

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES: Segment 6

Homosexuality, Part 1: A Commentary

by Ildefonso J. Rubrico

Good evening, esteemed viewers of this program, **Biblical Perspectives!** This is your host, **Nene Rubrico**, as he brings to you in the next 30 minutes the important lessons we all learn as we view various social issues under the lens of the Bible.

I constantly remind myself that my primary work in this television program is to propound and expound on the issues that constantly and critically bear upon the life of a Christian community such as ours - social and religious issues that bear watching because they impinge upon the moral fabric of our people and our ability to build a strong, God-fearing nation imbued with solid spiritual values.

This is what we have been trying to do the last several weeks, and this is what we are hoping to accomplish in your behalf, our esteemed viewers.

So, for tonight's session, and for the next several sessions, we will tackle a new, but, controversial subject: **homosexuality**. It is, I believe, a topic that is unlike any other, not only because it is generating hot controversy in the church now, but also because it is posing a new moral challenge to traditional Christianity. The "New Ethics" of the so-called Gay Culture run the whole gamut of language and behavior, science and law, religious ethics, and even, spiritual values.

During the next several minutes, we will be talking about homosexuality - what it's all about; who (or what are homosexuals); its impact on our society; who are its champions and detractors, and why certain groups take adversarial and militant stands in its defense, as

well as of those who oppose it; and so on. And perhaps, for our purpose here - *what the Bible teaches about homosexuality, and what should the proper Christian response be.*

The Changing Views on Homosexuality

Past, present and future views about homosexuality in our society are *changing* - rapidly in some societies but slowly in most others. Many views about homosexuality are still conservative and traditional, as in the Philippines and most Asian countries and in Latin America. Even the Church has maintained its traditional stance and opposition to homosexuality in general.

But some people have taken an increasingly-liberal attitude towards homosexuality, especially in Western countries in Europe and the United States. In particular, the "gay rights" movement and the feminist movement in the early 1960s in parts of the United States and Europe became a springboard for mass actions by gay advocates and feminists in the streets, in the academic halls of colleges and universities, and in the powerful lobby circles of Congress and the White House. In the beginning, at least, much of the success of the feminists and gays was that they made common cause with the marchers for civil liberties (like Dr. Martin Luther King) and the defenders "human rights" (like former U.S. president Jimmy Carter).

Some people claim homosexuality has always been around us for the past thousands of years, and will remain so for many thousands more in the future. Some claim homosexuality is "something you are born with," a kind of "third sex" and is therefore only *natural*. A small minority openly flaunt their sexual preference by establishing gay "communities" and even gay "churches." However, most still prefer to hide their sexual orientation - they be male or female. Many who are

brave enough to admit they are homosexuals say they are uncomfortable with "it" but confess to being helpless about what to do with it. Faced with the ridicule of peers, rejection by one or both parents and siblings, and the social stigma of being "different," many are driven to seek the companionship of other like-minded individuals. Here, at last, they say: "*I have found acceptance! At long last, I am now counted as important by folks who are like myself, and who understand what I feel,*" or so goes the usual testimonies and confessions of many men and women who have taken the drastic step of joining gay groups.

Unfortunately, many have also become sick, or have died of, *AIDS* and other *sexually-transmitted diseases (STDS)*. We will treat the medical and psychological dangers of the "gay lifestyle" in a later segment.

It should be obvious that a 25- to 30-minute TV presentation like our present **Biblical Perspectives** program will not be adequate to cover such a broad topic as homosexuality. Nor is it intended to do so. My aim here is to briefly touch only on the relevant aspects of homosexuality, giving it an overall, but, balanced view.

As your program host, I also realize the controversial nature of this topic. Some of you may ask: "Why talk about homosexuality at all, where people might just get their feelings hurt?" Or, say: "Homosexuals are just like other people, except that they have special feelings for others of their own sex. There's nothing with that!"

One guy, a self-confessed homosexual male, wrote his feelings recently in a message board of the internet in this manner:

"Oh well, Geoff [Geoff is another email writer in the forum], I respect your views. I love being gay. I love my life, and I have contributed more to society than

many other straight guys and gals. I go on with my life because I know whoever is up there loves me for who and what I am.

"To those who don't think homosexuality is a disease, thanks. To those who do believe that it is, thanks, too for making the discussion fiery. I'm so gay I truly don't get affected anymore by anything that is said about us.

"Ms. L [his friend], you know me. I may be very romantic as a person but in the end I am just like anyone else. In this world, it won't really matter if you're straight or not, it's how you live your life. Thanks for the really nice words. C'est la vie!"

As expressed by this person I just quoted, most homosexuals would rather be left alone to themselves. However, this is not entirely true. Many other homosexuals like to get noticed and will do everything in their power to attract attention! Just take a look at most of our TV programs that feature gay hosts, where they scream and gesticulate wildly for the camera.

He also claims he has "contributed more to society" than other 'straights' (non-homosexual persons). This may or may not be true, but the fact is, homosexuals are found in all levels of society although they are not as numerous as first thought. There is also a deplorable tendency of gay persons to claim that others are like them, homosexuals. There is, for example, a shadowy group of U.S. homosexuals who claim that Jesus was a gay person and whose disciples were also gay. In fact, a play was made from it entitled "Corpus Christi" (Body of Christ) 15 years ago, but was a big flop. Then a movie was supposed to have been made from it but it never was made.¹

Another website asking "King James a homosexual?," at http://www.chick.com/reading/books/158/158_03.asp, debunks the

fantastic claim that James I, king of England, under whose patronage the 1611 English version of the Bible was produced, was - in reality - a homosexual. The charge had been made by one of King James' enemies, Anthony Weldon, who wrote about the king's alleged homosexuality 25 years after the king had died but who never offered proof for his allegation.

Finally, the email writer above claims that he is comfortable with his being a gay person because "whoever is up there loves me for who and what I am." Presumably, this "whoever" is God who loves him for who or what he is - that is, a homosexual.

It is of course true that God loves all sinners (after all, as best-selling Christian author Phillip Yancey wrote, Jesus himself although without sin, was a friend of sinners). What is NOT true, however, is that Jesus condones the sin. The Samaritan woman who groveled at Jesus' feet, asking for his forgiveness for having had six "husbands" ('lovers' would be a more-accurate description for this loose woman), Jesus replied: "your sins are forgiven. Go, and sin no more!" In other words, had the woman persisted in her adultery, do you think Jesus would have forgiven her? Not at all!

To put it another way, professing to claim God's all-embracing love WITHOUT repentance in one's heart is dangerous. It PRESUMES too much about God's love for His children but forgetting that His *Holiness* and *Just* attributes simply cannot go hand-in-hand with sin.

Thus, while we can commend that email writer for being quite honest about his "gay-ness," we are not ready on the other hand to endorse his sexual orientation, much less approve of his actions. As we will later detail in this program, the Bible contains many warnings against homosexuality, both in the Old and New Testaments.

Finally, there is one disturbing development of homosexuality that should be mentioned. This is about the insistence of homosexuals now - both men and women - to be legally wed by the State and to be recognized as such as married couples, with the same rights and privileges as a heterosexual marriage (that is, marriage between a man and a woman). While not yet a problem in the Philippines, same-sex marriage is a BIG issue in the United States. In fact, it is going to be one of the pivotal issues in the upcoming November 2004 U.S. presidential elections together with terrorism and the war on Iraq, according to political analysts.

On the other hand, I recall the PDI last year carried a news caption about some Filipino gays being married by in Baguio City. The marriage ceremony for 17 gay couple was solemnized in secret by an American "pastor," according to the news. Same-sex marriage is not recognized in the Philippines, and pastors and priests must have a Philippine license before they can solemnize a marriage.

Homosexuality: A Growing Social Problem

A few years ago, a magazine that champions the cause of a group of people known as gays and lesbians carried a news item about the case of 20 Filipinos being deported from the country of Qatar, a country bordering the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Middle East. The charge, according to a Filipino embassy official, was that these Filipinos were suspected of being gay, or "bakla," of being a homosexual. The story was first reported by the Associated Press that said that the 20 Pinoys were first detained by Qatar Police, following a massive sweep of an area believed to cater to gay men. All of those arrested were male Philippine citizens working legally in clothing and barber shops in the capital of Doha. The establishments were apparently under surveillance for several months. The embassy

official also told AP that 16 more were awaiting deportation on similar charges.

If convicted, those under detention face five years in prison before being eligible for deportation.

The following month, the neighboring state of Kuwait conducted a similar crackdown targeting Filipino men working as barbers and clothiers in Dubai. The subsequent deportations were at the time explained to be part of a larger government effort to rid the country of "undesirable elements" though no other aspects of the program were revealed to journalists.

Kuwaiti officials alleged that the men they detained and deported used the hair salons as a front to mask a brisk business in illegal sexual services, presumably for an all-male Kuwaiti clientele.

Though Philippine officials did not link the actions in Qatar and Kuwait, the existence of an enormously-lucrative male prostitution ring, headquartered in Manila, is believed to be in operation in countries throughout the Middle East.

In a more recent development, only about two weeks ago, the Governor of the U.S. State of New Jersey, James McGreevey, publicly announced his resignation after revealing that he is gay and that he had an adulterous affair with a man.

With his wife standing by his side, McGreevey -- a father of two -- spoke in calm tones as he described his struggle with his sexuality, "a certain sense that separated me from others." It was something that he said began as a child.

"At a point in every person's life, one has to look deeply into the mirror of one's soul and decide one's unique truth in the world, not as we may want to see it or hope to see it, but as it is," McGreevey said.

"And so, my truth is that I am a gay American," the Governor, who is a Democrat, said. Considered a political rising star, McGreevey, 47, won his seat in 2001 over a veteran opponent by a wide margin over the issue of corruption of state funds.

According to CNN, McGreevey became involved with a young Israeli whom he had hired as a highly-paid security consultant when he first took office in 2002. CNN revealed that a sexual harassment case had been readied by this man against Gov. McGreevey just recently. It was speculated that McGreevey was forced to resign when the Israeli consultant's lawyer tried to negotiate a cash settlement with him for five million dollars in exchange for dropping the sexual harassment charges against him.

But even churches are not immune to the controversies surrounding homosexual prelates. Only last year, the election of the Rt. Rev. Gene Robinson, a high-ranking Episcopalian minister, caused a serious split in the Anglican Church of America (which traces its roots from the Church of England). His election last month as the first openly-gay bishop in the Episcopal diocese of New Hampshire, USA, is now threatening to crack open the long-existing fault line over homosexuality in the worldwide Anglican Communion, a global association of churches in 164 countries. Rev. Robinson used to be married several yrs. back, had a son by his wife, then got divorced 15 years ago, and is now living with his long-time male partner.

Twenty four conservative American bishops, in an open letter released to the public, warned that they would join conservative leaders in Africa, Asia and South America and break ties with the Episcopal Church USA if it votes to confirm New Hampshire's chosen bishop, V. Gene Robinson, or if it endorses a separate resolution to create a blessing for same-sex unions. There are about 300 active and retired American bishops. Not long

after that confrontation with the bishops, Rev. Gene Robinson was elected as head of the Episcopalian church in America by a slim majority of votes, effectively ignoring the threat of secession by the conservative U.S. bishops.

Said Bishop-elect Robinson in a telephone interview from New Hampshire on Thursday: "It breaks my heart if any of them choose to leave. But if they leave it's because they are choosing to leave, and they are choosing to divide this communion, not me."

"I am not willing to take responsibility for the future of the Anglican Church," he added.

In another yet ongoing scandal involving the Roman Catholic church this time, the New York Times internet edition dated September 9, 2003 reported that the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston had agreed today to pay \$85 million to settle almost 550 lawsuits by people who say they were sexually abused by priests. The settlement is the largest ever by an American diocese to resolve sexual abuse cases.

The deal was reached after three days of intense negotiations, and is considered a personal triumph for Boston's new archbishop, Sean P. O'Malley.

Archbishop O'Malley took over in Boston only in late July, seven months after his predecessor, Cardinal Bernard F. Law, resigned under pressure, and the new prelate made resolving the sexual abuse scandal his priority.

As if to compound the already confusing situation, only the other week, the Associated Press bannered a story where the California Supreme Court voided the nearly 4,000 same-sex marriages sanctioned in San Francisco this year and ruled unanimously that the mayor overstepped his authority by issuing licenses to gay and lesbian couples. The State Supreme Court said the

city illegally issued the certificates and performed the ceremonies, since state law defined marriage as a *union between a man and woman*. The justices separately decided with a 5-2 vote to nullify the 3,995 marriages performed between February 12 and March 11, when the court halted the weddings. Their legality, Justice Joyce Kennard wrote, must wait until courts resolve the constitutionality of state laws that restrict marriages to opposite-sex couples.

In a related development from the Yahoo! Internet edition, the American Civil Liberties Union (or, ACLU), a U.S. activist organization of lawyers and jurists for the defense of civil liberties, sued the city of Baltimore and four Maryland counties for the right of same-sex couples to marry. The lawsuit was filed in Baltimore Circuit Court on behalf of nine couples and a man whose partner recently died. The couples had sought marriage licenses and were denied, said Ken Choe of the ACLU's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, based in New York.

Maryland law specifically defines marriage as between a man and a woman. In February, Attorney General Joseph Curran sent a memo to state legislators and the 24 clerks of the court reminding them that clerks are *not* authorized to issue licenses to gay couples.

Curran issued a statement Wednesday saying the law "unambiguously defines marriage in a way that excludes same-sex couples." But, he said, "it seems appropriate that the issue, which has been framed as a matter of civil rights, be decided by the courts."

The ACLU has pending legal challenges in Massachusetts, Oregon, New York, Washington State, California and Nebraska.

Other groups have filed lawsuits in New Jersey and Florida to legalize gay marriage. On the other hand, it will prove to be an uphill battle for ACLU. Already, 37

states, comprising 74 percent of the Union, have passed measures defining marriage as between men and women.

And, even as I write this commentary on this issue of homosexuality, the breaking news I just received from CNN is that of a conservative congressman from Virginia, Rep. Ed Schrock, unexpectedly dropping his bid for a third term in the face of unverified allegations that he called a gay phone sex line. Allegations that Schrock is gay were posted on the Web site blogactive.com by Michael Rogers, according to The Associated Press. Congressman Schrock, who plans to serve out the remainder of his second term, has been a leading supporter of the *Federal Marriage Amendment*, a proposed constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage.

What is Homosexuality?

There is an unusual stir when Johnny Depp, the Oscar-Nominated actor in Hollywood who was named People magazine's "sexiest man alive in 2003," is said to play the starring role in "The Libertine," a movie about 17th Century poet John Wilmot, also known as the Earl of Rochester. Why so? The Earl was rumored to be bisexual, and in that movie, Depp and another handsome, though, unknown, actor by the name of Rupert Friend, will have some fairly-heavy kissing scenes between the two of them.

Johnny Depp joins a growing list of Hollywood actors who have played gay or bisexual characters on screen.

Several months back, when British singer Britney Spears performed a slow, provocative 'French kiss' with her older counterpart, the American singer Madonna, before a live concert audience and viewed by thousands of fans on TV, many people were shocked and offended. The entertainment sponsors of the event had to issue a

written apology for the behavior of the two. Many people were repelled, it seemed, not by their act of innocent and sisterly 'beso-beso,' but because it oozed with a sexual intimacy that flaunted their supposed sexual liberation for everyone to see!

Contrast now the blatant kissing act of Britney Spears and Madonna to an interview in Discovery Channel of a scantily-clad warrior in the jungles of Papua New Guinea. In guileless - almost, childlike, fashion - he describes in matter-of-fact way how he and his wife do the sex act. Yet we the TV listeners sense no trace of narcissistic malice in his words. Unlike a certain early-morning TV host in Metro Manila, whose loud antics in front of the cameras are akin to childish behaviour that I would term "calling attention to one's actions," or what the Tagalogs would call as "nag-papapansin."

A retired university professor, a grandmother, once wrote in the PDI, complaining about invasion of "faggotry" in mass media which, she said, was harmful to our children. This professor taught Communications subjects in college and claimed to know just how influential television can become to values formation, particularly among the minds of the young.

Summary

At this point of our discussion on homosexuality, we shall take a much-deserved break from this highly-controversial but interesting topic.

But for our esteemed over the air waves, here's good news to our Cebuano listeners:

Watch for the **Cebuano** version of this program, to be aired either this week or next week!

Due to numerous requests, your program host has decided to express his biblical commentaries also in our beloved Cebuano language. This way, we in Biblical

Perspectives are hoping to reach more people, by expressing ourselves in Cebuano. Henceforth, Biblical Perspectives will be in a new format: English and Cebuano versions alternating weekly. Please watch for further announcements.

Meanwhile, this is again your humble host for this program, **Biblical Perspectives**, bidding you a pleasant good night for now. Your host, **Nene Rubrico**, reminds you in Proverbs 29:18a, that:

"A nation can save itself from perishing if its people has vision."

Thank you very much for your time!

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