argument on unsuspecting gay people trying to learn the truth about this aspect of some people’s personality. If anything, the real sin is ignorance — and that’s the sin we’re often up against. It’s also the most difficult one to argue against. We can have all kinds of logical research on our side to support our viewpoint, but once we come up to ignorance — or more correctly closed-mindedness — all bets seem to be off. There’s often no way to break through mountains of bigotry and set-in-their-ways prejudice. A priest sensitive to gay people’s issues further elaborates on sin by saying that, “the most serious sexual sin is alienation from and suppression of God’s good gift of sexuality.” I wholeheartedly agree. Besides being sinners in the eyes of the church some of our relationships make us potential criminals in the eyes of the law and that too is something we have to deal with and work around.

Such un-Godly teaching wears down the human spirit. In the process people are robbed of their autonomy and humanness — their dignity, their personhood, power, potentialities for growth and development in their personal self-identity, and most of all, their hope. I dare say there are more broken spirits and broken hearts caused by such Christian teaching than by the sum total of all emotional trauma non-gay people are exposed to. You know, redheaded people, like witches, were also once associated with the devil and burned at the stake when their uniqueness wasn’t understood. Thankfully, we’ve outgrown that philosophy. It’s now time to slow down and look at the other side of different issues, as they relate to gay people — to let the pendulum swing back into the perfect will of God rather than to get hung up on dogma or taboos.

Hopefully new discoveries will force people to realize these archaic attitudes should not occupy a position in our modern society. Being gay is not any kind of maladjustment. Conversion to heterosexuality is not necessary for a happy, healthy, Godly life. Just like in the astronomical community of old, false teachings must be rebuked by the clearer views of the everlasting facts to prevent impaired judgments and false conclusions.

Recent enlightened attitudes have only prompted some with traditional values to criticize our lifestyle even more, using their belief that it is against the teachings of the Bible to have any kind of same sex intimate relationship — even devoted responsible loving ones. They are against any sexuality that is not sanctioned by religion, licensed by the state, and contains a heterosexually married couple open to having children. Yet some of these so-called “holy” unions are the most unsatisfactory relationships imaginable. It’s time they realize a moral meaning to human sexuality can also be a gay relationship which realizes the full sense of mutual self-giving and interchange, support, growth, and fulfillment, along with human tenderness in the context of true sharing love and respect. You don’t need the benefit of clergy to have those qualities in a relationship.

Morality always seems to come up in a discussion of this subject so let’s get our definition on the record. Whether a relationship is gay *or* non-gay: those that are responsible, respectful, loving, genuinely constructive and concerned for another’s feelings, mutually supportive, truly promotive of the good of both partners completely, and not carried beyond either party’s limits of control are moral; those that are abusive or

exploitive to any degree, irresponsible, selfish, dishonoring, disrespectful, compulsive, not mutually desired by both partners, or destructive of the true good of either party must be judged immoral. Gay or non-gay has nothing to do with which category a relationship fits in. It is the nature and quality of a relation that really matters — its inner worth, *not* its outer appearance or method of expression. Homosexual affection can be as selfless as heterosexual affection and therefore we should not see that it is in some way morally worse.

This definition may shake up traditional Christians with their persistent conservative view of moral judgment concerning homosexuals, but something's got to get them out of the dark. The primary moral problem in sexual relations is not sex within marriage versus sex outside of marriage, or sex within a heterosexual relationship versus sex within a homosexual relationship. The problem is sex as a depersonalizing force versus sex as fulfillment of human relationship. Thus the important question would appear to be whether or not it is possible for the homosexual to achieve a responsible fulfilling relationship. Of course it's possible — it's sometimes harder when we have to work around homophobia, but it *is* very possible. We must no longer continue to confuse moral ideals with relationships that are *only* heterosexual.

For most people, however, this rethinking of the morality of sexual expression has yet to be extended to gay persons. I believe that their recognition as morally responsible members of the Christian community with opportunities, rights, and responsibilities of all other members is based ultimately on Jesus' view of human nature as reflected in the Gospel. Again and again, He broke through the prejudices of the day to accept and lift up those rejected and downgraded by others for whatever reason. And just as the reasons for their rejection were often beyond their control, so the gay person's condition is generally not a matter of conscious choice.

Although the human ideal for all sexual expression is within the context of an ongoing relationship fitting within the moral boundaries as we outlined above, I am aware of individuals who for various reasons do not desire to enter a continuing relationship of any kind. Even those who only occasionally have a sexual liaison with a friend can surely conduct this encounter in a moral way. Any interaction where a partner's past activity has been varied should be prudent with an eye to following safe practices.

If we are going to judge anyone as good or bad, it should be within the moral/immoral categories as they are defined above, and not natural differences in people such as what color they are, which race they belong to, what their national origin is, their religious beliefs, who they are comfortable with in an intimate way, whether they are fat or thin, or any other discriminatory or natural difference someone has. These are not important things to worry about when we recognize ourselves as one planet, one people — the way God made it in this corner of the universe.

If your relationship doesn't fit our immoral definition, no matter who you are or how much others say such relationships as yours are wrong, don't bow to pressures trying to break you up. You don't need a traditional peg (or church endorsement) on which to hang a moral judgment. It's you and your mutual loving partner's decision alone. *No* one has a right to interfere. Don't let them! You don't need anyone's permission to enter a moral relationship you and your partner mutually desire. You may have to keep your relationship under wraps from unenlightened busybodies, but so be it. This is unfortunate, but for some relationships nearer the fringes of mainstream society, those that cause

conservative-minded people to raise their eyebrows, the realities of the real world make such cautions necessary. Do what you have to do; just be aware such “hidden” relationships add complexities, and sometimes complications, not present in out-in-the-open relationships.

On occasion, “hidden” relationships of this nature that would otherwise be very moral, end up somewhat less moral (like sexual orientation, morality is infinitely variable between the moral and immoral extremes) because of the clandestine measures the couple has to take in their efforts to keep their privacy from the prying eyes of snoops. We should make it clear that these tactics are not the fault of the couple, but rather of the oppressive society and intrusive souls who stick their noses in where it doesn’t belong. This is one of those obstacles you have to work around and make the best of it. Just work at getting it as moral as possible and let God handle the rest. No one can ask more of you. Just don’t give up. In the end you’ll be surprised how strong you’ll both become by it.

And don’t let them try to make you feel guilty either. “Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil.” —Romans 14:16 (NIV). I’ve known people who, while relating very happy feelings from a relationship they had at one time in their life, also have many guilt feelings because other “concerned” people dug their hooks in saying how “wrong” their past interaction was. If you’re comfortable and happy at the time and it fits our definition of a positive and moral relationship, that’s what counts. Inflicting such false guilt (guilt they wouldn’t have had if “know-it-alls” would have kept their negative philosophy to themselves) and shame is morally reprehensible. That’s one of the worst offenses traditional-minded folks, especially respected loved ones and friends, can commit.

The concern of Christian ethics should be to relate the reality of welcome intimacy in its various forms to the freedom and integrity of human wholeness. One wonders why some people have a need to interfere in the happiness of two people’s togetherness; but that’s a real world obstacle we sometimes have to work around. Just don’t give up — or give in. If you give in that’s like saying you’re satisfied with their reasoning. Remember, many scientific advances were accomplished only because someone refused to accept defeat. Let meddlesome nuisances know they can butt out!

Another definition to get on the record is legal and illegal sexual activity as it pertains to morality or even harming one or the other partner to some degree. One phrase I may repeat more than once is that gay people have the ability to do something in their own way while being true to their feelings without — contrary to the way some laws are worded — disadvantaging, exploiting, using, or abusing anyone else.

Some laws classify some mutually loving relationships as exploitive or abusive in some way, even though the two happy partners and other enlightened people do not share this view. So inaccurate is the legal definition of exploit in some cases, that in a relationship that *is* exploitative or abusive in some way, the law sometimes defines one partner as the abuser when in fact, when viewed in the proper context, the other partner is the real guilty culprit. This discrepancy is easier to understand when you realize in some backward parts of our country any and all same gender forms of sexual interaction are illegal.

On an equally bad tone, some heterosexual relationships can meet every provision of abiding by law and still be exploitive to some degree to one partner. An overbearing spouse expecting the other to always comply is just one example. Such actions are clearly immoral. There is something more to the moral quality of sexual behavior than a purely

objective legal question. Legal sexual conduct is not automatically considered moral, and illegal sexual conduct should not automatically be considered immoral. When popular confusion prevails serious obstacles are in our way and unnecessary suffering results. This legal equals moral false connection is not limited to sexual behavior. It makes little sense to unjustly penalize a minority group and cause unnecessary and untold pain, fear, and suffering to people who are otherwise law-abiding and responsible citizens. When more members of society share this view we will be well on our way toward a promising future. Here in our writings, to avoid confusion we use only the real world based enlightened views of abuse or exploit as they relate to sexual activity regardless of the legal status of the happy couple's relationship.

As far back as 1955 the American Law Institute in its model penal code recommended that private consensual homosexual acts should be excluded from the criminal law because "no harm to the secular interest of the community is involved, and there is a fundamental question of the protection to which every individual is entitled against State interference in his personal affairs when he is not hurting others." With this model I fully concur.

The worst threat gay people face today comes from those involved with organized conservative religions who stick their insidious toes into our lives with the tenacious and deadly bite of a rattlesnake. They seem to want to insist everyone fit the norm so they don't feel upset when they are confronted with something that is different.

Gay people are given constant pressure to disown sexual feelings. It becomes nearly impossible truthfully to integrate one's personal sexuality with any sort of developing self-esteem. Many then live with constant shame, secrecy, and dread which are seen by many as the hallmarks of homosexuality. We are told that our forbidden feelings "should be" experienced as loathsome and disgusting, that they come from having been infected by evil and that Satan has a grip on us or that we are possessed by demons. We're then informed that this is a sordid lifestyle that destroys the quality of life and that our relationships are the sad consequence of rejecting God. Tragically some good Christian believers turn to Satanism, believing that is the only spiritual belief they can have. It is not surprising, since it is very demoralizing to be constantly ridiculed, that so many suffer such pain.

What we have to be aware of is that Satan in his destructive ways will work all that more harder to keep us from accepting ourselves in order to add more misery to our lives. When rigid thinking Christians preach their anti-gay lingo they play right into the devil's hands. Be aware and advised. It's long past time to lay old theories to rest. If this book helps correct the social injustices and indignities suffered by even a few gay people at the hands of such oppressive thinking Christians then I'll know I've made an important contribution to mankind — God's mankind.

This hotly defended sexist dogma is the foundation of homophobia — the *unnatural* fear (**F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal) and dislike of homosexuals. Its prevalence in society has hindered many gay people from forming happy monogamous relationships. So serious is this ailment that some gay people even suffer from it — I'm ashamed to admit that I too contacted a mild form of it when I was a teenager. Fortunately mine did not progress to the later stages and I soon recovered to a new level of appreciation of who I truly was and am.

Homophobia, which has its roots in a lack of understanding, is a disability like any

other phobia — heights, snakes, deep water, Friday the 13th, etc. Upon encountering a hunk of the unknown it is human nature to seek a reassuring explanation. And if, as is too often the case, an honest answer doesn't match what we "think" it should, our increased uneasiness urges us to speculate. Speculation soon transforms into assumption, thence to presumption, and on to dogma, brutally defended. Voilà — homophobia is born in another victim. Mystery, ignorance, and misinformation about the unknown breed fear, and fear feeds prejudice, oppression, closed-mindedness, and cruelty. Prejudice thrives on the lack of contradictory information. What people don't understand they try to destroy.

An enormity of human suffering has been brought about by church oppression and prejudice; something the Bible speaks against on numerous occasions. Despite that, gay people are the latest group, in a long list, of people suffering some form of oppression at the hands of Christians. Apparently we'll be the last too. I don't believe Christian society tolerates, or will ever again tolerate, oppression of any other groups. Those of us who are at harmony with our true nature wonder how otherwise good people can be so cruel. The fact of the matter is simply a lack of understanding on their part.

Teachings like this place mankind out of balance. Why don't more people see what we are doing to ourselves? When we are out of balance, humanity loses. At first it seems that homophobia may be an issue that only affects gay people. But it is clear now that it is not a specialized issue affecting just us. Like all forms of prejudice, any threat to any of us is a threat to *all* of us — gay and non-gay alike.

This is where we have to fight the fear with the facts, because any society that sets out to oppress its minorities, sets out to destroy itself. History can attest to that. A wise man once said, "The death of dogma is the birth of reality." Our country's civil rights' movement started a revolution by freeing us from the belief that some people are basically subordinate. Here we are destined to extend that intellectual revolution by releasing others from the idea that gay people are basically different from non-gay people in any important ways. It's time America stops being afraid of (and feeling threatened by) people who have some differences, after all, we don't bite. It's time we start worrying more about the degeneration of respect for other human beings around us rather than the internal orientation a person happens to have. We have a right to live without fear of intimidation in a democratic society. This can happen when we understand and appreciate our place alongside and within the arms of nature because we are all a part of nature.

When we are dealing with rights, there are not two different groups of people — gay people and others. The rights of gay people and the rights of others are no different. All too often it is in the enforcement of those rights that the differences emerge, because we are perceived as being different somehow — less desirable, ill, or sometimes, even dangerous. Basic rights are violated more for gay people than for others, and therein lies the fatal difference. A right is not a right until *every* person has it!

Every generation should be able to experience the spiritual, emotional, and physical refreshment that is natural to them in a way where they are undisturbed by anti-philosophies. All varieties of mankind and womankind are interdependent and the diversity of nature — prevalent in all corners of society — is essential to our well-being. We can't be as great a country as everyone wants unless all groups of people have equal rights. Open prejudice against gay people should be as socially unacceptable as open racism or anti-semitism. All forms of religious-sanctioned abuse are reprehensible and *must* be eradicated so gay people can grow as God meant us to grow. When we realize the root of our differences as being from God we have a renewed sense of hope. To this

end we dedicate ourselves to opening the eyes of young and old alike to the wonder, beauty, and variety of human nature.

Some may be tempted to say, “who cares if the gay community is outraged, or if individual gay people are hurt or offended?” “Sensitivity” is supposed to have become the mark of the man of decency in modern American life. So we are told. A “sensitive” man does not repeat ethnic jokes; he does not abide insults to *any* minority; he monitors his rhetoric, lest he inadvertently give offense. When political officials violate that taboo they are sometimes driven from office. A sensitive man honors the environment and all its various inhabitants.

Gay people, however, America’s unfashionable minority, may be mocked; they may be parodied in print and on video or film, their lifestyle may be portrayed as unnatural folly. By depicting us in this way they are assaulting our community in a way they would never dare assault the black community, the Jewish community, or the Christian community. And traditional society, invoking the First Amendment, will rush to the defense of the defamers, not the defamed.

The battles many of us have to fight are just more skirmishes in the centuries’ struggle over whose values, whose beliefs shall be exalted in American culture, and whose may be derided and disparaged. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. summed it up in one short sentence; “Justice denied anywhere *is* justice denied everywhere!” Let’s keep that in mind.

Good sense often is not innate; it needs to be born through education. The foundation-less, fantastic edifice of anti-gay doctrine would long ago have met with its long-deserved fate were it not that the love of fairy tales is so deep-rooted in the hearts of man. We need to continue our educational efforts to discourage all forms of oppression from continuing in the future and encourage others to be willing to consider new ideas and observations.

Over two decades ago Dr. King had a dream where all of God’s children will one day walk hand in hand proclaiming their freedom. There is no reason why gay people and non-gay people cannot be included in that hand in hand walk together — after all we too are God’s children. Dr. King used education of the public as one way to accomplish his dream, and we too can and should follow his lead.

Myths, taboos, superstitious notions, and dogmatic positions must be questioned if we are to grow and become ourselves, because if we assume they are true, they soon become desperately close to the truth. With time and effort they can be weeded out. There is no reason — except for the negative messages “preached” to us — to believe that we are morally depraved, abnormal, or emotionally unbalanced. We do *not* give up morals or belief in a higher power. What is abnormal and undesirable is when people of traditional values rally to the defense of their doctrine and maintain its credit with the public by suppressing viable and alternative views. In spite of overwhelming evidence, unyielding dogmatism prevails. Let us not allow what has happened to some of us befall any other gay brothers and sisters who have insights that do not suit conventional lines. Some people’s values do not have to be every people’s values — and there’s no reason they should be.

We should not accept unchallenged any prepackaged set of assumptions about our identity. The greatest help can and should be given to identifying the symptoms, causes,

and antecedents of homophobia and searching for effective means of treatment. If this crippling disease can be eradicated, gay people can live with no more difficulty than any other citizen. Homophobia is costing valuable lives. It is the disturbance that needs serious attention — not homosexuality. We must *never* accept *any* kind of psychiatric diagnosis labeling us with a “disease.”

Interestingly, Mary Baker Eddy, the discoverer and founder of Christian Science, and author of *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* considers those with “...unprejudiced minds...” as being “...simple seekers for Truth [God]...”⁸

Statements like those above prompted my research of the Scriptures to see just what is said, and how we fit into God’s plan. I knew I was not intrinsically evil and wanted to spread the Word. As it turns out, my Bible study gave me a deep respect for the Bible. I find in Biblical teaching overwhelming persuasion on the side of love, tolerance, and affirmation of life. In fact, Jesus seems to have a special love for outcasts of society. His harshest words are against ethical hypocrisy as we’ll see in our study of Matthew.

If you are having a difficult time understanding how your orientation fits into God’s plan, or care about someone who is, this book is for you. Hopefully what is presented here will be a growth-full experience that will remove some of the mystery that surrounds how gay people fit into that plan. It presents ideas and suggestions for changing attitudes and behavior so as to aid gay people and the family members and friends who love us.

There is no reason to be repressed or oppressed. My hope is to help remove unnecessary oppression and reconstruct the simple pleasures of gay identity. Life is too short to be unhappy. It is meant to be enjoyed — not endured with unnecessary aggravations. We are responsible, if oppressed, members of society — and oppression is condemned in the Bible, (see Exodus 22:21, 23:9, Proverbs 3:31, Ecclesiastes 7:7, Isaiah 1:17, Baruch 4:21, et al.). We can be assured this teaching is from God, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,...for instruction...” —2 Timothy 3:16 (KJV). *Science and Health* has this to say, “Discerning the rights of man, we cannot fail to foresee the doom of all oppression...” —227:14-15. A review of church history in such great works as *Halley’s Bible Handbook* reveals an enormous amount of church and Papacy sanctioned oppression in the name of Christian love. Any oppression or persecution is the spirit of the devil, even though carried on in the name of Christ.

Not all oppression is perpetrated out of malice though. Some comes inadvertently from “well-meaning” Christians who have an insensitive habit and/or narrow window of understanding of the subject — and on this issue, some of society is like a foolish juror, listening only to one side of the case. In view of some of what has been done in the name of Christian love in the past, it seems inconceivable how modern day enlightened people could take our responsible loving relationships and see them as un-God like behavior.

Worse than that, there are still some people today who firmly believe in certain “Christian” doctrines that prohibit their congregation from receiving modern medical treatment and/or blood transfusions when sick. To abide by this, they would allow their

⁸ Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, MA, 1875, 1925), p. 570:14-15.

loved ones to die rather than disobey their religious teaching, and all this while they are believing they're acting in the name of Christian love. That is abominable by humane standards. Religionists who have promoted or condoned hypocrisy and bloodshed do not originate with God, nor do they represent him. Therefore their anti-gay views should be disregarded.

Everyone needs a sense of identity, purpose, and personal goals. What a person believes and how they feel about themselves will condition that person and affect his or her ultimate destiny. If this book helps both the gay and the non-gay person to achieve the objectives listed in the preface, increases the public's awareness and appreciation of gay people and their natural uniqueness, and brings hope to those who need it most then it has achieved its goals. With a clearer and more liberal understanding of Christianity these goals are possible. Hopefully the liberating influence of this work will be felt far into the future — just one more small step for people-kind. A lot of my self in my spiritual journey is covered here — perhaps more than I intended — and I sincerely hope and pray that God will continue to use it as an instrument of peace and reconciliation for anyone willing to open their hearts and accept it.

Readers should be aware, and I'm sure they are, that my conclusions here are in conflict with many, if not most, Christian people's opinions and traditions on the subject. Consequently, what is presented here should be carefully appraised by each individual reader. The value of my conclusions does not rest on any official authority, but on the value of the reasoning and evidence that I have provided and also on the extent to which my conclusions receive confirmation in the experience of the reader.

To help accomplish these objectives it helps to understand why people of traditional values do not always base their conclusions about gay people upon the facts. All too often facts are ignored, and instead the currently popular views of the majority are championed in spite of evidence to the contrary. Quite frequently, popular attitudes get read back into Biblical statements that say very little on some subjects. When so much negative criticism abounds, average laymen are intimidated and even reluctant to contradict it. Some may even become irritated or pretend the evidence does not exist when their beliefs are in conflict with the truer liberal thinking evidence. Because of negative societal attitudes about us, many people are susceptible to preconceived beliefs before knowing the facts and are likely to cling to them, especially if they are popular beliefs, if they support their preconceptions of the notions they want to believe. It seems to make no difference even when they recognize that many of the anti-gay claims are made by people who may be careless in their research and intemperate in their writing. And they surely won't take our word for it when what we say contradicts their personal beliefs.

This became clear in August 1991 when research conducted by neuroscientist Dr. Simon LeVay, Associate Professor at the Salk Institute, determined that a tiny area of the brain known as the hypothalamus, believed to control sexual activity, was smaller in gay males than in non-gay males. The Christian community, insistent on their "theory" that it's not inborn, biological, or genetic were outraged about these findings. I'm sure we'll hear more as research continues.

Some, like Chaplain Ray as we'll read later on, accept that there are internal

dissimilarities within the bodies of gay people, but they always refer to these differences as “glandular *disturbances* and hormonal *imbalances*.” I prefer to use the term glandular or hormonal *difference*. This gets away from thinking we are out of balance and therefore wrong in some way.

These kinds of Christian short-sighted responses are just other examples of the “dance of the dinosaurs” that inevitably takes place whenever new ideas threaten the established order. Like any new technology, new thinking threatens to change the world, and we humans don’t like to change the way we do things. Overcoming the status quo is the largest obstacle we face. Just look at the controversy over using computers to “colorize” old black and white movies. Even though people against this process can easily turn the color control down on their TVs to see these old classics in all their original black and white glory, they instead want to deny the rest of us the opportunity to choose enjoying them in color. Once the status quo gets its hooks in, old habits are slow to change. What are they so afraid of anyway?

It’s hard to change people’s views, especially when they are weighed down with thousands of years of tradition and history originating out of Biblical’s cradle of civilization — but when our future is at stake, we’ve got to try. An invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come. Our time is *now*! This isn’t your grandparents’ world any more. The world today is big enough to contain both gays and non-gays alike. Neither one makes the other worthless — and there’s no need being afraid of having this belief; no need to fear changing ideas. These are the 1990’s *not* the 1950’s!

Actually many may support our viewpoint presented here, but would not publicly admit it because of fear of rejection and being branded. Unfortunately, even with so much overwhelming evidence to support a more liberal view, hardcore conservatives — I call them counterfeit Christians — will still not admit their errors. Why? They have committed themselves to their viewpoint so strong and have gathered so much support. Because of that, they work to justify their preconceived ideas at any cost, rather than acknowledge possibly damaging facts that would hurt their cause. They have an absolute commitment to avoid accepting the “unacceptable” (to them) conclusion. They resist at all cost the undeniable facts. In some cases, they may make such an issue out of it because they are having a hard time convincing themselves that how they live is the right way. Maybe they just feel better when they are able to gloat about their “correct” way of viewing life and someone else’s “incorrect” way of viewing life.

What is so bad is they will pronounce moral judgment on *all* gay people without ever taking a long unblinking look at the actual experience of true unselfish gay couples in stable unions whose relationship provides the context for mutual growth and fulfillment. That something like that is quite viable in our times still has them perplexed.

Hopefully our study here will be thorough enough to prompt those of a conservative inclination that there is no legitimate reason to continue their oppressive attitudes toward gay people. They can use their time more wisely if they were to direct their energies toward something that would lead to positive rather than negative changes in society. Positive teaching is teaching tolerance and respect for diversity.

Theologians will not deny that God created human nature and scientific findings seem to confirm that our sexual orientation is largely ingrained from birth, therefore how can it be denied that our orientation is part of a divinely inspired plan? God made us all different for a good reason. An orchestra would be pretty dull if everyone played the same instrument. You are a special instrument of God, designed to do His work in the world. Be happy to reflect God's glory and the spiritual challenges He chooses. Only then will you have a solid basis for self-respect and a purpose for living. Cherish your personal strengths and use them for others. Don't worry about your weaknesses either which are also part of God's design for you.

Because He was intimately involved in the specific design of who we are, gay people must therefore be part of the grander scheme of things with something to accomplish. According to Scripture, we are; "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." —Ephesians 2:10 (NIV). Sometimes God's surprises explode into our lives like a Ruffed Grouse; other times as a barely discernible deer in the forest. We may have difficulty in understanding God's purpose and plans for us, may even spend years trying to avoid them, but we can fully believe they *are* good! Until we accept our destiny and who we really are we will not find fulfillment or know how valuable each one of us is. Others among us may be fortunate enough to have a better grasp of the situation. It is sort of a lofty enterprise of the human spirit to see where we fit into the greater scheme of things — to understand our life adventure.

It would be inconceivable and contrary to our highest ideas of God for Him to allow some to have an attraction only for others of the same gender and then condemn and punish those for feeling and doing naturally what they could not avoid. *Science and Health* seems to concur; "In common justice, we must admit that God will not punish man for doing what He created man capable of doing, and knew from the outset that man would do...." —357:1-4.

The Bible speaks of a loving God throughout, yet wouldn't it be cruel to create hundreds of thousands this way and then deny them all intimacy. I believe in a loving compassionate God and compassion is the heart of all morality. God does not despise anything that God has created. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." —John 1:3 (KJV). "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." —Colossians 1:16-17 (KJV). God created us in His own image; "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:..." —Genesis 1:26 (KJV). "Everything that God has created is good; nothing is to be rejected, but everything is to be received with a prayer of thanks, because the word of God and the prayer make it acceptable to God." —1 Timothy 4:4-5 (TEV). Can traditional valued Christians honestly claim to love the Creator if they despise His creation? Hmmm.

God and Jesus are concerned for people with all kinds of needs. In fact, the Bible does recognize that some are unable to have traditional male/female relationships. They're called Eunuchs, and we'll speak more about their nature later in our study of Matthew.

While the Genesis stories about Adam and Eve are intended to make several points

perhaps, they are not meant to make heterosexual marriage mandatory, as some would argue. Too much Scripture contradicts that. Genesis 2:24 is often quoted by traditional-minded Christians who say a couple must be married in order to interact together as one flesh. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” —(NIV). 1 Corinthians 6:16 disproves this point when it acknowledges that even when one unites with a prostitute they become one flesh, which refers back to Genesis 2:24. “Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, ‘The two will become one flesh.’” —(NIV). The basic point about the Adam and Eve stories is to deny sexism and racism — to show that the human race is one family created from the hand of God initially as one unit, one flesh. From the one came two — “bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” In the beginning there was perfect equality and harmony.

It is hoped that opponents who find this liberal teaching inconsistent can, with God’s help, stop defining individual Scripture verses separately in a very narrow out of context manner, and view them within the framework of the entire Bible in order to get a broader picture of what God more realistically really meant. Ideas that are not there should not be read into these verses. When Ephesians 5:24 says a wife should submit to her husband in *everything*, does that mean that if the husband tells her to sleep with another man, she must do it? Certainly not. You must consider the teachings of the *entire* Bible. We’re not to take an isolated text and build some doctrine on it.

The main teachings and lessons of each passage should be searched out fairly and honestly. By using God’s understanding rather than our own we will come to believe what we ought to believe. Having an openness of mind is more becoming to those seeking to interpret a book like the Bible. When this is done, ambiguity should vanish and the excitement of Bible stories comes to life.

It is only against such a background that one should talk about homosexuality in the Bible because the subject very rarely is mentioned in Scripture. At the other extreme, Scripture is filled with condemnations against idolatry. Idolatry, the worship of anything or anyone other than God, was a widespread and very serious offense in God’s eyes. It is surprising how much it is overlooked by those modern writers and preachers who are most critical of our lifestyle. Catholics take notice. Could praying to statues be a form of idolatry? Oppression receives more coverage in Scripture than alternate lifestyles and it too is often glossed over. Even lying is condemned more often in Scripture than homosexuality.

All too often people like to cite a few verses “on the subject” as though that were all the Bible had to say to a whole class of people. They dilute their words to quite an extent by glossing them over with human ideas and traditions. But the whole Bible belongs to every person. The goal is to understand most clearly what the Bible says on its own terms. When based on individual verses separated from their context, Scripture which should grow in beauty and consistency then appear contradictory when subjected to such usage. Viewed in a broader, more general way, we get a truer indication of His wisdom. The truth is the truth; whether it’s a Sun-centered solar system or a gay person accepting his or her inner self. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” — John 8:32 (KJV). Only the truth will set you free — not an alibi, lie, or excuse. There’s

no alibi for who you truly are. You are what you are; period!

Ironically, we have been hated because we are people who dared to follow our own inner truth in times and places where our love has been forbidden. To further add to the irony, the Ten Commandments prohibit untruthfulness, while *not* prohibiting homosexuality. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man.” —Ecclesiastes 12:13 (KJV). Being true to ourselves and our convictions *is* part of God’s plan — *and* within Scripture.

While some verses speak against same gender sexual activity, it is always in the context of referring to it as lustful sexual behavior at the same time. The gravity of lustful interactions can be gauged from the fact of the kinds of acts they are lumped together with. Usually nearby in the same chapter a verse also denounces prostitution and drunkenness, sometimes even thievery and murder, along with other vile activities. Sometimes we see prohibited sexual acts lumped together with sorcery and idol worship, both of which are also condemned quite often. Nowhere is there a specific text which explicitly rejects all homosexual activities as such independent of these other disgraceful practices.

In Biblical days people feared sorcerers (those who practiced magic arts). Today that is not the case. We acknowledge that magicians are merely illusionists that use slight of hand tricks to give the impression they are performing magic acts. This needless fear led to one of the most barbaric and heinous crimes in the history of humanity. In this shameful part of Earth’s history, women who practiced witchcraft were burned at the stake as Biblically proclaimed and anyone who didn’t conform was considered dangerous to the establishment. “Do not allow a sorceress to live.” —Exodus 22:18 (NIV). The brutal Inquisition characterized it as a form of heresy and took an active interest in the severe treatment of individuals accused of being witches. Today no civil-minded people, even Christians of fundamentalist theology, demand Exodus 22:18 be adhered to — at least we hope not.

Males too, including children, faced the penalty of execution at the hands of religious lawmakers if they were suspected of practicing witchcraft. They just weren’t punished as severely as women. An English law of 1683, for instance, stated that for the crime of witchcraft, a man *may* be hanged, but a woman *must* be burned. Throughout Europe about 80% of those burned for witchcraft were females. This was due to the long-established belief in a female’s inherent disposition to sinfulness and wantonness. Not one person would have died for the human invented “crime” of witchcraft were it not for the Inquisition and Biblical passages like Exodus 22:18.

It’s noteworthy that moderate social drinking is not prohibited, only the excessive aspect of it. In fact drinking in itself is hardly even mentioned. In the same light, while lustful homosexual interactions are prohibited, along with lustful heterosexual ones, that’s where the prohibition ends — and there is no mention of sexual orientation in any manner. The Bible does not deal with that issue. Later in our study in Chapter 3 we’ll see a proper translation of Greek text bears this out.

There are several ways to express our sexuality, and it is not done exclusively for procreation. Today we are able to recognize three types of sexual activity: procreational (sex to have babies); romantic (where genuine expressions of deep emotional interpersonal love and caring are involved, the ideal human context for sexual expression); and recreational (physical pleasure accompanied by no more than affection).

The first was highly recommended, especially at a time when the sparsely populated Earth needed to grow. The later was prohibited, but the center one, romantic, was not even addressed in the homosexual sense.

There was a tremendous emphasis throughout the Bible that all sexual relationships should be procreative because of a great concern for perpetuation of the people. Large families were needed to populate the Promised Land! When trying to understand why ancient writers put so much emphasis upon condemning our methods of affection for one another, we must keep in mind this pro-fertility bent of the Old Testament authors that was due to under-population, with the result that any willful destruction of viable human seed was regarded as a serious crime. We'll address the ancient misinterpretation of human seed later in our study of Romans and see what implications their misinterpretation had and still has on our society.

Another factor influencing anti-gay attitudes was the strong Hebrew stress on preserving the family name through offspring. In fact, participation in God's covenant with the chosen people depended on having children. One of the worst curses which could befall a Jewish male was sterility. Another important element giving importance to procreation becomes clear when we picture a time when there were no paper currencies, no banks, no Social Security, or pension funds. A man's wealth was often limited to his personal possessions, his livestock, and of course his family and children. By the time one became old and needed help the only possible form of social security that one could count on generally was his children. Hence every man and woman of the ancient East (and those in poorer countries around the world today) wanted to have as many children as he or she possibly could — they were an absolute necessity. This was also often true for the gay people of this era — they had the same old age survival needs to contend with as everyone else.

Our sexuality has evolved considerably since ancient times, but we still hold non-conformity an unpopular idea. With proper enlightenment there should be no trouble in seeing the possibility of having a homosexual relationship that is mutually desired and satisfying, trusting, beneficial, generous, spontaneous, uninhibited, reciprocal, loving, responsible, totally equal and very positive, and in turn have that relationship blessed by the love of God in Christ. That is in complete conformity with Scripture.

The Biblical perspective on sex indicates to us that it is time for us to stop dealing with sexual relationships in the negative, and treat them in the wholesome way God intended them to be, whether that relationship is gay or non-gay. The more central meaning of sexuality in Scripture is a very intimate, deep form of communication, a form of overcoming separateness and becoming one. Sexual union is a way of transcending otherness, and thus is a model, a paradigm, of our spiritual oneness with God. The recreational, communicational, and unitive functions of sexuality are also evident in the Bible. Sexuality and sexual activity are accepted as natural, joyous, fulfilling, fresh, and good. Life is too short to *not* be happy.

In the cultural and historical context of the Old Testament, and even later in the New Testament, homosexual activities could only be envisaged as expressions of hatred and scorn, or even, as in the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, force. Such practices clearly fit

into our definition of immoral. These people, including the inspired authors, had no concept at all of the positive, loving, and special aspects of many gay relationships. While these qualities and the contemporary scientific concept of sexual orientation were not known about in Biblical days (or maybe such relationships fit in so well alongside conventional heterosexual unions that it was hardly worthy of comment), it is understandable then why they were not addressed in the Scriptures and why condemnations against even loving relationships seem so plausible in conservative Christian tradition originally addressing a problem of widespread immorality. We recognize many things as desirable today that were unknown even a hundred years ago. To read contemporary issues back into the Bible is to do it an injustice and to now condemn aspects unknown at the time and not addressed in the Bible is not only unfair, but unethical. We must never allow society to return to those dark ages and force us back into the closets.

For some it is advantageous and even necessary to have this kind of lifestyle. Those who think a male/male or female/female relationship is an unnatural form of sexual expression must realize that a male/female relationship is unnatural for some of us to have. We are *all* sexual beings, and to not express this important part of ourselves is not natural. Our concept of what is and isn't natural is merely a human creation anyway, tainted with oppressive theological elements. Let's keep this sentence in mind when we read a little later what several homophobic clergy have to say about us in their pamphlets.

As far as God is concerned, no loving relationships are unnatural, and those of us free-spirited souls see them as so natural that it justifies, in our case, interacting within a sincere communion of life and love analogous to marriage. What is the real unnatural element is the unhealthy and unproductive discord and separation some gay people go through because of society's negative attitudes brought on by homophobia, bigotry, and old education. Such things cast us headlong into darkness and dogma. The time for harmony is at hand. *Science and Health* says it best of all; "Harmony in man is as beautiful as in music, and discord is unnatural, unreal." —304:20-21. Remember, nobody's born a bigot or a homophobe — these things are instilled in some people by shallow teaching. Incidentally, *Science and Health* makes no mention of homosexuality at all. As in the Bible, when lust is mentioned, other vile activities are always grouped with it in the same sentence. Clearly, Mary Baker Eddy did not associate lust and loving relationships together either.

To help the traditional churches' teachings catch up with the medical and scientific community we need to question the authority of the churches when it appears inconsistent with an informed conscience. We need to be guided by our own relationship with God as we understand Him and let our conscience be our guide rather than the pronouncements from the churches. After all, God speaks to the conscious of individuals and gay people can make a decision in conscious how to live their lives without destroying themselves emotionally. If the way you are relating is improper God will let you know. It will show itself as destructive of the human and disruptive of your relation with God.

Just like money, food, or laws, sexuality can be very good, nourishing, and healthy in the proper context — can be used to heal and empower people, to bring the Earth more nearly in conformity to heaven. But just like anything else (even good things) when used excessively, improperly, or overdone, it can be used to destroy and dominate people — to

make the Earth a living hell. Don't allow your hormones to let you lose all sense of ethical responsibility and moderation. "...In whatever you do, be moderate,..." —Sirach 31:22 (NAB).

We of course recognize that not all gay relationships are emotionally stable, healthy, and happy, but others must be helped to realize that many are. And for those that are not, their reasons are usually not related *only* to the fact that the two partners are of the same gender. Every relationship needs to be treated individually in keeping with each person's individual nature.

Religions should accept diversity and differences of beliefs, after all, look at the many different denominations (all of which use the same Bible) all professing to be Christian — each with their own particular doctrine and ways of responding to God's love — and the ways they are taught. Such differences have led some Christians to claim that other Christians are not really Christians at all. There is no need for that when we accept that Biblical interpretation and theology differs from church to church. No one religion has cornered the market on God. Religion isn't the important issue anyway — Spirituality is. The difference being, Spirituality is your direct connection to your higher power, God; whereas religion is an organized business.

Biblical interpretation and theology also change from time to time. Around 150 years ago in the United States, some Christian teaching held that there was a "natural" two-fold moral order: black and white. Whites were thought to be superior to blacks, therefore blacks were to be subservient and slavery was an institution ordained by God. Clergy who supported such an abhorrent idea claimed the authority of the Bible with its acceptance of slavery and teachings where God's "chosen" Hebrews were treated different than outsiders.

This archaic thinking contaminated religious oriented folks even in our recent past. I recall seeing a picture taken in the early 1960's of protesters angrily denouncing integration of black children into white schools. And in the tightly clenched arms of one protesting mother was, what else, but a Holy Bible. They even believed it was unnatural for black people to drink out of the same water fountains that white people used. These same denominations, of course, do not support slavery today. Did the Bible change? No, their *interpretation* of the Bible did! Surely, we can look into our Bibles and find a place for gay people just as we found a place for others who have been rejected in the past.

There is not *one* true faith as Catholics have been taught. We are too varied for that. It is not necessary to be Roman Catholic, and subject to the Roman Pontiff and Catholic traditions, in order to receive salvation of eternal life as some past "infallible" Popes have declared, and some current priests still do. On the contrary, salvation is gained by trust in God through Christ. (One 16th century Pope who endorsed this teaching, "declared burning of heretics a divine appointment"⁹, another from the 19th century said, "every dogma of the Roman Catholic Church has been dictated by Christ through His vice regents on earth"⁹. Other Papal claims included, a "hold on this earth the place of Almighty God, and that obedience to them is necessary to salvation"⁹ and that "Everyone separated from the Roman Catholic Church, however unblameable in other respects, has no part in eternal life."⁹) Infallibility, by the way, concerns the absence of error, not of

⁹ Halley, pp. 780, 781, & 783.

sin, according to the Catholic Church. Popes considered themselves error-less, not sin-less.

The Catholic Church may have been the first Christian church started by Christ, but that doesn't make it the only one that is right. There are a variety of ways to honor God, just as God made various kinds of people. Being we are all uniquely designed by God, we all have our special ways of honoring Him — each with an individual walk in life. Other faiths also have a unity with God. They follow and allow Bible principles to govern their lives in the manner they understand Scripture, but each does it in its own unique way.

I've heard Catholic priests criticize some Protestant teachings that do not contribute to a person's salvation despite the Protestant preacher's insistence that it does. Then on the other side, Protestant preachers will criticize some Catholic teachings as being incorrect for a person's salvation. Catholics sprinkle "holy" water on a person while baptizing but Protestants say that isn't enough. For them, baptism requires complete immersion in water. Who is to say which faith is right? Must there be only *one* "right" one? Is it even important? Doesn't it make more sense that there is more than one little narrow grass-grown path that leads to heaven? Hmmm.

Diversity equals richness. If some people find fulfillment in one doctrine then that is part of God's plan, and if someone else finds it in another doctrine then that's part of God's plan too. There is not just one road to God; at least not a narrow one. All life plays an integral role in His plan. Our great country came into being on the principle of religious toleration for all. Christianity should be valued and honored in whatever manner it is found with everyone worshiping Him according to the dictates of their own consciences and in keeping with the way they understand Him.

Those who believe we are deviating from traditional Christian values should be reminded how the Protestant faith grew out of a group of people protesting (hence the name) the teachings of the traditional Catholic Church. Speaking out for differences is nothing new and is as viable today as it was in antiquity.

Small doctrinal differences are not important as long as we understand that Jesus Christ *is* the Son of God, and that we in turn love and accept Him as our personal Savior. All of these conventional religions do have certain things in common though; love of God as they understand Him, neighbor and family, importance of relationships, the Golden Rule, truthfulness (to yourself and others), and the Ten Commandments (which, by the way, do not condemn homosexuality). All of these beliefs are also important to many gay people. At the same time, some of the most fundamental Christian religions neglect the "do unto others" Golden Rule teaching when we are the target.

A lot of the pain, suffering, and psychological damage that is being done to gay people today is intensified by traditional church teachings and negative pastoral attitudes. This public posture legitimizes homophobia and must be brought into question. "Anxiety causes great harm, tending to break down the life forces, that worry encourages weakness and disease, that doubt closes the door to many blessings, that discouragement paralyzes faith and hope, making a person unfit for usefulness, and that care diverts the mind from Christ."¹⁰ Teaching is always open to critical reexamination and change if there is a good

¹⁰ Gulley, p. 120.

reason, and it is a good reason if it's destroying the emotional lives of thousands of people. What's bad psychology has to be bad theology. Being different does not necessarily mean being bad. Being gay can be a great inspiring joy. Prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear, however, create a burden that too often smothers the joy and replaces it with great pain. Inflicting this kind of pain is the real wrong being perpetrated. Creating psychological harm is *not* God's way. Jesus made a point of denouncing those who place grievous burdens on others, (see Luke 11:46).

While some traditional churches say that any and all homosexual activity is against family values and contributes to the breakup of families, they should be helped to understand that at least 10% of their members — one out of every ten — have some amount of natural attraction towards some others of the same gender. While these “defenders” of Christianity are teaching love and closeness in the family — and accusing us of not being “family friendly” — they are rejecting and condemning some of their *own* family members and hurting many of those that surround them. This undermines the structure of these families and violates their own basic law of love — the exact opposite of what they're trying to accomplish. Those who say that homosexuality is not an issue that pertains to them need to realize that with extended families — including aunts, uncles, cousins etc. — just about *every* family has one of us quietly blooming in the background; or unfortunately, quietly wilting. It is *not* anti-family to promote honesty and integrity among *all* family members. These are the very values Christianity is *suppose* to teach. Traditional families — even the most fundamental ones — have gay children too; whether they admit it or not! Praise God!!! It's time they stop burying their haloed heads in the sand and deny that fact. It's time they show their pride in God's rich and wonderful variation in the human animal. When it comes to family, one size doesn't fit all!

With the extra pressure some families end up separating and this is a shame. These condemnatory attitudes of the churches toward gay people today are painful. They need to stop ignoring the scientific and medical findings and accept the fact that homosexuality has been eliminated, per se, from the “sick list” of diagnostic nomenclature. If they really want to preserve the family unit, as they say, they will help families understand and accept this different feature of human nature.

To get an understanding of how serious the dilemma is that gay people face today from traditional conservative Christian teachings, let us examine what two independently separate ministries teach about homosexuality. While some readers may find the following offensive, I know I do, we must understand the kind of attitude they teach is fostered by an imperfect understanding of the language of the Bible — the very understanding we are trying to correct.

Chaplain Ray directs an international prison ministry from Dallas, Texas. Here are some excerpts from his pamphlet titled, *What the Bible says to Homosexuals*:

Before we examine the cause, the curse, and the cure [of homosexuality], let us first get some popular misconceptions straightened out in our thinking. Homosexuals are not “queers.” They are not a third sex. They are not accidents of either creation or procreation. They are ordinary people who, in the early years of life, responded to their emotional and mental stresses and strains with wrong attitudes and wrong actions which developed into serious neuroses. Almost all homosexuals are extremely unhappy.

Many people are of the opinion that they can instantly recognize a homosexual man or a lesbian woman by their external appearances, their speech, and

mannerisms. This simply is not true. Experts in the field estimate that only fifteen percent of the homosexual men are obviously homosexual. No more than five percent of the lesbian women are obviously lesbians. The homosexual problem is like an iceberg, by far the largest part of it is hidden from view.

Another misconception of the homosexual problem is the opinion held by many, and actually fostered by most homosexuals, that a homosexual is born a homosexual, that he is the product of creation or procreation, and that he as a person had no choice in the matter. Modern scientific investigation has led to the conclusion that homosexuality is strongly influenced by the environment in childhood, especially by influences in the home, and that homosexuality is the result of the child's or the youth's responses to that environment. Children living in the same home, exposed to the same environment, may and do respond differently. The final choice lies with the individual.

One of the most unfortunate and disastrous misconceptions about homosexuality is that it is incurable. This just simply is not true. Many homosexuals have been fully cured and they have become fully heterosexual in their sex lives. When Dr. [Irving] Bieber's group studied the results of a number of homosexuals who had received psychiatric treatment for their problem, they found that thirty percent of the patients had shifted completely to heterosexuality. This was achieved simply through human psychiatric treatment. A much higher cure rate has been achieved where faith in God, the Bible, prayer, and spiritual power have been used to affect the cure.

Homosexuals are not average, normal, well adjusted persons who just happen to express their sex interests toward other men instead of towards a wife. Homosexuals have serious problems that affect the whole personality, not just affecting their sex habits.

The personality of the homosexual almost invariably includes a mixture of these traits, according to Dr. Edmund Bergler.

- 1) Masochistic provocation and injustice-collecting.
- 2) Defensive malice.
- 3) Flippant covering of depression and guilt feelings.
- 4) Hypernarcissism and hypersuperciliousness.
- 5) Refusal to acknowledge accepted standards in nonsexual matters, on the assumption that the right to cut moral corners is due homosexuals as compensation for their "sufferings."
- 6) General unreliability, also of a more or less psychopathic nature.

Regardless of the level of their intelligence, culture, background, or education, these traits appear in homosexuals.

Almost all homosexuals have a subconscious compulsion to suffer injustices at the hands of others. Almost without exception, the homosexual is a compulsive "Injustice collector." He actually enjoys defeat, humiliation and rejection. Then he can indulge in generous portions of self-pity. The excessive amount of psychic masochism at work in the average homosexual is an accurate measurement of the depth of his neurosis.

A recent phenomenon in the world of the homosexuals is the new militancy and openness of self-confessed homosexuals in the Gay Liberation Movement. They actually claim to be proud of their way of life, and demand equality as members of a third sex, created by God, and worthy of acceptance and approval by their fellow man.

A homosexual boy or girl is like the lost sheep of the Bible. A homosexual is one who has gone astray, and suffered, a lonely, desperate person. It is right at this point that the church should speak the positive word, the Biblical statements, concerning the cause and the cure of the homosexual. The curse of the homosexual is obvious, and it has been for many centuries. The curse of being lonely. The curse of being

ostracized and condemned, and finally the curse of divine judgment which is upon the sin of homosexuality as it is upon the sins of fornication, adultery, murder, theft, lying, drunkenness, or any other sin.

The cure of homosexuals is much easier to achieve if treatment begins at a very early age. But there will be no treatment until the problem is detected and admitted. Often the boy's father and mother will be the last to recognize that their child is a homosexual.

The teachers in our public and private schools should be well trained and alerted to be on the watch for signs of homosexual behaviour in their students. They actually have much more opportunity to observe these signs than do most parents.

Boys that are emotionally inclined toward the homosexual life almost never engage in such games as baseball and football. They seldom if ever engage in fist fights. They tend to be over-polite, obedient, anxious to obey their parents. They are often witty, charming, and quite popular with adults.

In a study of 106 homosexuals, Dr. Bieber found that 89 avoided physical fights; 75 were afraid of physical injury when they were children; 60 were "loners", and 33 played almost entirely with girls until they reached the age of puberty. Of this 106 homosexuals only 17 had participated in competitive group games; only 16 had played baseball.

Many psychiatrists and researchers believe that fathers have it within their power to prevent their sons from becoming homosexuals.

Homosexuals almost never express love, admiration, or affection for their fathers. Very often homosexuals seem to dote on their mothers, and express love for their mothers; nevertheless their retreat into the world of homosexual men is in reality their flight from women.

Parents and others do well to watch closely for any signs of homosexual inclinations and evidences of the six personality afflictions that almost invariably accompany the incipient homosexual. Wherever the problem arises, expert help and guidance is needed for the parents as well as for the child.

A teacher, observing a child in its relationships with other children in the classroom or on the playgrounds is in a favorable position to detect the first signs of homosexual tendencies.

Many homosexuals were over-protected, sheltered, and controlled as children. They would have been healthier emotionally and psychologically if they had been involved in the rough and tumble games and fights of the children on the playgrounds rather than sheltered in the home, dominated by a woman or by women.

Did God create homosexuals? Can anyone answer this question more accurately than Jesus? [He] said, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female," Matt. 19:4. God made only two sexes! Are we in this age of permissiveness to yield to popular pressures to approve a third sex?

When a homosexual accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour the church should joyfully receive that former homosexual into the church fellowship as readily as it receives those who were formerly drunkards, fornicators, or thieves. But the homosexual is no more justified in continuing his or her unnatural sex habits than the former drunkard is justified in continuing in drunkenness or the former fornicator continuing as the patron of harlots!

The cleansing power of the blood of Jesus Christ can cleanse from all sin, and that includes the sex sins of sodomites, homosexuals, and lesbians. The power of the ever present Holy Spirit can transform and recreate lives so that the sins of the past do not hold dominion over the Christian's present or future. Many homosexuals have been converted to Jesus Christ, and made New Creatures in Him.

God's love can restore lesbians and homosexuals to normal heterosexual persons and to radiant, victorious Christians. With all my heart I want to encourage homosexuals and lesbians to come to Jesus, the friend of sinners, and the transformer of distorted lives.

Modern psychiatry places most of the blame for [the cause of] homosexuals on the parents. The Bible commands parents to, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The Bible has a further word to say about homosexual habits and characteristics, and it appears to speak directly to the homosexual that he is the person who in the final analysis makes the final, ultimate, and fateful decision on whether to be or not to be a homosexual! Is it not clear from [Romans 1:18-32] that no man can blame another for his sins...and that every man must accept responsibility for his own decisions?

This entire scripture passage is centered on the sins of unnatural sex affections and practices. It indicates that homosexuals bring about many of the changes in their bodies, their appearance, and their personalities, by their wrong thoughts and deeds! The glandular disturbances and hormonal imbalances of homosexuals are not the cause of the homosexuality, but the result of their wrong choices!

[A Christian psychiatrist said that] once he learned the personality characteristics of the homosexuals, he could actually cause them to change in facial appearance from masculine to feminine, and from feminine to masculine, simply by the words that he would speak with them. He was convinced that their unnatural sex thoughts, actions, and emotions, directly affected their glands and disturbed the normal hormonal balance of the human body. In treating homosexuals he did not use hormone injections, as he felt that would be treating the affect and not reaching the cause.

Rather, he would conduct indepth counseling sessions to help them to understand themselves, and to get them to recognize that God made only two sexes, male and female; that they had made themselves homosexual, and that they had the power, if they exercised their will, to make themselves again what God had made them at the time of their birth.

The Bible never speaks a single word of approval for any unnatural sex practices, whether these be homosexual, sodomy, or lesbianism.

The homosexual or lesbian who really wants to change can be changed. The change starts in the mind and in the heart. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." From out of the heart are the issues of life.

Let the person who wants to be changed realize that without God's help he made himself a homosexual. Now with God's help he can be changed again, changed to the person God created him to be. This means that there will be no more statements blaming God, society, or others for past troubles and for the inner turmoils of the homosexual. God made only two sexes. Affirm daily, every hour, that you are what God made you.

Accept Christ as Lord and Saviour. Confess your sins. Confess that homosexual words, alibis, and activities are sin. Repent and turn from not only the actions and deeds of this sin, but also turn from the thoughts, desires, and emotions of homosexuality.

If possible, seek and accept the help of a capable Christian counsellor. Follow his advice. Avoid all contacts and associations with homosexuals and lesbians, unless they too have accepted Jesus and committed themselves to Him and are determined to change. Then associate with them only in Bible Study, discussion groups, and Bible centered, Christ centered seminars.

Keep active. Work. Exercise. Involve yourself in as much wholesome group activities as possible. Stay among friends who are with you and for you, in Christ. Stay away from all hangouts of homosexuals. Depend on God's help. Live much in prayer. Even if you falter, don't quit. God is for you. With His help you can be what He created you to be.

From Whittier, California, Believers Fellowship has distributed material along similar lines. Here are some excerpts from their pamphlet titled, *The Homosexual Made Accountable!*:

...[One] evil lie that is spread which some practicing homosexuals have been deceived into believing is that because God is a God of love, He couldn't possibly keep them out of heaven for their "preference" could He?... Many who are caught in the lie of homosexuality have actually been deceived into believing that God created them that way, so he couldn't possibly want them to change!... The Homosexual is not practicing what he was created to do — he is practicing something that is unnatural, (read Romans 1:26), and declared by God Himself to be a shameless deed!

Another fatal lie that has been fed to the homosexual community is that the homosexual can be a minister of the gospel.... Homosexuality is actually in opposition to the gospel! There is no more place for a homosexual to consider himself to be in a right relationship to God than there is for a practicing murderer or kidnapper or liar to do so!

One of the most important points that must be made in regard to the homosexual is that they will be held accountable to God for having exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

It is true that some people who end up becoming homosexuals or lesbians were molested by someone of the same sex when they were children. Then there are others who simply "always seemed" to have a physical desire for the same sex. And then there are those who began to have sexual relations with those of their own sex when they were no longer fully satisfied with having relations with the opposite sex. But let's be absolutely clear on one thing. There came a time in the life of each individual, no matter how they got started, when they themselves, having been confronted with their sin, either by preaching or by conscience, made the choice to continue in that sin! You see folks, nearly everyone is influenced somehow. All of us grew up being lied to. And this may have influenced us to lie. But the day comes when we make the choice to lie in spite of having been shown that lying is wrong!

Therefore, no matter how a person comes to practice any sin, it will be their accountability to God for doing what they knew was wrong that will leave them without an excuse!

Now, having established the fact that a homosexual, just as any other sinner, will be held accountable to God by what they have been shown to be sin, it becomes vital to point out that all sinners must come to Jesus Christ or be eternally lost!

...The Bible offers one solution to your problem and only one! It is not years of therapy with a psychologist! It is not being herded off with those who have "the same problem" so you can "relate." And it is not by surrendering to the lie that you will never be changed! The thing you must do is to come to Jesus Christ in a complete and true surrender of faith!

The first thing you must do is repent!

Many people might ask, "Is it possible to be a homosexual and be a Christian?" The answer is an absolute NO! BUT it is possible to be a Christian and still be tempted and perhaps even stumble with homosexual desires because the sin that is in your flesh has not changed!

Thus, if a person who struggles with homosexual temptations will get truly honest with God, and surrender unconditionally to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and yield their lives completely to the power of His Spirit, they not only can but will experience freedom from fulfilling the lusts of their flesh!

We cannot come to Jesus and be secretly desiring to keep some "pet" or "cherished" sin.... If we are saved, there is no half-way!

For those Catholic readers among us, here is the kind of "preaching" they have to deal with. On October 31, 1986 Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued a 12 page letter calling homosexuality an "intrinsic moral evil...behavior to which no one has any conceivable right." For Catholics trained to believe that homosexuality is an almost unspeakable wrong, the letter

states the obvious: Since, in the church's view, homosexual acts do not involve "the life-giving union of men and women in the sacrament of marriage," engaging in gay sex is a mortal sin, an "objective disorder."

Gay people, by the way, are not the only ones to suffer oppression at the hands of the Catholic Church in recent times. In the early part of the 20th century, native American Indian children attending Catholic schools were prohibited from practicing their own traditional ancient customs and even prohibited from speaking their own language. It's amazing the things they'll do in the name of Christian love.

Imagine having feelings for someone of your own gender and having no more knowledge on the subject than what is presented above. Spreading oppression and hate in the name of righteousness is not right. The prejudice developed from such words in the name of God is scary. Is it any wonder many Bible believing gay Christians are intimidated and beguiled by the widespread use of such language? How can Christian gay people accept themselves with any sense of dignity and value as long as they must see themselves as organically expressing the effects of sin in the world and as essentially in contradiction to the divine will for man?

Do you want to understand God as a fearsome Christian God of judgment and punishment or do you want to understand a more familiar Christian vision of God — the God of hope, love, and healing? This God appeals to many God loving Americans for whom religious tolerance has been a bedrock value since the War of Independence. We are expected to lead fruitful lives, yet the insistence on the objective sinfulness of all gay relationships is precisely the type of moral thinking that psychologically destroys the ability of many gay people to enter into lasting and fruitful relationships.

It's terrible emotional abuse to hear these kinds of things from so called "educated" people with such influential power and all under the guise of religion. These words — intended to cause confusion and guilt — can be pretty depressing to those of us who are still uneasy about our orientation to some degree. With so much being done to foster hateful attitudes we can easily see the dilemma gay people are confronted with in today's "modern" world. What's more, they discourage non-gays from finding out what we're all about, and that's a grave disservice both to gays and non-gays alike. Clearly those of us who are gay cannot just hope that the public's infatuation with anti-gay views will go away. Other than exonerating Galileo, we can't even get the current Pope to apologize for earlier "Holy Fathers'" atrocities, let alone admit current damage being done.

Some gay Christians have an especially difficult time co-ordinating their sexual lives and their conflicting religious faith. As far as these people are concerned, they can either continue their relationship with their faith at the price of being cut off from any deep natural human relationship and deprived of their potentialities for growth and development in their personal self-identity or they can seek their personal growth and identity by means of a loving relationship with someone they are comfortable with at the price of cutting themselves off from their faith with all the attendant guilt and emotional stress which such a separation involves.

If today's Christian leaders could only find that their traditional guidelines are not always adequate, but frequently lead to serious harm and destruction for some of their congregation they would see the obvious need for a critical reexamination of those guidelines. This may be possible if we could get the Christian community to sit down and talk with us in an atmosphere of enlightenment and compassion rather than ignorance and invective. Unfortunately, this doesn't seem likely any time soon — most Christian

leaders have not progressed to the point of reexamination.

As gay people and Christians we must understand the reality of the situation — that there has been and continues to be an invasion. A massive crucifixion is going on in the form of a serious plague, rivaling in its intensity any plague of the Middle Ages. Amid all the suffering there is a mass hysteria and fear that leads to persecution and hideous injustice by the community at large. These ghosts of oppressive teachings should have been exorcised a generation ago — but tragically many Christians, and many more of the general public, still believe them. The more evidence we present, the more obstinate they become. Truly, we have our work cut out for us if we're going to cleanse the last poisonous vestiges of prejudice from the Christian community. These church leaders will do, say, or teach anything — even use threats — to keep a gay person from having his or her true identity. How else to enslave free people. This *is* the real abuse and sickness in our society — the real immorality. Any preaching or teaching that turns its back on the future and promotes dishonesty is a sick philosophy.

You know, past efforts at legal reform have often brought forth the irrational contention that gay people do more harm to society than a non-gay person who seduces another's husband or wife, breaks up a marriage, assaults or injures a person, begets and abandons an illegitimate child, etc. And the more severe legal penalties imposed testify to the effectiveness of that sick contention. Don't let them continue to hurt you with improper thinking! Don't let them play God with your life! Don't give them that power over you. Take your power back! Be your own person! If they want to play God they should practice His love and compassion first.

Now is the time to open our hearts and turn our creative thinking as never before to the urgings of the Holy Spirit, to understand His teachings as they were meant to be, and to allow God to use our uniquenesses He gave us in the Godly ways He meant them to be used. No matter where, or from whom, homophobia unmasks its ugly face we need to be there, ready to nip it in the bud. We must speak out whenever we can — to discuss such shortcomings and to encourage an interest in the real world around us where clearly 10% of us are more comfortable with those of the same gender.

When social structures oppress human dignity and freedom and maintains situations of gross inequality, the persons who share life within these situations also share responsibility for allowing them to continue. There is a need and an obligation to undertake a process of consciousness-raising, whereby these injustices and the structures that support them can be identified. Education will awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make people ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all people. If we remain silent, we are guilty of passive abuse. That, and interfering with the natural and truthful growth of another human being are the real sins. Let us not allow another generation of young people to grow up tied to an ancient fantasy that we are bad, devious, or unworthy of God's kingdom. Never again should we be content to suffer prejudice and injustice passively. Remember, the anti-gay values that are taught today will affect future generations. Silence=abuse=death.

The Jewish community actively educates people about the sufferings they endured during World War II so society is never again permitted to commit such atrocities. And in regular grade school history classes, children are now taught about the holocaust during their studies of that period. Yet how many know that gay people were the *second* largest group after the Jews to suffer a similar fate at the hands of the Nazis? Why do history

teachers leave this aspect of truth out of their lesson plans? Is it because gay people are not speaking up as the Jewish community is? Is it because to textbook authors or teachers we are a people not worth mentioning any more than they have to? If this is the case, it is giving a bad image to the gay people they have as students and that is a dangerous practice. The moral is we have to speak up; to get the word out. Silence=abuse=death. The tragedy that happened to us is just as important and worth mentioning. As a group we can change what we cannot, and should not accept.

Even if our activism is as minor as speaking up in a correcting tone of voice when someone says a disparaging remark about gay people, that's a start. In a smaller way, those too shy about mentioning gay issues directly can still speak positively about differences, appreciation, compassion, and acceptance of people in general. A gay teacher I know, fearful of losing his job, emphasizes these admirable qualities to his students but goes no further about discussing gay people. On several occasions throughout his years of teaching gay students have chosen him as the first person they wanted to talk to about their feelings. Even without knowing he was gay, and in fact never knowing, they knew by his philosophy that he was someone they could talk honestly to and receive straight and compassionate answers. They were right. I sincerely hope non-gay teachers with similar qualities in their value system will somehow find a way to let students know that *all* people with a kind heart can be worthy citizens. In some way we *each* — gay and non-gay alike — can be a voice of reason in a crusade for a healthy, bountiful Earth. Every little bit helps. Remember, there's no such thing as a healthy prejudice.

There are enough rough areas of life during these years not to add any excess baggage. Such destructive teachings must cease. Ex-President Bush has said we need a kinder and gentler nation. In a similar analogy, we need a kinder and gentler Christian teaching.

There's one more thing I should add while on the subject of silence. Some say they don't mind that we're gay if we'd just shut up about it; no more marching etc. Well I ask, where would the black movement or the women's movement be if some brave souls didn't step forward and speak out? Women may still not be able to vote and black slavery may have been a common late 20th century practice. The insights derived from these movements have rendered us all sensitive to the depersonalized and unequal status of these citizens in our culture. Truly this is no time to backslide — on their issues or ours — no time to remain silent and accepting of the status quo. Onward to equality for everybody!

Chaplain Ray speaks of the unhappiness, depression, guilt, and loneliness homosexuals often experience along with being ostracized and condemned for having these sexual feelings to begin with. This mentality keeps alive the myth, once believed, that we are mentally ill in some way. While many of us have experienced these emotions from time to time — and some may have other psychological difficulties, like anyone else — we need to understand where they are often originating from and who is *really* responsible for allowing them to continue. The primary reason for negative qualities experienced in some gay relationships is the guilt and self-hatred which too many of us tend to introject as a result of the judgment passed on us by our "compassionate" religious community. Any activity, even heterosexual activity, would tend to be dehumanized and compulsive if it were considered illegal by the state and the effect of immorality and sin by the church. Any group that is medically stigmatized and socially persecuted is bound to suffer some ill effects. In the end, this position of Christian

teaching undermines the development of healthy interpersonal relationships and because of that who wouldn't feel depressed, lonely, and unhappy? It's no wonder some need a therapist to help repair the wounds inflicted on their psyches by these prejudicial teachings.

When we learn that many of the Christian related gay problems we suffer are usually not found in those cultures where homosexual behavior is socially acceptable we see the direction our efforts must take. Everything these pamphlets say about us are meant to foster all these unhealthy emotions we are claimed to have individually and within our relationships. Tragically, they often succeed — but not always.

We have already said there are many healthy, well-adjusted, and productive people living in stable and happy gay relationships. The presence of these relatively whole people in stable gay relationships exposes the weak basis of traditional Christian values that we are essentially unhappy people. It's sort of a moral miracle that despite every obstacle that society and the church has placed in the way of gay relationships, many have succeeded in maintaining a high degree of stability and have provided a truly human companionship and fulfillment. That should count for something.

Before we go any farther, one damaging myth and misconception needs to be cleared up. Chaplain Ray refers to Matthew 19:4 (God made only two sexes; male and female) when he says that Jesus spoke against homosexuality. Somehow Chaplain Ray thinks that we consider ourselves a third sex, something which would not be a part of God's creation according to Matthew 19:4. This belief is, of course, false. We still recognize and consider ourselves to be males and females only — a part of God's creation. He closes by telling us "don't quit." I couldn't agree more. If there is a problem relating to or accepting our identity we should just roll up our sleeves and get to work on it.

Several points need to be made about the Believers Fellowship pamphlet. Without a doubt, they are referring to homosexuality in the context of lustful interactions *only* rather than loving and responsible relationships. This is indicated not only in the text where they refer to "fulfilling the lusts of their flesh!" but also on the front cover (which is not included here) where there is a drawing of a bath house. Bath houses are commonly regarded as places where patrons can obtain anonymous (lustful) sex and never see each other again.

They acknowledge the fact that some people "'always seemed' to have a physical desire for the same sex" and then turn around and say it is a lie to believe "that God created them that way." As the Bible does, they put all homosexuals in the same category as murderers and kidnappers. This further indicates they are addressing lustful interactions only. I honestly don't think they believe in such things as loving same sex intimate relationships without lust.

The biggest problem we face today is understanding that responsible loving relationships are not sin. I'm not saying in any way that gay people are without sin, just like no one is without sin — only that being gay is not a sin. At the same time, any irresponsible relationship, even a non-gay one, *is* sinful.

In fact, Scriptures speak of love and relationships often. One primary purpose of God making us sexual beings is relationship. In Genesis 2:18 God said, "It is not good that man should be alone," and recognized that humans needed a suitable companion and helper. Thus mutual love and fulfillment is equally a Biblical norm for human sexuality. Many moralists seem to ignore the significance of this account of creation and assume that the much touted procreation is the only Biblical norm.

Unlike a merely lustful sexual interaction, a truly loving relationship involving love, trust, responsibility, and commitment considers the love between two people as primary, and the sexual activity as secondary. To consider the sexual part as primary tends to distort the meaning. We now recognize that the only intimate companionship some can have is with someone of the same gender. There is no clear condemnation of such responsible loving relationships in Scripture. On the contrary, under desirable circumstances a gay relationship could possibly be interpreted as fulfilling the positive ideals of Scripture. A relationship is quite different from fleshy desires or lusts, just as moderate social drinking is quite different from drunkenness.

The Bible also has a lot to say about God's love for us. One of the main points of the Bible, of the Christian faith, is that no matter how many times or in how many myriad ways we lose our way, God loves us and stays with us — forever offering forgiveness, healing, and wholeness. We live, and move, and have our being — including our sexual being — within the sphere of God's love.

Clearly our educational efforts *must* continue if we are to prevent any more spiritually wounded victims from falling in the wake. The important thing to remember is that even though we may encounter many defeats we must not become defeated. Press on — you are somebody 'cause God don't make junk!

Fortunately, not all clergy is negative. In June 1988 Bishop Spong, an Episcopal Bishop from New Jersey, had this to say on *Donahue*:

“I'm now convinced that homosexuality is a phenomenon that is natural in the human situation, that it is not evil, that it is the reality of some 10% of our population, and that, for most of those people, it is not something that can be changed. And I think that, when two people discover that they love other people, that there ought to be some way that we, as a church and as a society, recognize, bless, affirm, uphold, undergird those relationships. I think the alternative, for church and society, is either that we affirm faithful, committed, lifegiving relationships among gay and lesbian people or we unwittingly contribute to the destabilization of life, and to the reality of promiscuity. And I come down for commitment.”

Hooray for his courage to speak out! If more brave souls with similar enlightened views came forward, God only knows how much pain could be avoided. Let's show that kindness to our fellow man that Jesus so beautifully encourages.

Some gay people are even destroyed by the thoughtless cruelty of neighbors, friends, and family. While some are damaged, most manage to survive. Many grow strong, building emotional muscle in the struggle to survive. For some the hurt is much worse and affects their present attitudes and actions. In others the carry over is so great they can hardly function in a normal way and may even suffer mental or emotional breakdowns. When the wounds are deep the results may be life long. With the secret shame some of us have, our feelings remain hidden and we never achieve full self-awareness.

With help to get over this shame our true feelings can be brought back to the surface. We can then experience the treasures of simple human feelings that give life a sense of zest and worth. We can each be an individual who grows into a satisfying self in all ways,

including sexual gender orientation. This is important because to truly love someone is to be fully involved; body, mind, and soul.

All people need to live full, happy, and healthy lives. That is part of God's divine plan. (...all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.... — Declaration of Independence.) We can only do that psychologically if we can accept and *love* ourselves for what we are. "...We ought to love our own bodies.... For no man ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it...." —Ephesians 5:28-29. Learn about your body and how it responds naturally. William Shakespeare once said, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." We must not allow ourselves to think of our loving responsible relationships as bad or feel guilty because some have tried to distort our feelings to make them appear bad and ugly. We cannot allow others to encourage us to think of some parts of our natural bodies as unclean. We are "...persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean." —Romans 14:14. Our bodies are something we *are* and not merely something that we *have*.

"One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself. Then you can come to an intelligent decision for yourself. If you form the habit of going by what you hear others say about someone, or going by what others think about someone, instead of searching that thing out for yourself and seeing for yourself, you will be walking west when you think you're going east, and you will be walking east when you think you're going west. This generation, especially of our people, has a burden, more so than any other time in history. The most important thing that we can learn to do today is think for ourselves.

"It's good to keep wide-open ears and listen to what everybody else has to say, but when you come to make a decision, you have to weigh all of what you've heard on its own, and place it where it belongs, and come to a decision for yourself; you'll never regret it. But if you form the habit of taking what someone else says about a thing without checking it out for yourself, you'll find that other people will have you hating your friends and loving your enemies. This is one of the things that our people are beginning to learn today — that it is very important to think out a situation for yourself. If you don't do it, you'll always be maneuvered into a situation where you are never fighting your actual enemies, where you will find yourself fighting your own self."

—Malcolm X (from *Malcolm X Speaks*, Grove Press, 1966)

Our most natural loving feelings are not wrong and they don't make us a bad person. We have to work within the framework of our God given nature, not fight against it. You can't fool mother nature. When we've reached that level of understanding we're well on our way toward recovery and happiness.

When parents or other family members discover the homosexual orientation of a younger person it can be very surprising and shocking. How families react vary, but there

are three typical responses: 1) Families who accept the newly disclosed gay person with open arms, 2) Families who do not want their gay loved one that way, but accept him or her in other ways while hoping the condition will “go away,” and 3) Families who disown their former loved one and throw him or her out of the house. In item 2, families may accept it only if the subject remains in the closet and never comes up again. In item 3, I’ve heard of parents whose culturally conditioned emotional revulsion is so strong that they would rather see their own son or daughter a dope addict than see them become gay.

Regardless of whether the families welcome, accept, or reject them, powerful feelings are evoked for all family members. This is a time when extra love, closeness, and understanding are needed. As much as they love the gay family member, and hopefully will want to help, they simply do not understand the experience of being gay in a non-gay world. The younger gay person may not even understand his or her feelings too well either. It has been my experience that education and an emotional understanding of this orientation should accompany family’s efforts to intervene and help. In an effort to help families, the following list of guidelines has been developed by family members and gay people who have experienced the difficulty in disclosure and family relations.

1) The first thing loved ones should do at this confusing time is to create a strong supportive home environment. Increase your understanding of gay identity, particularly the positive aspects by reading uplifting and encouraging material on the subject. Avoid criticism. The more they are personally criticized the worse they get. It is society’s stress and pressure upon gay people that gets on everyone’s nerves. Try to project a non-judgmental attitude that reflects acceptance of the person. 2) Keep communication clear and simple. Provide encouragement and reassurance. 3) Verbal praise is a strong positive reinforcer. Don’t hesitate to offer praise and appreciation for the honesty of the disclosure. It increases the person’s self-esteem and confidence while easing doubts. Be validating, supportive, and create a positive alliance. The proper words can uplift, strengthen, and fill with new interest in the present and new hope for the future. Don’t neglect the importance of talking about it. Your loved one no longer wants to be stuffed in the closet and gagged. He or she wants to share with someone close and needs acceptance. Silence and the absence of any open discussion allows prejudice and unfounded fears to flourish. These then often lead to serious persecutions and injustices. 4) And last but not least, establish a foundation of understanding, compassion, and assistance. Seek out support from others and share feelings with those who have already lived through this disclosure and have come to terms with it.

Before you can effectively help, you must acknowledge the gayness and learn about it. Acknowledgment is a powerful tool that encourages the gay person. As you learn more about it you will begin to feel hopeful that you can do things to help your loved one. Here a consciousness-raising type support group or the very helpful *Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays* organization can be highly beneficial. With over 200 chapters in the United States and groups in other parts of the world, informed people are glad to share their information with others. For information about a local chapter in your area write their national office at: Parents FLAG, P.O. Box 27605, Washington, D.C. 20038-7605, or call: 1 (800) 4 FAMILY. A local gay & lesbian community center, available in many larger cities, can also help considerably too. If your city has one, its location can be found in the white pages of your telephone book under Gay or Gay & Lesbian. Groups and meeting places like these are a window on the world of contemporary America for gay people of any age and loved ones who are trying to understand their feelings in a hostile

environment.

Some high schools have programs to help their gay students be their true selves but I've heard of none better than Fairfax High School's *Project 10*. Besides helping their own students, they publish material so others interested in conducting similar programs in other schools can benefit from what they've learned with their own project. Anyone with a gay loved one in high school would do well to help form a similar project in their local school if one is not yet available. Information can be received by writing to: Dr. Virginia Uribe — Project 10, Fairfax High School, 7850 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, Ca. 90046.

Some groups specialize in helping gay Christians deal with their conflicts. Unfortunately, far too few of us have access to such wisdom. Those that do will find members anxious to contribute to the task of separating the wheat from the chaff; that is, the real implications of Christian faith and morals concerning their life style from the traditional customs and prejudices which, as they see it, an often all-too-human traditional church community has imposed upon them. For they feel that this church tradition owes its origin more to prejudice and misunderstanding than to the true implications of Christian faith. More groups expressing these enlightening views are badly needed. As our community grows closer to God I'm sure we'll see more and more.

As your understanding increases, you will be able to view him or her from a closer loving honest perspective. Your family relationships will improve and the gay person will feel more supported. Positive family relationships and feelings understood greatly enhance the therapeutic benefits. Such positive attitudes are refreshing to acquire by both parents and younger gay people early in their journey of discovery.

Realization and acceptance are the first steps toward learning how to live with this lifestyle. Time and effort are needed to understand and cope effectively. Increasing one's consciousness is a matter of increasing awareness, alertness, and sensitivity to the many facets of this unique orientation. Loved ones need to become better related to the gay person and understand that gay relationships are special kinds of relationships with special kinds of joy and pain. As they learn more, they will hopefully be able to see gay people as having the ability to do something in their own way while being true to their feelings and not — contrary to the way some laws are worded — disadvantaging, exploiting, using, or abusing anyone else. Along the way, as loved ones grow they will become less concerned about homosexuality per se, and more concerned about a generally misinformed and hostile society that may prevent their gay loved one from achieving his or her full potential.

Often the non-gay members wonder where they failed or went wrong. Sometimes selfish feelings surface and their first concern is that they won't ever be grandparents. One guy told me his father goes as far to suggest he marry a lesbian, with the agreement each has their own romantic interest on the side, just so they could have a kid together. It's amazing the irrational thoughts some people will come up with. You know, gay people can sometimes adopt kids if they want, and also sometimes even non-gay couples don't want kids. So my advice to interfering parents of this nature — respect your kid's privacy and free will as you would like yours respected — mind your *own* business! Raising a family is not everyone's cup of tea, whether they are gay or not, and people with this desire should not be considered selfish either.

Perhaps it is human nature for loved ones to feel responsible for psychological phenomena which have no single clear explanation. Be advised though that feeling as

though one has failed is self-destructive and leads to feeling guilty; feeling “imperfect.” These distortions create stress which can be destructive to everyone. Loved ones must realize that nothing they could do or did do influences or determines the sexual orientation of their young loved one. No one is at “fault” and blaming family members is as unproductive as telling the gay person to “knock it off.” Responses like this usually lead to conflict and can worsen family relations — and for that they *are* at fault.

It’s as much a part of them as the color of their eyes, hair (even red hair), or skin — or the size of the shoes they wear. It’s present in all walks of life, rich or poor, and in all kinds of upbringing whether the home was devoutly religious or not. The gay loved one could have been an only child; the youngest/middle/oldest. The household could have been a single or double parent situation. One parent could have been dominant, distant, or submissive — even neglectful, hostile, overly loving, or anything in-between. The family could be from small town America or right in the heart of a major inner-city. Schooling could have been received in a coeducational or a single gender school — it doesn’t matter. No matter how children are reared or spouses are responded to, there is no pattern.

One pattern I have noticed though is that parents seem more judgmental if it is their oldest sibling that is gay than they would be if it is a sibling further down the birth order. And only children — as I am — face the same critical nature from parents as first born children do. Doctors who have studied birth order characteristics believe parents are more perfectionists with first borns and only children. This is distressing when it leads one to think that being gay alone makes one farther from “perfect.” When you learn of your loved one’s nature keep these birth order patterns in mind as you respond to them.

Contrary to what some believe, this is not a lifestyle someone *simply* decides to choose — like joining a club — no more than one chooses to be left-handed or right-handed or brown eyed or blue eyed; nor can one be encouraged into it or changed from it. Who would consciously join a group that is constantly persecuted and ridiculed? Because it may require years of agonizing soul-searching and self-denial for people to just be able to accept themselves it is a gift most would not choose, *if* choice were an option. Sometimes nature just grabs you by both lapels, gives you a good strong shake and says, “I’m in charge.” One wise psychologist compares sexuality to a flower. At a certain time it is ready to unfold and when it does it has a certain color that cannot be changed. Once again I tell you — blossom where you are planted.

When I was a baby my mother tried to change me from being left-handed by putting my spoon on the right side of my dish. Because this was not natural to me, I immediately switched it to my left hand and comfortably ate my meal. After awhile, she finally realized this feature could not be changed and it’s best to leave well enough alone. To this day it poses no problem because no one makes an issue out of whether the hand a person uses to do a task determines his or her value or goodness.

It’s no different with a person’s natural sexual orientation. It too could pose no problem if no one made an issue out of it. There are enough problems people have a difficult time handling in life, yet here is one that can be solved without any hard work at all. Just accept, or at least don’t make an issue out of, this one feature of gay people’s nature and a great deal of unnecessary burden could be lifted off of their shoulders. This is in keeping with Scripture where Jesus denounced those who “...load people down with burdens...” — Luke 11:46 (NIV).

It may interest you to know that in the relatively recent past, left-handed people in

Australia had problems in their country similar to those faced by gay people in the United States today. They were not allowed to be teachers because people “concerned” for the welfare of children felt they would be a bad influence on students or, heaven forbid, that the kids might “catch” it. That’s the same kind of foolish nonsense that pervades our country when a gay person wants to be a teacher — they think kids will “catch” it. In reality, kids are actually less threatened by a gay teacher or leader than they are by an intolerant one.

One can only imagine the horribly depressing message that Australia’s rule gave to kids who, by nature, were left-handed. And how about American kids when they read *Webster’s* unabridged dictionary definition of left-handed which includes statements like: “marked by clumsiness or ineptitude; awkward; exhibiting deviousness or indirection; given to malevolent scheming or contriving; sinister; underhand; marked by uncertain or ambiguous intent; backhanded; dubious; double-edged; insincere; of, relating to, united in, or born of an illicit liaison; illegitimate”? It’s a pity anything so natural gets stuck with such an ugly definition. By the way, a person’s left or right-handed nature or even equally both-handed (ambidextrous) nature is infinitely variable too, just like our sexual orientation. We are not limited to left, right, or both.

When I speak of it being no choice, I’m referring to a person’s inner emotional feelings and attractions for someone; not their behavior. I can actively choose to eat with my right hand but I cannot choose that it’s uncomfortable and not natural. I can change the color of my eyes with tinted contact lenses, but that doesn’t change their true color I was born with. In the same way, some gay people unwilling to accept their attractions for others of the same sex may, for various reasons, choose to never act on these feelings for years — some may even get heterosexually married hoping these feelings will vanish. These are conscious choices people make just like a young person can choose whether they’ll have sex or abstain from it. We can’t choose the kinds of things that excite our emotions of attraction to someone — these are inborn feelings; natural feelings that are God given at birth. We cannot marry away these feelings.

It makes as much sense to ask why someone is gay, as it does to ask why someone *isn’t* gay — or why someone likes one food or drink that another doesn’t, or why someone prefers a dog and someone else a cat for a pet. It is just as natural for gay people to be attracted to the same sex as it is for the rest of the population to be attracted to the opposite sex. It is not something one can inherit or “catch,” or even be “recruited” into by being in close proximity to someone who is gay. No one can go around and prompt you to join like one solicits membership in a club. It is not a learned feeling or a disease.

What is learned though, is the negative hurtful feelings some people acquire toward this orientation because of rampant homophobia and this then often requires un-learning and re-training. Prejudice and hate are *not* inborn feelings we possess in the beginning. People make conscious choices to have these attitudes toward other members of the human race. These are the things that can be caught from others nearby suffering this affliction — *this* is the contagious disease we need to worry about.

One cannot be “saved” from homosexuality by being kept away from someone who is gay. And equally important, if a non-gay person experiments out of curiosity to see what it’s like that will not switch his or her natural orientation just like trying out an opposite gender interaction will not convert a gay person.

We often hear loud speaking Christians proclaiming that gay people can be “cured” and successfully switched over to a non-gay orientation. In order to respond to this

statement we need to realize there is a difference between a true gay person and one who may just experience some homosexual activity when conditions made the opportunity available. Even if the activity continued for some time and he or she was very happy with it, this person may generally be oriented more towards those of the opposite gender. For these people, they can continue happily along without homosexual activity ever again becoming a part of their life. These are the people that are claimed to be “cured.” As we progress along the scale towards the 50% level where bi-sexuals are found we find it harder to give up where our hearts are leading us. While abstaining can surely be done, emotional attractions remain strong and this person would not fit in the “cured” category; and no amount of anointing with oil or trying to shake out demons or any other hocus-pocus will effect a “cure.” Let’s keep these differences in mind when we study the various interests of people’s lives.

For a true gay person, his or her orientation is merely an ability to demonstrate deep and real feelings of love and affection towards some others of the same gender that we may possess. And while we’re on the subject of what our orientation is, let’s also see what it isn’t. Homosexuality does *not* represent an immature form of sexual development at a selfish stage which prevents the individual from appreciating the difference of the opposite sex. It is extremely important to loved ones to understand these concepts.

Merely speaking in a positive way about people with a gay identity to youngsters just learning the facts of life will *not* encourage them to change from non-gay to gay if that is not their true nature. Actually, what it will do though, is allow them to accept their natural selves better if they do have this orientation; and if they don’t, they’ll be more accepting of other gay people they obviously will meet many times throughout their lifetimes. Anytime a healthier climate is provided for people the result will surely reduce social pressures and other problems some young people may have.

As an added bonus, open-minded accepting teaching in general will probably encourage them to be more understanding of other vast differences in people. In a society where neighborhoods are becoming much more diverse with people from different cultures, races, and religions this will be a great asset to their future. This should be important to all parents or anyone who knows someone who is teased because of his or her difference among a peer group whether it be physical characteristics, mental capabilities, beliefs, or any eccentricity someone may have. We know how cruel kids can be to other kids they view as quite different than themselves. Parents are quick to correct them if they make fun of someone’s physical proportions or clumsiness. They should also be as quick to teach tolerance to *any* natural differences. *All* kids should be free from the abuse of teasing.

This is where we need to be directing our efforts. We are on the wrong track when we spend so much time questioning or worrying why someone is or isn’t gay. The more important question from now on must be why do so many people fear anyone who is different from them and then have a need to label them as sick or evil. Why is there so much contempt for something so harmless? Let’s get our priorities in the right place — alright?

While you can’t determine your loved one’s sexual orientation, you can determine if they grow up to be a healthy and happy homosexual — whether they *choose* to live with dignity over shame, whether they nurture or stifle their inner feelings, whether they choose to not be forced into “acceptable” social conduct or cave in to pressures to

conform. If you love and accept them there is a good chance of that transpiring, but if you reject them it can lead to a life time of soul-searching and self-hatred. Young people grow best when given daily doses of love, respect, understanding, and support — all things the Bible encourages. This applies equally for gay and non-gay people. We all have the same dreams in life — we're all on this Earth together.

You can also be a guiding force in steering them away from immoral relationships and towards those that are moral because these *are* choices people can make. You'll recall our definition of what is moral and immoral may be different from what traditional Christians believe. If you find yourself backsliding to a more primitive definition don't hesitate to check back how we defined these terms earlier on.

Give praise and encouragement, be proud of and rejoice in the honesty and courage of their disclosure — seek support, educate yourself, and avoid criticism until you have a good understanding of the facts. The process itself is reassuring and validating to the gay loved one. At this precarious time in their recently discovered feelings, criticism can be hazardous to their emotional health. Many felt like outsiders while growing up. They don't need to feel that from family now and they sure don't need impediments placed in the way when they want to share their honest feelings with you.

Whenever I've encountered psychologically healthy gay people, sure of their own dignity and capacity to love and be loved, it is almost a certainty that their parents, whatever their original disappointment over their children's orientation, responded to them with true unconditional acceptance and love — exactly the qualities Christians teach. While parents of a gay offspring have no reason to assume guilt, parents of a psychologically healthy gay person have good reason to believe that they have done their difficult task well. They are surely to be congratulated.

As you learn more, you will feel more comfortable and be better able to help your gay loved one. Think of the disclosure as a gift and grow richer by it. The announcement of gay identity does not reveal a totally new person — it simply adds a new dimension to the old one.

Along with raising your own consciousness level, you can be most helpful by working to combat destructive stereotypes while trying to change a toxic society from the ignorance and prejudice that inflicts great pain. Anytime a young person — especially one in their early years of sexual development — is labeled as “bad,” “sick,” or the “black sheep” of the family that's what they're going to believe about themselves — and more than likely, they will assume some sort of misbehavior to fit this label. If people are led to feel guilty about an essential part of their own identity, they will in all likelihood experience considerable psychological pressures. Anything that lowers a child's self-esteem is child abuse — it may be unseen, but it *is* a form of emotional child abuse. Unfortunately, our current society does not address this form of abuse with as much fervor as it does to other highly publicized forms that can be even less damaging in certain circumstances.

When I began the first draft of this book in the spring of 1987 the above sentence — something I've recognized for years — was a part of those first hand written scribbles. Now that I'm in the later stages of editing on my word processor I am overjoyed to see this form of abuse is finally getting public attention. And not only that, but it's getting front page attention.¹¹ *Los Angeles Times* staff writer Bob Baker enlightened us all of the

¹¹ Bob Baker, “Cruelty That Is Not Unusual,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 12, 1991, pp. A1, A34, A35

seriousness of the problem when he said, “Widespread physical child abuse was first brought to the American public’s attention in the 1970s. The 1980s saw an explosion of concern over sexual abuse. Throughout, emotional abuse has received relatively little exposure. However, in the last several years it appears to be moving closer to center stage.” “Emotional child abuse” Baker says, is “a phenomenon that most experts believe can be more psychologically damaging than physical or sexual abuse, yet receives far less attention, primarily because few people can agree on what it is.”

Nothing in the entire article, which carried over to two additional pages, mentions gay issues at all, but it did make reference to belittling children. “He [James Garbarino, President of the Erikson Institute for Advanced Study in Child Development in Chicago and a specialist of psychologically battered children] said that as the effects of emotional abuse become better known, society may grow more outraged at parents who incessantly yell at their children or belittle them, the same way that outrage has grown toward parents who fail to protect their children with safety seats or seat belts.” A fist can break the skin but words can break the spirit.

Along with cutting fats and cholesterol from our diets, stopping smoking, and other health related practices we once gave little concern for, here is one more piece of medical advice equally important. O.K. people, now that you know the dangers, there’s no excuse any longer for those who have engaged in such behavior. If you’re seeking to act in Godly compassionate ways, as we all should, doing no harm to anyone in *any* way is a commendable step.

Because of societal pressures it took a lot to even be able to admit same gender attractions to themselves, let alone to a non-gay parent or other loved one. Whatever the age at which they first became aware — and for most it was quite young, even before they had words for it or associated it to sexual feelings — there followed a long period of quiet, internal, emotional struggle. It was a lonely secret they were too ashamed to admit. Consciously or not, they became alert gatherers of information. They listened for news of others who had the same feelings. They read what was available on the subject and hoped for a truly supportive friend or family member whom they could speak openly and truthfully to. They felt caught and pulled in the direction of their impulses and feelings, yet held by the repugnance of becoming an outcast. It is during this time that gay young people build an invisible wall between themselves and their parents as a protection. All too often though, their careful listening has shown no sign that their parents are likely to be supportive of their gay identity if disclosed. Sometimes their family members energetically express their disgust of gay people in general, not realizing their young loved one is one.

Their necessity to build self-worth and self-respect has never been greater. If you have been a very important loved one in their life your positive or negative reactions and responses could possibly bring about a greatly amplified emotionally relaxed or emotionally tensed situation in their mind. Many of the unfortunate sorrows of being gay have often been the result of interactions with hostile attitudes from others. Some of the most damaging pain younger gay people can experience is rejection by those family members they love the most. Don’t contribute to the shame and misery they shouldn’t have in the first place. You owe that to them — they’re your kid!

Appreciate how deeply you are valued by this gay person to justify his or her taking such a risk. You may feel as if time has skipped a beat and once the clock resumes

ticking nothing will be the same. But please keep in mind, they are no different now than they were moments before the disclosure. You just have some additional information about them you didn't have before. Being gay does *not* change who they inwardly are. He or she has not suddenly changed and is still the same person you have always loved; but unfortunately it sometimes changes what you think about them and how you'll treat them from now on when you find out.

While the criticism of strangers is bad enough, that received from close family and friends causes the worst wounds of all, those that go so deep they damage the self-esteem. It can be especially devastating to the younger gay person when everyone in the family makes such an *issue* out of these inclinations and particularly emphasizes there is something gravely “wrong” with these feelings. (Some families are so small-minded they can’t even accept their non-gay children just dating someone of the opposite sex if they belong to a different religion. This tragic attitude dates from early Biblical times where mixed marriages were so much abhorred by strict Jews. If they could only realize the unnecessary abuse they cause the very ones they should love. How can some be so selfish and cruel?) In turn, wrong “therapists” the family may turn to at this confusing time can actually inflict more harm by the way they handle it.

Sometimes a parent, fully aware of their youngster's gay identity, may show all the love and support in the world for him or her, yet still occasionally comment that being gay is not right. This too *is* abuse — mild abuse; but still unnecessary abuse.

Just trying to understand communicates your caring and that's the most important gift you can give. Your loved one needs your love, respect, and support. They're your loved one first before anything else. The person's path is a lot less lonely if the family is cheering. In time your attitude can and must change. You're on a journey that has just begun. In the meantime, before truth prevails, don't let fear and superstition rob you of your special loved one.

This information is just as valid for non-gay children trying to come to terms with understanding a gay parent as it is for non-gay adults trying to understand a gay younger person.

I'll close off this section with the following poem and let you take it from there:

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.
If a child lives with hostility,
He learns to fight.
If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.
If a child lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilty.
If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.
If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.
If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.
If a child lives with fairness,
He learns justice.

—Dorothy Law Nolte

–65–

exist between the individual and his or her family, friends, and acquaintances is one of openness and acceptance. Unfortunately, that's not the real world situation for some. You still have to live within the framework of a mostly non-gay society and you still have to work around that. Some can never come out to everyone, but that doesn't mean they can't accept themselves and contribute. And it surely doesn't mean that silence should be a sign of shame. Just because you hide being gay doesn't mean you shouldn't see yourself as O.K. On the contrary, you just understand the reality of the situation you live in and you adapt the best you can to work around it.

Some Jewish people living in Germany during World War II successfully hid their ancestry for safety and survival reasons. At no time did they ever feel shame for who they were; nor should they. They just realized the reality of the temporary situation they were in. In the background most all of them did what they could to alleviate the situation and at the same time remained proud of who they truly were. Our people are no different in that respect. We can still all work to relieve the oppression in some way and pray for a time when the temporary situation we're still in will be a relic of the past. Until that day comes we can still remain proud. There should never be shame in being true and right to ourselves and society.

When the time nears to disclose yourself, sit down and prepare when and how you'll do it, what you'll say, and how you'll handle a positive or negative response from them. In the beginning you may be the only one in your family who accepts your lifestyle. "Even if you are a minority of one, the truth is the truth." —Gandhi. This will be a complex and confusing experience for your non-gay loved ones' just beginning journey. You should have done some reading on the subject so you will be able to assist them in sharing reliable information and research with some degree of knowledge and self-assurance. If new and revolutionary ideas are powerfully presented in the right way, your loved ones will hopefully accept the information in the loving way it is meant to be received. Sometimes a person's mind is stretched by a new idea and never goes back to its old dimensions. Your goal here is to stretch these ideas.

Be patient with them. Countering their emotional beliefs with rational arguments becomes more difficult when the non-gay person brings to the encounter an unwillingness to accept us as viable people. It will take time to make the necessary progress toward the new insights they'll need. You will each be able to relate more completely, honestly, and closely to one another from this moment forward. If you are still not as sure of yourself as you would like to be, seek out others who are a little farther down the path.

If you are from the Los Angeles area and too shy to seek out others yet or even scared to receive literature in the mail from gay organizations I strongly encourage you to listen to *IMRU* (pronounced I am are you), a weekly educationally oriented and entertaining gay and lesbian radio program. For one hour every Sunday night from 10 to 11 PM on KPFK-FM 90.7MHz you can put on your headphones in private and be in touch with others of our community. Some have said that just hearing a positive word sort of puts a spring in their step, recharges their batteries so to speak, and makes them ready to make it through another week. I know I feel that way. Their signal is fairly strong so those in outlying areas please do try to tune in. Along with reading anything uplifting you can, I know of no better way to begin a journey of discovery.

Weaving your way through the options you have are not easy, there's no doubt about

it. Ultimately though, new attitudes on the block will surely make it easier to future gays wanting to leave closet behind. For a growing number of us we find this journey is worth taking even if the road winds a bit along the way. Coming out is a lot like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon. You have been living a restricted life, wound about with coils of ignorance, fear, and repression. By suppressing your true nature, you have stunted the growth of your entire being. But now that you are free to show your true colors, you are also free to spread your wings and fly. Hallelujah!

Those who have been hurt emotionally when younger often have trouble working out their emotional problems in later years. This affects their relationships with other people. They feel desperate, isolated, scared, and so lonely it hurts. They have no positive gay role models. It's as if other people like them do not exist. To make matters worse, some supposed "sex-education" films portray the homosexual as "emotionally disturbed." There is then no way to identify with the person so presented and still maintain self-respect. These gay people suffer a very low sense of self-esteem. They think of themselves as wrong, bad, deficient, or defective. And the younger they were when they were taught such negative information, the more severe the harm is likely to be. The secret is protected with lies that reinforce the bad self-evaluation. Energy goes into a personal civil war being fought against natural gay feelings. They grow up during the invisible years suspecting that there must be many basic things wrong with them. Why else would loved ones say such things about people who share our feelings? Not surprisingly, the seeds of self-doubt and self-hate grow and grow.

As time goes on they cannot picture themselves being successful at anything. They are afraid to take on new duties, set goals, or even prepare themselves for a better position in life. Having been put down so many times they have lost hope, seem out of balance, and unable to take care of responsibilities in everyday life. They live under a cloud of self-doubt and personal insecurity. Everyone has a few feelings such as these from time to time, however, some have been damaged so badly they cannot live a normal life.

Tragically, living this "double life" all too often leads some toward self-destructive behavior like alcohol and/or drug abuse as a means of momentarily killing the emotional pain. Or worse yet, some attempt suicide. More than one young person has committed suicide because of the religious moral pressure he or she couldn't deal with. The May 8th, 1992 edition of ABC-TV's *20/20* addressed this tragic problem in graphic detail. Transcripts of the show can be ordered by sending \$5.00 to: 20/20 Transcripts, 1535 Grant St., Denver, Co. 80203, or by calling: (303) 831-9000. A video cassette is also available by calling the same number.

While conventional thinking Christians are so against abortion as murder, they are blind to see how they are actually responsible for these kinds of unnecessary deaths. They should accept the heavy burden of this responsibility and recognize their homophobic attitudes are a form of child abuse in this society that *must* be addressed with more urgency.

In May 1991, the University of Minnesota and the University of Washington released a study that said 1/3 of gay teens consider or attempt suicide because of despair and the stigma they face about their sexual identity and family pressures to conform.

They have such a low self-esteem they basically feel they deserve to die. That's a high penance to pay for the truth. Their tragic deaths tell us that for them, life is a riddle too complex to solve, a fatal labyrinth that locks them into despair. Need we look any further who to blame? If this isn't a form of abuse they are facing, what is? Isn't it about time we stop leaving victims in the wake? Why must those created in God's image endure such pain?

In January 1990 similar figures were in the *Report of the Secretary's Task Force on Youth Suicide* by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Unfortunately, due to pressure from Christian supremacists and political conservatives concerned about upholding "traditional" family values, then HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan disavowed this accurate study because gay kids were included. Doesn't this mean there are many loud and powerful voices who think the deaths of gay kids are a traditional family value to uphold; that it's better for these kids to die, and die unnoticed? What else could it mean? It is heartless hypocrisy to pretend that powerful people, or even "normal" laymen for that matter, really care about the welfare of gay kids or gay people at all. If they did they would stop torturing them while claiming to help them. But this is just what "loving" Christians refuse to do.

The real obscenity in this society is to allow these deaths to continue while we stand idly by and do nothing. Why should religion — the wellspring of so much that is lovely — why should religion, which teaches peace and justice and gives meaning to life be so provoking in the human animal? Could it be small-minded people need to make someone feel inferior so they can feel superior? How could a people who survived oppression, persecution, and adversity in centuries past have the nerve to inflict abusive characteristics on their *own* people today? Is it because we are the last group where it is socially acceptable to do so? They, if anyone, should know the horrors of being persecuted. Surely they couldn't have forgotten their past. The days of the Inquisition are dead — let's bury oppression and persecution right alongside.

Along with suicide and drug problems, many go through self-destruction. They hurt many of the people around them, especially their families and close friends. Many felt lonely, hurt, afraid, and angry. We all need to have a social consciousness for this situation. We owe it to those who have destroyed themselves with drugs or alcohol or committed suicide out of shame. God did not intend for us to be unhappy human beings. Such actions are a truly terrible human tragedy. It doesn't matter which side of the gay or anti-gay fence you come down on. No one should have to deal with the spiritual, the emotional, and the psychic dissonance when a person has to choose between their faith and their being.

It's time the churches recognize the pain that is out there and speak in a pastoral loving caring way on important matters that are tearing this society to pieces. They need to direct their priorities toward the *real* harm they are doing — toward homophobia — and stop trying to worry about something — same gender mutual attractions — that shouldn't have such emphasis. Brutal pastoral approaches must change before any more damage is done and we bury more of our fellow human beings.

God, speaking to us through Jesus Christ, tells us that life has meaning, that there is beauty and nobility in life — *everyone's* lives — and that it is worth living. Life is like a circle, everyone has a place within it. Many loved ones don't realize the noxious agent that led them this far was the socially approved, seemingly natural conspiracy of disapproval and lack of acknowledging the existence of gay people as respectable.

Becoming sensitive to the tragedy of these issues can be an unpleasant experience to some, but the trade off comes when you see progress being made through your efforts to understand. Anything we can do to prevent these emotions and attitudes benefits not only the individual victims, but all of society. We owe that to them.

Earlier in our study we touched upon the church's attempt to keep us in the dark about the true workings of the universe above us. Thinking of that while writing these last few paragraphs prompts some further thoughts in me. We make great efforts to study the nature of things, such as stars and the rest of the physical universe. Yet so often we overlook the human condition. Perhaps in human affairs we should be using as much talent, dedication, and cooperation as professional and amateur astronomers use in studying the stars together. The heavens we can understand yet not influence, but human beings *can* be influenced to live together better on this very small and fragile planet Earth.

Our inner life rests on a foundation of reason and emotion. When our emotions have been damaged it is difficult to think properly. Painful memories are woven into our hearts and minds. We can't clearly see or understand ourselves or others. For the gay person in an anti-gay society a lonely emotional struggle is predictable. The future is filled with fearful images. This is due not to our gayness either, but to the un-God like prejudice and oppression some have burdened us with.

With the bombardment of negative messages telling us what gay people are supposed to be like, some gay people yield to the massive pressures and make a futile attempt to try to conform to the popular image of the "conventional" or "normal" non-gay person. Having a need for social acceptance, they find it easier to fit in and be like everyone else — at least outwardly. A people pleaser so to speak. This conformity to the church's heterosexual ideal will be in behavior only, but not in feelings or thoughts. The gay person's true inner feelings remain to battle with other assumptions from the past that all same gender sexual interactions are wrong.

In their effort to hide, which can go on for years, they may participate in the kind of locker-room macho sensibility with the guys and even actively contribute to fag jokes when the subject comes up — or worse yet, initiate them. Later on, some of these people may get heterosexually married in their attempt to conform and rid themselves of the "forbidden" feelings and thoughts. They may think that marriage and having a family will make them a more healthy person. That is ludicrous, because they're not unhealthy to begin with and there is nothing to "cure." In some cases they got this idea from backward thinking pastors counseling that "marriage is an antidote to homosexual inclinations," antidote here implying something is to be recovered from. Marriage, in this context, usually leads to unhappiness and eventually divorce, leaving heartbroken spouses and children in their wake. Others may conform merely because they're expected to by society or because they've been "programmed" to be that way. Some gay Catholics even become priests, that way they don't have to keep making excuses to conservative family members why they don't get married.

It's especially sad when non-gay people get very irate at gay people who have gotten heterosexually married. They accuse them of being selfish to a spouse's feelings and put all the blame on the gay partner for any distress the non-gay spouse suffers. Yet in fact,

the gay partner is the innocent victim here — the victim of a society that wouldn't let him or her be their *real* self. If you're a non-gay person with similar irate feelings put yourself in the gay person's shoes. Picture yourself living in a small very conservative and homophobic community where everyone is encouraged and expected to conform to the "norm." Picture yourself suffering the same homophobia everyone else around you shares. Mix all that in with feelings of attraction for someone of your own sex that always remains in the background. Now who do you think is the real guilty culprit here? Who or what circumstances are responsible for the gay person closeting all that he or she really is? Before non-gay people get irate at a gay person's heterosexual marriage they should look at their *own* homophobic nature and that of their friends and family around them and see if that is responsible for driving a gay person into such a "normal" marriage. The sooner we get rid of the closet, the sooner we will have fewer people chasing a dream that's been created by a society that's homophobic and that ensnares some very nice innocent people who wake up one day after their marriage ceremony to discover this big secret; and we can only imagine the kind of pain that ensues from that.

Wouldn't it be better for society if people could be honest with themselves? Could a nation obsessed with the safety of three young fragile whales trapped in the Arctic ice, in October 1988, be as mindful of the health of young people's fragile psyches? Tragically, the answer appears to be no. As these whales were being saved, at a cost of millions of dollars, others were being hunted in the open oceans. And as we now spend millions in an effort to keep kids from the tragedies of drug abuse, we neglect those gay youngsters and often inflict the worst abuse of all. Shame on anyone who does that! Let us not make heroes out of whale savers *while* we make villains out of people being their *true* selves or those helping others to be true to themselves.

Don't get me wrong here, I am *not* against *any* environmental movement, whether it be whales or whatever. That is not the point I am trying to get across. On the contrary, I am very concerned about the world we all share. I just want to make it clear that no one should have to hide their true emotions and feelings behind a facade of being "normal" and that everyone (and every living thing) counts to God.

What is normal anyway? If asked what is normal body temperature most people would say 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Yet doctors will tell you that for some people a lower temperature is normal, while for others a higher temperature is their normal. It's the same for anything else.

There is no reason to follow a pre-programmed life script. No one should be pressured to swim against their own developmental history. This is some of the psychic damage that some traditional church teachings and negative pastoral attitudes contribute to. It's time for those responsible for emotional pain and suffering to stand up and be held accountable for their actions. That's what we ought to demand of them and no more running away from it. Let us become watchdogs and monitor the progress.

If the gay community were allowed to play its role in society with full acceptance and ability to contribute imagine what could be accomplished, and imagine the suffering that would be avoided. It's something to think about — and something to work toward. The Christian community shares our goal of alleviating suffering in the world, they just have a less effective idea how it should be done. With a little urging and praying maybe we can get them to take their blinders off and see what their prejudicial views are doing to the world.

What we need to do is help the person to become more truly himself or herself. Encourage them to change the way they see themselves; not change their orientation. Emphasize that it is all right to be whomever they are, as long as they are *their* true self. Being true and natural is one of the best ways to show your love for God. An individual left to develop into his or her own *true* self will be in a much more stable position emotionally. “This above all, to thine own self be true” —William Shakespeare. Encourage integrity by advocating behavior and attitudes that match inner feelings rather than advising the person toward traditional conformity. Help them learn to value integrity, creativity, and individuality, and to devalue conformity. Diversity offers riches while conformity leads to mediocrity. A lack of popular conforming ideas does not equal a lack of worth. It *is* O.K. to march to the beat of a different drummer as long as we do not violate anyone else’s rights in the process.

We must help establish self-respecting patterns of gay identity and feelings. Our lives are the product of our thoughts and feelings. To live right, we need to think right; whether we have to neglect popularly held views or not. “What is right is not always popular and what is popular is not always right.” —Howard Cosell. A gay person is a better person than many for having remained true to his or her feelings in a world where people try to be like everyone else at any cost. Many even have a greater than average respect for inner truth and integrity. People are actually more free to grow and develop if they are not busy trying to conform. But to grow in positive ways we must be able to integrate our gay identity into the other unique and varied facets of our lives.

Be romantically human — be your *true* self.

Shine wherever you are!

We need to affirm our will to live in harmony with all life on Earth. It is not an easy assignment, but history has shown repeatedly our ability to overcome some of the most daunting challenges. Once again, we will be called upon to demonstrate resourcefulness and resiliency. We must meet that challenge.

If there is any one thing that will hold us back, it is our failure to recognize that each one of us — as individuals — holds the key to changing the world. The political will that is needed to implement the necessary changes will come from the individual resolve of each of us. As individuals, we can provide leadership in helping others change their negative views. This small step alone can add up to nationwide and worldwide change. Institutions, from near and far are only as good as each and every one of their constituents. All great accomplishments have a simple beginning. Never doubt that a small group of concerned people can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has. When we all work together a divine level law opposite of Murphy’s Law will eventually come into effect; “Anything that should be set right sooner or later will.” Ah. Slowly we will be able to shine bright in the firmament of human-kind as we expose God’s true teachings and say, “this is what nature says!”

If the pressures are too severe to work out, even with the help of some supportive friends and family, you may need the services of a professional counselor. In order to be of benefit to you this should be a gay-oriented therapist who truly values being gay. This

is the professional person who has experienced the oppression to which gay people are subjected, has an understanding of how various social sanctions influences individual development or creates special problems, and celebrates any person's self-respecting behavioral expression of gay feelings. For the gay-oriented professional the task is clearly to be of assistance in helping the client come to terms with his or her sexuality — to become more truly himself or herself. That means helping the gay person to become more truly gay, comfortable, and self-appreciative — someone who is able to weave their way around and/or through a largely homophobic society and avoid its numerous pitfalls, someone who is open to the possibility of healthy and positive human relationships with others of the same gender, someone who looks to the future where they are going as a gay person and not from where others say they came from. The therapeutic approach must help clear away roadblocks that may interfere with a gay person's ability to function. The therapist also needs to encourage integrity by encouraging behavior and attitudes that match inner feelings and helps the person to develop his or her gay identity optimally.

A professional who is not gay-oriented is not appreciative of gay identity as a gift and is likely to subtly reinforce and transmit the covert and destructive belief that heterosexual is better, even if "gay is O.K." He or she may even be afflicted with homophobia to some degree and its attendant crippling side effects. Those who seek to help gay people must first of all ferret out the homophobia hidden deep in their own psyches. Beware of help designed to change you, no matter how many degrees are hanging on the wall. Degrees just don't mean that much, at least not in this work. On occasion, they have even hindered. I know some people with no college training whatsoever that can run circles around some traditional highly trained psychiatrists. The so called "helper of persons" from the old school days of "fix it" psychiatric training, when we were considered an illness, brings his or her own personal biases into the "therapy session." This in turn can leave the person more confused and less sure of his or her inner feelings. RUN, do not walk, as fast as you can from this "therapy" before any more damage is done to you.

I am a prime example as one who should have had this advise when I was a 16 year old sent for "therapy" to "cure" me of my natural attractions toward other male school friends. I mentioned earlier that when someone is labeled as "bad" or "sick" that's what they're going to believe about themselves, and as a result they may engage in some sort of misbehavior to fit their label. As I look back on some of the behavioral problems I had around those times, I relate them to the unnecessary negative self-image I was given by people infringing their homophobic beliefs upon me. But that was 1966. Although we've got a long ways to go, thank God many therapists and others interested in helping people have progressed beyond that point.

But what was that point? What was the "old school" training psychiatrists were indoctrinated with? For an answer to that question let's turn to Edmund Bergler's 1956 book, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life*. But first I must warn you that what you are about to read is extremely unnerving and unsettling. Mr. Bergler defines homosexuality as:

"...a neurotic distortion of the whole personality....There are no healthy homosexuals. The entire personality structure of the homosexual is pervaded by the unconscious wish to suffer. This wish is gratified by self-created

trouble-making (psychic masochism)...he is an emotionally sick person.”¹²

Others of this same period professed a similar philosophy when they said that, “heterosexually was a biological norm and all individuals are heterosexual unless interfered with” or that homosexuality was ascribed to “unconscious conflicts and fixations that have their roots in early childhood.” Nonsense like this reminds me of another personality trait that was once considered a sickness. In 18th century America, black slaves who habitually escaped were sometimes said to be victims of a disorder — a “morbid desire for liberty.”

No, we sure don’t want this kind of archaic mentality to pervade our thinking. This is the kind of “help” that’s kept us down throughout the years. Unfortunately, some current psychiatrists still see the removal of homosexuality from the official list of emotional disorders as a mistake. It’s obvious that there is a great need for further education in this area if “professionals” with similar beliefs and attitudes are actively contaminating their clients with this mentality.

Another warning sign for those seeking a proper therapist is if you’re teaching him or her more about gay feelings and thoughts than he or she is teaching you, that’s a sure sign to run. You want a teacher, not a student — especially when *you’re* paying for it out of *your* pocket.

If you are emotionally, intellectually, and bodily attracted to — and/or more comfortable communicating with — some people of the same gender, you know it. You may be far from wanting to admit it — even to yourself — but if you have that special feeling for someone of your same gender and that person sets your heart a-flutter, you are gay. This is true even if you have never had an actual intimate encounter with someone of your own gender. A celibate Catholic priest I know of who has never had, nor ever expects to have, intimate sexual relations with any males he finds attractive considers himself an “emotional homosexual.”

Efforts to convert and conform will be costly in time, energy, and money, and are likely to leave you scared, lonely, and feeling less good about yourself. While therapists with this belief should be avoided, gay-oriented professionals understand and appreciate the richness of gay identity. If we are ever going to heal the wounds left by our status as a persecuted minority it will be from a wisdom generated within our own community.

Beyond matters of romance, sex, and love, people have the same sort of human troubles whether or not they are gay. But in addition to these ordinary human troubles, gay people can be better helped to grow if they work within a framework that appreciates gay identity and is sensitive to the experience of being a gay person in today’s world. Of course, many people do not need the services of a professional, but we all do need someone with whom we can be completely open and still be treated with respect and love. If you are the non-gay family member that fills this position recognize how important your support is.

We are all unique individuals, each with special and different gifts, talents, and traits that were implanted in us by God at birth. We all have an inner need to be useful and want a purpose in life. We are expected to use our uniqueness in our own ways to

¹² Edmund Bergler, *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life* (New York: Collier, 1956), pp. 1-10.

contribute positive things to the world. “So we are to use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us...” —Romans 12:6 (TEV). Our sexual orientation does *not* determine the quality of our contributions. Even while fighting off persecution and oppression we are collaborating with our non-gay brothers and sisters in the mutual task of building a more humane society. Imagine what we could accomplish if you let us be free — free to reach our full God given potential?

God wants us to be happy, whole, and healthy, but we can’t possibly be if we aren’t honest with ourselves in being the person we really are. “The glory of God is humans fully alive.” —Saint Irenaeus. “Nature fits all her children with something to do.” — James Russell Lowell. See your gifts and abilities as spiritual strengths. Use your talents and bring honor and glory to His name. Be humble and satisfied to live as created and empowered by God. Feel optimistic about yourself and praise God for designing you and your life adventure.

To accomplish this and enjoy life in all its fullness, we must take a holistic health approach by including the body, mind, and spirit equally. A glorious abundant life is certainly aided by having vitality of body, clarity of mind, and purity of soul. A very important factor about having good health is to visualize good health. See yourself as whole. All three are closely related. Each part must be in harmony with each other. (This is referenced in 1 Thessalonians 5:23.) Exercise regularly, eat nutritious balanced meals, keep an active healthy positive thinking mind by reading something uplifting, and love, praise, and have faith in God and Jesus Christ.

If you are in balance you give the world a chance to offer you some positive reinforcement and your own efforts bring you additional self-respect. As part of a spiritually healthy mind we must accept the uniqueness of our God given personality and rejoice in it for only then can we be happy, healthy, and successful as He meant us to be. Our orientation is natural to us and if it’s natural, it’s healthy.

As we grow in our self-awareness and sensitivity we enjoy widened horizons and are able to build a wider and deeper internal emotional capacity. As these positive changes are allowing us to be more alive and aware we can then integrate these feelings into our self-concept. As we do we feel stronger and more worthwhile, whole and more rounded.

When we’ve discovered the richness of our identity and feelings we realize our sexuality facilitates capability rather than creating a restriction. Being different does not mean being limited. The less we limit ourselves the happier we’ll be. Even though some of our feelings are not approved of by others, we know they’re right because they’re *our* feelings, they’re part of being human; and it’s a shame to rob ourselves of *our* feelings. “And God said, Let there be light:...” —Genesis 1:3 (KJV). Seek the light of knowledge, not the darkness of ignorance and fear. Release the light in your world — speak up and accept yourself; don’t compromise! Be your own person. Trust *your* nature — that’s your barometer of what’s natural for you. Accept your values around what you understand as good, not some artificial way of looking at things which is foreign to your inner nature. You have to live the life you were born to live. You have to go with what your body is telling you. You can’t fool mother nature. You deserve to be happy and *nobody* has a right to interfere. Stand on *your* principles — *your* beliefs! Just remember, the most formidable weapon against errors of every kind is reason. Free your mind and the rest will follow. If you start thinking in more open, tolerant ways, then others will too. Remember, minds are like parachutes; they function only when open. When you live in your heart, magic happens. Your heart will not lie to you. God will not lie to you. You

were born with all you need to win at life. We can have a glorious life in harmony with our true nature — we can survive. Today is the first day of the rest of our lives as openly accepting gay people. With this level of understanding a healthy mind is at hand and holistic health is within our grasp.

“Always be yourself, and to that self — be true!”



CHAPTER 2

Seven versions of the Holy Bible were used in this research. Sometimes there is an advantage in seeing the various wordings of some verses to help clarify their meanings. Many Scripture quotations incorporated in the text are from the *Authorized King James Version* (KJV). This noble monument of English prose was translated in 1611 from ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and contains traditional time honored vocabulary and style of the historic Elizabethan English language of that time. Readers must be aware that because of changes in the English language since 1611 some words and terms have changed in meaning.

For those readers who wish to consult this beloved old time standard treasured friend, but find its archaic and obscure wording harder to understand, may wish to use the *New King James Version* (NKJV). It updates the language, punctuation, and vocabulary of the King James for today's readers with contemporary English usage which has been substituted for the previous traditional wording. While much clearer, it is quite close to the traditional King James Version in phrasing and doctrinal terms. Although actual word changes have been few, the rhythm and majesty of the original has been preserved. However, it does not go as far as the New International Version (listed below) in its updating.

In a similar manner, the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV), 2nd edition, Copyright © 1971, remains very close to the King James tradition. As a revision rather than a new translation, it retains traditional vocabulary of the KJV. Its changes, which have improved accuracy and clarity, take into account our present understanding of English while incorporating many manuscripts (including the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947) more ancient than those upon which the KJV was based.

Some of our Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (NIV), © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society, 144 Tices Lane, East Brunswick, N.J. 08816. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers. Its passages are in a contemporary, clear, and natural form of English more easily understood by many.

Also containing modern everyday standard English is the *Good News Bible, Today's English Version* (TEV) © 1976, American Bible Society, 1865 Broadway, N.Y., N.Y. 10023. Its translators used different wording from the NIV when conveying the meaning of Scriptural passages. It is in simple and direct language, yet faithful to traditional texts. This version is popular with those who seek a fresh rendition of the Bible message.

As a supplement for the New Testament a paraphrased edition titled *The Greatest is Love* by the World Home Bible League, South Holland, IL 60473 was also used. Its modern English format was sometimes useful in understanding the wording of the others. Being paraphrased, it is a restatement of the original author's thoughts using different words than he did. This edition was able to simplify and expand where necessary for a clearer understanding by the modern reader.

For those readers of the Roman Catholic faith, I've included *The New American Bible* (NAB) © 1970, 1977 by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York. This edition contains the very latest completely new Catholic translation which should add greatly to the enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of the Sacred Writings by Catholic readers. Its passages are in a modern English that facilitates an easier understanding of the text.

Catholic versions of the Bible contain additional books, all in the Old Testament, that are not a part of the other Bibles in our study. Catholics speak of these books as deuterocanonical to indicate that their sacred and canonical status as Scripture was settled later (in 1546 at the Council of Trent) than that of the other regular protocanonical books. Non-Catholics regard them as apocryphal, i.e., not divinely inspired Scripture, therefore do not include them in their Bible. In a bit of irony, Protestants say the apocryphal books were added to the Bible in 1546, whereas Catholics say Protestant Reformers, led by Martin Luther, dropped these books from the Bible that had been in common use for centuries. Whomever the guilty party is, I hope they are mindful of Revelation 22:18-19, “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.” —(NIV).

Those Catholic books that are noted in our study here in Chapter 3 are placed in their proper place among the other “regular” books of the Bible and are indicated as being part of the Catholic Bible with an asterisk after their names. Besides these additional books, some verses in the Catholic Bible’s other 66 books are different from those same numbered verses in non-Catholic Bibles.

As in other ancient documents, the precise meaning of the Biblical texts is sometimes uncertain. Archaeological and linguistic discoveries in this century aid in understanding difficult passages, but some uncertainties still remain. While more recent versions incorporate these newer discoveries, the King James Version did not.

Verses marked with a Bible designation (KJV, NIV, TEV, etc.) are quoted exactly as printed in regard to spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and italics. In my effort to be extra careful in these regards, I have noticed slight differences in the *Authorized* King James Version and a King James Version published by the American Bible Society without *authorized* as part of its title. The differences I have noticed are too minor to confuse anyone, and are mentioned only to promote complete accuracy. One example is Psalm 19:1. In the Authorized version we find, “THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.” In the non-authorized version THE becomes The, sheweth becomes showeth, and handywork becomes handiwork. Enough said on this issue — just be aware.

I am also indebted to: Dr. Henry H. Halley’s *Halley’s Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Regency Reference Library, Zondervan Publishing House, 1924, 24th ed. 1965, 52nd printing [large print] 1984); *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* (Mt. Juliet [Nashville], TN 37122: Crusade Bible Publishers, Inc.); *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press); James Strong’s, S.T.D., LL.D. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, © 1890, 1st ed. 1894, 32nd printing 1974); Myer Pearlman’s *Through the Bible Book by Book* (Springfield, Missouri 65802: Gospel Publishing House, 1935); Francis Cleary’s, S.J., S.S.L., S.T.D. *How to Interpret the Bible* (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1981); Norman R. Gulley’s *Final Events on Planet Earth* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1977); Mary Baker Eddy’s *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston, MA, 1875, 1925); *Life — How did it get here? By evolution or by creation?* (Brooklyn, New York: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, International Bible Students Assoc., 1985); Peter Ellis’ *The Yahwist: The Bible’s First Theologian* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press,

1968); N. H. Snaith's *Leviticus and Numbers* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967); Joseph C. Weber's article "Does the Bible Condemn Homosexual Acts?"; John E. Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Kenneth E. Hagin's *The Woman Question* (Tulsa, OK 74150: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1975, 2nd printing 1978); Robert Burnham, Jr.'s *Burnham's Celestial Handbook: Volumes One & Three* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1978); K. J. Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1978); *The Documents of Vatican II*; various booklets distributed by *Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays*, P.O. Box 27605, Washington, D.C. 20038-7605; numerous other booklets, pamphlets, and brochures of interest to our study here for insight in compiling this work; many homophobic Christians in various Bible study groups unaware of the research I was doing; and of course, last but not least, the many gay people I have known throughout the years who have shared their thoughts and feelings so I could grow to become the gay person God had in mind for me.

In understanding the Bible we must realize that its various books were written by men, and even though they were divinely inspired, each writer used his own thoughts which must have reflected his own personality within his writings.

Artists, philosophers and even scientists speak of inspiration, which is the urge to create a work of beauty (artists), a constructive outlook on reality (philosophers), or a solution to a problem (scientists). How to explain this inspiration? First of all, inspiration is related to a certain sensitivity which exists in a society at a given time. This sensitivity inspires gifted individuals in that society. These individuals in turn heighten that sensitivity in their fellow citizens.

There is a similarity between Hebrew literature and all art. Both are inspired. But Hebrew literature is more than just that. It is inspired (breathed upon) in a very special way by Almighty God. This does not mean that God dictated His message as a businessman dictates a letter to a secretary. God takes the author as he is and leaves him free to choose his own means of communication or use his own reflections. Isaiah was a great poet and composed beautiful poems to convey his message. Ezekiel was not well-versed in letters and his language is rather poor. Some authors chose existing folk tales and even beast fables to bring out their point.

God Himself guided the Hebrew genius in its searching out of the mysteries of the human condition. This guidance is called inspiration. Though inspired (guided) by God, the Hebrew authors were free to choose their literary genres (forms) to convey the message. As a matter of fact, these literary forms were conditioned by time and culture. Read the well-known poem on creation in Genesis 1. The ancient Hebrews saw the Earth as a large plate with a huge vault (sky) over it. Above the vault is God's palace. This outlook conditioned Genesis 1. Do not be shocked about this! We know that the Sun neither rises nor sets, the turning Earth merely makes it appear as such. Nevertheless we go on speaking of sunrise and sunset, since we did not know better for such a long time.

Taken literally, the Biblical portrait of the cosmos would seem to be quaint and hopelessly out of touch with modern science. It wasn't, of course, intended by the ancients to be a scientific literal representation of the universe, but as a metaphor for what

they saw going on in the world and the sky around them.

Sometimes, it is secular science which gives Christians the lead to reconsider their Bible understanding. The discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo made Christians aware that Genesis 1 is not a sacred lesson in science, but a poem on creation. Most scientists hold that the human species has developed somehow from lower kinds of life. This knowledge helped Christians to rethink the “how” of God’s creative activity and to understand that Genesis 2 and 3 is not a lesson in Anthropology, but an allegory (symbolic story), teaching us the lesson that sin is the root of all evil.

The Bible contains many symbolic things; the number seven or multiples of it being only one of them. In fact “seven” is quite conspicuous throughout the Bible. It is the Biblical number suggesting fullness, completeness, and totality.

The ancients recognized five naked eye planets in the sky along with the Sun and the Moon. “Sevenness” was a mystical property of the heavens, and therefore a property of pure and ultimate reality. In many classical and medieval traditions, there was no more room for any extra heavenly objects than there was for an extra day of the week (the seven days from sabbath to sabbath were named for the planets, Sun, & Moon) — or for extra aspects of the natural world not covered by the many sevenfold properties based on mystical correspondence to the planets.

Indeed, as late as the 17th century this was why learned men refused to believe Galileo could even have discovered moons of Jupiter. We can only imagine the effect on intellectual history if, for instance, Uranus — a planet just visible to the naked eye but not discovered until 1781 — had been noticed by some watchful observer in antiquity. Would we have had a philosophical crisis? Would we have had eight days of the week when it was realized seven was not a special pure number? Hmmm — enough philosophy for now. Seven is not a special or lucky number just like thirteen is not an unlucky number to be avoided.

Now that you know the Biblical origin of “lucky seven” you should not be surprised to learn that thirteen, especially when it is associated with Friday, has its roots in Christianity too. Our sixth day of the week, named after Freya, the Norse goddess of love, used to have a good reputation. But, with the advent of Christianity, her amorous ways were considered sinful and Friday developed an aura of foreboding. The fear of the number thirteen — known as triskaidekaphobia — has its own history of gloom. The number appears on the Tarot death card and it is said that thirteen witches form a coven. The bugaboo over Friday the 13th was probably cemented when Jesus, believed to be one of thirteen persons at the Last Supper, was crucified on a Friday.

Come to think of it, twelve shows up with a greater than average degree regularity in the Bible also — twelve sons of Jacob, twelve loaves of shewbread, Twelve Tribes of Israel, Twelve Apostles. Is it any wonder our present calendar was given seven days of the week and twelve months in a year? Can you see the mystical connection numbers had to our ancient ancestors?

However, one problem remains: You may hear interpreters of the Bible who are literalists or fundamentalists (fundies, as some gay people comically refer to them). They explain the Bible according to the letter; Eve really ate from the apple, there were no prehistoric cavemen before Adam & Eve, and Jonah was miraculously kept alive in the belly of the whale. Then there are ultra-liberal scholars, who qualify the whole Bible as

another book of fairy tales. We should follow the sound middle of the road, keeping a balance between fundamentalists and scholars who are too liberal.

We have stated: One must understand man's word in order to understand the Word of God in the Bible. That is why some knowledge of the Biblical literary forms is necessary. Of great importance also is some knowledge of the situation in which a Bible passage came into being. You understand the Book of Exodus better if you know something about the slavery in Egypt and you understand the condemnation of homosexuality better if you understand how, when, and why it originated.

Biblical poems in particular can easily be misunderstood. Read them as poems and not as scientific or historical reports, in which one tries to explain every detail as a revelation from God. The feeling, the thought, the total poem is inspired (guided) by God, though it is not necessarily revealed truth!

No matter how honest a writer is, there is that possibility for him to allow his personal beliefs to enter in his wording something that was not meant to be expressed in that exact way. We would do well to recall here the words of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council dealing with the interpretation of Sacred Scripture:

“Since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in a human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.”¹³

This cautious investigation of the intention of the human author is especially called for in dealing with Biblical passages which traditionally have been accepted as dealing with homosexual activity.

“Scripture combines the divine and the human, expressing God's infinite thoughts in finite human words expressed in the language of men. God's thoughts come to us through men's expressions. The Word is infallible, whereas the words are fallible; the Word exhaustless, while the words are limited. The Word is divine, but the words are human. The written Word of God came from heaven clothed in human words to present God. The thrust is to reveal God, but it is always accomplished through the limitations of human form”¹⁴ and language.

Speaking of God is necessarily limited by the possibilities of human language and conditioned by time and culture. The Bible is God's Word *and* man's word. One must understand man's word first in order to understand the Word of God.

Surely, each inspired writer also had in mind the background of his *immediate* readers, which no doubt influenced his choice of words. Each author adapted himself to his reader's character, needs, and ideals, then selected those incidents which needed particular emphasis.

The Bible was written in ancient times of heinous slayings, beheadings, battles, and extreme lustfulness. Quite primitive and simple-minded by today's standards. Even Jesus

¹³ *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, S.J. (New York: American Press, 1966)

¹⁴ Gulley, p. 70.

referred to a person with epilepsy as having an evil or unclean spirit, because that's what the people of the day could understand. It was commonly believed that the afflicted were under the control of evil spirits so apparently no effort was made to correct the popular error. Spirits and demons were often referred to.

In Matthew 13:10-17 Jesus explained why he needed to use the easier to understand wording of parables in His teachings to a simpler people to aid them in their understanding. Much of the Bible's wording was written in a way to be understood by the simpler less sophisticated people of those days.

The New Testament was written by perhaps as many as 12 different authors over a period of some 50 years. Jesus' teachings are contained in the 4 Gospels, written decades after His death, and represent the best historical reporting that oral tradition would allow. The first Christians gathered and edited all sorts of lore that they attributed to Jesus, but the actual authors were not eyewitnesses of the events and words they recorded. The letters of Paul were all written to meet specific needs faced by early Christians of the day. Some were addressed to a specific town, others to a certain church group. The following eight books are more varied. Some are addressed to believers everywhere, others are written to individual churches or persons. The most recent writings in the New Testament were written around the end of the 1st century A.D.

So much has changed in the world since then, that it seems illogical to expect every Scripture to apply to the world of today. Beyond that, many centuries elapsed between the oldest and latest writings in the Bible and the original languages of all its books are not the same. When one compares the more recent New Testament with some Old Testament passages written over 1400 years earlier (in the bronze age), there are a noticeable amount of Scripture verses that command people in totally different ways.

The Old Testament writings are spread out over a much greater period of time with its various authors in different stages of culture. Even the writers of the Bible recognized the changes in the world that had taken place and therefore preached their ideas in line with the current times. Every book of the Bible is a piece of ancient history which must be understood in its original time slot to gain the full impact of its message.

Modern day theologians are able to recognize some of these changes and do not insist upon a rigid enforcement of every Scriptural verse. Just as there was a cultural, and divinely accepted, reason for allowing men to have multiple wives at an earlier period in our history (to populate a sparsely inhabited Earth), we should now be able to recognize a valid cultural reason today to accept responsible loving same sex intimate relationships as something that is viable, even though they haven't been accepted as such in earlier times. There is no longer a legitimate reason why *all* devoted responsible gay relationships must be prohibited.

Often the Bible is interpreted in different ways by different Biblical scholars. Some theologians criticize us when we interpret the Scriptures and say that they do not prohibit responsible loving gay relationships. Yet various stories are repeated in several different books of the New Testament by different inspired authors. Each one interprets the events a little differently and his written description changes the events slightly. This is most conspicuous in the 4 Gospels where different early Christian authors used editorial liberties in preserving the sayings and activities of Jesus in differently worded statements. Compare these six examples: Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8; Matthew

26:17-29, Mark 14:12-25, Luke 22:7-23, John 13:21-30 (accounts of the Last Supper [the Passover discrepancy]); Matthew 26:30-35, Mark 14:26-31, Luke 22:31-34, John 13:36-38 (Peter's denial and the crowing of the cock); Matthew 27:1-2, 11-14, Mark 15:1-5, Luke 23:1-5, John 18:28-38; Matthew 27:32-56, Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49, John 19:17-30 (notice the four different inscriptions above Jesus on the cross as reported in each story); and Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:14-18, Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-23.

Contradictions seem to appear when we don't recognize differing viewpoints. Opposing statements can be equally valid depending upon the sense in which we interpret them. Differences between certain quotations and details can be no more than the difference in viewpoint and the purpose of each writer or what his culture is. Viewed in the proper context, Scripture can and should be harmonized. Semantics (study of meaning of words) may be the cause of some confusion. Other problems are solved by a correct understanding of cultural practices of the time.

When we examine the footnotes contained in some Bibles we see many instances where various manuscript translations had either added, deleted, or changed the wording of particular verses, or even added or deleted a whole verse. Sometimes the change alters the meaning. In some cases a later copyist is suspected of making a change. The last line of the Lord's Prayer is one such example, (see Matthew 6:13 & Luke 11:4).

Clearly we cannot always interpret everything in a strictly literal sense. A basic principle for interpretation is that "Scripture interprets Scripture." Individual verses must be read within the overall theme of other nearby verses and against the background, especially cultural background, of the entire Bible in order to be placed in the proper perspective. Much error has resulted from ignoring this law of interpretation. That's how people have gotten into difficulty on our subject, as well as others. You can lift verses out of their settings, ignore the law of interpretation, and make them say anything you want them to say. But by looking carefully at the precise meaning of words (the original words used by the original authors), figures of speech (most not common today), and imagery in the text itself, we can analyze the passages for what they are really saying. Everything else is secondary and to be used only with caution. The ancient world must be understood on its own different terms if the full message of the Bible is to come through. The past was truly past, different from the present. By letting the past tell its own story we are able to avoid reading into the text many misleading anachronisms such as later attitudes, customs, and meanings foreign to the Biblical authors and their original audiences. When this is done properly, the conclusions we reach in our personal study of Scripture will not conflict with any other parts of Scripture — all parts will harmonize together.

We've spoken of uncertainties of some Biblical texts. Recent study and research has resulted in many long accepted but unexamined presuppositions about various parts of the Bible to be rejected in favor of interpretations which strike us as new and different, but which in fact are what the text originally meant. As a first step in learning what God has to tell us through Scripture, we must understand what the human writer wants to say and how he goes about saying it.

When the sacred authors wrote, they selected some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explaining some things in view of the situation of their churches, and preserving the form of proclamation but always in such fashion that they told the truth.

To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among

other things, to different “literary forms.” The truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are of various kinds. The Bible contains many different kinds of literature, not unlike that of other writings of this period. Some parts are meant to be taken literally, other parts more figuratively or symbolically. Some are historically and scientifically correct, others are not. Certain passages are to be viewed poetically rather than historically, while others may be based on prophesy legends, folklore, folktales, or myths common in the day. Sometimes stories are simply fables, parables, or other forms of discourse.

The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.

All these kinds of literary forms are often intermingled. Often they are used to teach a lesson. If we do not know what form a writer uses to convey his message we might misunderstand what he is trying to say. That is why we must distinguish between the various forms the Bible uses and keep them distinct. For instance, if he chooses to use figurative speech, we should understand it as such.

Sometimes the sacred authors took their narratives & traditions and remolded, refashioned, and elaborated them to bring out the religious lesson they wanted to teach. When we read the Word we have to understand it in these terms. We should welcome with joy and enthusiasm the discovery of marvelous new dimensions to familiar passages.

A few contemporary examples will help to demonstrate the impact of all this upon Bible study. Not every Scripture was meant to be interpreted in its literal sense and without errors, as some Biblical fundamentalists believe. When Jesus said, “And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven.” —Matthew 23:9 (NIV), we should not read into this that Catholics are in error to call priests “Father.” Children also do not need to come up with a new title for male parents. This was often typical speech of the time. It does not reject authority in principle, or the use of titles, only the failure to acknowledge the authority of God the Father.

We are also not expected to actually pluck out the lusting eye and cut off the sinful hand (Matthew 5:27-30) or pick up snakes and drink deadly things because Jesus said believers will not be hurt (“They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them;...” —Mark 16:18 [KJV]). Nor should we interpret verses that speak of God and Jesus as separate beings (Galatians 4:4, Hebrews 1:3) to be in contradiction with those that speak of God and Jesus as one (“I and *my* father are one.” —John 10:30 [KJV]). And we are not expected to always be praying (Luke 18:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

So many verses must be placed in the proper perspective and context. By letting Scripture interpret Scripture this principle helps us to correctly understand Jesus’ teachings just referred to.

The Gospels repeatedly emphasize that Jesus opposed the formalism of certain Pharisees. (This along with details about the Pharisees are covered in more depth in our section on Matthew in Chapter 3.) He wanted interior attitudes, not external observances. Jesus was not one to get hung up on formalities — he was not forbidding our common practice of addressing parents or clergy. Instead, he insisted we cannot allow others to make contrary decisions or to command what God did not intend. This is the meaning of Matthew 23:9. “...We ought to obey God rather than men.” — Acts 5:29 (KJV). Jesus’ critical statements to the Pharisees included; “You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.... You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe [*set up*] your own traditions!” — Mark 7:8-9 (NIV). We need to be bold enough to throw some traditional values aside and look at God’s many blessings in their various forms. We may then find one of the most powerful faith-builders of all.

Men condemn our loving acts, but God does not condemn responsible loving kinds of relationships. That’s not what the Bible is dealing with. Our society needs the sophistication and social responsibility to understand the distinction between relationship and lust. The mutilation of Matthew 5:27-30 is objectively seriously wrong and not an act of virtue. In many places the Bible teaches that sex is good and that our bodies are to be revered as temples of the Holy Spirit. Mutilation only prevents the external act, and has no effect on internal thoughts of lust, greed, and envy.

Interpreting a passage from its context and deciding how literal it should be interpreted is sometimes no easy task, even for experts. So important is an understanding of this subject, that we cover it at several points in this chapter in various degrees. Inspired scholars are more apt to interpret the Word spiritually, while ordinary historians interpret it from a literal standpoint. Literally taken, the text is made to appear contradictory in some places. To interpret it properly we need to have a sense of what the human author directly intended, and the sense which his words convey. We need to focus on the words themselves, and also learn all we can about the cultures from which they came, the human author, and his world — his nature, interests, personal biases, and purposes, the oral and written materials used as sources, and the forms of expression current at that time.

The mustard seed is *not* “the smallest seed of all” — Matthew 13:31-32, even if the Bible says it is. The Biblical world is alien to ours, its languages quite unlike English and the best translations only approximations. It can take hard work to discover the sense intended by the human author, which the words themselves convey.

The Bible is not error free when it talks about certain specific happenings in the world (history), or how this universe was formed and how it functions (science). Biblical truthfulness does not stand or fall on whether the Medes ruled Babylonia when Cyrus the

Persian conquered it. The author of the Book of Daniel apparently thought so, but the evidence is that this is not historically correct.

There is no clear indication we must take rigid positions about how Biblical passages are to be interpreted. Some religions appear quite easygoing and permissive, and their followers still lead good Christian lives. We must believe and have faith that all will seek this same understanding and wisdom. Moderation is the key.

Of all the quotations made by Jesus in the New Testament, at no point did He make *any* reference to homosexuality. But He did say; “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” —Mark 16:16 (KJV), “...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” —John 3:16 (KJV), “Jesus’ mission was not to condemn anyone, but to save those who believe.” —John 3:17, “Those who believe in Jesus are not condemned, but those who believe not are already condemned — for not believing” —John 3:18, and “...What God wants you to do is to believe in the one he sent.” —John 6:29 (TEV). Jesus makes no demand except faith. He does not demand changes in personality, behavior, or lifestyle for salvation. He is the Son of God with the authority to speak for God (Matthew 3:16-17, 17:5, 28:18). What more do you need?

In a sense, many of our laws have their roots more than 3000 years ago with the children of Israel wandering in the desert after their exodus from Egyptian bondage. The Book of Leviticus records the words God spoke through Moses giving His instructions for worship and behavior. In these few short pages lies the seed of modern Western law. Chapter 19 of Leviticus especially, with its simple, nobly expressed rules of moral behavior, lets us glimpse embryonic versions of many of our own American laws.

Every Biblical verse that condemns homosexual acts seems to refer back to Moses’ writings in Leviticus 18:22. Yet an introduction to Leviticus discloses that the book contains regulations for worship and religious ceremonies in *ancient Israel*. And in Leviticus 18:1-2 the Lord spoke through Moses to the *people of Israel*. In later writings in the New Testament Paul reiterated the same commands to different communities of people because of wanton lustful immorality in their cities, particularly Corinth in Greece which we will cover in more detail later. Clearly these commands were directed to lustful activities, but unfortunately they were so broadly worded that modern day Biblical literalists insist they are meant to pertain to even the most responsible and loving of gay relationships and these are the teachings that must be brought into question. When people today engage in lustful sexual behavior as those of ancient times did, the Biblical objections remain valid.

Throughout the entire Bible lustful activities such as adultery and prostitution are condemned quite often. Even today lust and prostitution are preached against as activities that sometimes contribute to crime. A distinction needs to be emphasized upon the great difference between mere lust and responsible loving relationships.

In our study of the Bible we’ll begin with the Old Testament and work our way

through the New Testament. Being separated by so many years there are some quite noticeable differences. Throughout the Old Testament we see the symbolism of death. An example is the symbol of death and destruction in Exodus 7:14-25, the miracle of turning water into blood which is one of the first miracles mentioned where God gave the power to Moses.

But in the New Testament Jesus performed His first miracle to show us the abrupt change in relationship that a person now has with God. For His first miracle was not the turning of water into blood, but the turning of water into wine (John 2:1-11). Wine is a symbol of life, of joy and gladness. This miracle brought a new relationship between us and God.

One can see the contrast between the two relationships by reading the last verses of the Old Testament and the first verses of the New Testament. The last few verses of Malachi speak of a curse. It says that men should change and repent lest God smite the Earth with a curse (Malachi 4:6). In the very first verses of Matthew, you read of the birth of a baby. From a curse to a blessing.

We also see a change in attitude concerning the sexual nature of some people. Nowhere is this more evident than in the account of the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39. We see it depicted here how the new Christian community differed from its predecessor in the Old Testament by now accepting and including those once considered outcasts. Eunuchs, described as people who are sexually different and who, for whatever reason, do not procreate, were excluded from the Lord's community in Leviticus 21:20 and Deuteronomy 23:1. Now, in the New Testament, we find they are welcomed with open arms in the sacrament of baptism — in fact the Holy Spirit took the initiative to make them one of the first groups of outcasts to be included in the new covenant community. Isn't it wonderful; just by believing in Christ as the Messiah and receiving baptism and the Spirit, the eunuch rides on into history full of joy — that's all it takes, Hallelujah!

In Isaiah 56:2-8 there is an explicit prophecy that with the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of the new covenant, the eunuch (meaning those who are sexually different) will be given a special place in the Lord's house and an immortal value. What better blessing can there be than acceptance, and in this case acceptance to a special level? Why are traditional Christians so afraid to fulfill this prophecy within the gay Christian movement? Are they afraid to admit our special value? If so, why? Are they even aware of it? Do you suppose gentle education will help? It can't hurt. For more about the nature of eunuchs see our treatment in Matthew 19:12.

There are many examples of considerable changes in the ensuing years between. It can reasonable be assumed that if a 20th century Testament were written today it would have massive changes and would probably be in line with recent scientific and medical findings.

The Biblical Misinterpretation

The first of five Biblical condemnations of homosexuality is Leviticus 18:22, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination." — (KJV). With so few references in over a thousand pages of text, homosexual "sin" couldn't have been a high priority to either the ancient Hebrews or the early Christians. Yet it came to pack

tremendous emotional wallop — all because of what could be misinterpretations of an early text. Homosexuals should not be viewed from the conventional, moralistic perspective, but rather as a minority group worthy of protection.

Scholars agree that the injunction against homosexuality is rooted in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. It is the story most often cited to “prove” God’s “condemnation” of homosexuality. Christian churches have taught, and people universally believed, practically without question, on what they held to be excellent authority, that homosexual practices had brought a terrible divine vengeance upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the repetition of such “offenses against nature” had from time to time provoked similar visitations of divine wrath in the form of earthquakes, floods, famines, outbreaks of pestilence, etc. It was taken for granted, therefore, that by means of both Christian discipline and the restraints and penalties of civil law steps should be taken to ward off the wrath of God from the community. It was also taken for granted that the sin for which the cities of the plain were destroyed was that of the habitual indulgence of perverse homosexual practices among men. Consequently, the question must be posed; to what extent is this tradition truly founded in Scripture? What was the meaning of the encounter of Lot and his angelic visitors with the angry inhabitants of Sodom as recorded by the Yahwist author of Genesis 19? Finally, what grounds, if any, are there for the persistent belief that the inhabitants of the city were addicted to male homosexual practices and were punished accordingly?

The Bible reflects life as it is. The good and the beautiful exist side by side with the sordid and the ugly in the Bible and in life. Thus alongside the beautiful story of David and Jonathan we have the sordid story of Sodom and Gomorrah. It’s unfortunate that this is the one story of homosexuality in the Bible that everyone seems to know by heart. It’s doubly unfortunate that a great portion of the public identifies *all* homosexuality with the conduct of the men of Sodom and says that the men of Sodom *were* bad, therefore *all* homosexuality is bad. Well, the men of Sodom *were* bad, but they were bad not because of their homosexuality *per se*, but because they had allowed themselves to become so callous in their dealings with other human beings that they had turned themselves into abusive brutes.

As we will see, the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative possibly had nothing whatever to do with homosexual practices — and surely nothing to do with warm, loving, sharing, and caring relationships involving two mutual people of the same gender. Scriptural evidence indicates if sexuality was on the author’s mind, it was not homosexuality *per se*, but homosexuality as part of the idolatrous fertility cult of the Canaanites. Whatever sexuality it was, it does not constitute the main sin of the two cities. Rather, the sin remains primarily one of inhospitality.

The story opens with two sinful cities that stand on the brink of destruction. Before acting, God sends two emissaries to find someone righteous who might be saved. Disguised as travelers, the angels come upon the house of Lot. Because a stranger’s kindness was often a matter of life and death in the nomadic world of the ancient Middle East, Lot invites the wayfarers to rest and refresh themselves in his home. After some resistance, they accept.

However, the inhospitable men of Sodom throng around Lot’s house, demanding; “...Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.” —Genesis 19:5 (KJV). Lot, ever the gracious host, doesn’t want to subject his guests to indignities. Hoping to placate the angry horde, he offers them his

two virgin daughters instead (Genesis 19:8). But the Sodomites will settle for no less than the newcomers, and nearly break down Lot's door in a frenzy to get at them.

The angels—*cum*—travelers strike the Sodomites blind and exhort Lot to gather his family and escape from the city. Soon after, "...the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from...out of heaven;" —Genesis 19:24 (KJV), and the cities were pulverized.

Before we go any further, let's take a closer look at Lot's actions. Here we are face to face with a standard that strikes us as barbaric, to say the least. So horrified was he at this gross violation of ancient hospitality rules that he was willing to sacrifice his *only* two daughters to the offensive and angry crowd in order to keep two male strangers he had never met before safe. This seems not only hard to understand, but a morally outrageous act if we only look at it from today's standards and family valued priorities. Yet when viewed from the Middle Eastern cultural standpoint of their day, we have a better understanding for why it happened. Hospitality was very important. If a visitor arrived, planned or unplanned, it was a serious cultural discourtesy to not invite him in and care for him. While males, even strangers, were regarded with absolute dignity; women, even those of one's own family, were second class less important citizens, their honor and life more expendable than men. Between male host and male guest there was a sacred bond, and this bond of hospitality must not be dishonored *at any cost*. Lot, wanting to be a congenial host — as was culturally expected — offered his own beloved flesh and blood to save these strangers.

This isn't the only instance in the Bible where female loved ones were offered for sacrifice in order to save a visiting male guest. We find a similar story in Judges 19:22-25. It's a sure bet our worst homophobic oppressors today would place *their* family's safety first over that of a strangers as is socially acceptable in our world. Clearly, when we study ancient teachings and actions we have to do it with an eye to *their* customs — not ours — and the meanings they had when the Bible was written, else some ridiculous meanings result. There is no need for any further explanation. For there is nothing that can be said that will excuse the crudity of this offering of the girls to be raped instead of the men.

After safely away from Sodom's destruction, both of Lot's daughters got him drunk with wine on separate nights so they could become pregnant. As a result, each daughter later bore a son. This incest was never condemned because its purpose was to preserve the family line and populate the sparse Earth, two vitally important goals and duties in early Biblical days (Genesis 19:30-38). Just one more example of such a different culture our ancestors lived in.

But are these horrible views toward women truly *past* history? Can we safely say Middle Eastern societies have progressed closer toward equality of the sexes? Tragically, in some current day cultures over there the answer appears to be no. The March 12th, 1992 edition of ABC-TV's *PrimeTime Live* reported on a shocking ancient custom called HONOR DEATH where women and girls are punished with death for bringing shame on their family. This ritual, which usually happens in very traditional rural societies, is found in Europe and Asia, not just the Middle East, and in no way is it a part of the teachings of any religion. The practice, we are told, goes back so far into history that no one knows when it began. Even though winds of change have swept away kingdoms and national

borders, leaving modern nations carved into this ancient land, a time honored and effective way of controlling women remains alive and well.

In one small village not far from Jerusalem in the Negev Desert of Israel women may enter the mosque only by the rear, girls learn at an early age to do what boys say, men believe women should remain virgins until marriage, and they must not bring shame on the family by going out with boys. One man from this society told *PrimeTime* that even though he loves his daughter she may lose her life if she flirted with boys. Another man told us his daughter had a sexual relationship with a fellow worker at the factory where she worked. When everybody knew it they had a meeting and decided to get rid of her and the oldest son was chosen to kill her. When the father was asked if he could just forgive her he said he would, but the rest of the family would not because they felt shamed that the neighbors were talking about the scandal, so they had to wipe the slate clean with the woman's blood. Afterwards, we learn, the family made sure the neighbors knew the deed had been done.

Fathers agree this practice is a burden to them, but they have to do it for the society. This sanction is a warning line for the girls of the society in order to keep their society within the same norms. So ingrained is this ungodly practice that girls lucky enough to flee their family could be pursued for years by brothers or uncles or any male member of the family intent on returning honor to the family name. In one case a woman was tracked down and killed 20 years afterwards when her family found her.

One may ask, what about the police — won't they put a stop to it? In those rare instances where legal authorities get involved punishment is very light if at all. Fortunately, there are some underground organizations helping girls and women flee to safety, but still, even with that, dozens of girls are killed every year at the hands of "loving" males in their family.

PrimeTime did not address gay people in their documentary so we can't comment with any assurance of accuracy as to how they would be treated, but that is not our point in reporting this story. I just want to give you an idea what we're up against when we deal with Eastern based societies, even in the 20th century, so different from our own. Anyone wanting further details on the subject of HONOR DEATH can obtain a transcript of the episode by sending \$5.00 to: Journal Graphics, 1535 Grant St., Denver, Co. 80203, or by calling: (303) 831-9000. A video cassette is also available by calling the same number.

The key to the injunction against homosexuality is found in the final five words of the Sodomites' demand; "that we may know them." In the Bible here, the phrase "to know," *yada* or *yadha* in Hebrew, is usually assumed to mean carnal knowledge. Because the men of Sodom demanded to *know* the men in Lot's house, their words were taken to denote homosexual lust. Sodom and Gomorrah were ravaged on the heels of this alleged lust. Therefore, the Sodomites' sin has come to be known as "sodomy."

The true meaning of these five words, upon which hangs our powerful cultural hatred of homosexuals, is open to some question. Israelite tradition was unanimous in ascribing the destruction of Sodom & Gomorrah to the wickedness of these cities, but tradition varied in regard to the nature of this wickedness. Nowhere in the text are the sins of the cities actually enumerated, except in the most general way; "But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly." —Genesis 13:13 (KJV). "...the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great,...their sin is very grievous;" —Genesis

18:20 (KJV).

If we are to understand the development of the Sodom and Gomorrah story it is important to place it in the context of the legends of a similar character in the folklore of the surrounding cultures. Many of these legends tell of a stranger (sometimes a divine being in disguise) who visits a prosperous city and is refused hospitality. He eventually finds a lodging, often with poor outcasts. Consequently, he helps his hosts escape before the city and its inhabitants are destroyed. The most famous of these legends is Ovid's account of Philemon and Baucis. These legends may account for the particular form the Sodom story itself assumed during its course of oral transmission prior to being written down. In the legend, as in the same Yahwist author's Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11:9, the conduct which brings judgment upon the offending community and leads to its destruction is never sexual, but always wickedness in general, and in particular pride and inhospitality.

Today, critics of the traditional homophobic interpretation argue that the sins most responsible for the wrecked cities were more likely a combination of lustful forcible rape, idolatry, *and* inhospitality rather than mere carnal knowledge of men by men. There is no evidence elsewhere in the passage or in the Old Testament to show that homosexual behavior was particularly prevalent in these cities. This is a very important concession, since the centuries-old tradition in the Christian world of extreme condemnation of homosexuality always had its primary basis in the interpretation of this text of Genesis as indicating an extreme divine judgment of condemnation on homosexual behavior. Furthermore, at no time are any kinds of loving relationships of either sexual persuasion — homo or hetero addressed.

There are several other indications in Genesis which tend to indicate that in the mind of the Yahwist author, the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was primarily one of inhospitality to strangers. For example, when the angelic visitors come as strangers to Abraham's tent in Genesis 18:1-5, the quality of Abraham as a good man is dramatically established by an emphasis on his hospitable reception to the strangers. Similarly the quality of Lot as a good man worthy of God's favor is established in contrast to the other inhabitants of Sodom by his hospitality to the same strangers in terms strongly reminiscent of the story of the disciples of Emmaus in Luke 24:13-35.

If one reads the context of the Sodom and Gomorrah story beginning in Chapter 13, it is clear that God had judged and condemned those cities long before the incident with the angels anyway. When we ask how the rest of the Bible explains the story, it is clearly not *only* a sexual issue, and this is an important point to keep in mind. Ezekiel 16:49-50 explains Sodom's sins as anything but sexual. Like many people today, they had an abundance of material goods, but failed to meet the needs of the poor. "Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen." —(NIV). The sins of injustice and idolatry plague every generation. We stand under the same judgment if we create false gods or treat others with injustice today.

The real Sodomites in our own time are not gay people, but rather those whose greed and quest for power have brought abuse, poverty, and sometimes war to millions of innocent people. I know some leaders of various countries that could surely fit in this category, even some of our own American politicians match some of the characteristics. These are the ones we should be concerned about.

According to Isaiah 1:9 & 3:9, it was a lack of social justice, and Jeremiah 23:14 cites moral and ethical laxity. 1 Kings 14:24 speaks of people who were like the people of Sodom in the land “...and they did according to all the abominations...” —(KJV). Abominations in plural signifies a variety of behavior above and beyond forcible sexual lust. A confirmation of the interpretation of the primary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as inhospitality occurs in Matthew 10:5-15 and Luke 10:1-12 where Jesus refers to Sodom while discussing the problem of inhospitable receptions with his disciples. And in Luke 17:28-29 Jesus mentions activities happening in Sodom when “...it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed *them* all.” —(KJV). Sexuality and/or lust are not among the activities mentioned in either case. “...they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;” —Luke 17:28 (KJV). Now, I believe Jesus, being the Son of God, should be the final word on this subject.

Catholic Bibles are not without their reference to the activities of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah either. In two of their additional books not contained in non-Catholic Bibles we find the following: Wisdom 19:13-17 reports the misdeeds of Sodom in clear terms as treating their guests with hatred. Finally Sirach 16:8 informs us that God did not spare the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because He detested their arrogance and pride.

In Judges 20:4-6 the victims of a nearly parallel Sodom type incident, detailed in Chapter 19 of Judges, report the crime of inhospitality included the design to murder the stranger. The obvious stress, once again, is not so much on the implied sexual contact with the stranger as on the right of the stranger to a hospitable reception.

Here’s another important indication that in Biblical times the sin of Sodom was not connected with merely homosexual practices as such: The story of Sodom and Gomorrah is found in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, whereas the Old Testament condemnations of homosexuality are found in Leviticus — a later book. And New Testament condemnations refer back to the Leviticus condemnation. While various inhospitality discussions we’ve exampled above always referred back to the Sodom story, none of the passages, either in the Old or New Testament, traditionally understood as condemning homosexual practices makes any mention of the Sodom story at all. Yet wouldn’t such a reference surely have been obvious if the sin of Sodom was understood as involving these practices? At the same time, none of the inhospitality references back to Sodom condemn homosexuality per se, but the several associations of the city with “wickedness” may be a condemnation of homosexual rape and assault — as indeed they should be.

Original Biblical texts, distorted by layers of translations, show no uniform use of the phrases referring to carnal knowledge. For example, in Genesis 16:1-16, we come upon the story of Sarai’s tragic sterility in the face of God’s promise to build a great nation from the seed of her husband, Abram. She offers him her maid, Hagar, as proxy childbearer. “...Behold now,...” Sarai says, “...the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her....” —Genesis 16:2 (KJV). The same chapter of Genesis continues; “And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived:...” —Genesis 16:4 (KJV). In this context the meaning of “go in unto” is indisputably sexual. (This is also an example of surrogate motherhood, which some religions do not accept today, yet her actions were all in keeping with the laws and customs of their time. Today artificial insemination is used to impregnate another

woman, and it too is not accepted by some Christians.)

But later, in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, a similar phrase is used completely differently. The angels who visit Lot tell him that they will spend the night in the streets. But Lot beseeches them to accept his hospitality. “And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house;...” —Genesis 19:3 (KJV). Surely God’s own emissaries didn’t engage in sexual intercourse with Lot! Genesis 6:4 provides another example where “came in unto” refers to sexual intercourse; “...when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare *children* to them,...” —(KJV).

The inconsistency that applies to the phrase “go in unto” also applies to the phrase “to know.” “To know” and its various other forms (knew, known etc.) are found perhaps only a dozen or so times in the entire Old Testament in a context meaning heterosexual intercourse. Most often the term used to denote sexual intercourse is “to lie with.” In The Song of Solomon (Songs), the most explicitly sensual part of the Bible, the word “know” is not used even once with reference to sex. Why then should we assume that the Sodomites’ demand, “that we may know them,” must refer to carnal knowledge? It surely didn’t in John 2:24, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all *men*,” —(KJV).

It may have meant no more than “get acquainted with.” Some have suggested that the passage can be interpreted as implying that Lot, who was a *ger* or resident alien in Sodom, may have exceeded his rights by receiving and entertaining two foreigners whose intentions might have been hostile and whose credentials, it seems, had not been examined. This explanation may provide a natural and sufficient reason for the demand, “...Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.” —Genesis 19:5 (KJV).

If we are to accept the traditional view that it does involve carnal knowledge though (as admittedly even a number of liberal thinking scholars agree), then we surely are able to see that it is only referring to sexuality of a lustful *and* even attempted forcible gang rape nature. They were wicked, evil men, intent on nothing but the abuse of the strangers and the satisfying of their own lusts. They were ugly, callous, dirty-minded, and unfeeling rapists. There is no point in trying to depict them as anything else. The pleasure which these men wanted to achieve was an aggressive pleasure. Their intent was homosexual rape, which (precisely like its heterosexual counterpart) is the dehumanization of one human being by another or, as in this case, others.

At the same time, let us see what their homosexuality was not. There were no overtones of love, caring, compassion, or anything else positive that we know today can exist in same gender relationships. We’ve seen in both the Old and New Testaments where Sodom is referred to as a symbol of utter destruction occasioned by sins of such magnitude as to merit exemplary punishment. Can anyone reasonably believe two loving people of the same gender would pack such a punch? Doesn’t it make more sense this loving activity was not on the Yahwist author’s mind and that other deplorable behavior was what he was referring to? Hmmm — it makes one think doesn’t it? I hope so.

We must see the sin of Sodom for what it was; it was an attitude of mind that justified the abuse of one human being by others. It was an attitude that would turn people into objects — things — to be used or abused. This was sinful then and it is still sinful today. It clearly fits within our definition of immorality. “Sin” in Biblical thinking is missing the mark that God intends for us. God intends that we should love persons and use things. But people pervert this. Instead we are always tempted to love things and use

persons. Whenever we give in to this temptation and act toward another person as if he or she is an object, this is sin. This sin of turning another person into an object for one's own gratification does not always have to do with sex, although more frequently than not, it does.

When the people of Sodom disregarded their visitors we saw what happened, "...the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from...out of heaven;" —Genesis 19:24 (KJV). When we, in our own relationships, disregard other human beings as persons in dishonest ways we do them a severe disservice and this is perhaps one lesson of the Sodom story and its punishment. It's a sad humorless fact of life that for nearly two thousand years in Western culture this is how those of us have been treated who have been honest enough with ourselves to accept gayness as a given fact of our existence. We have been treated as less than human for no other reason than that we have expressed our honest feelings for members of our own sex. All because of the Sodom incident, we've all been maligned — just because we are sincere and truthful. I'm sure that is not the lesson God intended to teach us.

In the following centuries the influence of the homosexual interpretation of the Sodom story, and resulting divine punishment meted out, became evident in every strand of tradition dealing with the subject. For one thing, there was a tendency on the part of civil officials to read into any natural disaster a divine judgment due to homosexual practices. This fear of us, the first vestiges of homophobia as we know it today, kept our "sin" a high priority in the minds of law makers for years to come.

Peter Ellis, in his book *The Yahwist: The Bible's First Theologian*,¹⁵ offers an interesting and suggestive thesis to explain the possible presence of the sexual element in the Sodom narrative and it has nothing to do with two people loving and caring for each other. He points out that one of the Yahwist author's principal themes was an attack against Canaanite nature worship directed to the fertility gods. The Canaanite religion worshipped multiple gods of fertility cults and featured female and male cult prostitutes as part of their ceremonial rites. Several verses in later books of the Bible refer to and condemn such practices which were quite widespread at the time. Later in our study of specific verses we will cover this subject more thoroughly and see how the severe offense of idolatry is always connected with it. This was the form of sexuality and idol worship by God's *chosen* people that so detested Him and the inspired author of the Sodom story surely had on his mind when and if unnatural sexuality — as an expression of sacred prostitution, *not* sharing and caring love — was a major part of the reason leading to the cities' destruction.

In the end, we cannot pin down the exact sin or, in all probability, combination of sins that caused their destruction. It is not clear what, if any, role sexuality played. Of all our studies though, one thing seems clear beyond a reasonable doubt — that warm, loving, sharing, caring, and responsible gay relationships were not on the inspired author's mind when he penned his words so long ago. Various Scripture indicates that, it seems logical, and I believe it!

If we are correct in identifying inhospitality as the primary sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, as I believe we are, then we are dealing here with one of the supremely ironic paradoxes of history. For almost two thousand years in the Western Christian world gay

¹⁵ Peter Ellis, *The Yahwist: The Bible's First Theologian* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1968)

people have been the victims of inhospitable treatment. Condemned by “morally right” Christians, we have been the victims of persecution, torture, and even death. In the name of a mistaken understanding of the crime of Sodom and Gomorrah, the true crime of Sodom and Gomorrah has been and continues to be repeated every day. It’s time the *true* word gets out to those who need it the most. Then they can devote their Christian ways to something constructive for a change. They can help build people up, rather than continue to tear them down and John 8:32 will finally be realized — the truth will set us free!

Leviticus, the book of laws, was set up as a code for the fledgling Jewish nation. Moses was concerned that the new state be strong in numbers. Any intercourse that didn’t further that end had to be condemned. The severe penalties with which homosexuality has been punished in various countries throughout history probably originate with that 3rd book of the Bible; “If a man lie...” —Leviticus 20:13. But the issue then was survival, *not* morality.

Homosexuality was outside the mainstream of early rabbinic thought. It was only with the New Testament and the Palestinian Jewish reinterpretation of Genesis 19 that it became a major theme. Intervening events are believed by some scholars to account for the change.

One factor was a carry over from the apocryphal Book of Jubilees and Testament of Naphtali, which alleged that the Sodomites’ had created a race of giants by cohabiting with gods — the “Watchers” — who lusted after mortal women and descended to Earth in order to have sex with them. For their crime against nature, the Sodomites were punished. Over time, it seems the “Watchers” were forgotten, but the notion of “crime against nature” remained, although the crime in this case was heterosexual and consisted in the commission of adultery and acts of gross sexual license and shameless promiscuity between men and women.

The critical factor in that selective memory was the antagonism that had developed between the pious Hebrews and their hedonistic Greek conquerors. The reinterpretation of the collapse of Sodom and Gomorrah was, in part, a reaction against the Hellenistic (Grecian) way of life. Homosexuality, one of the hallmarks of Greek civilization, became the symbol for the vices of an alien and hostile culture that offended the devout Jewish spirit.

References to homosexuality became much more explicit as they evolved in the New Testament, where three condemnations are found. But, in the final analysis, it was not so much divine ordinance that created the Judeo-Christian injunction against this form of sexuality — rather, it was the survival needs of a nation and the clash between Hebrew and Greek cultures. (See our comments in 2 Maccabees 4:9-14.) Those conditions don’t exist any more. Yet, the injunction has remained to mold our laws and attitudes to this day. Biblical contexts also refer to anal-genital contact only, as we will be detailing later, and not oral sex or mutual gently touching, which is not mentioned in any way.

One controversial topic over the years is how the Earth came into existence and life formed. Creationists believe as per Genesis 1 that God commanded “let there be...” and it happened. Within six days it went from nothing to a fully formed Earth complete with life. Evolutionists believe life formed by a process of spontaneous generation with higher

life forms gradually evolving over many years as proposed by Charles Darwin in 1859. They believe chance caused all things to happen. It is simply man's attempt to explain the existence of a creation without a creator. Each side totally disbelieves the other, yet it's possible to believe in both creation and evolution, if evolution was God's way of creating Earth. In particular, that God created the universe and all that is in it, but to accomplish it he used the complex and orderly laws of physics and evolution.

The age-old feud between the evolutionists and creationists — or between gay people and non-gay people — places an artificial barrier between science and Christianity. Because of these barriers, imaginative thinking and problem solving on both sides are crippled. Evolution and creation — or gays and non-gays — are not necessarily anti-thetical — the two concepts not incompatible; *not* mutually exclusive — both can coexist in harmony and still maintain their special heritage. It took us hundreds of millions of years to evolve from out of the trilobite-populated seas of deep prehistory and onto the elevated freeways of the 20th century. Let us not backslide back down the scale. If we are to solve the social and scientific problems of the 21st century, these barriers must come down.

Christians — gay or otherwise — need not reject evolutionary (and refreshing) thinking and philosophy. Properly understood, religion and science, or faith and reason, have always feasted sociably at the same banquet. It's only when one or the other dislikes what is being served that acrimony spoils the occasion. As in so many areas of life, it is hardly ever a matter of either/or but rather of both/and. Is the glass half full or is it half empty — *it's both*. Theistic evolution — harmonizing evolution with a belief in God — can and must be reconciled with Biblical Christianity. Gay Christians and non-gay Christians must harmonize. Justice is sometimes slow to prevail for the proponents of unorthodox ideas, but eventually truth prevails. “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” — John 8:32 (KJV).

Literal thinking Christians do not accept any part of evolution because in the first chapter of Genesis it is said that plants and animals were made “after their kind,” supposedly to mean that life forms cannot evolve up the scale. Once again we are confronted with the problem of interpreting individual passages too literally. In Genesis 1:29 God gives man *every* seed bearing plant on the face of *all* the Earth and *every* tree that has fruit with seed in it for food. In Genesis 1:30 God gives *every* green plant to *every* other animal for food. Clearly these verses cannot be taken literally because some plants and fruits are poisonous. Likewise, not *every* moving creature is edible to man as Genesis 9:3 proclaims, nor is it possible to populate the Earth with as many people as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand on the seashores (Genesis 22:17).

Some creationists will further say that being we're created in God's image and likeness, then to believe in evolution is to say God is an ape (alluding to Darwin's theory that we evolved from apes). Not necessarily so. In Genesis 1:26 man is presented as the climax of God's creative activity — he resembles God primarily because of the dominion God gives him over the rest of creation. When we nit-pick about such things like saying that because we are created in God's image that there is no such thing as evolution because God isn't in the image of an ape, we are trying to read something into or out of Scripture in search of something that is not there, instead of understanding what it is really saying in the proper context. This form of interpreting the Bible is a product of an over-active imagination. Man's image and likeness to God may refer to giving human-

kind the power to love and have compassion for others as God has for us — it need not be an *actual* physical likeness; and Scripture doesn't say it must either!

Scientists have determined that the Earth and Sun along with the other planets, stars, and everything else took billions of years to form. Life on Earth did not form for hundreds of millions of years after that and when it did it went through a slow evolutionary process of change. Higher advanced life forms appeared gradually (evolving from lower life forms) in more recent stages. But everything followed certain established laws of nature which God the creator of all had to create. We can observe these slow and great processes to this day on Earth, and in the cosmos with our telescopes.

God uses laws of nature to accomplish and maintain everything else we are aware of, whether it's to keep the Earth in a proper orbit or to allow a bumble bee to fly. Even Jesus' growing and learning years went through a natural slow process of Him acquiring maturity and wisdom rather than receiving them in an instant or being created with them. It's just as likely God would use natural laws to create all that is seen and unseen.

Creationists will point to unexplainable flaws in evolutionary theory to gain support for their creation only view, yet those few problems that remain need not worry us. The proof just hasn't been found yet. There may be higher level principles still to be discovered beyond fundamental physical or the normally accepted workings of Darwinian evolution. All this means is that God had to use processes so complex to accomplish the creation of living and non-living matter, that we are unable to understand all of these processes at the present time — yet they can still exist. Our complex brain works very effectively and efficiently, even though we don't understand many of its intricacies, and it has for hundreds of thousands of years. Just because there is heated debate over the mechanism of evolution or the brain's operation doesn't mean it is not the true method of operation. Evolution and brains can work without a need for our understanding of their framework.

Whether its trying to understand evolution, the brain, gay people, or anything else, we may not have all the answers to important questions, but falling back on fantasy and silly myths is decidedly *not* the right approach and is the ultimate scientific "sin." It is bad science *and* bad theology that leads to abuse of one kind or another.

The scant knowledge we had of the universe in the 17th century led to incorrect ideas and beliefs, but as more information became available the church slowly accepted the truth. Praise God that will happen as more information about our origins becomes available.

It's much the same with gay people today as it once was for scientific understanding. At the present time many don't understand why we're here, yet it's clearly indicated God has His reasons. The sooner everybody realizes we're part of the whole broad picture, the better it will be for everyone, gay and non-gay alike. We in turn, all need to feel comfortable with our position on the evolutionary tree of animal life in order to understand ourselves.

To help understand the discrepancy of scientific evidence of processes taking billions of years, and Genesis 1 proclamations of a six day creation, it seems reasonable to assume that the sacred authors of Genesis 1 used six days to use terms easily understandable to the people it was addressed to originally. This wasn't the place to

complicate matters by introducing the advanced concepts of lengthy unimaginable periods. Instead they kept it simple by describing time periods which the people could relate to. The wise authors knew not only what to say — but what *not* to say. The Lord often uses things in people's own understanding. Trying to explain to them processes that took billions of years while going through complex changes would not have been understood. Geologist Wallace Pratt said:

“If I as a geologist were called upon to explain briefly our modern ideas of the origin of the earth and the development of life on it to a simple, pastoral people, such as the tribes to whom the Book of Genesis was addressed, I could hardly do better than follow rather closely much of the language of the first chapter of Genesis.”¹⁶

To make the truths contained in these chapters intelligible to the Israelite people destined to preserve them, they needed to be expressed through elements prevailing among that people at that time. For this reason, the truths themselves must therefore be clearly distinguished from their literary garb. We should not interpret every word we read to mean exactly what it says here or elsewhere. “Certain numbers were used as figurative representations, and not actual quantities, such as, 7, 10, 40, 100, which represent completeness.”¹⁷ Here six “days,” or more correctly six creative periods, are six unknown periods of time or ages. Maybe six million years, maybe six billion years. After all Scripture says, “...With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” — 2 Peter 3:8 (NIV). Again having a “feel” for the Biblical world and times is helpful in this understanding.

While not wanting to dwell too heavily on the dangers of interpreting the Bible too literally, let's examine the subject a little further as it relates to the first chapter of Genesis. Even in other parts of Scripture the word “day” has variable meanings. Sometimes it is used in the Word of God to speak of a period of 24 hours, and more particularly that part of the 24 hour period which is light, in distinction from that part which is dark. In Genesis 1:5 it is used as a term for light. In 1:8, 13 and others it seems to mean a day of 24 hours. In 1:14, 16 it seems to mean a 12 hour day. But the word “day” is also used in Scripture in another sense, and that is to designate a period of time in which certain extraordinary events are to take place. In Genesis 2:4 it seems to cover the whole period of creation. In such passages as Joel 3:18, Acts 2:20, and John 16:23 “that day” seems to mean the whole Christian era. In 2 Timothy 1:12 it seems to refer to the era beyond the Lord's second coming. Like 2 Peter 3:8, Psalm 90:4 also compares a day to a thousand years. And in 2 Corinthians 6:2 we read; “...behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.” — (KJV). This “day” of salvation was in progress when Paul wrote, yet it continues down to this present hour. God calls this long period a “day.” The expressions “evening and the morning” relative to the six “days” of creation in several verses of Chapter 1 of Genesis do not limit the meaning to a literal 24 hours. A man's entire lifetime can be referred to as his “day,” as “in Jesus' day.” The lifetime “day” can be divided up by saying, “in the morning (or dawn) of his life” or “in the evening (or twilight) of his life.”

Clearly, the first chapter of Genesis is not a treatise on science. Yet its harmony with present biological and zoological knowledge is amazing. In all fairness to creationists,

¹⁶ W. L. Copithorne, *The Lamp, 'The Worlds of Wallace Pratt'*, Fall 1971, p. 14.

¹⁷ *Smith's Bible Dictionary* (Mt. Juliet [Nashville], TN 37122: Crusade Bible Publishers, Inc.), p. 222.

while still denying any part of evolution, some do accept that the meaning of “day” does not have to be limited to a 24 hour period. On the other hand, when God is setting down the Ten Commandments to Moses (see Exodus 20:8-11), He says to work only six days and keep the Sabbath day holy. These apparently are 24 hour days. Verse 11 explains the reason being, that the Lord made the heaven and Earth, the sea, and all that is in them in six days and rested on the seventh. In Exodus 31:14-17 we also find a “day” as being a 24 hour period. People doing a literal interpretation would then see these days of creation as 24 hours also. Once again scientific evidence and Biblical pronouncements can coexist in harmony if we avoid a literal word for word interpretation. Our study shows this to be true not only here, but in many places throughout Scripture.

Science and Health expands on the spiritual meaning of some of the verses of Genesis. It clearly indicates the six days of creative activity and seventh of rest are not to mean “days” in the literal sense. “...No solar rays nor planetary revolutions form the day of Spirit...” —504:31-505:1. Each advancing day in Genesis 1 is spoken of as ideas that form successive stages of progress. “Thus the dawn of ideas goes on, forming each successive stage of progress.” —506:13-14. The third day in Genesis 1:3 is considered just a third stage. “The third stage in the order of Christian Science is an important one to the human thought, letting in the light of spiritual understanding...” —508:28-29-509:1. They’re also referred to as “...God’s infinite ideas [and] images [that] mark the periods of progress.” —511:17-18 or “Advancing spiritual steps...” —513:6. “In the record, time is not yet measured by solar revolutions...” —513:11. “...ideas of God...” —519:9.

In response to Genesis 2:2 statement of God resting on the seventh day it states; “...The numerals of infinity, called *seven days*, can never be reckoned according to the calendar of time.” —520:10-11. “...The objects of time and sense disappear in the illumination of spiritual understanding, and Mind [God] measures time according to the good that is unfolded. This unfolding is God’s day, and ‘there shall be no night there.’” —584:4-8. As a point of information, a year is, “One moment of divine consciousness...” —598:23.

These are other contemporary examples to help Biblical literalists accept the Bible in a freer manner. I hope I have not bogged anyone down too heavily in these last few paragraphs, but I think that with this understanding those with a stricter upbringing can more easily comprehend how a freer interpretation is not only acceptable, but proper.

Let us compare what we find in Genesis to our own modern understanding of the origin of the universe and the evolution of life. Christians of fundamentalist background insist that everything written there must be accepted as a scientific account of the universe’s beginning. Consequently, they scour the Bible for every reference to time spans, and conclude that the world had to be created in 4004 BC.

Creationists explain their belief of a 6000 year old Earth with geological evidence for a much older age by saying that creation was mature from its inception — that God created it with age (appearing billions of years old when it isn’t). They say Supernatural creation would merely give the appearance of age beyond that which would normally be required for the same event to occur naturally. Now why would God have to go to that extent to fool us? If things were given a sudden appearance of age, as they say, why did Jesus have to go through a natural growing process to maturity? Hmmm. And if evolution

is too theoretical and too speculative to deal with, what about the mathematically calculated distance to external galaxies millions of light years away (meaning light takes that long to arrive)? They obviously were around more than 6000 years ago.

On occasion, I've cornered fundamentalist teachers after a Bible study session about some of these facts. In an uncomfortable way they will answer my inquiry as quickly and briefly as possible while constantly trying to move on to someone else with a "more proper" question. I'll never forget the look on one seemingly "wise" scholar's face after he answered me with, "God created it with age." That statement threw me for such a loop I couldn't help but snicker at the ridiculous nature of what I had just heard. Our "teacher" was noticeably irritated at my reaction and from that day forward avoided my presence in future Bible study classes. So set are they in their ways, that they will not face the facts even when they are laid out in front of them in irrefutable black and white.

Its amazing — and dangerous — to see what comes from the mouths and pens of Christians of fundamentalist backgrounds. What they believe, say, do, or, worse yet, teach in order to support their views — and how they justify such atrocities to themselves — is sincerely distressing. Does somebody actually sit around and think these things up? — I'm afraid so! Don't they realize the damage they're doing for no other reason than they think it's Biblically correct? — It seems not! A responsible Christian teaching should take care to present an in depth look at the issue without regard to what a majority of narrower thinking Christians think is correct.

Thankfully, other Christians are freer in this matter. Archaeologists have unearthed pagan accounts of creation similar to Genesis, but written centuries earlier. What could have happened was this. The author of the Book of Genesis was not trying to compose a scientific treatise or outline a chronological table. He had a more important work to do. So he borrowed a creation story from well-known pagan epics and then significantly revised it to emphasize ancient Israel's unique beliefs. Unlike his pagan counterparts, the Biblical God did not have to fight adversaries to gain power. The world sprang into existence at the Almighty's mere word of command. Instead of an Earth filled with evil powers threatening destruction, absolutely everything created is very good! The original audience would have reacted with praise of the good God who found joy in all his work. "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever." — Psalm 136:1. There are similarities between Mesopotamian creation myths and the Genesis Creation story, but with a difference; the sort of man being made. Mesopotamian gods made man to be a slave, whereas the God of the Bible made man in His image. So did the gods of Egypt.

In studying ancient pagan religious texts researchers have come across other stories that were already familiar. Apparently many Biblical stories, such as the creation and fall of man, are deliberate adaptations of these old pagan epics rather than something completely new.

Science and Health has this to say; "...The mythical human theories of creation, anciently classified as the higher criticism, sprang from cultured scholars in Rome and in Greece, but they afforded no foundation for accurate views of creation by the divine Mind [God]." — 255:6-10. And about Genesis it says; "It may be worth while here to remark that, according to the best scholars, there are clear evidences of two distinct documents in the early part of the book of Genesis...." — 523:14-17.

Thus, the literary form of Genesis 1 is not a scientific description, but a profession of faith in the goodness of God and His creation. Once this is recognized, we don't have to be upset that the Biblical text has light existing for three days before the creation of the Sun, Moon, and stars on the fourth day — that stars are evolving and even being born to this day — or that plants are growing and reproducing before the life giving Sun is formed. Nor is it necessary to reject the theory of gradual evolution, since the Bible does not intend to teach that creation was limited to six 24 hour periods. Astronomical observations of stars still forming do not contradict Genesis 2:1; "THUS the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." —(KJV).

More than any other ancient religious account of world origins, the Bible is in complete harmony with the assured results of modern science. No one could walk on the Moon, believing it to be a goddess; or drill for oil, if the realm of the dead really lay below the Earth's surface. True science is never in conflict with Christian teaching when that teaching is understood in the freer manner God intended it to be.

In using the six day chronology of creation the author was concerned (among other things) with the Jewish workweek that ended with Sabbath rest. Even God observed Sabbath at creation! The religious truths taught in the opening chapters of Genesis are so profound and so important that everything else pales in comparison. Liberal thinking Christians are fortunate to have authoritative figurative interpretations of the Bible. It makes possible accepting scientific theories and conclusions of historical research without fear of contradicting God's Word. The Bible does harmonize with science. Its teachings are intended to be a help rather than a burden for believers.

As another example, Genesis 1:6-7 speaks of a firmament to divide the waters "which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament" — (KJV) because people once believed there was an ocean in the sky. The Hebrew's pre-scientific conception of the world had God's heavenly seat, or palace, resting above the superior waters in the sky. Below these waters lies the firmament or sky (containing the Sun, Moon, and stars) which resembles an overturned bowl and is supported by columns. Through openings, called floodgates, in its vault the superior waters fall down upon the Earth in the form of rain or snow. The Earth is a platform resting on columns and surrounded by waters, the seas. Underneath the columns lie the inferior waters. In the depths of the Earth is Sheol, the home of the dead. We now know this view isn't a true representation of our world, but to the simpler original people who this was written for it had to be written in their own understandable terms. Logic dictates that we must now make these allowances not only here, but throughout all Scripture.

The long life spans attributed to some Biblical patriarchs also have a symbolic rather than a historical value. Rather than meaning someone actually living, in some cases, over 900 years as stated in Genesis 5:3-32, they indicate the long and full lives that important and great persons lived. There may be a historical nucleus around such stories, but this possibility has nothing to do with the teaching of the book. The seemingly historical data — great numbers, names of kings, cities, etc. — are used merely as vivid details to create interest and charm or in some cases to convey special meanings beyond the actual

description of these things. Great numbers are also often used to signify immensity.

In a similar manner, an inspired author may refer to 2 locations as being separated by “a good two day’s travel” when in actuality they are 11 days apart. The author is merely using popular impressions about faraway places — he is not teaching geography nor speaking literally.

Examples like this are a manner of speaking called “hyperbole,” or exaggeration for the sake of emphasis. You probably have heard people say that they have a “million and one things to do today.” This is a normal and acceptable way of saying that there are too many things to do.

Even though we do not view the account of all stories as history in the strict scientific sense, nevertheless certain of the matters recounted can be placed in the actual historical and social framework of the Near East Biblical world. For those that have a core in history it must be remembered that the author did not intend to write history as we find it in our school books — he simply uses existing traditions and fashions them to bring out a religious lesson.

In some of the above paragraphs we’ve seen an analogy between evolutionist vs. creationist thinking and gay Christian vs. anti-gay Christian thinking. In both situations we see the same disregard of logical evidence replaced by fears and superstitious thinking of old. Keeping this same analogy in mind let us see what one evolutionary Christian scientist has to say:

We can have diverse views of nature without conflict. Various branches of science and theology each look at certain areas of reality. There are different standards of evidence and certainty that are looked for in each of these areas. It is a mistake to take the kind of reasoning that’s used in any one branch and try to apply it to other areas of science or of theology.

Science and theology require different lines of approach. What kind of method of investigation is used in each area? What kinds of evidence are going to be acceptable? What kind of certainty of knowledge can you get? A scientific theory about the origin of life is not going to talk about God, because God is not an area of knowledge where the scientific method applies. The difficulty comes when someone insists that the scientific theory is a total description of what happened.

As we study more and mature we realize that this beautiful world is a complicated place, and that many answers, not just one, are right.

Theology has a right to have an input into the question as do all the other branches of science. They can all contribute.

As people who think deeply about nature, we each have to develop our own thoughts about day and night. “THE heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” —Psalm 19:1-2 (KJV).

The Bible does expect us to learn and advance scientifically which was necessary to

accomplish one part of Genesis 1:26. In 1912 arctic explorer Robert Peary noted God's statement when He created man; "...let them have dominion...over all the earth,..." — (KJV). "It is only now, with the attainment of both uttermost points of the Earth, the North and South Poles, that the scriptural permission and command has been effective," stated Admiral Peary at that time.¹⁸

Two verses later God commands us to "...Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth,..." — Genesis 1:28 (KJV) so that we will live over all the Earth and bring it under our control. These words show up in later verses and by later copycat writers who refer back to this first time they were mentioned while referring to man. Modern day critics of our lifestyle will quote this passage when they try to say here is another "proof" our lifestyle is against the Bible because we can't be fruitful and multiply. They insist 1:28 ties fruitfulness to human sexuality and then procreation — reproducing after its kind. The fruit of Mankind — husband and wife — is another human being. Thus, homosexuality cannot carry out the first command of God to the human race. As far as procreation, we can't, but they should realize it is possible to speak the truth partially in hateful ways and it can become a vice. On the contrary, there are *many* ways gay people can be fruitful and creative members of the community. There is not just one way, and it is not done exclusively through procreation. When the Lord closes a door He always opens a window.

And let's not forget, that much heralded procreation issue is not the only Biblically proclaimed reason for our sexual being. Genesis 2:18 has given us the equally valid suitable companionship, love, and fulfillment aspect of human sexuality — a window opened for us. Of course, let's not forget some gay people have successfully adopted children and provide them with very happy homes — another wonderful window.

Only when procreation is held as the primary aim of all legitimate sexual activity is it relatively easy to condemn same gender intimacy since it necessarily contradicts the primary aim. Many also believe that the ancient approach of procreation being elevated above other purposes of intimacy in heterosexual relationships inordinately places too much emphasis on the biological and physical aspects of the sexual act and sometimes ignores the interpersonal context of love in which the act takes place. Modern consciousness has been sensitized by the movement for women's rights to the fact that to understand the female exclusively in a functional manner as "bearer of children" is a depersonalizing and, therefore, immoral attitude.

We do not find it "contrary to nature" that humans have taken the hands which biological evolution provided as grasping instruments and employed them in the ideal creative pursuits of wielding a brush or a pen. Nor do we find it contrary to nature that the mouth with its teeth, tongue and lips, obviously intended by nature for eating, should be used in order to communicate through speech and song humanity's most intimate aspirations. Nor should we find it any less according to nature, if males and females should use their sexual organs, designed by nature for procreation, in order to give the most intimate expression to their drive for union in love with their fellow human beings.

When gay relationships achieve the more important coequal and natural aim of

¹⁸ Robert Peary, *Popular Mechanics*, May 1912

mutual love, support, and fulfillment it is morally acceptable. The procreative framework is *not* the only valid ground for judging rational moral worth. Human sexual behavior can be morally justified as an expression of true human love without being connected to procreation in any way — every single act of sexual intercourse need *not* be open to procreation as the Roman Catholic Church claims. Being a virile masculine person does not make a male any more of a decent human being. That human sexuality outside of the procreative context is moral may not be a traditional value, but it is a value which is essential to the community and the family wishing to open their hearts to fresh new thinking — thinking that can move us into the 21st century where oppressive attitudes no longer hold people back from their full God given potential.

“That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;” —Colossians 1:10 (KJV). According to *Science and Health* the multiply in Genesis 1:28 does not signify people at all, but ideas — that multiply and replenish the earth — 511:4-5, 512:20-21. “Divine Love blesses its own ideas, and causes them to multiply, — to manifest His power....” — 517:30-31.

We also need to put this passage in the context as to who it was directed to and when it was said. This was a time when the world was scarcely populated and a major priority was to increase our numbers. Men took wives or were given them without a formal ceremony to unite them or a Biblical command to have only one. In the sparseness of early days, inter-family “marriages” — what is known as incest today — were common. With many wives men had many, many children — exactly what the world needed. As mankind increased in numbers commands and laws were modified to keep up with the times. Inter-breeding and having more than one wife were no longer permitted. One would logically expect more emphasis to be placed upon procreation then than one finds today, and as situations changed permissible behavior was also changed. Currently, our situation is such that we are able to recognize the difference between responsible loving relationships and mere lust. Therefore, we should allow our commands to be modified to accommodate this new level of enlightenment.

In overpopulated China, women currently are severely and officially reprimanded if they have more than one child. And in the United States, legislation has even been introduced to create World Population Awareness Day to call attention to the high-water mark in human fertility. It took us only 26 years to double the world’s population. Together, the increase in population and in resource consumption are basic causes of human suffering and environmental degradation and must become major priorities for national and international action. There is no single view as to how we should address the problem of overpopulation. Simply getting our numbers down must be a main priority. All concerned seem to agree that a combination of problems exist that require a multi-pronged solution. One thing is clear, *excessive* procreational sex is a liability.

Nonetheless, population is an emotionally charged topic — largely because it challenges conventionally held religious beliefs (“be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it” —Genesis 1:28) and notions of family. Despite recent efforts to call attention to the high-water mark in human fertility, this ancient mentality still carries through into the laws of our land. Attempts are made to encourage heterosexual marriage and the procreation of legitimate children within marriage by imposing extra taxation on single people — with gay couples being classified as single as far as tax laws are concerned. At the same time other laws allow certain tax breaks to families with children.

Well, the Promised Land and everywhere else is full, and we're choking it to death environmentally! Failure to curb the rate of world population growth will magnify the deterioration of the Earth's environment and natural resources and undermine economic and social progress. A humane sustainable future depends on recognizing the common ground between population and the environment. It seems this strict Christian philosophy ends up contributing to messing up the entire world's environment — all in the name of nit-picking a few words for Christian love. Be fruitful and multiply? How about *enough already!* Isn't it high time Pope John Paul II approves birth control methods so we can do something about this problem? You'd think so wouldn't you; but, being the old-fashioned character that he is, he didn't. Maybe next Pope we'll get lucky.

Times certainly have changed. The population will not be in jeopardy if some members of society do not contribute to its population — in fact, it's probably better if not every member of the Earth procreates. Be rest assured though, we *are* being fruitful in our own ways.

Praise God!!!



CHAPTER 3

We'll now sequentially go through the entire Bible; commenting on those books, chapters, and verses of interest to those wishing to better understand how homosexuality and Scripture can peacefully coexist. Comments are made on those happenings, religious and social customs, traditions, rituals, rules, and commands of the day that are quite unusual by today's standards — some being quite extreme. This way, the reader can get a “feel” for the times and cultures in the ancient Biblical world. While not absolutely necessary, the reader is encouraged to have a Bible at hand for more details on the verses I briefly comment on. I hope this summary treatment will inspire readers to undertake a much more thorough study of God's loving Words.

OLD TESTAMENT

An earlier paragraph mentioned five condemnations in the entire Bible against homosexuality, two being in the Old Testament. Besides those two in Leviticus (18:22 & 20:13), two other references are also made. The Sodom and Gomorrah incident in Genesis 18:16-33 & 19:1-38 and another in Judges 19:22-25. More details are given below.

GENESIS

In addition to events in Genesis already covered the following are also noteworthy.

4:19; This is the first reference of a man with more than one wife. At this point in time husbands and wives are mentioned with no marriage ceremony to unite them.

9:6; God expects one who murders a man to be executed by his fellow man. Later in the New Testament forgiveness is preached.

17:9-14; God commanded Abraham that *all* eight day old males are to be circumcised, even those “...bought with money, of any stranger,...” — **17:12** (KJV). Did God then condone baby selling and/or slavery? Later in the New Testament slavery is still accepted, but a demand of circumcision is less important.

17:23-27; Abraham follows through and circumcises all males including his slaves. He was notable for his faith and obedience to God.

18:16-33 & 19:1-38; Here the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is spoken of along with their destruction. The apparent homosexual reference is spoken of in terms of attempted forcible gang rape along with considerable lustful behavior. It must be emphasized that this is quite different from a responsible loving relationship. A heterosexual incest relationship between Lot and his two daughters is also mentioned and not condemned because its purpose was to preserve the family line and populate the sparse Earth, two vitally important goals and duties in early Biblical days.

20:12; Contains an example of inter-family marriage of a man, Abraham, to his half-sister.

29:1-35, 30:1-24, & 31:14-15; A father arranges who his two daughters will marry, sells them, and allows one man to have both as wives.

30:1-8; The younger daughter is unable to have children with her husband so she lets her maid have sex for her so she can have children. This is another example of surrogate

motherhood.

30:9-13, 17-18; The other wife stopped bearing so she used her maid as a surrogate also. God rewarded her for giving her maid to her husband, and she was now able to bare children once again.

30:14-16; This is an example of offering something of value to have sex (prostitution).

34:1-31; Revenge and murder of men of a town after a rape.

35:22; Unwed sexual intercourse.

38:1-30; A man (Onan) was suppose to have sex with his brother's widow (Tamar) so she'd have children. He didn't want to and spilled the semen to the ground. The Lord was displeased and killed him. Some have interpreted these verses relating to spilling the semen as being a condemnation against masturbation. A careful reading of the Scripture will make it clear this is not the case. What is referred to is incomplete sexual intercourse and withdrawal before completion. At this time in Earth's history of sparse population not only was there a reverence for the semen but it was also customary and *expected* of a man to fertilize his brother's widow, and obviously there were severe consequences if he refused. The ancient Israelites regarded as very important their law of "brother-in-law" marriage which practically guaranteed that almost no one was left alone. Practically everyone was guaranteed a niche in a family somewhere; this was their "social security." It is primarily the violation of this law, rather than the means he used to circumvent it, that brought on him God's displeasure. Deuteronomy 25:5-10 elaborates further on this law.

As we read on in the chapter Onan's father Judah, who was now a widower, had sex with what he thought was one of the Canaanite type of temple prostitutes. As it turns out, the prostitute was Tamar, disguised with a veil so Judah did not know she was his widowed daughter-in-law. When he learned she sold herself and became pregnant his first reaction was, "...Bring her out and have her burned to death!" —(NIV). It is interesting to note that there was no stigma attached to Judah for having sex with a prostitute, but for Tamar selling herself the stigma was that she should be put to death. This indicates that men might visit temple prostitutes but that women were allowed no illicit sexual relations. In the end Judah does not have her put to death. He realized she was more righteous than he because he did not give her his third younger son when he grew up as he previously promised her.

EXODUS

2:11-12; Moses (who later in Leviticus commands against homosexual acts) witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his own people. When he is sure no one is watching he kills the Egyptian and hides the body in the sand. It seems ironic — Moses condemns our loving acts that are not condemned in the Ten Commandments, but commits one of the worst offenses there is; murder — *premeditated murder!*

2:21-22; A man gives one of his daughters to Moses because he helped the man's daughters earlier. She gave birth to a son. There is no mention of a marriage ceremony to unite them and the Bible does not command one.

12:44; While setting down regulations about Passover the Lord explains what slaves bought for money must do before they can eat of it. While the verse demands they first be circumcised, it does not prohibit human slavery which was an accepted part of their

culture and compatible with the customs of their day. If fundamentalists recognize slavery was a sign of their times, why can't they today recognize responsible loving relationships are a sign of ours?

20:1-17; The Ten Commandments, brought forth by Moses, are listed here. They were the basis of the Hebrew Law we'll cover in Leviticus. Four of the commandments have to do with our attitude toward God and six with our attitude toward our fellowman. Later we'll see that Jesus condensed them into two, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and strength and mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." As bad as some claim homosexuality to be, it never made it to the top Ten. Nor did slavery which is considered deplorable by virtually all of the civilized world today.

The commandment, "Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day," was a directly revealed command of God whereby the Jews set apart the seventh day of the week, Saturday, to be consecrated to God. There is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays as is common practice by most Christian religions today. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the special day of worship, in honor of the day on which our Lord rose from the dead. By being more liberal in our understanding we need not worry we are disobeying God when we changed His day of worship.

In **20:5**, Numbers 14:18, and again in Deuteronomy 5:9 the Lord says He will punish the children for the sin of the fathers. Then in Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20 the children shall not be put to death for the sin of the fathers. This is another one of those circumstances where we should not be too literal in our interpretation or we'll find ourselves face to face with a contradiction.

21:1-11; God does not prohibit slavery, but sets down laws on how to govern it. By today's standards some commands and customs here are quite unusual. A woman slave has less rights than a man slave.

21:12-27; Lists severe penalties for breaking some serious laws. One quite severe punishment is death if you strike your father or mother. Those who curse their father or mother are also to be put to death. If a man strikes his male or female slave he is *not* to be punished if the slave gets up after a day or two because the slave is his property.

21:24; Refers to an eye for eye, tooth for tooth etc. In the New Testament it's the opposite. We're told to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-42).

21:28-36; Lists penalties for other broken laws. Apparently slaves' lives are not as valuable as non-slaves.

22:1-31; Lists various other laws and the penalties of the time. Two carrying the death penalty are women practicing witchcraft and anyone having sex with animals.

22:21 & 23:9; Both speak against oppression, yet that is what happens to gay people when Biblical literalists attempt to condemn all of our responsible loving relationships. When this is done it is not out of line to consider them hypocrites. Those who are should be reminded of Proverbs 11:9, "A hypocrite with *his* mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered." —(KJV) and encouraged to read Proverbs 3:31, "Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways." —(KJV) along with Ecclesiastes 7:7, "Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad;..." —(KJV).

23:1-13; Lists various other laws. **23:2**, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil;..." —(KJV) is what we need to say to many who want to oppress us in evil ways. **Verse 5** is quite exemplary of directing these statements to those times. It commands a person to help an enemy's donkey that has fallen.

31:14-17; God tells Moses to tell the people of Israel that whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.

33:18-23; As we've seen, there are times we have to be careful how literally we interpret some verses or we may find others that contradict with them. That circumstance exists here. Moses asked the Lord to show His glory to him. The Lord said, "...you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." —(NIV). "...my face must not be seen." —(NIV). But directly above in **33:11** it says, "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend..." —(NIV). Now in Deuteronomy 34:10 we find that it says, "...no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face," —(NIV), in John 1:18 we are told, "No man hath seen God at any time;..." —(KJV), and in 1 John 4:12 we find, "No man hath seen God at any time...." —(KJV). Moses was a man. Now while we're in the neighborhood check out Numbers 12:7-8. We must not get to hung up on individual verses in our attempt to understand the Bible's true meaning and intent.

35:1-3; Repeats the penalty for working on the Sabbath. You cannot even light a fire in your house. The laws of Exodus were for the people of Israel of that time to follow.

LEVITICUS

In Leviticus God speaks through Moses to command the people of the day. In Exodus, Israel was redeemed and established as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Now in Leviticus, God shows His *chosen* people how they are to fulfill their priestly calling. Led out of slavery and into the sanctuary of God, Israel now must move from salvation into service, from deliverance into dedication. This move involves laying down laws about offerings and animal sacrifice rituals for the atonement of the people's sins, along with a series of strict laws and regulations to govern *all* aspects of daily life, worship, religious ceremonies, and service. The main theme of the book is the holiness of God and the ways in which His people were to worship and live so as to maintain their relationship with "the holy God of Israel."

The ways animals are used here are quite unusual by today's standards. The first seven chapters contain the rules for conducting these rituals. If all homosexual behavior is suppose to be anti-Scripture today, then shouldn't it also be for theologians to *not* do all of these commanded rituals today? Shouldn't we adopt the rest of these Biblical pronouncements? Even the strictest religions do not demand obedience on many of these ancient practices.

Certain foods and practices were prohibited by the Law of Moses because they were thought to make a person ritually or ceremonially unclean. The following passages lay down more rules:

11:6; Prohibits eating rabbit.

11:7; Prohibits eating pigs (pork).

11:9-12; Prohibits eating anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales. It is an abomination to eat them. This would prohibit many modern day delicacies if it were enforced today — shrimp, shellfish, lobster, scallop, clam, oyster, etc.

In **Chapter 12** God commanded through Moses for the people of Israel what a woman must do for purification after giving birth. Among other things required of her, she must bring to the priest at the entrance of the tabernacle a one year old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. Again it is commanded to

circumcise males on the eighth day.

In **Chapter 13** people with leprosy were outcast to outside camps, ordered to wear torn clothes, leave their hair uncombed, cover their lower face, "...and shall cry, Unclean, unclean." — **13:45** (KJV).

Chapter 14 continues with the ancient purification rituals for those who have had leprosy.

Chapter 15 covers regulations about body discharges.

15:16; Says "When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening." —(NIV).

This verse, the next, and **22:4** below describe something that could have to do with masturbation as well as with other forms of emission, but these texts are concerned only with ritual impurities, not with moral wrongdoing.

15:17; Cloth or leather items must be washed and then remain unclean until evening if semen falls on them.

15:18; After sexual intercourse and there is an emission of semen, both the man and woman must bathe and are unclean until evening.

15:19; When a woman has her monthly period, she remains unclean for seven days (there's that mystical seven again) and anyone who touches her is unclean until evening. The next few verses cover more relating to her uncleanness.

15:31; The Lord told Moses to warn the people of Israel about their uncleanness, so that they would not defile the tabernacle of His presence, which was in the middle of the camp. If they did, they would be killed. These strict regulations were for the purpose of controlling the spread of some very loathsome and dreaded diseases of those days. Those diseases are no longer problems in our world. Today we have diseases, like AIDS, that require different guidelines for intimate practices to protect ourselves. These are like updated regulations pertaining to uncleanness.

Chapter 18 contains all the laws relating to sexual practices and contains the first instance when homosexuality is prohibited. While forgetting that gay people are family members too, Christians of traditional values will quote from this chapter without realizing its commands are designed to protect and maintain the family as a divine institution.

Again as before, **Chapter 18** begins by the Lord telling Moses to speak of these prohibitions to the people of Israel. With all the commands given out so far directed to them, one gets the impression they were worded specifically for them because being much less sophisticated they needed to be commanded in very specific terms. So many of the commands in Leviticus could not be followed today and no one expects them to be either.

Sexual relations with any close relative are prohibited and several verses give examples. Previously when the Earth was much more sparsely populated, God did not prohibit these kinds of inter-family relationships. We do not yet find a prohibition against having numerous wives. Apparently God still wanted men to have many wives so they could have many many children to populate the Earth.

Because people of our current times can recognize the difference between responsible loving gay relationships and lust, and can appreciate them as capable of being positive and meaningful, it is more likely a loving compassionate God would now accept these kinds of relationships.

18:22; This is the stickler that is quoted over and over as being an abomination for

mankind to “...lie with mankind, as with womankind:...” —(KJV). As mentioned before, this is the first condemnation against homosexuality in the Bible. Many conservatives who are against any kind of sexuality outside of marriage will say homosexual marriages are not accepted. Therefore, relationship or not, it’s not acceptable. Yet, nowhere in our studies so far has a marriage ceremony been made mandatory by God.

Let’s take a closer look at abomination for a moment. An abomination is that which God found detestable because it was unclean, disloyal, or unjust. Several Hebrew words were so translated, and the one found in Leviticus, *toebah*, is usually associated with idolatry, as in Ezekiel, where it occurs numerous times. Given the strong association of *toebah* with idolatry and the Canaanite religious practice of cult prostitution (see also our comments in **19:29** below, Deuteronomy 23:17-18, 2 Maccabees 6:3-5, & 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 11:1-16), the use of *toebah* regarding male same-sex acts in Leviticus calls into question any conclusion that such condemnation also applies to loving, responsible homosexual relationships. N. H. Snaith, in his commentary on Leviticus 18:22, says that:

“...usually the word *toebah* has to do with idolatrous actions, actions committed within the cult of other gods. This links up with the previous verse [18:21] if we see there a reference to children dedicated to temple prostitution. Thus homosexuality here is condemned on account of its association with idolatry.”¹⁹

James Strong in his authoritative reference work, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, further verifies the true meaning of *toebah* when he defines the word as “...probably something disgusting morally...especially idolatry or concretely an idol: — abominable (custom, thing), abomination.”²⁰

18:23; Sexual relations with any animal is prohibited. This verse specifically addresses the rule to both men and women.

Interestingly, no other verse prohibits women to lie with women. Probably this form of sexuality was either unknown or was not being abused lustfully, and no rule pertaining to it was needed. Likewise, in our society of today when a gay relationship is loving, caring, and far from lust no rule should pertain to it. The chapter ends by emphasizing that these are commands for those people of Israel at that time and others living with them.

Chapter 19 gives more rules:

19:11; Prohibits lying.

19:19; Prohibits crossbreeding domestic animals, planting two different kinds of seeds in the same field (gardeners pay attention!), and wearing clothes made of two different kinds of material. Most of us break these last two rules, but no one seems to condemn us for planting a garden with variety or wearing a combination of clothing materials. And why not? Because it doesn’t matter any longer.

19:20; Discusses sexual conduct with a slave girl without prohibiting slavery though.

19:23; Instructs them about fruit tree planting when they come into the land of Canaan.

19:27; Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your

¹⁹ N. H. Snaith, *Leviticus and Numbers* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1967), p. 126.

²⁰ James Strong, S.T.D., LL.D., *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, © 1890, 1st ed. 1894, 32nd printing 1974), Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary section p. 123, word # 8441.

beard.

19:28; Do not tattoo yourselves.

19:29; Instructs them to not disgrace their daughters by making them temple prostitutes, because these women were found in Canaanite temples where fertility gods were worshiped. The Canaanite religion believed that by means of intercourse with these prostitutes it was possible to enter into a special relationship with the god or goddess represented by the sacred prostitute and fertile fields and herds would be assured. In the fertile-cult ritual, sacred prostitution climaxed the rite which hailed the return of the rains and fertility.

Obviously some of these commands and beliefs are not needed or desired in today's society. The chapter ends by warning the people to obey *all* these statutes and judgments. It is not reasonable to expect God to insist that all people for all times in the future are to follow commands that are meaningless to a different society. We do allow some to be disregarded, therefore, there should be no problem in allowing others.

Chapter 20 gives penalties for breaking the aforementioned laws. Some examples:

20:9; Death penalty if you curse your father or mother.

20:10; Death penalty for adultery.

20:13; Death penalty if a man lies with mankind as with a woman. "...they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them." —(KJV). How many homophobes have justified gay bashing by reading this verse? How many more will before the Christian community comes out of the dark ages? Of course, Christians will be quick to point out they do not condone such behavior. But non-Christian homophobes, hearing so much anti-gay Bible preaching over the years, are quick to justify to themselves these bad deeds by taking this verse at face value. This is the second and last condemnation of homosexuality in the Old testament.

20:15-16; It is a death penalty for either a man or a woman to lie with any animal. As before, no woman/woman sexual relations are mentioned.

20:27; Death penalty for a man or woman who is a medium or spiritist. While many laws command the man only, this one specifically addresses the woman also. Ancient people were particularly fearful of spirits and witchcraft. As previously mentioned, witches were burned at the stake in days past by those wishing to abide by death penalty commands. Enlightened attitudes have dispelled our fear and superstition of witches. We now must work at dispelling the fear some have for gay people — mankind's last people facing socially approved and state sanctioned oppression.

21:9; If a priest's daughter becomes a prostitute "she shall be burnt with fire." — (KJV).

24:10-23; God commands a man be stoned to death for cursing the Lord. If man injures another a like injury will be returned, broken bone for broken bone, eye for eye, tooth for tooth etc. Deuteronomy 19:21 adds "Show no pity:..." —(NIV) when we seek this equal retribution. Now see Matthew 5:38-42 where we're told just the opposite — to turn the other cheek. Oh how Biblical teaching changes with the world.

25:39-55; Contains rules pertaining to slavery.

25:42-46; Establishes that you may buy slaves from other areas around you if you need them. You are also permitted to buy children of the strangers that live among you. The relationship here between Israelites and foreigners appears similar to the relationship between whites and blacks in the early history of America — and we have advanced considerably beyond that phase.

Chapter 26 talks of blessings of obedience and the wrathful consequences if the people don't obey.

It ends at **26:46** by saying that, "These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses." —(KJV).

It is hard to imagine being allowed to buy children to perform as slaves while being denied simple, devoted, responsible, and loving gay relationships. Clearly their world was much, much different from ours.

NUMBERS

5:11-31; Gives instructions as to the elaborate and odd ritual a woman must go through to bring out the truth if her husband suspects her of unfaithfulness. If she is guilty she is cursed with abdominal and other problems, unlike Leviticus 20:10 which commands death for adultery. The Lord again commanded these actions which are quite bizarre by today's standards.

Chapter 15 explains the various animal offerings to get purified from unintentional sin, but the one who sins intentionally is put to death.

15:32-36; God commanded Moses to have the whole congregation stone a man to death after he was found gathering sticks (firewood) on the Sabbath day.

15:37-41; The Lord commanded Moses to tell the people of Israel to put tassels on the corners of garments and put a blue cord on each tassel. It is to be done for all time to come. They are reminders to remember and obey all the commandments.

Chapter 30 covers rules about vows. The wording makes it quite clear that husbands have authority over their wives. We will be covering this subject in more detail beginning in 1 Corinthians.

35:9-34; These verses command that a person who purposely kills someone must be put to death. An accidental killing does not carry the death penalty.

36:10-12; Cousins were married by the Lord's command in this certain case. Christians who prohibit such relationships today are in effect saying permissible conduct can change with time. This is exactly the point we make about gay relationships. Different times in history can view the topic in a different light and it is not against Scripture.

DEUTERONOMY

An introduction to Deuteronomy in part says that Moses reviews the various laws that are to govern Israel's life in the promised land.

5:1-21; The Ten Commandments are repeated. They do not prohibit homosexuality.

6:5; Jesus later called this the greatest commandment of all, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." —(TEV).

13:6-18; If your brother, son, daughter, wife you love, or close friend secretly entices you to worship other gods you are to show them no pity. You must be the first to put him to death and then the other people will also stone him. Likewise, if the same thing is happening in a city you are going to live in, you are to destroy it completely. As we've mentioned before, worship of other gods and idols was widespread and in turn a very serious offense in God's eyes. It bore repeating in **17:2-7**.

14:3-21; Repeats Leviticus of what we could not eat.

15:12-18; Contains more statements on the treatment of slaves.

15:19-23; Commands setting aside first-born males of cattle and sheep for the Lord.

18:9-14; Once again sorcery, witchcraft, and the like are considered abominations.

19:1-13; Again states that a man that kills another on purpose is to be put to death, but an accidental killing is not.

21:1-9; Contains an unusual ritual procedure for an unsolved murder.

21:15-17; More than one wife is permitted by a man, even a wife that is not loved. Sexual relations that did not involve love were accepted if they served the vital purpose of populating the sparse Earth. I haven't seen any homophobic Christians saying it's O.K. to have a second wife that isn't loved — or a second one that is loved for that matter.

21:18-21; A stubborn and rebellious son that refuses to obey his parents, even after punishment, is to be taken by the parents to the town leaders and the men of the city will stone him to death to get rid of the evil.

21:22-23; If a man was put to death for a crime and his body is hung on a post or tree it is not to remain there overnight.

22:5; It is abomination for women to wear men's clothing, and for men to wear women's clothing. In today's society women commonly wear pants. Do we consider that an abomination? Certainly not! Yet it got Joan of Arc executed in 1431 by Pro-English Churchmen.

22:8; When you build a new house, be sure to put a railing (battlement or parapet) around the edge of the roof. Then you will not be responsible if someone falls off and is killed.

22:9; Don't plant two kinds of seed in your vineyard.

22:10; Do not hitch an ox and a donkey together for plowing.

22:11; Do not wear clothes that were made by weaving wool and linen together.

22:12; Sew tassels on the four corners of your clothes.

22:13-30; Contains various laws concerning sexual purity. Some are:

22:13-21; If a man takes a wife and then later claims that she was not a virgin when he came to her (had intercourse), and there was no proof she was a virgin and she in fact wasn't, the men of the city are to stone her to death because she did a shameful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still living in her father's house.

22:22; If a man is caught having sex with another man's wife, both are put to death.

22:23-24; If a man is caught in town having sex with a girl engaged to someone else, they both are to be stoned to death.

22:28-29; If a man is caught raping a girl not engaged to someone else he must pay her father the bride price of 50 shekels of silver and she will be his wife. He can never divorce her. Today, Christians so against abortion as murder will sometimes allow it for a rape victim. Can we even imagine making her marry this guy and she would have no say in the matter? What a different world indeed. No longer is the man rewarded with a wife for such abhorrent behavior — thank God! How times change.

23:2; No child born out of wedlock may enter the congregation of the Lord, nor any of his descendants even down to his tenth generation.

23:15-16; Slavery is mentioned with no prohibition against it.

23:17-18; "No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute [Hebrew *of a dog* (a term of reproach in ancient Israel)] into the house of the LORD your God to pay any vow,

because the LORD your God detests them both.” —(NIV). It was a practice among some of Israel’s neighbors to use both sexes as part of the fertility rites in temple services. Since the gods were understood as sexual, they were to be worshiped in overt sexual acts. Whenever homosexual activity is mentioned in the Old Testament, the author usually has in mind the use male worshipers made of male prostitutes provided by the temple authorities.

The Hebrew word for a male cult or shrine prostitute, *qadesh*, is translated “sodomite” in the KJV and some other versions of the Bible. Strong defines it as “...a (quasi) sacred person, i.e. (technically) a (male) devotee (by prostitution) to licentious idolatry: — sodomite, unclean.”²¹ The Hebrew religion, characterized by the revelation of one God, stood in continuous tension with the religion of the surrounding Canaanites who worshipped the multiple gods of fertility cults. Canaanite idol worship, which featured female and male cult prostitution as noted above, repeatedly compromised Israel’s loyalty to God. This form of sexuality and idol worship by God’s *chosen* people are what so detested Him. It is the connection of the two in Jewish consciousness we must keep in mind when we study the question of homosexual activity later in the New Testament where the subject is handled in much more detail.

25:1-3; If men are having a dispute and a judge ends up deciding which one is guilty, the judge can determine if the guilty man deserves to be beaten. If so, he is to lie down and be flogged with the number of lashes his crime deserves, provided it is not more than 40 lashes.

25:5-10; If a man’s brother dies without first having a son the living brother is to marry and have intercourse with his widowed sister-in-law. Her first son is to “carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.” — (NIV).

25:11-12; “If two men are having a fight and the wife of one tries to help her husband by grabbing hold of the other man’s genitals, show her no mercy; cut off her hand.” —(TEV).

27:11-26; Listed here is a list of behavior that curses are pronounced upon. Several items pertain to sexual relations with close relatives and one with man and animals, but none curses *any* manner of homosexual behavior.

JOSHUA

23:6; Joshua who is Moses’ successor commands the people to obey and do everything that is written in the book of the Law of Moses. Don’t neglect any part of it.

JUDGES

Chapter 19; Homosexuality is referenced by way of an attempted homosexual attack and ending in a forced heterosexual rape. Similar to Sodom and Gomorrah we see the phrase “...that we may know him.” —**19:22** (KJV). And like that story in Genesis (which may have been a direct literary model for this one), we see hospitality an issue where a man, the host, is willing to give up his own virgin daughter to save a stranger. This attitude strikes us as one that is totally indifferent to the importance of women as

²¹ Strong, Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary section p. 102, word # 6945.

persons, as indeed it was. But such were the mores of the time and place that produced these stories. Women were chattel (movable personal) property and, as such, not as important as men. The guest here, however, would not let the old man throw out his virgin daughter; instead, he sacrificed his concubine, a woman lower still on the social scale. There is nothing, however, that can be said to justify this action or what happened to the concubine. It is a horrible sordid story.

Times were ruthless. Lots of battles, wars, and heinous slayings are taking place. People seemed unable to comprehend more stable, healthy, and loving feelings and emotions. Continue to the end of the chapter if you have a strong stomach. Again we see homosexuality used in the context of lust and even force. This gory account of the outrage at Gibeah reinforces the notion that in the eyes of the early Israelites it was rape or intended rape that was the sin of Sodom rather than homosexuality itself.

Whenever we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which a sizable portion of the Bible is filled, it would almost seem more consistent that we called it the word of a demon rather than the Word of God. Let's remember, it is a history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize man and especially womankind for centuries. For my part, I sincerely detest it as I detest everything that is cruel.

RUTH

4:7; Contains a unique custom of the day. To settle a sale or exchange of property, it was the custom for one party to take off his sandal and give it to the other party. In this way the Israelites showed that the matter was settled.

1 SAMUEL

1:1-2; Contains an example of a man with two wives.

In **Chapter 16** shepherd boy David, of David and Goliath fame and a direct ancestor of Jesus, was anointed to become Israel's second king. He was considered very religious. From here on David is the central figure of Old Testament history. He had immense physical strength, a beautiful countenance, great personal attractiveness ("...goodly to look to..." — **16:12** [KJV] [I just love that ancient Elizabethan language]) — **16:12, 18**, and prince Jonathan had an unselfish devotion to him. Many years later this great beauty was captured for all time to come by Michelangelo in his famous statue of David. Along with being a poet and musician, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* additionally describes David as "a romantic friend."²² And *Unger's Bible Dictionary* says, "Jonathan is next introduced to us as the bosom friend of David."²³ Amazingly they go right around the issue without admitting it. In fact, most scholarly works on the Old Testament hardly do more than allude to this friendship, let alone risk a homosexual interpretation. The bond between the two forms one of the noblest stories of friendship in history.

Their story together begins in **Chapter 18**. "...Jonathan was deeply attracted to David and came to love him as much as he loved himself. Saul [Jonathan's father] kept David with him from that day on and did not let him go back home. Jonathan swore

²² *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, p. 72.

²³ *Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press), p. 603.

eternal friendship with David because of his deep affection for him. He took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, together with his armor and also his sword, bow, and belt.” —**18:1-4** (TEV). Jonathan was obviously smitten.

19:1-7; Speaks more of the fondness between Jonathan and David. “But Jonathan Saul’s son delighted much in David:...” —**19:2** (KJV). King Saul openly expresses he wants to kill David. Whatever the liaison between Jonathan and David was, or whether that was the reason, Saul would end it. Here Jonathan speaks well of David to change Saul’s mind and is temporarily successful.

20:1-42; Jonathan helps David avoid Saul who again wants to kill David. As strong as family ties is and always has been in the East, it couldn’t compete with the bond that exists between two beloved friends. Those who have been torn between a parent and a lover can surely understand the dilemma Jonathan was in. It was noble of him to be able to keep both relationships without ever expressing a word of disloyalty to either, or they to him. I hope anyone in a relationship not appreciated by family members will be as honorable to family *and* lover.

20:17; Reaffirms their love, “Once again Jonathan made David promise to love him, for Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself.” —(TEV).

20:41-42; They kiss and cry together, “Then Jonathan said to David, ‘God be with you. The LORD will make sure that you and I, and your descendants and mine, will forever keep the sacred promise we have made to each other.’...” —(TEV). There are no direct indications of any sexual activity between them, but it seems plausible to believe there was at least a romance without the physical element present. Unfortunately, the Bible does not expand on their interaction further, but it is noteworthy that at no time does the Lord condemn this style of affection between two men. This here was love and deep affection, not lust. It is perhaps only of passing interest to note that David did not seek to arrange any tearful farewell meeting with his wife, Jonathan’s sister, before he went into political exile.

If they did interact, that of course does not necessarily mean they were both predominantly gay. Both did in fact have children, although Jonathan had only one son. It would seem that David did not have the same strong male attraction as Jonathan had. David could have simply been a well-rounded man who acted fully within the standards of a society where neighboring cultures fully accepted homosexuality. It may have only been a passing phase for him, but it was one that he turned to good advantage by cementing a close alliance between himself and the royal family.

23:15-18; While David was hiding from Saul in the hills, Jonathan went to him to assure him of God’s protection. Jonathan told David that he will be king over Israel with Jonathan right next to him. The two of them made a sacred promise of friendship to each other and then parted.

2 SAMUEL

1:17-27; This is a lamentation sung by David because Saul and Jonathan had been killed in battle.

1:26; David grieves for Jonathan saying “...how dear you were to me!...” —(TEV). He acknowledges how wonderful Jonathan’s love was for him saying it was “...better even than the love of women.” —(TEV).

Believing, as we do, that the whole Bible is the Word of God, inspired by Him, we

must accept that God had some purpose for placing same gender feelings of love and affection in the Bible. Guided by God, David used his wonderful talent with words to place in writing these interactions so this part of the sacred story is available for all time to come. Equally noteworthy, God did not inspire David to condemn these beloved feelings when he wrote many of the beautiful Psalms.

3:2-5; David, now king, had several wives and sons from them.

3:29; This is a possible reference to an effeminate man. It mentions an “unmanly” — (NAB) man fit only to do a woman’s work (“leaneth on a staff” —[KJV]).

5:13-16; More concubines and wives for David with more children (sons and daughters).

A concubine is described as a servant woman who, although not a wife, had sexual relations with her master. She had important legal rights, and her master was referred to as her husband. Her condition was assured and provided for by Moses. She could have been free or slave, or a captive taken in war. This then is sex out of wedlock.

11:1-27; David commits adultery then arranges for the woman’s husband to be killed in battle when he learns the woman is pregnant. He then takes her as his wife and she has a son. God was not pleased.

12:1-23; David admits his sin and is forgiven by God. God will let him live, but will kill his son.

21:7-9; Because of the sacred promise between David and Jonathan, David spared Jonathan’s son’s life. Jonathan had only one son (unusual by Biblical standards), Mephibosheth (see also **4:4, 9:1-13, & 19:24-30**). Oddly, Scripture makes no mention who his mother was, or if Jonathan had a wife or concubine. Usually the Bible is quite thorough about family histories and genealogies.

1 KINGS

2:1-9; David is about to die and calls his son Solomon, now king, to give him his instructions. They include wanting Solomon to carry out two murders which are based on revenge that David wants.

11:1-4; King Solomon had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. He turned away from God.

14:24; There were “...Sodomites...” —(KJV) “...male shrine prostitutes...” — (NIV) in the land “...and they did according to all the abominations...” —(KJV). Abominations in plural signifies a variety of behavior above and beyond sexual lust whether it be forcible or with a consenting prostitute.

1 CHRONICLES

3:1-9; A repeat listing of the wives, concubines, and children of King David.

8:34 & 9:40; Jonathan’s one and only son is named Merib-Baal here with the NIV and TEV Bibles explaining in a footnote that he is also known as Mephibosheth. The genealogy of Jonathan’s family does not list him as having a wife or say who the mother of his son is.

14:3-7; More of David’s wives and sons & daughters. He had been praised by God.

2 CHRONICLES

11:18-23; Example of a man with 18 wives, 60 concubines, 28 sons, and 60 daughters.

13:21-22; Example of a man with 14 wives, 22 sons, and 16 daughters.

TOBIT*

4:12-13; Avoid “...every form of immorality, and above all, marry a woman of the lineage of your forefathers. Do not marry a stranger who is not of your fathers tribe,...” —(NAB). Men were to take wives from among their own kinsmen as did Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

4:15; “...Do not drink wine till you become drunk, nor let drunkenness accompany you on your way.” — (NAB). Mere sociable drinking is not prohibited. A distinction is made between moderate drinking and drunkenness.

ESTHER

1:1-22 & 2:1-23; The queen ignores the king’s order and the chauvinistic attitude of the men of the day surfaces to quite an extreme. To prevent other women’s contempt and wrath the king is advised to replace her and choose another queen. The king does so and then sends letters out to all parts of the kingdom saying, “...that every man should be ruler over his own household.” —1:22 (NIV). Women were considered second class citizens.

2 MACCABEES*

4:9-14; Earlier in Chapter 2 we spoke of the clash between Hebrew and Greek cultures when the Greeks were attempting to Hellenize (convert) the Jewish people into the Grecian way of life. Here in 2 Maccabees we see where a gymnasium and a youth club for it is established to enroll young Jewish men and initiate them into the Greek way of life. Being the symbol and center of athletic and intellectual life, the gymnasium — where the youth exercised naked (from the Greek *gymnazein*, to train naked; *gymnos*, naked, stripped) — was the chief instrument of Hellenistic propaganda. Jewish youth were attracted by sports and encouraged to join youth clubs. These clubs were an educational institution in which young men were trained in Greek intellectual culture, physical fitness, military skills, and in the duties of citizens. Through participation in the intellectual life, many were gradually won over to the Greek lifestyle. (See our comments in the second to last paragraph in Matthew about Pharisee’s origination.)

6:3-5; Refers to cult prostitutes, common in the idolatrous religions, and associates this sexuality with evil, intolerable, utterly disgusting, debauchery, and revelry. This signifies this form of sexuality as being something that is a considerable distance, and quite different, from a responsible loving relationship.

PROVERBS

David’s son Solomon is the principal writer of the words of wisdom contained in Proverbs.

6:16-19; There are seven (mystical seven again) things listed here that are an abomination to God. Homosexuality is *not* listed, nor is it referred to anywhere within Proverbs. Lying made the list twice and is often condemned in its various forms throughout Proverbs. While no form of sexuality is mentioned among the seven, adultery and prostitution are discouraged and/or condemned more than once in Proverbs.

WISDOM*

11:24-25; “For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned. And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it, or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?” (NAB).

14:24-27; While on the subject of “The Origin and Evils of Idolatry,” the term, “unnatural lust” (a probable homosexual reference), is mentioned in **verse 26**. As often happens, this lustful variety is lumped with murder, adultery, theft, guile, corruption, perjury, besmirching of souls, and shamelessness among others. “For the worship of infamous idols is the reason and source and extremity of all evil.” —(NAB). Clearly they are not speaking of loving relationships of either sexual persuasion.

19:13-17; The misdeeds of Sodom are reported here as treating their guests with hatred.

SIRACH (ECCLESIASTICUS)*

9:2; The chauvinistic attitude of the Biblical world shows through here, “Give no woman power over you to trample upon your dignity.” —(NAB) and again in **25:21;** “The man is a slave, in disgrace and shame, when a wife supports her husband.” —(NAB).

16:8; According to this verse God did not spare the people of Sodom and Gomorrah because He detested their arrogance and pride.

18:30-33 & 19:1-4; If you go after and satisfy a lustful appetite it will make you a sport of your enemies. Joy of the moment brings poverty redoubled. Companions of harlots (prostitutes) become reckless. “He who lightly trusts in them has no sense...” —(NAB).

Once again, it’s obvious to see the inspired author was *not* speaking of loving relationships between non-married people when he addressed the issue of lustful sexuality and other mannerisms associated with it.

23:5-6; These verses are part of a prayer where the sage is asking for divine assistance to preserve him from these inclinations among others. “Let not the lustful cravings of the flesh master me, surrender me not to shameless desires.” —(NAB).

23:16-27; Sins of the flesh are discussed here, notably fornication and adultery, along with their dire consequences and how the passion of lust tyrannizes over its victims to consume and utterly destroy them. Notably absent, as always when discussing lust, is any showing of sharing, caring, or love in these interactions.

33:26-33; The proper care of slaves is discussed with no mention of prohibiting slavery.

ISAIAH

The prophet Isaiah often refers to adultery and prostitution as being unrighteous. As

in many other places in Scripture, the unrighteous sexual activities mentioned are those of a lustful nature only. Loving relationships are not spoken of, nor is any form of homosexuality. Oppression is also often spoken against, "...relieve the oppressed,..." — **1:17** (KJV).

JEREMIAH

As Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah spoke of adultery, prostitution, and oppression in the same way at various places throughout this book.

17:19-27; Hundreds of years later (7th & 6th century BC) God tells Jeremiah to tell the people to not do *any* work on the Sabbath. Again, these words are addressed to the people of that area and time.

29:6; Its previously been mentioned how God placed a great deal of importance on procreation then because the Earth was so sparsely populated. In this verse the Lord tells the men to take wives and have sons and daughters, take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands so they can have sons and daughters. The importance of increasing in numbers is emphasized when the Lord says, "...Increase in number there; do not decrease." —(NIV).

EZEKIEL

God speaks by way of visions to Ezekiel about His anger at what the people of the area and time are doing. Mentioned are idolatry, murder, prostitution, adultery, lust, etc. No form of homosexuality is mentioned, only that Jerusalem is worse than the abominations of Sodom in **Chapter 16**. As has been mentioned before, Sodom's actions are anything but sexual (**16:48-50**). Several chapters throughout the book express God's extreme anger at the various wicked activities taking place.

ZECHARIAH

7:8-10; The word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying: execute true judgment, show mercy and compassion to one another, do not oppress, and do not think evil of others in your heart. Over and over the prophets remind us not to be oppressive to one another.

MALACHI

4:4; Ends the Old Testament with God telling Malachi to tell the people of Israel to remember the teachings of His servant Moses, about the laws and commands which God gave him at Mount Sinai (Horeb) which are for all the people of Israel to obey.

NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament has three condemnations of homosexuality — all in the context of it being lustful activity only, and all written by Paul. They are: Romans 1:24-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and 1 Timothy 1:10. In addition, two references to it are made. 2

Peter 2:6-8 and Jude 7. More details are given below.

MATTHEW

The four Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — largely narrate the same things, but from slightly different perspectives. While each has the same story to tell, the story of Jesus, each author told the story in his own way, mentioning that which especially appealed to himself. Some parallel stories contain more details, and/or slight variations, in one Gospel than another. In most cases our study will not repeat events that have already been covered in one of the other Gospels.

Matthew presents Jesus as a great teacher, who has the authority to interpret the Law of God, and who teaches about the Kingdom of God. **Chapters 5 through 7** contain Jesus' Sermon on the Mount which concerns the character, duties, privileges, and destiny of the citizens. Containing as it does the very heart of Jesus' teachings, we may think of the Sermon on the Mount as being to the New Testament what the Ten Commandments were to the Old Testament. Jesus does *not* make any reference to homosexuality at all anywhere (even when He spoke of the other deplorable activities of Sodom and Gomorrah), only that whoever believes in him shall have everlasting life. In this case, what is *not* said is of importance here.

Just because Jesus was silent on the matter and the writers of the Gospels did not include the subject in their texts, there is no reason to conclude that homosexual activity was not known to these writers and to Jesus Himself. As we point out, homosexuality was not only well known, but widely practiced throughout the ancient world. It was not an underground activity, yet Jesus was not disturbed by it — surely not as much as the inhospitality of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Some will say, "That Jesus made no pronouncement on a particular act is no license to go out and commit that act. He could not have made pronouncements about everything." True. But the fact is that the Gospels are rather comprehensive in their treatment of what is really important; and what is really important is not so much a set of legalistic rules, but a body of spiritual truths. What the Gospels attempt to do is to establish an attitude of the heart that will prefer right conduct over wrong. And what is right or wrong anyway? A good guideline would be to ask, "Is what I am about to do going to harm my neighbor or help him or her?" If the answer is the latter, then we should know we are on the right track and within the bounds of moral behavior. Jesus' teachings are a clarion call to do battle against the *misuse* of sex in all its forms.

The slightest, if at all, reference to homosexuality is in **5:17-20** where Jesus reinforces all parts of the Law of Moses and tells us to obey every part. That not the least part is being done away with and will be in effect forever. (O.K. fundies, no shrimp and ribs at the Sizzler for you!) But later on He does make some changes though. (Relax fundies, it's O.K.!)

5:22; People are told that if they're angry with their brother without cause and call him a fool, they're in danger of the fire of hell.

5:28-30; Jesus further redefined adultery. If we look at a woman to lust after her we've committed adultery in our heart. So "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away....And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." —(NIV). Quite extreme, but even at that — homosexuality is *not* mentioned.

And what sex is, is a lustful reference. Jesus does mention condemnations of adultery and fornication etc. at other times too.

We've previously explained that the bodily mutilation was not meant to be taken literally. As the world has changed, the Bible has allowed for some changes. Jesus Himself changes some of the previous rules concerning divorce, oaths, and even revenge. He referenced how it was previously taught "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, & Deuteronomy 19:21). Now he preaches against revenge and to turn the other cheek. We are not suppose to resist if someone wants to take something or borrow something from us (**5:38-42**). He teaches to love even enemies where the Old Testament didn't (**5:43-48**). We're even told to pray in private instead of in "...houses of worship..." —(TEV) so as to not be like hypocrites who love to be seen in public praying (**6:5-6**). Later in Hebrews 10:25 Paul tells us not to forsake, "...the assembling of ourselves together,..." —(KJV).

In **6:19-21** we are then told to *not* store up riches for ourselves here on Earth, but to store them up in heaven. Big money TV preachers who preach so strongly against all forms of homosexuality should take notice here.

Then let them see **19:16-30** where Jesus says to sell your possessions and give to the poor. If they want to interpret the Bible so literally, let's see them follow these simple pronouncements first which were important enough to bear repeating in Mark and Luke.

7:1-6; Jesus tells us not to judge others.

For those religious folks who treat us bad, they should be reminded of **7:12**, "Do for others what you want them to do for you:..." —(TEV). Among the other teachings on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made no reference to any forms of homosexuality.

12:1-14; Jesus responds to questions about working on the Sabbath which was strictly against Moses' Law. By way of examples, Jesus shows that the Law does allow us to do something good and helpful on the Sabbath. The indication here is that there are variations that the Law does allow for. You'll recall how strict the Law was originally interpreted. Unfortunately, the possibility of having loving responsible homosexual relationships was not addressed to Jesus to allow His viewpoint, but the fact that He does not condemn them, while he does condemn other lustful sexual activity, could be an indication of His feelings.

15:1-20; Some Pharisees and scribes (teachers of the Law and copyists of the Scriptures) asked Jesus why His disciples do not follow the tradition of washing their hands before they eat. Jesus said it's thoughts that come from the heart and out of the mouth that makes a person ritually unclean and not what goes into the mouth. He gives examples of evil deeds these thoughts lead to. Homosexual acts are not listed. Mark 7:1-23 goes into a little more details on this subject. Here Jesus declared that all foods are fit to be eaten. Previously the Law preached against eating certain foods that were considered ritually unclean.

19:1-12; Jesus is questioned about marriage and divorce. He acknowledges that Moses' Law allowed divorce if a man gave his wife a written notice, but now Jesus prohibits any reason for divorce unless the wife is unfaithful. If they divorce and remarry they are committing adultery. A man who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery. (See also Matthew 5:31-32, Mark 10:11-12, and Luke 16:18.)

Then Jesus in His broad wisdom realized that marriage is not for everyone (He Himself never married), but only for those to whom God has given it. In **19:12** He mentions people called eunuchs who are incapable of having traditional male/female

sexual relations for various reasons. Some were born that way, some were made that way by other men (possibly an injury sustained in battle), and others did not marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (they probably chose to be an unmarried religious person and serve God that way). While some Biblical literalists may narrowly define a eunuch as a castrated man *physically* incapable of having typical male/female sexual relations, others are not so limited. Strong refers to a eunuch as an “...unmarried man...” or one that will “...live unmarried...”²⁴ While a physical disability may be behind those that were made that way by other men, some that were born with this inability maybe did not have a physical problem at all. It’s conceivable their inner emotional desires were just not directed toward members of the opposite sex. While Scripture is not clear on this point, it’s possible they simply were not oriented toward a heterosexual lifestyle. This may be the closest description we have in the Bible of what we understand today as a homosexual. Today we can accept homosexuality as being a God implanted characteristic from birth. Some of us see ourselves as being incapable of having traditional male/female sexual relations.

We must also realize some unique heterosexual people do not have an innate desire for marriage and/or to have children, and they shouldn’t be pressured into it by grandchildren starved parents — those always bugging their offspring how they want grandkids — either. Those of us who have experienced such meddling know how it feels. No one has a responsibility to — and should not feel any guilt when they choose to not — carry on the family name if that is not a part of their lifetime goals. This too is within the range of God’s created nature. To Jesus these people are fruitful in their own unique ways. He did not insist they multiply as was previously written, “...Be fruitful, and multiply...” —Genesis 1:28 (KJV). Jesus then told the people to accept His teaching about marriage if they are able (**19:12**). Mark and Luke make reference to this teaching also.

19:17; Jesus tells a man to obey the commandments in order to have eternal life. And, homosexuality is *not* prohibited in the Ten Commandments.

22:34-40; Jesus called this the first and greatest of all commandments, “...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” —(KJV) (Repeated in Mark 12:30 it adds, “...and with all thy strength:...” —[KJV]). Jesus called this the second great commandment, “...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” —(KJV). “The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these two commandments.” —(TEV). “...Do this and you will live. [have eternal life]” —Luke 10:28 (NIV).

The Pharisees were the most numerous and influential of the religious sects of Jesus’ day. Being strict legalists, they stood for the literal interpretation and rigid observance of the letter, forms, and traditions of the Law. While strictly adhering to its teachings, they departed from the spirit of Godly teachings in the Old Testament. They neglected more important matters of Moses’ Law and put undo emphasis on other parts. We read about this in the **23rd Chapter** of Matthew. The words of Jesus here and elsewhere constitute the most bitter denunciation that ever fell from His (and John the Baptist’s) lips. He never talked that way to sinners, publicans (tax-collectors), common people, or homosexuals. Surely He would have if it was an important issue. Why then have His followers throughout history speaking in *His* name needed to? Jesus himself was the most

²⁴ Strong, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament section p. 33, words # 2134 & 2135.

genuinely religious man that ever lived, yet how His soul loathed religious pretense, covetousness, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy!

Those fellows did not all die in that generation. Through all the centuries the church has been cursed with leaders exactly described in the 23rd Chapter of Matthew, irreligious professional religionists, parading themselves in holy garments, pompous fellows, self-important, strutting around like lords, preaching religion, yet having none.²⁵ (See also Matthew **15:1-20, 23:1-36**, Mark 7:1-23, Luke 11:37-54, 16:14-15, 18:9-14 et al.)

In the **24th verse** Jesus criticizes how they will “...strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” —(NIV). The Pharisees were so overly concerned they might ingest a gnat, considered an unclean animal prohibited by Moses’ Law from being eaten, that they would strain their food with their teeth closed to prevent the possibility that a gnat might get by. While being this careful, they would neglect something more important and in the process commit a worse offense and neglect the real meaning of Moses’ teachings — they’d eat a camel; figuratively. They emphasized the wrong thing and Jesus let them know; *firmly*.

We should not make the same mistake today. We can adhere to the spirit of the Bible’s teachings without the need for a literal interpretation in many instances. 2 Corinthians 3:6 supports this view; “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant — not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” —(NIV).

The Pharisees, by the way, were thought to have originated in the 3rd century BC., in the days preceding the Maccabean wars, when under Greek domination and the Greek effort to Hellenize (convert) the Jews. There was a strong tendency among the Jews to accept the liberal Greek culture with its religious customs. (Homosexuality was common in the Greek culture at the time.) The rise of the Pharisees was a reaction and protest against this tendency among their fellow countrymen. Their aim was to preserve their national integrity and strict conformity to Mosaic Law. They later developed into self-righteous and hypocritical formalists, actions that brought Jesus’ firm criticism.

Wouldn’t it be better for each of us to know and accept God in the way we understand Him in our conscience rather than to get hung up on some formalities? We can, if we can learn by the mistakes of our ancestors and accept them as mistakes. Moral judgments and prejudices of the past need not be invoked to support personal prejudices of the present.

LUKE

6:27-31; Jesus tells us to, “Give to everyone who asks you for something, and when someone takes what is yours, do not ask for it back.” (See also Matthew 5:38-42.)

10:1-12; Jesus refers to Sodom while on the subject of inhospitable acts.

17:28-29; Jesus makes a passing reference to the fire and brimstone raining down on Sodom while discussing the activities happening there. No sexuality or lust is even mentioned.

JOHN

²⁵ Halley, Matthew Ch. 23.

The Apostle John was the most intimate and close earthly friend of Jesus. They were both about the same age and indications are they were cousins. Five times he is spoken of as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” (**13:23, 19:26, 20:2, & 21:7, 20**). He must have been a man of rare qualities to thus attract the close extra love and companionship of Jesus. John and Peter became the recognized leaders of the 12 Apostles. Along with this Gospel, John wrote three Epistles and Revelation.

3:16; “...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” —(KJV).

4:1-42; Jesus talks to a woman from Samaria. In **verses 16-18** He acknowledges that she told the truth when she said she has no husband. Jesus lets her know that He knows that she has had five husbands in the past, and the man she currently has is not her husband. In the following verses Jesus does *not* condemn her current non-married relationship. Conservative thinking Christians always appear to define fornication as any sexual interaction outside of wedlock. Defined in this way the Samaria woman’s current relationship would be so classified. Jesus obviously did not see it this way. In Matthew 15:19-20 and Mark 7:21-23 He is quick to lump together and then condemn fornication, adultery, wickedness, lasciviousness, murder, and other evil thoughts. When spoken of in this manner fornication is lustful sex without love. In no way did Jesus speak of the Samaria woman’s non-married relationship in this manner or context. All Christians would do well to follow His teachings as a help in understanding the distinction between lust and love in non-married relationships. Loving non-married relationships are not fornication — not in Jesus’ eyes, nor should they be in ours.

8:1-11; An adulterous woman was brought to Jesus who was asked for His opinion about Moses’ Law which demands that she be stoned to death. His response was that, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” —(KJV). They left and He told her not to sin again. He did not adhere to the Law. This standpoint is one that sees Jesus’ attitude as based upon His very high regard for women or, in this case, His defense of women. Standing up against a group of hostile males to defend one female shows how deeply concerned He was about women as persons — as much as He was about males as persons. For a man living in the first century of this era, that was an extremely commendable and liberal position. I can only pray more of us could have such feelings of compassion. Need I point out again that this attitude in other cultures often went hand in hand with a tolerance for homosexuality.

8:28; Jesus only teaches what God taught and Jesus said nothing about being gay.

14:6; Jesus said, “...I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.” —(TEV).

15:10-14; Jesus speaks of obeying His commands and His main commandment is to love one another.

ROMANS

As we’ve said before, while the various authors of the Bible were divinely inspired they were still men who as all writers do, included their personal feelings about matters in their work. The Apostle Paul wrote 14 of the books in the New Testament, in the form of letters, and this one to the Romans was addressed to the people of the church at Rome. He was not one of the original 12 Apostles that worked with Jesus in His ministry. An

introduction to Romans says he wrote to explain *his understanding* of the Christian faith and how the Christian life should be lived. One of the themes he takes up involves questions of conscience which obviously are slanted toward his viewpoint.

Chapter 1 speaks of God's anger at ungodliness and unrighteousness. Paul says people knew God, but wouldn't honor Him. Instead, they worshiped carved images as idols. For that reason God then gave them up to unclean lusts, "...to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:" — **1:24** (KJV). His slanting views show through in the next few verses where both female and male homosexual interaction is described as "...leaving the natural use..." and being "...burned in their lust one toward another;..." — **1:27** (KJV). Continuing on he says people are given over to corrupted and evil thinking like greed, vice, fighting, deceit, God-hating, and murder to name just a few.

While homosexuality is covered a little more thoroughly than in Leviticus, we must again note the context and look at these references in the broader picture. It began because of God's anger with widespread idolatry and then, because of that, speaks of "unnatural" sexual practices. You'll recall in Deuteronomy 23:17-18 we showed how homosexual activity and idolatry were definitely connected in the Jewish consciousness. Paul was well aware of this context from the Old Testament. In reading his letters it is important to keep in mind his central concern in the text dealing with homosexuality. He obviously believed that this activity, as far as he understood it, was the result of idolatry — and that is the key; *his* understanding.

Everything Paul says illustrates his unenlightened views and lack of understanding that there are such things as responsible loving ongoing homosexual relationships that are natural and not lustful. Taken in this larger context, it should be obvious that such acts referred to by Paul are significantly different from committed and responsible relationships seen today. Honest loving relationships of any kind should not be considered "fleshy desires." To equate them is extremely unsound and an analysis of Scripture helps us arrive at this conclusion. Remember too, he brings to his writings that pro-fertility bent afflicting all authors of his time with that procreation requirement and populate the sparse Earth philosophy. Like many early Church Fathers of his day he believed "any act which was not consistent with the proper end of intercourse, namely the generation of children, necessarily pertained to the vice of lust." Surely, I don't have to emphasize any further how archaic and wrong this definition of lust is.

Homosexual activity in the above verses is indicated in Greek as *para phusis*. The normal translation in English for this phrase has been "against nature." The problem is, modern readers are apt to read into that phrase a wealth of associations derived from later philosophical developments, scholastic theology, Freudian psychology, social taboos, as well as personal misgivings. Once again, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what is meant by Paul here, but the same phrase in other verses by him makes it clear that it does not necessarily imply a moral judgment on the action as wrong.

In **1:26-27** Paul finds it convenient to make use of one of the classical world's more spiritual philosophies; Stoicism. When he speaks of that which is in accordance with natural use and "...that which is against nature [*para phusis*]:" — (KJV) he certainly seems to be using language borrowed from the Stoic philosophers. Or maybe it is language that he shared with them. The Stoics were members of an ancient Greek school of philosophy that believed they should live consistently with nature — that is, the natural order of the universe. But they assumed that the universe was rational, that there was a harmony between human reason and the rationality of the world. If people lived

according to their rational natures, the Stoics said, they would be freed from such temporal passions as pain, love, sex, anger, and so on. To be moved by these passions was to live irrationally, or contrary to nature. According to Joseph C. Weber, who has written one of the most illuminating treatments of this passage, Paul does not call us to live according to nature anyway, but he is explaining “the universality of sin in order to make clear the meaning and magnitude of the establishment of God’s righteousness in Jesus Christ.”²⁶

Reference to “unnatural” practices here could more correctly be: heterosexuals turning away from perhaps already established relationships into adulterous or idolatrous ones, exploiting, or using others. (Adultery is condemned many times in the Bible.) It could also refer to individuals who go beyond their own sexual appetites in order to indulge in new sexual pleasures. A strong argument for this interpretation is the explicit reference to those having “abandoned” the “natural uses” of their sexuality for that which is “beyond nature.” What we might have here is a conscious choice of a type of activity contrary to their normal inclinations such as, heterosexually inclined individuals voluntarily choosing to indulge in homosexual activity and thereby act contrary to *their* ordinary sexual appetites — *their* nature. We do know that most men who visited temple prostitutes — whether male or female — were heterosexually married.

Whatever Paul had in mind when he set his thoughts down on paper so long ago, one thing is clear — that we are *not* to be unnatural; Paul appeals to naturalness (defined as that which is “...instinctive...” in *Strong’s*²⁷), and that is exactly what we emphasized in the early part of this book. Whatever reference Paul makes to homosexual acts here, it is surely in the light of lustful behavior only which in today’s society is recognized as quite different from a responsible, loving, ongoing natural relationship. As in every other reference or condemnation to homosexuality in the Bible, these passages in Romans 1 say nothing about sexuality in the context of responsible, loving, committed relationships between gay people whose basic orientation makes relating to their own gender *natural*. Shouldn’t we consider it a sin for anyone trying to encourage a 100% gay person to go against his or her true nature and interact with the opposite sex? I do — yet this is exactly what fundies keep badgering, and sometimes even threatening, us to do!

Come to think of it, isn’t uncircumcision the natural state of the penis? **2:27** seems to say so, “...uncircumcision which is by nature,...” —(KJV). Wouldn’t this be a relevant issue for those who insist that whatever (they think) is natural should be followed in every case? If so, aren’t those who perform circumcision committing an unnatural act? Jesus was circumcised (Luke 2:21). Was He unnatural? Hmmm.

And in 1 Corinthians 11:14 Paul asks, “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?” —(KJV). In regard to these two references, for many males circumcision seems natural, although it is not, and for all of them long hair is natural — until it is cut! In other words, the reverse of what Paul says about “nature” may be true. But we are wrong to try to pin down *one* meaning for “nature” in Paul. We cannot; for there seems to be almost as many meanings as there are uses. Just more food for thought for you.

In any event, the conservative view of “unnatural” practices in **1:26-27** appears to

²⁶ Joseph C. Weber, “Does the Bible Condemn Homosexual Acts?” in *engage/social action*, Vol. 3, No. 5 (May 1975), p. 34, and *INTEGRITY: Gay Episcopal Forum*, Vol. 1:8 (June-July 1975), p. 6.

²⁷ Strong, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament section p. 77, word # 5446.

involve anal-genital contact only and Scripture backs this up. (See our treatment in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 which, by the way, was written *before* Romans despite it being placed later in the Bible.) Anal intercourse in the ancient world was considered an expression of domination, contempt, and scorn. It was used as a way of punishing and degrading conquered armies and slaves — hence the term “unnatural.” The name for this sexual act, Sodomy, comes from the acts the men of Sodom were assumed to do. So even in the beginning, the deeds addressed in Scripture involved anal-genital contact. In a society where the absolute dignity of the male was a primary consideration, even above female family members (remember Lot offering his daughters), voluntary acts of this nature among males could not be tolerated.

It is interesting to note that the Holiness Code in Leviticus did not condemn females to the same penalty of death for participating in gay practices as it did for males, although if a female had sexual relations with an animal she did suffer the same condemnation. Along with other indications about the lower status of females in Biblical times, this too may suggest they were concerned about the dignity of males and animals, but not of females to any great degree. As deplorable as we now view this philosophy in today’s society, we need to understand it and know there are many ancient customs we do not presently follow — clearly, condemnations against loving homosexual practices need not be practiced today.

If there is a certain message that becomes clear in our studies of the Biblical world, it is the belief of the time in the absolute respect that should be shown the male and the relative lack of concern for the female. There was a marked tendency, as we have seen, in all the sources of tradition to condemn sodomy in terms of a male “playing the role of a female” with another male, or using another male “like a female.” This has been looked upon in tradition as the degradation not so much of human nature as of the male as such. To stimulate or encourage or compel another to stimulate the passive coital function of the female represented a perversion intolerable for a society organized according to the theory of the essential subordination of woman to man, a society which particularly valued male aggressiveness and dominance. Consequently, a male who acted “like a woman” was treated as one who had betrayed not only himself but his whole sex, dragging his fellow men down with him in his voluntary disgrace.

Another reason for such a distinction being made between male and female homosexual practices may be that only male homosexual practices involve the emission of seminal fluid. There has been a definite influence on Western sexual attitudes and on traditional moral theology derived from a reverence for human male semen. This reverence had its origin in an ignorance of human physiology and the conception and birth processes. Because there was no knowledge of the female process of ovulation, women were traditionally believed to be merely the incubators in which male seed was deposited. Male semen was considered something almost or about to become a person. The idea that the male semen at emission was almost human controlled sexual theory until biological investigations of human physiology in the 16th century.

Despite the advances in our knowledge of these processes, the ancient tradition continues to influence our ideas of sexual conduct and morality until the present day — for example, the moral attitude against male masturbation. The reverence for the male seed as “almost human” was undoubtedly responsible in no small measure for the fact that society has always tended to reprobate and punish homosexual practices of males

while more or less ignoring those of females. Although our ignorance of birth processes has been a thing of the past for several centuries and the emancipation of women has made definite strides, something of this deep-seated but irrational view of women remains today to influence the attitude of men in general toward the homosexual male. The real psychological crisis in our culture appears to be not just homophobia — but male homophobia.

There are many gentle loving, mutually satisfying, close touching, and massaging practices that gay people participate in that do not involve anal-genital contact at all (some of us never cared for the activity, even before the AIDS crisis was upon us) — and do not transmit diseases either — and therefore should not be classified as “unnatural” in even the conservative view. And for those who do prefer this method of activity in a loving way with a mutual partner, they should not feel amiss just because it was once done in a degrading way by a society with vastly different priorities.

We also recognize that just because a person is gay does not mean he or she is corrupt or led into corruption. Some of the nicest, most warm, God loving, and caring people today just happen to be gay. Even in Paul’s conservative views of being against homosexual interaction he *only* condemns lustful fleshy desires as being “vile affections.”

6:12; Sin and lust are connected together again. Before Paul’s writings, the only condemnation against homosexuality was in Leviticus which only forbids men with men, not women with women. Probably lesbianism of a lustful nature was not widely known about. Now in Romans, Paul becomes much more explicit about these condemnations to include both males and females. Being a strict Pharisee at one time and firm believer in the Law, he even persecuted the church (Philippians 3:4-6), but now he teaches that Jesus Christ replaced the Law and adherence to it is not what’s important. His teaching encourages faith in Jesus who never did forbid homosexuality. So why such forceful condemnations?

7:14-25 seems to shed some light on the subject:

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature [or *my flesh*]. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do — this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God — through Jesus Christ our Lord!

“So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.” —(NIV)

Is it possible Paul condemned our actions so severely because he had his own inner struggle of powerful impulses within his nature to deal with? Are **verses 14-25** a picture

of that continuous desperate struggle against these feelings? Indications are he must have felt something powerful within his nature that caused this struggle, else he could never have written these words. The verses don't clarify what the struggle was, but Paul was not married (1 Corinthians 7:7-8), craved love (anyone who could have written such a moving testimonial as 1 Corinthians 13 was a person who craved love), and expressed a definite need for male companions. On his journeys he was never alone (except for a very brief span in Athens where, incidentally, he had no success to speak of). Whatever it was, his feelings were natural for him and he felt guilty about them.

Some of us experience similar guilt feelings when our natural selves don't agree with prevalent traditional teachings. In our present day society some of the strongest critics of our orientation are those struggling with these feelings within themselves. They are under the false belief that the louder they are at criticism, the more apt their inner feelings are to conform to tradition. It's time they accept their natural selves. Life is too short to *not* be happy — and it's surely not God's way! We can't be happy until we are free to accept ourselves. Happy is he that does not condemn himself (feel guilty) about the things he allows himself to do (**14:22**). We can follow **14:23** and have faith that our lifestyle is blessed by God and is not wrong and therefore not a sin.

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.” —**8:28** (KJV).

Many gay people are very much believers and even Paul says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” —**10:13** (KJV).

We should look at our alternate lifestyle as a gift from God and part of His plan. **12:6** recognizes that some of us have been given different gifts and it's implied that we should use what we've been given.

I like to follow **12:7-8**, “...if it is to teach, we should teach; if it is to encourage others, we should do so...” —(TEV).

12:9; Our “Love must be sincere....” —(NIV) and we are to “...cling to what is good.” —(NIV).

For those who criticize us most, I hope they follow **12:13**, and share their belongings with the needy and open their homes to others.

13:1-2; Tells us to obey the laws of the land (authorities) (higher powers) because they do not exist without God's permission and have been put there by God. Anyone who resists the powers then resists the ordinance of God and will be punished. Most states have legalized most consenting and mutually desired same gender sexual interaction. According to **13:1-2**, the authorities did it with God's permission. God must have realized we were ready for a change.

13:8-10; Tells us the only obligation we have is to love one another. “...Whoever does this has obeyed the Law.” —**13:8** (TEV). The Ten Commandments can be summoned up in the one command, “...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” —**13:9** (KJV). “If you love someone, you will never do him wrong; to love, then, is to obey the whole Law.” —**13:10** (TEV). This clearly is an admonishment by Paul to not use, abuse, or exploit other persons. Some merely lustful relationships where the only concern is to satisfy one's fleshy desires could do someone wrong emotionally. But where a loving relationship, either gay or non-gay, is built upon deep feelings of trust, companionship, and romantic intimacy, with much more than just sexual feelings involved, the possibility of doing someone wrong is not present to any extent.

Dr. Cecil Osborne writes in his excellent book, *The Art of Understanding Yourself*,

“Adultery [or any other sin] is not wrong because it is forbidden in the Ten Commandments; it is forbidden in the Ten Commandments because it is destructive of human personality. God is against whatever is destructive to us.” In this context mutually beneficial, loving, positive, and responsible relationships of either sexual persuasion are not forbidden by God, and likewise, if a lustful interaction is somehow destructive to one or both partners it would be forbidden.

Sin is properly sin because it opposes the will of God. But this “will of God” is neither arbitrary nor vindictive. Following the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the great Catholic theologian and philosopher, we see that the divine will is really identical with the true good of man. In this context it is worthwhile to repeat our basic premise; good morality and good psychology cannot be in conflict. There is no contradiction between the supernatural good of man and his ethical good. There can be no necessary conflict between the human and spiritual fulfillment of humanity.

14:14; Tells us that we are persuaded by the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean of itself, but to those who believe anything to be unclean then to them it is unclean. Critics of our lifestyle should realize our lifestyle is unclean *in their mind* only because they believe it to be, and not because it actually is.

As **14:5** says, we each need to be persuaded *in our own minds* what is important. We realize what is important to one, may not be important to another. The real important thing is to feel comfortable and content with ourselves.

We must not let what we regard as good to be spoken of as evil (**14:16**).

According to **14:13**, we need to be less judgmental and avoid putting a stumbling block in our brother’s way. Yet many of our critics do just that, and we lose self-esteem.

We need to aim for the things which make for peace and help strengthen one another (**14:19**).

1 CORINTHIANS

Paul’s 1st letter to the Corinthians was addressed to the people of the church he established at Corinth. Corinth at that time was noted for, among other things, idolatry and widespread immorality. Again in this book in regards to sexual interaction, emphasis is placed upon merely lustful sexual interactions and not loving relationships. Paul did not mean to teach unkind treatment of unmarried people who happened to be involved in loving relationships. He was writing at a time when immoral behavior was undermining the foundation of civilization. Under such conditions it was imperative that the issue be strictly and forcefully addressed. In this context it is somewhat understandable that Paul would be so condemnatory of all unmarried sexuality as sinful.

In our modern society if a riot breaks out curfews are placed in effect to help alleviate a situation. (Those of us living in Los Angeles during several days of violent rioting and looting are very well aware of what a curfew is.) That does not mean those temporary laws are meant to remain in effect for all time, and in fact they’re not. The same should apply in regards to sexuality in today’s world and what Paul directed to people many years ago in a world much different. Not all unmarried loving relationships are bad and should not be condemned for all time. Paul condemns drunkenness, but not merely drinking (**5:11 & 6:10**). Apparently he can make the distinction. Unfortunately he is unable to differentiate between lust and loving relationships.

Any consideration of New Testament statements on same-sex interaction must

carefully view the social context of the Greco-Roman culture in which Paul ministered. The more our study progresses we see Paul's discussion of homosexual acts does not support today's conservative interpretation of the passage. As we'll see shortly, prostitution was the most commonly known male same-sex act.

In **6:9-10** Paul condemns those who are "...neither...effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind," —(KJV). Unfortunately, some newer versions of the Bible translate the original Greek even worse: "...homosexuals [That is, catamites], nor sodomites," —(NKJV), "...male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders" —(NIV), "...homosexual perverts" —(TEV), and "...sexual perverts," —(RSV). Such translations make it sound as if *every* form of homosexuality is a "perversion." These are classic examples of what some scholars have said about most of our Western interpretations of homosexuality in ancient times; namely, that our interpretations are wrong because we have approached the subject basically from the standpoint of our own prejudices. These variations in translation point to the fact that there is very little understanding of the precise meaning of Paul's terms and the immediate context itself gives little or no clue as to the precise meaning he intended by these words. What is needed is a contextual analysis and an examination of the same terms in other sources. Recent scholarship then unmasks the homophobia behind such mistranslations.

It is truly surprising that despite the fact that the tradition of moral condemnation of homosexuality springs in large part from Biblical passages as these, little serious scholarly work has been produced concerning their exact meaning. Translations appear at times to be based on preconceptions rather than serious scholarship and cultural differences appear to exercise considerable influence over the translation of Biblical passages dealing with sexual morality.

The first word — *malakoi*, in the Greek text — is the plural of *malakos*, which literally means "soft" (e.g., Luke 7:25 & Matthew 11:8). Strong defines it as "of uncertain affinity; soft, i.e. fine (clothing)..."²⁸ In a moral context it is normally employed to signify loose, morally weak, or lacking in discipline or self-control. The word is used elsewhere in the New Testament but never with reference to sexuality and there is no justification for applying *malakoi* specifically to homosexuality. While in Greek it usually referred to generally dissolute behavior and can include anal intercourse by the passive partner in some contexts, its normal use referred to any form of immorality or debauchery.

Several Biblical verses criticize those who are effeminate. Even in classical Greece where homosexuality was probably more widespread than anywhere else, effeminate men were generally looked down on. Why? Because they represented the exact opposite of the heroic or noble type of love that was so admired at this time. I need not stress the point here that the concept "effeminate" as soft has no *necessary* connection with homosexuality as we understand it in the present day. As we've mentioned before, a good many gay males are *not* effeminate by nature.

The second word, *arsenokoites*, occurs once each in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy 1:10 (defile), but nowhere else in other literature of the period. The Greeks didn't have a word corresponding to our English word "homosexual." In literature a few centuries later, usage of *arsenokoites* appears to designate specifically anal intercourse by the active partner. Because some passages make use of the same term in reference to a sex act

²⁸ Strong, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament section p. 46, word # 3120.

between males and females it clearly does not refer exclusively to homosexuality. As we've mentioned before, there are gentle loving methods of interacting that do not involve this form of contact at all. And besides that, anal intercourse is not necessarily a homosexual activity, it can be performed between males and females. Whether it is consummated between same gender partners or not, it surely need not be considered an expression of domination, contempt, scorn, or degradation as it once was so long ago.

Scholar John E. Boswell translates *arsenokoites* as “male temple prostitute,” a male paid to have sex in a pagan temple.²⁹ This sure has nothing to do with committed loving relationships. Strong defines it as “...a sodomite...”³⁰ which we know from *qadesh*, is associated with prostitution and idolatry. Dr. Halley also acknowledges Paul was making reference to prostitutes in his message to the people of Corinth:

“Venus was the principal Deity of Corinth. Her temple was one of the most magnificent buildings in the city. In it a thousand priestesses, public prostitutes, were kept, at public expense, there always, always ready for immoral indulgence, as worship to their goddess. Some of the Corinthian Christians, having been used to a religion that encouraged immoral living, were finding it a little hard to adapt themselves to their new religion which prohibited immoral living.”³¹

Not only do we see same gender sexual interaction in a lustful context only, but once again we see the major problem with idolatry and the two being associated together in the same context. When viewed without an understanding of the Corinthian people and their life and times we see how even the loving aspects of a gay identity get lumped together in the same category with — idolaters, adulterers, thieves, slanderers, extortioners, drunkards etc. It is somewhat understandable, because of the nature of the times, why Paul did not clarify his meaning, even if he knew of loving responsible same gender sexual unions — which is unlikely.

Surely his prohibitive writing is limited to behavior known to his readers. Paul meant his words to apply primarily to the congregations to whom his letters were addressed and, perhaps, only secondarily — if at all — to others in similar situations. But such situations would have existed elsewhere only in that same ancient setting; they are certainly not found in our world today. As we will see shortly, he had no idea he would be writing for an audience far into the future — an audience in a world he could not have possibly known would ever exist.

Fortunately, today we are able to delve back into ancient writings and acquire a sense of what was going on and in turn the real meanings. If this had been done in years past — and other versions of the Bible had used the proper words when they translated ancient manuscripts — wrong understandings, which in turn lead some to great emotional stress in understanding their own sexuality, would not have happened. It is possible to have a loving gay relationship blessed by God.

Maybe we can excuse Paul — to a degree — for his views on gay people just as we might excuse him for having repressive views on women and on slavery that were, in

²⁹ John E. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980)

³⁰ Strong, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament section p. 16, word # 733.

³¹ Halley, 1 Corinthians Ch. 6:9-20.

general, not much different from those of the society in which he lived. What we should not excuse though (or permit) is modern day Christians for propagating these repressive views upon innocent folks they come in contact with. We have progressed to the point where we no longer tolerate slavery or the downgrading of women. How much longer must gay people wait for their just rewards and the laws to protect them?

Readers may be interested to know that when visitors tour reasonably preserved Ephesus (the city ranked second only to Corinth as the “sex capital” or “sin city” of the ancient Greek world and the city where Timothy was when Paul wrote to him in 1 Timothy) today one of the things that is pointed out to them is the door of a house of prostitution. It is marked by a tremendous erect penis in stone, the sign of Priapus, the god of fertility. When one has actually seen such things, it is much easier to imagine the intimate connection between religion and sex in Paul’s day.

This should not be considered a sin against the body as implied in **6:18**.

We are using our bodies for God’s glory as **6:20** instructs.

Apparently immoral lust was so bad in Corinth that Paul even recommended against marriage in **7:1**, but in following verses he allowed it to avoid fornication. The husband and wife were commanded to fulfill each other so they are not tempted by lack of self-control.

Paul’s anti-gay bias shows through in **7:7** where he wishes that all people were like him. He was open-minded enough though to recognize that we each have a special gift from God. Some are of one manner and some another. If he would have been introduced to the positive benefits of responsible loving gay relationships possibly he would have seen them as viable.

He again recommends against marriage, but go ahead if you cannot contain your desires (**7:8-9**). He thinks it’s better to remain single as he is. Further commands are made to the people about divorce and separating which are not strictly adhered to today.

He tells us that we all should go on living according to the Lord’s gift to us, and as we were when God called us (**7:17**). In this light, if our sexual orientation is a unique gift, we need to rejoice in it.

We’re told circumcision isn’t important, but remember how the Old Testament said it had to be done on the 8th day (**7:18-19**).

Paul addresses the “...present distress,...” in **7:26** (KJV) and because of it recommends those single men to stay that way and married men to stay that way (**7:27**).

Then in **7:28-29** he expresses how he wants to spare married people the trouble they’ll have. Because the time remaining for the world was short those who did “have wives should live as if they had none;” —(NIV). Paul was not aware that he was writing for an audience down through the centuries, surely he himself would have been most shocked if he were told that he was. He, like most other early Christians, believed that he was living near the end of time. (See also 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2.) If the world was soon coming to an end, why attempt to marry and beget children? You would not have the time to rear them. One should be preparing for the end, and sex was not a part of this preparation. There is no doubt that this was one notion which colored almost everything Paul had to say about sex. As far as he was concerned, he was writing to the Corinthians, his message was specifically for them. This is an important point we have to keep in mind as we try to understand the impact Paul’s words have to gay people in today’s world.

Paul was certainly also aware of the popular Stoic notion that the flesh was not so

much an evil as it was a bother, something to be overcome, or at least mastered rather than allowing it to master you. Perhaps Paul was so condemnatory about pleasurable sexual activity because he was struggling with a bothersome form of it (see Romans 7:14-25) and he thought others suffered the same affliction. In any event, following the Stoic approach, Paul would have been opposed to any kind of sex engaged in purely for pleasure. And he saw no reason to bring children into a world that was soon coming to an end. Hence he saw no need for sex — period! Quite a different world wasn't it?

These teachings of Paul to his Corinthian audience certainly seems to be the high point of his advice on sexuality. It would seem early Christianity around his time was a sex-negative religion. Obviously these are temporary recommendations for a temporary situation. A parallel pattern of present day distress is now enveloping gay people — the AIDS crisis — where for the time being we are recommended against certain practices while the crisis is present. Each distress situation throughout history has had its own set of temporary guidelines to follow until the problem is alleviated.

In further verses, Paul implies married people are pulled in two directions, trying to please both the Lord and their spouse. This is something we don't recognize today. Through **verse 38** he makes it clear it is not a sin to marry, but is highly discouraged. Remaining single you "...doeth better." — **7:38** (KJV). We can imagine the distress they must have been in to go as far as recommend against marriage. In that light, we can understand recommending against homosexuality. What we need to make clear is that this was a temporary distress situation. The time for the curfew is long past.

11:1-16; Because some Biblical customs about women are so unusual by today's standards we need to take some extra time in studying them.

"It was customary in Greek and Eastern cities for women to cover their heads in public, except women of immoral character. Corinth was full of temple prostitutes [known for having short hair]. Some of the Christian women, taking advantage of their new-found liberty in Christ, were making bold to lay aside their veils in church meetings, which horrified those of more modest type. [Paul regards the independence of the Corinthian women who participate in worship with unveiled heads as a lack of humility, since a woman's veil is regarded as a sign of dependence on the authority of her husband.] They are here told not to defy public opinion as to what was considered proper in feminine decorum."³²

Men considered themselves supreme over women and thought it bad generally when women became too much like men. We even receive trouble from current writers intent on perpetuating these ancient beliefs. From Kenneth E. Hagin's book *The Woman Question* we read:

"But as a wife, in the natural human relationship, she has a subordinate place in the family. For the sake of good order in the family, the husband should be the head of the house. No intelligent woman should think of marrying a man who in her estimation is not worthy to take that place. Great calamities might have been averted if God's order in family government had been accepted and followed. The husband must carry the greater responsibility, therefore he should have the higher authority. If both husband and wife are what they should be, the husband will take his place naturally as

³² Halley, 1 Corinthians Ch. 11:2-16.

the head of the family, and it will be a joy to his wife to see him there. No real woman wants a mere echo or a puppet for a husband. It should be the wife's delight to submit her will to her husband's when necessary, rather than make him the laughingstock of his neighbors. There is no escape from the plain teaching of the Word of God on this point."³³

As should be expected in the present age of active feminism, Biblical teachings such as these are coming under attack for representing sexist concepts.

Paul continues on in **11:1-16**. It is a disgrace for a man to pray or prophesy with his head covered, but a woman must pray or prophesy with her head covered. (Even the conservative Catholic Church has changed its rule to allow women to attend Mass without hats.) The woman was created for man's benefit and her covering is to show she is under her husband's authority. Nature itself teaches that if a man has long hair it is a shame to him, but long hair on a woman is a glory to her. (Now aren't all the pictures and statues of Jesus as an adult shown with him having long hair? If we interpret the Bible to literally even Jesus would be un-Christian. Fundamentalists will be quick to point out that it was not long relative to *their* culture — that it was a normal length for *their* day. Exactly our point! We need to view it with an eye to *their* time, *not* ours! *Their* culture did not understand the nature and viability of same gender loving relationships and condemned them all. Their customs sometimes didn't even care if love was involved in male/female relationships as long as populating the sparse Earth was accomplished. We often see Biblical references where the father *alone* determines who their child will marry and procreate with. [Refer back to our comment in Jeremiah 29:6.] Culture changes — we see it in hair length and in methods of showing affection. Short haired women are no longer associated or confused with prostitutes, and in a similar fashion, same gender relationships should no longer be associated or confused with immorality.) Paul closes this subject by saying there is no other custom than this being taught in any of the churches. There are so many examples in the Bible that today's theologians see as no longer practical to follow, it is hoped they can understand the need to modify others as well.

Chapter 13 speaks beautifully of love, the premier teaching of Christianity and an undying expression of Jesus' doctrine of heavenly love. "Love is of God: therefore one who loves shows that he is begotten of God. God is love: love is his very being. To love God is to know Him and to share his life." —author unknown. Love is the essence of God's nature, the perfection of human character, and the most powerful ultimate force in the universe. What a thought-provoking chapter.

13:4-7; "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." —(NIV). As to the kinds of loving relationships in which we have, it should not be so much that Paul would condemn us, but that we should condemn ourselves whenever our relationships are lacking in the kind of love that is described here. Truly love is the best of God's gifts to us — *all of us!*

13:8; Says that love never fails, but prophecy and inspired messages are temporary and shall fail. We hope that some of what Paul said will be understood in the way it was

³³ Kenneth E. Hagin, *The Woman Question* (Tulsa, OK 74150: Kenneth Hagin Ministries, 1975, 2nd printing 1978), p. 24.

originally meant to be — as temporary messages for certain people of a certain period of time. We on the other hand speak of responsible loving relationships, something that should be eternal and never fail.

14:34-35; Contains further examples of how women were previously classified as second class citizens. Women had to remain silent in church meetings and were not allowed to speak. They were commanded by the Law to be obedient. If they want to learn something they are to ask their own husbands at home because, “...it is a shame for women to speak in the church.” — **14:35** (KJV). These two verses continue what Paul taught in **Chapter 11**. Here he forbids what he seems to allow in **11:5**, which allowed women to prophesy as long as their heads were covered. Dr. Halley speculates as to the apparent reason for this contradiction: “There must have been some local circumstance, unknown to us, that gave point to these instructions — possibly some bold women unbecomingly putting themselves forward.”³⁴ If this is true, it is easier to accept that some Bible teachings are directed specifically to only the people they were originally addressed to. Not everyone, for all time, need concern themselves with these matters or abide by them.

“Among the Greeks it was a universal custom for women to appear in public with their heads covered. Virtuous married women wore on their heads such a badge of subjection to their husbands. So thoroughly was it recognized as a badge setting forth the wife’s private and subordinate position that a significant rite in marriage was the assuming of the veil. A woman with head uncovered appearing in the church in Paul’s time in Corinth would have scandalized the church. Strangers would have thought such a woman was an immoral woman of the city. Such conduct would reflect on her, and on her husband. It would have dishonored her head, her husband. By nature woman is endowed with a symbol of modesty and retirement. The veil which signifies her devotement to home duties is merely the artificial continuation of her natural gift of hair. The long hair of the Greek fop...was accepted by the people as an indication of effeminate and luxurious living suitable for women...unsuitable for men. Now in our day, in our land, this is not the custom. A woman does not appear to be more modest if she wears a veil or hood on her head in public.”³⁵

In order to be effective witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ and advance the cause of Christianity early Christian leaders had to abide pretty well to the people’s existing customs, no matter how unusual, or they would think you were out of line. Slavery, as one example was not banned outright — rather slave owners were taught to not be harsh. As we have progressed we now recognize any form of slavery as unacceptable.

Besides not going against widespread customs in Corinth, of equal importance, it was probably not advisable in that day and in that part of the Roman Empire for women to teach, and this simple reason alone may have been behind Paul’s strong commands to women.

Deuteronomy 22:5 told us it is abomination for women to wear men’s clothing, and for men to wear women’s clothing. “In Bible days the men wore skirts and women wore the pants. Perhaps the women need to have the pants and the men need to take the

³⁴ Halley, 1 Corinthians Ch. 14, p. 598.

³⁵ Hagin, pp. 70, 72, 73, & 77.

skirts.”³⁶ This is not necessary — thank God! Following our current customs *is* the proper accepted behavior and does not go against the Bible. This all illustrates once again how we must have an eye to the prevailing customs and understand the context of the preaching done to us in the Bible, lest we read something into it not meant by the original author and not meant for us today.

Customs have such an impact on societies that behavior, quite acceptable to some, becomes a prohibited taboo to others. “In [ancient] Greek culture older-younger male [sexual] relationships of the teacher-lover type were held in high regard, even considered a duty and an honor, while many other forms of sexual behavior [common and acceptable to us today] were restricted and stigmatized.”³⁷ Today, similar older-younger mutual relationships strike such a chord of distaste in many that, at times, irate authorities may inadvertently impair a younger person with distress by their ardent methods to persecute and punish at any cost the older partner.

Closer to home, if an unmarried teenager living in a midwestern Bible belt community in the early part of this century got pregnant she did an almost unspeakable thing, but if a similar age girl from a 1990’s inner-city community gets pregnant she is not outcast. In fact she may be in a majority. It all boils down to prevailing customs — to what is an integral part of the culture and to what is a taboo; to what is considered acceptable or natural for people and to what is considered perverse or unnatural; to what is considered moral behavior and to what is considered immoral; to what is honorable and to what is ungodly dishonorable. What one society considers divinely inspired behavior, another society can regard the opposite as being inspired from a higher power. Without understanding the past it is unfair to make informed decisions about what is really predetermined by either God or nature.

Let us also understand the educational status of women in past times.

“Missionaries tell us that in the Eastern countries — especially before World War II — the poor, illiterate women were not able to comprehend the meaning of the message [in church services]. They would frequently interrupt the service with foolish and irreverent questions. They would speak right out and ask such things as the cost of the missionary’s dress, or the purpose of some article of attire. It may have been that Paul directed some of his restrictions against a similar state of affairs in Corinth, where history tells us the women as a class were kept ignorant.”³⁸

Paul advised the wives if they would learn anything, to ask their own husbands at home — thus implying the men were better informed than the women. Alas, this is not always true now. Many women would die in hopeless ignorance of the principles of our holy faith if they depended on what crude, half-baked, pernicious, and fallacious ideas their husbands could communicate to them. Once again, understanding the context allows the true intentions of Paul’s teaching to be realized.

14:37; Paul says the things he writes to the people of Corinth are “...the commandments of the Lord.” —(KJV).

In **14:40** he closes the chapter by saying that, “...everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” —(NIV). Many of these teachings are not fitting for our society

³⁶ Hagin, p. 88.

³⁷ K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978)

³⁸ Hagin, p. 92.

today. We would be much farther behind if we rejected the opinions and contributions women are making for everybody. It took many years for us to become enlightened enough to realize that. Now it's time for society to accept gay people as the contributors to society that they are.

2 CORINTHIANS

Paul's 2nd letter is also addressed to the people of the church at Corinth in response to a difficult period he had in his relation with the church. Only one verse (**12:21**) in this book speaks of sexual sin, but it is of a lustful, lasciviousness, and fornication nature again. Not surprisingly, it is also lumped with other evil behavior.

GALATIANS

Judaizers were a sect of Jewish Christians who were not willing to accept the teaching of the Apostles in the Galatian churches Paul founded. They insisted that Christians can only come to God through Judaism, and in order to be a Christian they must keep the Law of Moses. Paul's goal was to expand Christianity from a Jewish sect into a world religion. His letter to the Galatians was written in order to bring back to true faith and practice those people who were being misled by this false teaching. He argues that it is not necessary to obey the Law of Moses in order to be a true Christian because we are justified by faith without the works of the Law. Obedience to the Law is not necessary for salvation. He says the only sound basis for life in Christ was faith by which all are put right with God. Christian conduct flows naturally from the love that results from faith in Christ. Salvation requires no action other than acceptance.

1:1; Paul's call to be an Apostle came not from men, but by Jesus Christ and God.

1:11-12; What he taught was revealed to him by Jesus Christ.

2:16; "Yet we know that a person is put right with God only through faith in Jesus Christ, never by doing what the Law requires. We, too, have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be put right with God through our faith in Christ, and not by doing what the Law requires. For no one is put right with God by doing what the Law requires." —(TEV). "You see, it's not what you know but whom you know that counts. The Pharisees knew the Law backward and forward, but they crucified Christ, the Lawgiver, and then ran home to keep the Sabbath."³⁹

The only reference prohibiting homosexuality in the Old Testament is contained in the Law of Moses. Now Paul, who has so forcefully condemned these acts, says the Law does not need to be followed. Apparently within the structure of the Bible there is room for change. Therefore, modern day theologians should take note and also allow for necessary changes that are now needed since the last words of the Bible were written. None of Paul's teachings attempt to invalidate the Ten Commandments, which didn't prohibit homosexuality anyway.

"I refuse to reject the grace of God. But if a person is put right with God through the Law, it means that Christ died for nothing!" —**2:21** (TEV).

Chapter 3 expands on this idea to quite an extent as to why the faith is more important than the Law. Earlier in our discussion we mentioned the transition from the

³⁹ Gulley, p. 33.

Old Testament to the New Testament as being, “from a curse to a blessing.” **3:10** reminds us of what the Old Testament taught, “...Whoever does not always obey everything that is written in the book of the Law is under God’s curse!” —(TEV). Although a different curse, we can still speak of a curse to a blessing transition. “...no one is put right with God by means of the Law,...‘Only the person who is put right with God through faith shall live.’” —**3:11** (TEV). “...Christ has redeemed us from the curse that the Law brings;...” —**3:13** (TEV). Referring back to **2:16** we see that only through the blessing of faith in Jesus Christ are we put right with God and then we shall live.

On the other hand Jesus has already said to obey the Law, so actually we have a bit of a contradiction here. Apparently we have to take some Scripture with a grain of salt, or better yet, be a little broader more liberal in our interpretation and let Scripture interpret Scripture. If we lead good lives true to ourselves and have faith in God and Jesus Christ I don’t think we’d find displeasure with God.

3:19; Says the Law was added to show what wrongdoing is, but it was meant to last only until the coming of Christ. “And so the Law was in charge of us until Christ came, in order that we might then be put right with God through faith. Now that the time for faith is here, the Law is no longer in charge of us.” —**3:24-25** (TEV).

In **3:28** Paul makes the claim that there was a seed planted by Christ, the seed of the Spirit, whose eventual fruit will be the overcoming of all divisions that separate human beings from one another, and thus separate each of us from the totality of ourselves. He mentions three such divisions: master-slave (i.e., all divisions based on aggression and domination), Jew-Greek (i.e., all divisions based on racial or cultural difference), and finally the division between male and female. Obviously, Paul is not referring to an elimination of the biological and, if any, the psychological differences, but to the learned cultural distinction which renders women inferior to men, denies them the full status of persons, and thus prevents a true interpersonal love encounter between males and females. It is this same cultural distinction which, as we have seen, lies at the base of cultural homophobia and leads to the active persecution of the homosexual.

Paul continues on through **4:7** with this new relationship with Jesus Christ and us. “For when we are in union with Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor the lack of it makes any difference at all; what matters is faith that works through love.” —**5:6** (TEV).

Again it is repeated, “...the whole Law is summed up in one commandment: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’” —**5:14** (TEV).

By faith we live in Jesus Christ — *not* in Leviticus. To be sure, ethical concerns apply to all cultures and peoples in every age. Such concerns were ultimately reflected by Jesus Christ, who said nothing about homosexuality, but a great deal about love, justice, mercy, and faith.

In **5:16-26** Paul warns again about avoiding “...the lust of the flesh.” —(KJV) with the usual examples being given such as: adultery, fornication, idolatry, witchcraft, heresies, murders, drunkenness, hatred, wrath, etc. etc.

“If the Spirit leads you, then you are not subject to the Law....But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these.” —**5:18, 22-23** (TEV). And again, these are qualities that are possible for the partners in a loving gay relationship to have.

A comment from the Greek dictionary lists gentleness (kindness) of **5:22** as: goodness acting itself out toward others in kind deeds. And goodness of **5:22** as: doing what is right so that good can come to another, includes confronting evil so that

repentance can take place. It is *not* right to oppress others! We *must* do them good.

EPHESIANS

One of the goals we established near the beginning of our study was to form a unity between gay people and Christians. Hopefully some of the advice and encouragement we've presented will help others achieve that goal. Paul was concerned about a lack of unity between Jews and Gentiles. This is one of the issues he addressed in his letter to the Ephesians. Along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon this is one of the four "prison epistles" written from Paul's Roman imprisonment, A.D. 61-63.

1:10; God's plan is to bring together all of His creation with Christ as head. This letter is also an appeal to God's people to live out the meaning of this great plan for the unity of mankind through oneness with Jesus Christ.

4:19; Those who lost all feelings of sensitivity give themselves over to lasciviousness, uncleanness, and greediness. Many gay people are very sensitive with strong feelings of love in their relationships without lust, uncleanness, or greed.

5:2; "...walk in love,..." —(KJV) so that our life is controlled by love.

5:3-5; Fornication and uncleanness are once again lumped with other evil deeds.

5:16; Paul speaks of the evil days they're going through.

5:18; Do not get drunk with wine to excess. Casual non-abusive social drinking appeared to be of no concern.

Another 12 verses (**5:22-33**) are devoted to telling wives how they were regarded as second class citizens. Wives must submit themselves to their husbands for the husband has authority over his wife. Of course it also commands husbands to love their wives.

Chapter 6 reminds children to honor their father and mother as the Ten Commandments declare, and fathers are reminded to not provoke their children to wrath.

But then it continues (**6:5-9**) with commands for how slaves should act and be treated. Slaves must obey their masters "...with fear and trembling,..." —(KJV). Masters (who are always men) are told to treat their slaves right and stop using threats. What they had then was a society that would condone slavery — the buying and selling of human beings — but would condemn warm, desirable, mutually consenting, responsible, and loving relationships; unless that relationship was sanctioned by religion, licensed by the state, and contained a heterosexually married couple. Rather than abolish slavery, they attempted to hedge around it with humane considerations. They felt certain contexts of slavery were considered viable to their society as long as they were not abusive situations. In a similar way, today we are able to make a distinction between sexual interactions that are beneficial, from those that can be harmful and/or abusive in some way. It's time to come out of the dark ages and accept those beneficial relationships that are loving, whether they are gay or non-gay.

PHILIPPIANS

Paul's letter to the Philippians was written to the church he established at Philippi.

In **Chapter 3** he says the true circumcision is worshiping God in the Spirit and rejoicing in Christ Jesus, not the cutting of our bodies. He went on to say how previously he strictly adhered to the Law, but now has thrown all that away so he could put his trust and hope in Christ alone. All else is worthless compared to knowing Jesus. He now has

the righteousness that is given through faith in Jesus that comes from God and is based on faith. And that's really what it's all about — *faith!* Faith in a loving God who expects us all to use our uniquenesses to contribute positive things to the world while being true to ourselves.

COLOSSIANS

Paul's letter to the Colossians was written to the church at Colossae to oppose old and false teachings and emphasize the true Christian message about Jesus. "I tell you, then, do not let anyone deceive you with false arguments, no matter how good they seem to be." — **2:4** (TEV).

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ." — **2:8** (NIV).

We've already covered how the Mosaic dispensation was entirely removed from the shoulders of believing Christians. Not only was this important liberation clearly mentioned by Paul several times, but by other inspired writers also. (See also Acts 15:1-2, 5-29.) Those who tried to suggest that Christians should be obliged by any aspect of the Law were branded by Paul as heretics, and he admonished his disciples to "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:" — **2:16** (KJV), that is, the Jewish dietary laws or their feasts, New Moons, and Sabbath found in the Law of Moses.

These were only temporary rules that ended when Christ came (**2:17**).

These are only man-made rules and teachings (**2:22**). Back in the Old Testament we were told these were God's rules.

But, we are again told to avoid lusty evil desires, fornication, and other associated deeds that Paul is inclined to lump together "...which is idolatry:" — **3:5** (KJV). And again, loving relationships are not included.

As God's people we are to clothe ourselves, "...with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." — **3:12** (NIV). Exactly the qualities many gay people have.

Again he tells wives to submit to their husbands as that is what Christians should do (**3:18**).

Along with repeat messages to husbands, children, and fathers he also commands slaves to obey their masters, in all things, and masters to treat their slaves just and equal (**3:19-25 & 4:1**).

4:5-6; Contains advice gay people should use when dealing with those who do not believe in our lifestyle, "Be wise in the way you act toward those who are not believers, making good use of every opportunity you have. Your speech should always be pleasant and interesting, and you should know how to give the right answer to everyone." — (TEV).

1 THESSALONIANS

Paul's 1st letter to the Thessalonians was written to the church that Paul established at Thessalonica to encourage and reassure the Christians there.

Through Jesus he again commands against lust and fornication. Those who continue,

do not know God (**4:2-5**).

4:11-12 Provides another example of how some Scripture verses are addressed to a specific people about a certain immediate problem Paul needed to respond to. It seems that some, in expectation of the Lord's second coming, had fallen into the error of supposing that it was not necessary to work. Paul discourages this idleness here and again in his next epistle, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

1 TIMOTHY

Paul's 1st letter to Timothy, his younger companion and assistant, dealt with some false teaching in the church. Among other things it instructed church leaders and helpers of the kind of character they should have. Paul is eager to have the people, "...arouse the love that comes from a pure heart, a clear conscience, and a genuine faith." — **1:5** (TEV). A beautiful thought, it's too bad they could not see the viability of having that in a gay relationship.

In **1:8-10** homosexual activity is termed something, "...contrary to sound doctrine;" — (KJV) along with whores, kidnappers, murderers of fathers, murderers of mothers, murderers in general, and a few other ungodly acts. Again this seems to imply the lustful variety and not a deep loving relationship, after all look at the kinds of acts it is classified with.

You'll recall where Romans contains a condemnation against female homosexuality and 1 Corinthians did not. Now here in 1 Timothy we see Paul again abstains from including females. It should be noted that the two exclusively masculine references are addressed to Christians in two cities — Corinth and Ephesus — where, among all the cities visited by Paul, male homosexual prostitution was strongest. Interestingly enough, Paul's letter to the people of Rome is addressed to a city where lesbianism was far more prevalent — more so even than in Greece at the time. This further lends credence to the opinion of a growing number of scholars that Paul was addressing some of the content of his letters to specific people in a specific situation at a specific point in time.

In **2:9-15** he commands women to dress themselves sensibly in modest apparel. Not to have fancy hairstyles, gold, pearls, or costly array. They must have good deeds which is becometh women who profess godliness. They are to learn in silence with all subjection. He would not allow them to teach or to have authority over men. They had to keep quiet. (If a nun teaching at Catholic school condemns our love, wouldn't she then be a hypocrite?) His reasons were because Adam was created first before Eve, and it was Eve who was deceived and broke God's law, not Adam. But, by having children a woman can be saved if she continues to have faith, love, and holiness with modesty. There goes that emphasis on procreating again — and there goes associating women (symbolized by Eve) as the evil protagonist of original sin and therefore giving them a lower status among males.

Statements like those signify how it was an accepted norm to oppress certain members of society; namely women. Later verses speak against oppression, yet they were able to justify themselves so well they couldn't even see this as oppression. Remember Exodus 22:21, 23:9, Proverbs 3:31, and Ecclesiastes 7:7 commands against oppression? We've come a long ways since then, but some theologians still observe oppression against some Christians; namely gay people. If there is a widespread belief that homosexuality is wrong, it should be counteracted by the widespread belief that

discrimination is also wrong.

Logic that assumes a feminine inability to refuse temptation seems very foreign and unenlightened in today's world of feminist activism. In the 17th century however, there was a widespread belief that men embody the rational nature of God and that women are emotional, lacking the higher ability to think rationally. At a basic level of their belief, the Fall was brought about due to Eve's inability to reason, for she could not hope to win a rational argument against Satan and was forced to depend on less reliable emotion to make her decision for her.

Some wealthy TV evangelists should take note of **Chapter 3**. Paul speaks about the kind of character church leaders should have. Among other things they must not love money and must welcome strangers into their home ("...given to hospitality,..." —**3:2** [KJV]). You'll recall earlier we covered the importance of being hospitable to strangers in Biblical times. Likewise, the helpers must not be greedy for money either.

Criticizers of our lifestyle should take special note of **4:4-5**, "Everything that God has created is good; nothing is to be rejected, but everything is to be received with a prayer of thanks, because the word of God and the prayer make it acceptable to God." — (TEV).

Sinners should be rebuked publicly so that the rest may be afraid (**5:20**). No one's privacy was respected.

After all these commands Paul wanted his people to act without prejudice or partiality to anyone in anything they did (**5:21**). He was even unable to see that he recommended that men get preferential treatment over women.

5:23 is clearly not meant for anyone but Timothy. Paul instructs him to stop drinking only water and take a little wine to help his stomach problem and other illnesses. Scripture often condemns drunkenness. Here it allows a little drinking in moderation for beneficial purposes. A distinction between use and abuse is clearly indicated. In the same analogy, there is a distinction between lust and love unseen in the homosexual context in Biblical days.

While on the subject of partiality, the **first two verses of Chapter 6** again command slaves how to act toward their masters. Timothy was told to teach and preach these things. Biblical people seemed unable to see slavery as something ungodly.

6:10; "For the love of money is the root of all evil:..." —(KJV). Throughout the ages some church doctrines have been corrupted to produce exorbitant incomes for their church coffers. The Papacy of old was not exempt from some horrendous practices. In view of this fact alone, the fact that we have been condemned by these "Christians" throughout history, even by our current Pope, is appalling. If they would have applied Jesus' teachings and remained true to His ways we would not have experienced the condemnations and oppression we have.

2 TIMOTHY

Paul's 2nd letter to Timothy, written while he was in a Roman dungeon awaiting execution, contained a lot of personal advice to Timothy.

Avoiding youthful lusts is mentioned (**2:22**).

3:1-9; Links "...lovers of pleasures..." —(KJV) and lusts with other undesirable deeds.

TITUS

Paul's letter to Titus, a young fellow worker, assistant, and supervisor of the church in Crete, gives advice much as his previous letters did.

Church leaders must be hospitable and not be greedy for money, along with the other instructions he previously gave **(1:5-9)**.

Older women are instructed to teach younger women to be good housewives who submit themselves to their husbands among other things **(2:3-5)**.

Slaves again are told to submit themselves to their masters and please them in all things and not talk back or steal **(2:9-10)**.

Avoid lusts **(2:12)**.

3:1; Instructs Titus to remind people to obey authorities over laws. As we've said before, in most states most consenting and mutually desired same gender sexual activity is legal, so we are obeying the authorities (law) when we have loving relationships.

PHILEMON

Philemon was a prominent Christian slave owner. His slave ran away, came in contact with Paul in prison, and became a Christian. Paul's letter to Philemon is an appeal to him to be reconciled to his slave whom Paul is sending back. The letter is a perfect gem for its courtesy, tact, delicacy, and generosity, climaxing with its tender appeal to Philemon to welcome him as a forgiven Christian brother. At no time does Paul suggest that slavery is wrong.

HEBREWS

This letter was written to a group of Jewish Christians facing opposition. Most authorities accept Paul as the author who wrote to encourage them in their faith. According to Moses' Law, almost everything is purified by blood, and sins are forgiven only if blood is poured out **(9:22)**. One reason this epistle was written was to show the relation of the Mosaic system to Christianity, and the former's symbolical and transitory character. It explains to the people that animal sacrifices, to which they were so zealously attached, were no longer of any use. The killing of a bullock or a lamb could never take away sin and these sacrifices had never been intended to be perpetual. They were planned to be a sort of age-long picture of the coming sacrifice of Christ, and now that Christ had come, they had served their purpose.

A brief mention is made against fornication and being profane **(12:16)**.

Welcome strangers in your home **(13:2)**. (In a day of dead-bolted doors, barred windows and doors, and alarmed homes this is no longer advisable.)

"Remember...those who are mistreated..." — **13:3** (NIV). Remember to not mistreat us any further traditional valued folks.

God will judge whoremongers and adulterers **(13:4)**, but homosexuality is not mentioned.

"Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have,..." — **13:5** (NIV). Hear that rich conservative TV preachers?

"Do not let all kinds of strange teachings lead you from the right way. It is good to receive inner strength from God's grace, and not by obeying rules about foods; those who

obey these rules have not been helped by them.” —**13:9** (TEV).

“Do not forget to do good and to help one another, because these are the sacrifices that please God.” —**13:16** (TEV).

JAMES

The letter from James, brother of Jesus, is a collection of practical instructions written to all of God’s people scattered over the whole world.

Lust is mentioned as something one is tempted into, that then brings forth sin and then death. (**1:14-15**).

In **2:1-13** James speaks against being prejudice. We must never treat people in different ways (show favoritism) according to their outward appearance or show them partiality. “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ [Lev. 19:18] you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.” —**2:8-10** (NIV).

People who show prejudice against gay people need to be reminded of these verses and encouraged to treat us as they would like to be treated. We of course need to act in ways to show others we are deserving of their respect.

Those who criticize our lifestyle should be advised of the various places in Scripture that prohibit us from judging one another, because only God will judge us. James references this in **4:11-12**.

1 PETER

Peter’s (one of Jesus’ original twelve Apostles) 1st letter was addressed to persecuted and suffering Christians scattered throughout northern Asia Minor to encourage them.

Peter tells his readers to avoid their, “...former lusts...” —**1:14** (KJV), and “...abstain from fleshly lusts...” —**2:11** (KJV).

Again we are reminded to obey all ordinances (laws) of man for the Lord’s sake (**2:13-14**), and again I say most of our consenting behavior is in most states legal.

Slaves are told to submit themselves and show complete respect to their masters whether they are gentle or harsh. They were to endure, without resentment, any suffering wrongfully administered (**2:18-20**). Shame on this kind of teaching. And they have the nerve to condemn us? It’s time the record gets set straight.

In **3:1-7** wives are again told to submit themselves to their husbands. They should not use outward aids to make themselves beautiful, such as fix their hair, wear jewelry, or put on fancy apparel. They are to have the unfading (natural) beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. Husbands should understand that their wives are the weaker sex and should be treated with respect.

In **4:1-6** lust is referenced again as something to avoid and again it is placed in the same context with lasciviousness, drunkenness, wild parties, idol worshiping, and the like.

In **4:9** we are again told to be hospitable to one another without grudging.

As I’ve mentioned before we each were given special unique qualities as gifts from God. This is spelled out in **4:10** where it’s acknowledged we each have different gifts and abilities. We should use these special gifts for the good of others and help them

understand God's *many* kinds of blessings in their various forms and aspects. The 10% of the community that happens to have a same gender orientation should be recognized as a special kind of people with an ability to contribute in our own special ways.

2 PETER

Peter's 2nd letter is addressed to a wide circle of early Christians to combat false teachings and immorality.

Lust is referenced as something to be avoided in **1:4**.

But further verses express qualities you need in abundance: goodness, faith, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (**1:5-7**).

"For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive..." —**1:8** (NIV). It should not be surprising to hear that these are qualities that many gay people already do possess.

False teachers will follow immoral ways (**2:2**).

Reference is made to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah "...with *their* unlawful deeds;..." —**2:6-8** (KJV) (notice plural) and what God did to them.

Those "...that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness,..." —**2:10** (KJV) are told they in particular will be punished.

These kinds are described in **2:13**, "...Pleasure for them is to do anything in broad daylight that will satisfy their bodily appetites;..." —(TEV). Further their eyes are full of adultery and they cannot cease from sin. They entice unstable souls and partake in greedy practices (**2:14**). Truly this does not describe one involved in an emotionally stable and loving relationship.

Those with the lusts of the flesh are said to be slaves of destructive habits, for a person is a slave if something controls him (**2:19**). In the modern day world this person is considered to be addicted in a compulsive way and it is considered a negative trait in a person's personality. Again the *distinct difference* between lust and relationship *must* be made.

1 JOHN

John's 1st letter also warns of false teaching and encourages readers about God and Jesus.

The lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes are briefly spoken bad of (**2:16**).

He instructs the people to love not just in words and talk, but it must be true love which shows itself in deeds and truths (**3:18**). These are exactly what loving relationships are. In fact there is a frequent recurrence of the word "love" throughout this epistle, which makes it breathe an atmosphere of tenderness, written by the one "...whom Jesus loved." —John 13:23 (KJV).

"Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us." —**3:21-24** (NIV).

These last two books show the considerable difference in meaning between merely

lust and a loving relationship.

JUDE

Jude (Judas, who was one of Jesus' brothers) wrote to warn against false teachings and immorality and to encourage his readers to fight for the faith. This letter is similar in content to 2 Peter.

Reference is made to ungodly men turning to lasciviousness (**4**).

Again Sodom & Gomorrah is referenced. This time we're told their actions consist of people "...giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh,..." —**7** (KJV).

Further references are made to lusts and in **verse 19** it is said that if you are sensual (lustful) you do not have the Spirit. That's a reasonable statement, but at the same time there are many deeply believing gay people. Again we must make the distinction between loving relationships and lust.

REVELATION

The Revelation of St. John was written to give hope and encouragement to persecuted and suffering Christians. For the most part the book consists of several series of revelations and spiritual visions presented in symbolic language that would have been understood by Christians of that day, but would have remained quite mysterious to all others. There are differences of opinion regarding some details of interpretation. Several verses speak of sexual lust, but, as has often happened before, it is associated and grouped with other evil deeds. Below we give a run down of these verses. None of them contain any mention of homosexuality at all.

In **2:14** eating things sacrificed to idols and committing fornication are mentioned together.

2:20-22; References fornication, adultery, and eating things sacrificed to idols together.

9:21; Fornication is classed with murders, witchcraft, and stealing.

In **14:8** Babylon fell because she led others into the wrath of her fornication.

Chapter 17 deals with a prostitute or a vision of one and her associated fornication and associated obscenity.

18:1-3, 9-10; Expands on the story of Babylon and the wrath of her fornication.

19:2; Contains another whore fornication reference.

21:8; Whoremongers, murderers, sorcerers, idol worshipers, liars, unbelieving, etc. are classed together.

21:27; Whatsoever worketh abomination, liars, and any thing that defileth are grouped together.

22:15; Idol worshipers, liars (both in words and deeds), murderers, whoremongers, and sorcerers are grouped together.

Every indication we've seen throughout the entire Bible shows the considerable distinction and difference between lust and loving relationships. This final book of the Bible is no different. If Revelation is a prophecy for the future, is it possible part of God's future plan is that we are to make the distinction and allow loving relationships whether those relationships are gay or non-gay?

CONCLUSION

We have seen that in the light of today's knowledge of the Bible and of human sexuality, the traditional effort to prove from Scripture and from the natural law that a gay orientation is contrary to the will of God no longer has any validity. The few references to homosexuality in Scripture are all in the context of pure lust rather than responsible loving relationships. In the Old Testament only Moses' Law prohibited it. In the New Testament while Jesus does not invalidate the Law, he personally makes no reference against homosexuality. Later Paul says Jesus' coming replaced the Law. Faith and love in Jesus Christ is what is important now, yet Paul still prohibits all same gender encounters. As before, they are always referred to in the context of lust. When interpreted too narrowly and separately, there seems to be too much contradiction. In concluding, when Scripture interprets Scripture within the framework of the entire Bible, we are given a wider and truer perspective. When this is done, all the evidence beyond a reasonable doubt then points to no clear conclusive prohibition against loving, responsible gay relationships. And that is what it's all about — *RELATIONSHIP!*

Well, that's about it — much longer than I expected (certainly longer than I ever dreamed of when I began this project in April 1987), considering that the Bible actually says so little about homosexual practices and nothing about sexual orientation! Since so little is said, it is much more reliable to turn to the great principles of the Gospel taught by Jesus Christ and the Apostles. *Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. Do not judge others, lest you be judged. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love...against such there is no law.* One thing is abundantly clear, as Paul stated in Galatians 5:14: "the *whole* Law is fulfilled in one statement, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*'"

As we see, the Bible does have a lot to say about God's love for us. For me, the main point of the Bible, of the Christian faith, is that God does love us, *all* of us in our own unique ways, stays with us, and forever offers healing and wholeness. We live, and move, and have our being — including our sexual being — within the sphere of God's love. I agree with St. Paul that lust and sacred worship of anything or anyone other than God could separate us from God. I agree with Jesus that all things are to be based on love of God and love of neighbor. In the end, Jesus will base all on love of God and love of neighbor — *even* our sexuality!

We've covered a lot of ground, perhaps even gotten a little sidetracked. I hope I have been able to impart to you, the reader, at least a bit of what I've discovered over the years; the joy of living, the joy of being gay, the irresistible power of divine love and its healing strength, and the fact that we, as sentient beings, have the knowledge to choose between accepting our natural selves or rejecting our selves. I vote on the side of acceptance. Always be yourself, and to that self — be true! May you too find peace and self-acceptance.

Gay people *can* be Christians too & children of Jesus' redeeming love!

PRAISE GOD!!!



WHY GOD MADE FRIENDS

God made the world
With a heart full of love,
Then He looked down
From Heaven above,
And saw that we all need
A helping hand,
Someone to share with,
Who'll understand.

He made special people
[special in unique ways]
To see us through
The glad times
And the sad times, too,
A person on whom
We can always depend,
Someone we
Can call a friend.

God made friends
[many different kinds]
So we'll carry a part
Of His perfect love
In all our hearts.

—Jill Wolf

Seeing Yourself Through the Eyes of God...

God says in the Scriptures that you are a wonderful (unique) expression of His creativity. But is that how you see yourself? If not, here's help on how to gain Godly self-respect — and therefore free yourself to be a more vigorous and effective gay Christian.

In *Loving Gay Relationships and the Bible; A pro-gay Biblical-Christian perspective*, author Thomas L. Larsen, a gay Christian, enthusiastically encourages and helps you to overcome wrong views of yourself that can lead to depression, guilt, and persistent spiritual defeat. By understanding God's Word, gay Christians can harmonize their natural uniqueness into a Christian belief.

Chapters one and two deal with helping the reader acquire an increased understanding for the many facets of this unique and harmless orientation beyond sexuality and the special relationships that are possible. Positive ideas are presented so that gay people everywhere can rejoice in being true to *their* own natural feelings of attraction towards others of the same gender. Readers are taught to value integrity, creativity, and individuality, and to devalue traditional conformity. You don't need a traditional peg on which to hang a moral relationship. The Bible cannot be adequately comprehended except against the historic background which occasioned its writing. Therefore, ancient Middle Eastern beliefs and practices are examined to aid in comprehending the root and evolution of anti-gay views throughout the centuries of church teachings. Our study also includes some preliminary information and insight about Scriptural teachings and meanings, the Bible's authors and translators, and the ancient and much different Biblical world. This helps the reader gain a clearer understanding of what was relayed to us from God in the Bible and how it should be interpreted in a freer manner in today's world.

Chapter three delves directly into Scripture and comments on those chapters and verses of interest to our study here. We are able to examine many of the religious and social customs, beliefs, traditions, rituals, rules, and commands of the ancient Biblical world and get a "feel" for the times and cultures involved. In the end we see responsible and mutual loving gay relationships are moral and in complete conformity with the Bible's teachings of compassion and hospitality towards one another.

Learn to respect yourself as God does. Here's how you can see yourself
(and your uniqueness) through His eyes!

Gay people *can* be Christians too!

Christians *can* be gay too!

Gay people *are* family members too!

"Traditional" families *have* gay children too!

PRAISE GOD!!!