

Critique

Helping Christians Develop Skill in Discernment

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Editor's Note



One of the most challenging aspects of editing *Critique* is finding creative and varied ways to help our readers sharpen their skill in discernment. Though we hope that goal is evident in everything we publish, it finds particular fulfillment in The Discerning

Life. This column contains exercises in discernment, practical case studies in which Christians must make choices on issues which are not specifically addressed in the Scriptures. Such as how to respond when a non-Christian friend asks us to help him move in with his unmarried lover. It's not that the word of God has nothing to say on the topic, but simply that there is no particular text which spells out exactly what to do in such a situation.

So, we must learn to be discerning, identifying what exactly is at stake, and then determining what biblical principles of faithfulness apply. Since we live in an increasingly pluralistic world, we should expect such situations to increase, which means it would be wise to prayerfully consider such things ahead of time.

Most of the time The Discerning Life simply details the case studies, along with some questions to help us reflect on and discuss it. Occasionally, however, we take one of the case studies and spell out an attempt to think Christianly about it. In this issue, I continue a discussion which began back in *Critique* #4-2000. In that issue I reproduced an amusing—and rather cynical—letter addressed to radio talk show host Dr. Laura which was posted on the Internet. The writer had objected to her speaking out against homosexual behavior, and appealing to Old Testament law as her authority.

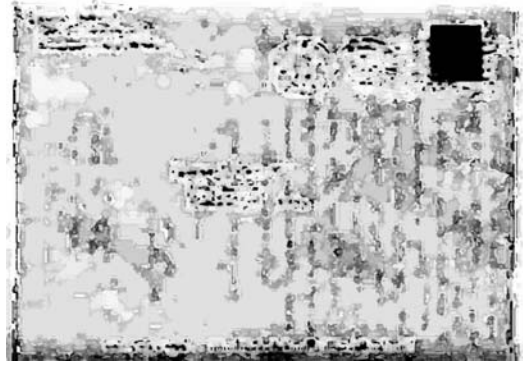
I was interested to discover that a number of readers had been confronted by similar challenges, and so I determined this was a case study worthy of some response. In *Critique* #1-2001, I addressed the first part of the case study, namely the controversy around Dr. Laura speaking against homosexuality on her program. In this *Critique*, I tackle the other issue involved, namely the Christian understanding of Old Testament law. And since the question of homosexuality is at the heart of this case study, we are including an essay by Mardi Keyes on that as well.

I enjoy leading discussions on these case studies. They are usually helpful, always animated, and frequently revealing. They allow the opportunity to think in the light of Scripture, going back to the text to determine exactly what faithfulness looks like in our post-Christian world. It is harder to write a response, like I do in this issue, if for no other reason that so much could be explored that might prove helpful. There isn't one neat answer to be given, but an array of texts and ideas that shed light. So I find myself editing and reediting, and in the end, being satisfied with an article that is always, somehow incomplete.

When we set aside a full page in each issue for Dialogue, the goal was to provide an opportunity for our readers to weigh in on such topics. To join the conversation by fleshing out the arguments, adding to the ideas, or to perhaps disagree and explain why. A few publications (for example, *First Things*) have a lively letters section in which readers extend discussions found in the magazine's pages—and as a result enrich it. I would like Dialogue to do the same for *Critique*. My response in The Discerning Life is incomplete, but I have to be satisfied with it for now. More needs to be said. And it will be very satisfying if you, dear reader, help complete the discussion. ■

~Denis Haack

Dialogue



On the “right” answer, learning to communicate, and Potter.

You are invited to take part in *Critique’s* Dialogue. Address all correspondence to:

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or e-mail:
marsena@itis.com

Unfortunately, we are unable to respond personally to all correspondence received, but each one is greatly appreciated. We reserve the right to edit letters for length.

We think the new format is great—and, I don’t mind the lack of three hole punches... have figured out how to do that on our own. The layout is attractive and the use of high quality paper makes each issue look fresh and compelling.

I think your encouragement of a dialogue with your readers has been a big plus. Sure some of what you choose to write about and some of your views may be controversial (I think most discerning people recognize that one’s views are safe from rebuttal or criticism when not shared with anyone else) but this is where Christians seem to be especially weak.

For some reason we are hung up on proving that there is only one right answer to everything because there is only one Truth. In a perfect world this would be true, but...we need to see that what our culture says requires a response and that developing that response will often require a thinking—dialogue — thinking—dialogue...*Critique*, and specifically the Dialogue section, provides an effective forum for this to occur.

Terry Opgenorth
Racine, WI

The questions on discernment help me think through something myself before I launch into a discussion with a non-believer. These are EXCELLENT!

The recommendation to “find agreement first” has begun to revolutionize my communication with my husband and others! I didn’t realize how negative I was or how I enjoyed pouncing on others until I started trying to do this.

You have helped me learn to ask questions FIRST instead of trying to answer the question I think they are asking, which many times is not their question but is merely the answer I have ready to give! My non-Christian friends find a more listening ear (I hope),

instead of a ready scriptural “pounce” on what I think they need to hear.

Melinda Brown
Plano, TX

In reading and letting people know about their gullibility in believing the erroneous e-mail from the *Onion* [*Critique* #1-2000, p. 2], I noticed there is no footnote from the *Onion*—so how do I know that I’m not being doubly led astray from the truth?

Harriet Braun
St Cloud, MN

Denis Haack replies:

I apologize for not noting my source; I assumed that simply mentioning *The Onion* would be sufficient for people to check out my claim by locating the original article on their web site. See “Harry Potter Books Spark Rise in Satanism Among Children” (http://www.theonion.com/onion3625/harry_potter.html). The fact the misleading email was taken from *The Onion* was also reported in the October 14, 2000 issue of *World* magazine (“Peeling the Onion”) p. 9, and repeated in the December 30, 2000/January 6, 2001 issue (“Potterville”) p. 42. Further, *The Onion* article (and erroneous email) quotes author J. K. Rowling from an interview they say was published in *The London Times*—another source easily checked, and which reveals the “interview” to also be a hoax.

What is sad is not simply that the e-mail was distributed so widely and believed so passionately by so many Christians, but that the truth about it was so easy to ascertain.

Responding to Questions

The conversation continues.

Here's the situation: A non-Christian friend asks how I can possibly take Old Testament laws against homosexuality seriously when other laws make provisions I obviously reject—such as buying slaves or stoning someone who works on the Sabbath.

You may notice this is actually a continuation of a discussion which began in *Critique* #4-2000. In that issue (pp. 4-5) I raised an exercise in discernment around a letter to Dr. Laura which was posted on the Internet. The writer objected to her appeal to Old Testament law to characterize homosexuality as an “abomination,” and asked her advice. “I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath,” the writer says. “Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him?”

I noted there were two issues worth discussing. The first involves the controversy surrounding the comments Dr. Laura allegedly made on her radio program—which I addressed in *Critique* #1-2001 (pp. 4-6). The second involves explaining the Christian's approach to Old Testament law in general, and to homosexuality more specifically. Both of these are addressed in this article (on law) and in Mardi Keyes' essay (on homosexuality).

I am going to approach this as if it were a conversation with a friend; not merely as a response to the letter addressed to Dr. Laura. I will begin with what I'd probably say to my friend, then give more details (which could be discussed if my friend is interested and the conversation warrants), and finally raise a few questions.

Remember this is supposed to be a conversation. Christian apologetics—

especially when responding to challenges raised by non-Christian friends—does not mean winning an argument. It must be, rather, an open-hearted effort within a give-and-take conversation to provide meaningful reasons for our faith. Our goal is not to win a debate, but to listen with care and to speak with warmth. And since Christ taught that the final apologetic is love, our attempt to speak the truth must be matched with an ongoing and practical effort to live out that truth in committed friendship, even at cost.

Our goal is not to win a debate, but to listen with care and to speak with warmth.

Since this is a conversation, much more could and should be said. I would invite you to join this ongoing conversation by telling us via email or snail mail what you would say, and why.

What I'd probably say...

Good question. Your question assumes that all the Old Testament laws are equally valid today, but that's not the Christian understanding. I do believe God has revealed himself in the Bible, and so I take his law seriously, but not the way your question implies. More important, though, as a Christian I am called to follow Jesus, and he came as a servant, not a judge. He treated every person as created in God's image, as precious, worthy not only of true friendship, but actually worth even dying for. I, too, am to be a servant and friend, not a judge.

If the conversation warrants...

As a Christian I believe Jesus is both divine Lawgiver and Judge, but when he entered space and time as a baby in Bethlehem, he came as a Servant. He did not come to make sure the laws and penalties listed in the Old Testament were followed. Nor was his ministry like that of the Old Testament prophet Elijah who warned the people about worshipping idols, and when they wouldn't stop, taunted the priests of Baal, and finally executed them (1 Kings 18:16-46). Instead, Jesus befriended people like prostitutes who would have been executed if the law had been followed (Matthew 11:19). He was never dismissive of sinners, but loved them, and didn't even judge those who rejected him. He even prayed for the people who crucified him, that God might forgive them. And to make all this clear to his followers, he told them he had the power to judge and punish (Matthew 26:52-54), but refused to use it.

One time Jesus was walking with his disciples through a province known as Samaria (John 4)—which Jews avoided since they hated the Samaritans. In any case, tired and thirsty, he asked a Samaritan woman for a drink and soon they were talking not just about water, but about spiritual thirst, about the yearning for transcendence. Jesus makes the astounding claim to be the source of what satisfies that yearning, but the woman deflects the issue, implying she has no such yearning that needs to be fulfilled. So Jesus asks her to go get her husband, but she has none, she says. Quite right, Jesus replies—you've had five husbands, and you are living with a man

about OT Law

right now without being married. The woman is shocked that he knows this, and realizes she is talking to a prophet. In asking that simple question, Jesus put his finger on the evidence of her spiritual yearning, a yearning that has driven her from relationship to relationship seeking something that will finally satisfy. It's the turning point in the conversation, and she quickly comes to believe in him, becoming his disciple. But notice: this sort of sexual behavior would have warranted death under the law, but Jesus never chides her for her behavior. He brings it up not to judge her, but to help her face her spiritual yearning and his ability to satisfy it.

What is more, Christ calls his disciples to follow his example. We're supposed to love people, not judge them (Luke 9:51-56). Judging would be arrogant, since if the law tells me anything, it tells me I am a sinner. I have broken God's law, and am in need of divine forgiveness. I am sent not to judge, which God reserves for himself alone, but to represent Christ as an agent of reconciliation and healing and grace and forgiveness.

Christians will be concerned about all sorts of cultural and moral issues, because Christ is Lord of all. Nevertheless, whatever we say and do about such issues must never subvert our calling as his ambassadors of reconciliation. The test of our faithfulness in this is not merely that we speak the truth, but also that our fellow-sinners can be our friends. After all, that was the response sinners had to Christ. He was perfectly righteous, never compromising, but rather than his righteousness repelling sinners, they were attracted to him—they invited him home, ate dinner with him, and wanted to talk. My desire is that even after I have explained the Christian understanding of homosexuality, homosexuals will feel welcome to talk to me, knowing that I neither hate nor despise

them, but desire to be their friend. They may still reject me, of course, but this must be my goal. "Unless we demonstrate grace," Jerram Barrs insists, "we have been unfaithful to Christ. To what extent? Until they crucify us. To want to judge our enemies now may seem natural, but it is anti-gospel and anti-Christ. It is similar to Peter saying No to the cross because he wanted his agenda of Christ's enthronement as King and Judge to occur instead. And to that Christ said, 'Get behind me, Satan.'"

One of the stories that captures my imagination is of the hero who dies so another can live. It's one reason why *The Matrix* and *Saving Private Ryan* are such compelling films. These stories of redemption touch us deeply, and I believe they find their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. He is the innocent one who served even though it cost him his life.

Just as Christ took the Old Testament seriously—as the word of God—so I must take it seriously as his follower. Taking it seriously, however, means I must make proper distinctions about the various types of laws found in the Old Testament. (This isn't merely the Christian understanding, by the way. It's a Jewish understanding as well.) Old Testament law falls naturally into a number of different categories, and those categories matter.

The political, economic, or judicial laws, for example, applied directly to ancient Israel when the people of God were a single nation. In Christ, however, the church is transnational (1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 7:9), so they don't apply directly to the church today. Then there's the ceremonial law, involving issues of purity and diet which were explicitly given to make God's Old Testament people separate from the surrounding pagan nations (Deuteronomy 4:5-8; Mark 7:15-19; 1 Timothy 4:3-5). The New Testament makes clear that Christians no longer have to regard certain foods as unclean.

The sacrificial laws were fulfilled in

Christ, who came as the ultimate sacrifice, the Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 9:11-10:18). Taking Old Testament sacrificial law seriously as a Christian means I understand it as no longer directly applicable because in Christ it finds its final fulfillment.

And finally there is the moral law, echoed in both Old and New Testaments, and summarized in the Ten Commandments. As a Christian I believe it reveals a basis for ethics. The Old Testament laws dealing with homosexual behavior are part of the moral law and are echoed in the New Testament (Romans 1), unlike, for example, the ceremonial food laws which are repealed (Acts 10). And though I reject public denunciations of certain sins as "abominations," I believe the moral law of the Bible reflects a deep understanding of what it means to be human, providing a basic ethical framework for living together in community.

Questions I might ask...

Are you really interested in talking about Old Testament law? Or is this really about the Christian understanding of homosexuality? (See the article by Mardi Keyes in this *Critique*). Would you be willing to read an article on the Christian understanding of homosexuality, while I read one of your choice—and then discuss them?

Do you feel judged by me? By other Christians? How do I/we communicate it?

How do you determine right and wrong? How do you know you are right? What happens if you are wrong?

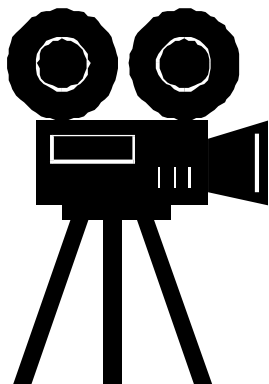
Have you ever read the story of Christ in the New Testament for yourself? Would you like to read through a gospel with me? ■

~Denis Haack

Sources: The quotes by Barrs and much of this material is adapted from a lecture by Jerram Barrs given at the 2001 Schaeffer Institute Summer Study Program.

The Darkened Room

Tasteful Tolerance



by Denis Haack

A review of **Chocolat**

Chocolat is a charming movie, a whimsical fairy tale that takes place “once upon a time” in an isolated and far-off French village. It is also a postmodern fable about neo-paganism, Christianity, and the quest for tolerance in a pluralistic world.

Lansquenet was an orderly village, pious and tranquil, until one evening at the beginning of Lent “a sly wind blew in from the north,” bringing with it Vianne (Juliette Binoche), and her daughter Anouk. From the beginning there is trouble. The townspeople, under the ever vigilant eye of the self-righteous Comte de Reynaud (Alfred Molina), are outraged and offended that not only does this single mother not attend church, she opens a *chocolaterie* during Lent. Vianne’s kindness, good humor, and delectable chocolates soon win her customers, however, and slowly her shop becomes a shelter for people burdened by brokenness—hurts which have never been allowed to break through the guarded tranquility of village life.

Josephine (played by Lena Olin, the wife of director Hallström) moves in with Vianne, leaving her abusive husband, Serge, finding not only shelter and friendship, but a chance to be creative in helping Vianne make the various chocolates which fill the shop’s displays. Armande, a bitter grandmother, played wonderfully by Judi Dench, long estranged from her daughter Caroline, soon warms to Vianne’s welcome and begins to repair the broken relationship with her grandson Luc. Even Reynaud’s fierce armor is pierced, as we

discover his deep grief over the fact that his wife is not on the extended shopping trip he claims, but has left him. More outsiders arrive, this time a traveling band of “river rats,” gypsies who live on house barges on the river, further polarizing the village. By now, culture war has been openly declared. Vianne’s lifestyle is an affront to the villagers’ Christian faith, and the Comte organizes his forces to rid his town of the outsiders who refuse to conform.

Throughout Vianne’s shop there are strange artifacts from a pagan past, and her chocolates are made from a mysterious recipe handed down from the ancient Mayans. And rather than merely satisfy a craving for sweets, these chocolates bring healing into relationships and hope into otherwise desperate lives.

In many ways *Chocolat* is a simple film which tells a simple story. Like *Babbett’s Feast*, it celebrates the goodness of God’s creation and the glory of human creativity. Both films remind us that food is more than just nutrition—good food, well made and served with love, nurtures both community and a proper sense of delight. The scenes in which Vianne stirs her chocolates on the stove are filmed with a delicious sensuality, and the feast given in Armande’s honor near the end of the film is warmly human and deeply inviting.

On another level, *Chocolat* is more complex, a fable exploring the postmodern notion of tolerance in a pluralistic society. The Christianity depicted in the film is sad, showing deeply devout believers who, fearful of those who do not share their convictions and values, react by becoming increasingly legalistic and withdrawn in an effort to preserve the purity of their faith. The mystical neo-paganism represented by Vianne is attractive in comparison, and reminds us that when the truth ceases to be beautiful, it is no longer compelling nor

Film Credits

Starring:

Juliette Binoche
(Vianne Rocher)
Lena Olin
(Josephine Muscat)
Johnny Depp
(Roux)
Judi Dench
(Armande Voizin)
Alfred Molina
(Comte de Reynaud)
Peter Stormare
(Serge Muscat)
Carrie-Anne Moss
(Caroline Clairmont)

Director:

Lasse Hallström

Writers:

Joanne Harris (novel)
Robert Nelson Jacobs
(screenwriter)

Producers:

Alan C. Blomquist
Meryl Poster
Bob & Harvey
Weinstein

Original music:

Rachel Portman

Cinematographer:

Roger Pratt

Costume Designer:

Renee Ehrlich Kalfus

121 minutes

Rated PG-13 for sensuality and violence.

plausible. Or as Roger Ebert put it in his review: “*Chocolat* is about a war between the forces of paganism and Christianity, and because the pagan heroine has chocolate on her side, she wins.” By the end of the film, however, tolerance is achieved. In the past Vianne and her daughter have always had to move on, extruded by the bigotry of villagers who will not accept her. This time things turn out differently, and when the north wind blows again, Vianne scatters her grandmother’s ashes in the air as she resolves to stay and make Lansquenet her home.

Chocolat is not without its flaws. Making the town statue smile at the end is a bit much, and though the change in Reynaud is both welcome and believable, his rolling in the window of the *chocolaterie* seems a rather heavy-handed way to depict it. Still, it is a charming film by a

veteran director. *Chocolat* is a window of insight into our pluralistic culture, showing the attractiveness of neo-paganism, the ugliness of legalistic Christianity, and what “tolerance” means in our postmodern society. It is also a wonderful film to use as a point of contact with non-Christians, to begin a conversation about things that matter.

Chocolat is also a challenge to those of us who are committed to the gospel of Christ, that our faith would be win-



When truth ceases to be beautiful, it is no longer compelling.

some and joyfully welcoming, without compromise and full of grace. ■

~Denis Haack

For further reading and study:

“Meet Your Neighborhood Neo-Pagan” by Dr. David John Seel, a ten-page *Critique* reprint. Cost \$2.50/copy + 20% shipping and postage.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What was your initial or immediate reaction to the film? Why do you think you reacted that way?
2. What is the message(s) of the film? Where do you agree? Disagree? Why?
3. In what ways were the techniques of film-making (casting, direction, script, music, sets, action, cinematography, editing, etc.) used to get the film’s message(s) across, or to make the message plausible or compelling?
4. With whom did you identify in the film? Why? With whom are we meant to identify? Discuss each main character in the film and their significance to the story.
5. How important is chocolate—and food—to the story? What is the Christian view of chocolate/food? Why? How should this be exhibited in a fallen—and starving—world?
6. How was the neo-paganism of Vianne depicted in the film? Why was it so attractive? What lessons should Christians learn from this?
7. To what extent are you conversant with neo-paganism as a Christian? Are you comfortable developing a close friendship with a neo-pagan—say, a Druid? Why or why not?
8. Granting the Catholic setting of the film, compare and contrast the Christianity depicted at the beginning and at the end of the film. In what ways were the two versions of the faith true to the Christian gospel? In what ways were they perversions of the gospel? At what point must biblical Christianity refuse to be “tolerant” (as defined by our pluralistic world)? Why? What will this “intolerance” look like?
9. To what extent is the legalistic Christianity depicted in *Chocolat* a realistic portrayal of (portions of) the church today? What should we do about it? Why? “I enjoyed the movie on its own sweet level,” Roger Ebert says, “while musing idly on the box-office prospects of a film in which the glowing, life-affirming local Christians prevailed over the glowering, prejudiced, puritan and bitter Druid worshippers.” Even if never depicted in a Hollywood movie, shouldn’t this be the reality in our lives?

Homosexuality: Speaking

Adapted from a lecture by Mardi Keyes.

There are few issues that have generated more political heat and extreme rhetoric; more anger and hatred; confusion and pain, than the issue of homosexuality. Christianity has come under fire for its traditional teaching that homosexual behavior is intrinsically immoral. For those who believe that a person's homosexual orientation is biologically determined, as much as race and sex are, the traditional Christian teaching seems cruel and intolerant—akin to racism or sexism. It appears to many that the God of the Bible condemns people for expressing the innate identity He gave them.

There are many—Christians and non-Christians—who feel alienated from all camps. They cannot celebrate their homosexual feelings and wholeheartedly embrace a homosexual lifestyle because they are convinced (for any number of reasons) that their homosexual feelings are the result of something having gone wrong. I have friends in this situation, and my heart goes out to them.

Those who identify with the gay rights movement talk a lot about *respecting diversity*, but they do not always respect the diversity among those with homosexual feelings. They need to allow space for those who interpret those feelings as the result of something having gone wrong...including those who seek help to change.

Richard Hays, a New Testament scholar, wrote about his best friend from college, who spent a week with his family shortly before dying of AIDS. Hays writes: "(Gary) was angry at the self-affirming gay Christian groups, because he regarded his own situation as more

complex and tragic than their stance could acknowledge. He also worried that the gay subculture encouraged homosexual believers to 'draw their identity from their sexuality' and thus to shift the ground of their identity subtly and idolatrously away from God.

"For more than 20 years, Gary had grappled with his homosexuality, experiencing it as a compulsion and an affliction. Now, as he faced death, he wanted

of this matter has been dominated by insistently ideological voices: on one side, gay rights activists demanding the church's unqualified acceptance of homosexuality; on the other, unqualified homophobic condemnation of homosexual Christians." Hays wrote this article, after Gary's death, in the hope that it would "foster compassionate and carefully reasoned theological reflection within the community of faith." I have quoted

Public discussion has been dominated by insistently ideological voices: on one side, gay rights activists demanding the church's unqualified acceptance of homosexuality; on the other, unqualified homophobic condemnation of homosexual Christians.

to talk it all through again from the beginning, because he knew my love for him and trusted me to speak without dissembling...In particular, Gary wanted to discuss the biblical passages that deal with homosexual acts...

"He had read hopefully through the standard bibliography of the burgeoning movement advocating the acceptance of homosexuality in the church...In the end, he came away disappointed, believing that these authors, despite their good intentions, had imposed a wishful interpretation on the biblical passages... Gary, as a homosexual Christian, believed that their writings did justice neither to the biblical texts nor to the depressing reality of the gay subculture that he had moved in and out of for 20 years."¹

Hays writes that both he and Gary were frustrated that "the public discussion

Hays because both here and in his studies on the Bible's teaching about homosexuality, he expresses so well the spirit with which I have attempted to reflect on this terribly sensitive issue.

Let me start by pointing out that there are enough differences between male homosexuals (gay men) and lesbians that they should not automatically be lumped together, even though the two groups are often political allies. For example: few men are aware of choosing to be gay. Many women are not either, but a significant number of women "convert" to lesbianism, sometimes after years of marriage and raising children.

For radical feminists, lesbianism can be a political choice, motivated more by feminist ideology than by an exclusive sexual attraction to women. For them, lesbianism is the strongest possible

the Truth in Love

statement of contempt for men (or of their irrelevance).

While many women become lesbians after experiencing abuse by men, there are also compelling ideas that draw feminists to embrace lesbianism. Obviously, to communicate with these women, we need to understand their thinking. We must also be prepared to face the uncomfortable fact that many of them grew up in families and churches where they experienced Christianity as *bad news* for women.

The Debate Among Christians

A growing number of scholars now claim that the Bible passages traditionally used to censure all homosexual behavior have been misunderstood and cannot legitimately be applied to the contemporary moral debate about homosexuality. These revisionist scholars include Catholics and Protestants, including some from an Evangelical background, like Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Mollenkott who together wrote *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?*

What unites these people is the conviction that Scripture nowhere teaches that homosexual behavior is intrinsically, and therefore always, wrong. They admit that the few biblical texts referring to homosexual acts all express disapproval, but it is argued that in each case there is something in the context that makes that particular expression of homosexuality immoral. For example: attempted gang rape or inhospitality in Sodom (Genesis 19), idolatry and ritual defilement in the Old Testament Holiness Code (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13), lustful promiscuity in Romans (1:24-27), and pederasty (the sexual relationship of adult men with boys) in Corinth (1 Cor 6:9-11) and Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:9-10). They argue that what is censored in the Bible is *not* homosexuality itself, but only abusive, exploitive, uncommitted, or in other ways destructive

expressions of it.

The question under debate is: Does the Bible teach that homosexual behavior is intrinsically wrong no matter what the context and personal motivation? Or, as with heterosexuality, does its rightness or wrongness depend on the specific context and motivation of the people involved? I don't have the space to analyze each of the Biblical references to homosexuality, so I will focus on Romans 1 because this passage clearly addresses the intrinsic moral status of homosexuality.

Romans 1:24-27: "Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed

We must face the uncomfortable fact that many lesbians grew up in families and churches where Christianity was bad news for women.

with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

Paul's reference to homosexual behavior in Romans 1 appears in the context of his sweeping theological analysis of the fallen condition of humanity. The widespread practice of homosexuality in the pagan world is cited as evidence that human beings are in rebellion against the Creator.² Their exchange of natural sexual relations for unnatural

reflects their exchange of the true God for idols. Paul is not arguing in a case-by-case way that every individual homosexual has consciously and willfully rejected God, rather he is making a sweeping diagnosis of the fallen human condition, and some of its tragic consequences.

The most influential revisionist scholar is the late Catholic Yale historian, John Boswell, author of *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* and *Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*. According to Boswell, Romans 1 isn't talking about homosexuals at all. He writes "there is no clear condemnation of homosexual acts in the verses in question." Instead, Paul is condemning individual heterosexuals who go against ("exchange") their own "natural" heterosexual inclinations to engage in homoerotic behavior.³ Boswell contends that to Paul, "nature" did not mean a universal moral order, but "the personal nature of the (individual) pagans in question."

There are two problems with this view. First of all, men who commit homosexual acts because they are "consumed with passion" or "inflamed with lust" for other men, are by any normal definition homosexual, not heterosexual. Paul is condemning homosexual acts committed by men with an erotic attraction to other men. He is describing men who are homosexual—psychologically and behaviorally.

Secondly, Boswell's argument depends on ignoring or rejecting the most likely meaning of the Greek phrase *para physin* (unnatural) in favor of his own idiosyncratic meaning. *Para physin* was a common "stock phrase" or literary convention used by Graeco-Roman (Stoic) Moralists and Hellenistic Jews⁴ and had the accepted meaning of *against* or *contrary to nature*, frequently used to designate homosexual

acts as immoral, in contrast to heterosexual acts, which were *natural* or *according to nature*. To Paul and his audience, *nature* did refer to a “universal moral order.” Furthermore, Jewish writers, like Paul’s contemporary, Josephus, specifically associated the *natural* with God’s Creation and Law.

Robin Scroggs, in *The New Testament and Homosexuality*, argues that Paul’s clear denunciation of homosexual acts in Romans 1 refers only to pederasty, the predominant model of homosexuality in Paul’s culture. Pederasty was an intrinsically exploitive, temporary, and unequal relationship between an adult male and a pre-adolescent boy (often a slave).⁵ Scroggs argues that the contemporary gay Christian model of mutual, consenting, monogamous adult homosexual partnerships is so different that the N.T. teaching simply cannot be applied to it.

It is probably true that pederasty was in the forefront of Paul’s mind, but he explicitly condemns the homoerotic element (male with male) not the pederastic element (man with boy) of the sexual practice. And the fact that Paul explicitly included female same-sex behavior in his condemnation, indicates that he had more in mind than pederasty. This is the only biblical reference to lesbianism, and the Graeco-Roman texts rarely refer to it. The fact that Paul departed so dramatically from the literary conventions by including lesbianism baffles Scroggs because of his insistence that Paul “could only have had pederasty (an exclusively male phenomenon) in mind.”⁶ But if Paul is condemning all homosexuality as contrary to the universal created nature of things, then the inclusion of lesbianism is not at all surprising. It is perfectly fitting.

I believe Scroggs, Boswell, and others miss the obvious in this passage: Paul uses homosexuality, in and of itself, as an illustration of the moral confusion and unrighteousness that comes from refusing to acknowledge the Creator who, as Jesus said, “made them male and female at the beginning, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall...be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’” (Mt. 19:4-5). Marriage between a man and a woman, two complementary equals, was established at creation as the only legitimate context for sexual intimacy.

In Romans I, Paul establishes the intrinsic immorality of homosexual

Homosexual behavior is wrong. But it is not the worst sin. And it does not set people apart as sub-human or moral freaks.

behavior, irrespective of social context, personal motivation or anything else. This means that when Paul condemns pederasty (in 1 Cor 6:9-11) he not only condemns the exploitation involved in that practice, (which he surely hated), but also the homoeroticism itself. Paul’s teachings must therefore be taken seriously by Christians and applied (with love, care and sensitivity) in every culture to whatever model of homosexuality emerges.

Implications of the Bible’s Teaching

Homosexual behavior is wrong. But it is not the worst sin. It is not even singled out as the worst sexual sin. And it does

not set people apart as sub-human or some kind of moral freaks. In dealing with this issue, two mandatory Christian attitudes are essential: humility and love.

First humility. It is scandalous when heterosexual Christians rant and rave about homosexual sin as a detestable abomination to God, while excusing themselves of other sins the Bible calls abominations—like lying, pride, stirring up dissension (or gossip), dishonest business practices and injustice in the law courts.⁷ These things are also detestable to God. Furthermore, human nature is such that, given the circumstances, any of us could be tempted to commit sins, sexual or otherwise, that we now consider ourselves incapable of.

In Romans 1, Paul sets up what Richard Hays calls a “homiletical sting operation. The passage builds to a crescendo of condemnation ‘against those wicked pagans...’ But then, in Romans 2:1, the sting strikes: ‘Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself...’ All people—Jews and Greeks, Christians and non-Christians, heterosexuals and homosexuals stand in radical need of God’s mercy.”⁸

The second mandatory Christian attitude is love: Jesus says we must love our neighbor as ourselves, including our homosexual neighbor. James wrote that we cannot praise God and with the same tongue curse men and women who are made in God’s likeness. Gay bashing and jokes are sinful and reveal unreality and hypocrisy in our praise of God.

We’re commanded to show hospitality, literally to “love the stranger.” God’s word does not say: welcome people into your homes, lives and churches, except of course homosexuals. Paul even rebuked

the Corinthian Christians for refusing to associate with sexually immoral non-Christians (1 Cor. 5:9). He said we would have to leave the world to avoid them, and that is not an option for Christians! We must be salt and light in the world, with non-Christian friends.

If we try to walk the delicate line of loving practicing homosexuals without condoning their sexual practice, we will be accused of homophobia by those who demand acceptance and even celebration of homosexuality. Listen to the words of Black feminist bell hooks:

“In the past year, I talked with a black woman Baptist minister, who though concerned about feminist issues, expressed very negative attitudes about homosexuality, because, she explained, the Bible teaches that it is wrong. Yet in her daily life she is tremendously supportive and caring of gay friends. When I asked her to explain this contradiction, she argued that it was not a contradiction, that the Bible also teaches her to identify with those who are exploited or oppressed.”⁹

This woman is a good example to us, yet bell hooks goes on to accuse her of “homophobic attitudes” that “encourage persecution of gay people” in the black churches.

Homosexual Orientation in a Biblical Perspective

We must understand homosexuality in light of the brokenness and abnormality of living in a fallen world. All of the Bible’s references to homosexuality specify homosexual behavior or acts; there is no Hebrew or Greek word for a “homosexual person” as such.

It cannot be denied that some people can only remember, as far back as they can recall, being attracted to the same sex. They are not aware of ever having had a choice in the matter. This raises a terribly troubling question. Isn’t God cruel and unfair to pro-

hibit homosexual behavior for those with a homosexual orientation they did not choose?

We must never minimize the suffering experienced by those with persistent homosexual desires, who struggle to be celibate. At the same time, ever since the fall, every one of us has been born with an orientation, or predisposition, to sin which we have not consciously or freely chosen. Yet God holds us morally accountable for our acts. Paul puts it very strongly. “We are slaves of sin” (Romans 6:17)—so much so that we need redemption, a word that means emancipation from slavery. We have the “first fruits” of redemption, but our struggle against sin will not be over until the final redemption of our bodies

It is scandalous when heterosexual Christians rant and rave about homosexual sin as a detestable abomination to God while excusing themselves of other sins the Bible calls abominations.

(Romans 8:23). Even if some people are biologically predisposed to homosexuality—that is not the same thing as causation—it does not determine behavior.

We are, in fact, in deep trouble if we believe that a biological predisposition for certain behavior (aggression for example) frees us from moral responsibility for our actions. Pre-Menstrual Syndrome affects some women dramatically. That does not excuse them morally if they abuse their children when suffering from PMS.

The fact that the Bible speaks of homo-

sexual behavior but not homosexual persons, should encourage us all. God does not define us by, or stigmatize us for our particular temptations (sinful dispositions or orientations), whatever they are! To define any person by their sexual orientation is to radically reduce a splendid Image bearer of God.

Thankfully, God sees everything, and understands the combination of factors—biology, environment, and choice—that influence our behavior. And He offers forgiveness and help to anyone who genuinely asks Him. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul says that some of the Christians in Corinth had been practicing homosexuals, but, by God’s grace, were no longer. The same is true for many today. There are no “quick fixes,” and Christians must beware of promising total healing for any problem in this still fallen world. Nevertheless, it is a fact that a great variety of therapeutic approaches have helped many homosexuals change both in orientation and practice.

Many find help in one of the ex-gay ministries, but it is also crucial for Christians struggling against homosexual temptation to have the love and support of a local church or Christian community, and particularly, close, affectionate, non-erotic friendships with heterosexual people of the same sex (healthy opposite sex friendships are also important).

Homosexuality, an Urgent Apologetics Issue

My husband and I speak on secular college campuses quite frequently, and our three sons have attended secular liberal arts colleges in New England. There is no question that in the non-Christian academic and media world today, homosexuality is the single issue that Christians feel most intimidated by, and are most scorned for. Where tolerance is believed to be the highest virtue, Christians who believe homosexual practice is wrong are

perceived to be on the lowest moral ground.

In terms of public opinion, the higher the prevalence of homosexuality, the more it appears to be just one among other sexual lifestyles—as morally neutral as being left-handed. The media, which tends to be strongly committed to “normalizing” homosexuality, makes the most of this, which is probably why we still hear the claim that 1 out of 10 people are homosexuals, even though that figure has been completely discredited. The figures for exclusive homosexuality are more like 1 to 3% for white males and half of that for females. But in fact, the prevalence of homosexuality has no logical bearing on the question of its morality. One can never argue from an “is” to an “ought.” For example, pride, greed and lust are extremely common in our culture, but that does not make them morally neutral or morally right.

According to Genesis 19:4-5, the percentage of homosexual men in Sodom was far higher than in America today: “all the men, from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old” demanded to have sex with Lot’s guests. If we allow the Apostle Paul’s argument in Romans 1 to interpret the story of Sodom, then a high incidence of homosexual behavior does the opposite of normalizing it. It is evidence that a culture is in a state of significant confusion, distortion, and rebellion against God’s created order.

The Christian faith is unthinkable for many people today because of its teaching that for homosexuals, there is no morally legitimate way to express their sexuality, whereas for heterosexuals, there is at least the possibility of enjoying sex within marriage.

This is true, but Francis Schaeffer

wrote in 1968: “If a person who has homophile tendencies, or even has practiced homosexuality, is helped in a deep way, then they may marry. On the other hand, there are a certain number of cases who are real homophiles. In this case they must face the dilemma of a life without sexual fulfillment. We may cry with them

Where tolerance is believed to be the highest virtue, Christians who believe homosexual practice is wrong are perceived to be on the lowest moral ground.

concerning this, but we must not let the self-pity get too deep, because the unmarried girl who has strong sexual desires, and no one asks her to marry has the same problem. In both cases this is surely a part of the abnormality of the fallen world. And in both cases what is needed is people’s understanding while the church, in compassion and understanding, helps the individual in every way possible.”¹⁰

The same can be said of single men, widows and widowers, divorced and those who are sexually incapable. Teaching that distorts the Bible by making an idol of marriage (including sexual fulfillment within marriage) is not only false teaching, but is extremely unhelpful to all single people—some of whom may never marry.

There is no denying that some Christians are “homophobic,” in the way that term is defined by the gay movement. But the Bible’s prohibition against homosexual practice is not “homophobic.” It does not single out homosexual behavior for censure, nor

does it condone hatred toward any person. In fact, the moral line the Bible draws is not between heterosexual behavior (good) and homosexual behavior (bad). All sexual activity that is not consensual, and in the context of heterosexual, monogamous marriage is immoral, and falls short of God’s norms.

This teaching is particularly difficult to swallow in an individualistic culture like ours, which has made sexual freedom into an idol. Our whole culture screams at us that to be human, to avoid neurosis, etc., everybody must be sexually active. Too many Christians

have their own version of that lie by treating sex within marriage in an idolatrous way.

At the same time, ironically, we are increasingly seeing the tragic and destructive fall-out of the idolatry of sex: a soaring divorce rate, unwanted pregnancies; abortions; single mothers and fatherless children; a whole array of STD’s (at epidemic levels on many college campuses today), sexual addictions; and of course, AIDS—which due to such high levels of promiscuity among gay men, has taken a particular toll in that population. All this is what comes from so-called “freedom!”

Christians need to challenge our culture’s idolatry of sexual freedom. In the first century, when pagans were converted to Christ, it was in the area of sexual morality that their lives tended to change most quickly and dramatically. And the pagans marveled at the Christians’ sexual freedom, defined as freedom from being driven by their passions, heterosexual and homosexual. It was a freedom that empowered them to live as chaste when single, and monogamously

when married. This kind of freedom benefits the whole community—men, women and children—and protects the vulnerable, those who are hurt the most by individual sexual freedom run wild.

Commending the Bible's Sex Ethic

One of the reasons a strong gay rights movement has emerged is that over the last decades, heterosexual marriage has lost its attractiveness and moral authority—both of which are needed to make the normativity of marriage persuasive and plausible. Many homosexual men and lesbian women quite reasonably point their fingers at the breakdown and ugliness of so many marriages today, and the abuse of women and children, which many of them have experienced first hand, in the so-called traditional family. It is not surprising that many are commending alternative “family forms.”

Bill Bennett has astutely pointed out that conservatives are in a panic about the issue of homosexual marriage while virtually ignoring the issue of divorce, which has been far more widespread and devastating to our culture. The breakdown of heterosexual marriage has come in large part from the idolatry of individual freedom and unwillingness to live within God's marriage norms. Homosexual marriage is just another step further down that same road.

This poses a huge challenge to us who believe that faithful, monogamous, heterosexual marriage is the Creator's norm, and is good for us. We, of all people, must be demonstrating that. This *must* mean much more than living with prohibitions. Our marriages and family lives must positively demonstrate the goodness of God's sexual and family norms; they must be beautiful, attractive and life-affirming for men, women

and children. They must also be welcoming to others—including homosexuals—and a source of rich blessing in society. Celibate singleness must also be seen as a good, positive and productive call, as it was in the lives of Jesus, Paul, and other disciples, both men and women (Mt 19:12, 1 Cor 7, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, etc.).

If these things are not living realities, we cannot expect our verbal apologetics for Biblical faith and sexual morality to be persuasive.

These are sensitive and complicated issues. Christians need to think them through in a sane and careful way and provide an alternative to the polarized rhetoric from extremists on all sides. This is one of the most important apologetics issues the

Conservatives are in a panic about homosexual marriage while virtually ignoring the issue of divorce, which has been far more widespread and devastating to our culture.

Christian Church is facing today, and it is not likely to go away soon.

I have only touched on a few of the challenges surrounding this terribly difficult issue. We need God's grace to walk the tightrope, following His word with humility in all that it teaches, loving those who disagree with us, and reaching out in compassion to those men and women who are suffering the sad and tragic consequences of living outside the created sexual boundaries that God gave us for our good. ■

~Mardi Keyes

Mardi Keyes co-directs the Southborough, MA, branch of L'Abri Fellowship with her husband Dick. They are the parents of three sons aged 29, 28, and 22.

Resources and Endnotes:

Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services, Box 7881, Reading, PA 19603. (610-376-1146)
Exodus International, Box 77652, Seattle, WA 98177. (206-784-7799)

¹Richard B. Hays, *Awaiting the Redemption of Our Bodies*, *Sojourners*, (July 20, 1991), pp.17-21.

²Richard Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Romans 1,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* (Nov 14, 1986) p.189.

³John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the 14th Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Edition, 1981) p. 109.

⁴Richard Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural...” p. 192-194. Josephus (whose life overlapped with the apostle Paul) wrote, “The law (Lev. 18 and 20) recognizes no sexual connections except for the natural (kata physin) union of man and wife...But it abhors the intercourse of males with males.”

⁵Even in those rare homosexual relationships (for example, between same age young men) that “stretched” the normal pederastic model, inequality was still built in. One always took the passive role, for the pleasure of the other who took the active role.

⁶He concedes that the “negative judgment made on both female as well as male homosexuality...could be considered a general indictment” (p. 121); and that Paul's “general language” for men (males with males, as Leviticus stated it, with no age difference indicated) could be too. But he continues to insist that Paul “could only have had pederasty in mind” (p. 122).

⁷Pr. 17:15 “acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent”

⁸Richard Hays, “Awaiting the Redemption of our Bodies,” *Sojourners*, (July 20, 1991) p. 19.

⁹bell hooks, *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989) pp. 122-123.

¹⁰Excerpted from *Letters of Francis A. Schaeffer*, Lane T. Dennis, ed., (Westchester, IL, Crossway Books, 1985)

The Socratic Method

There is a danger in both Christian families and Christian schools that indoctrination is taken for education. Nothing could be farther from the truth. One's convictions cannot be coerced. Instead, they are ultimately based on what we love and best learned in an environment of trust. Too often family dinner tables, Sunday schools, and Christian school classrooms are only one-way conversations—telling at the expense of listening. As such, many Christians have never learned the intellectual discipline of asking questions. Yet an educated mind begins with a questioning mind.

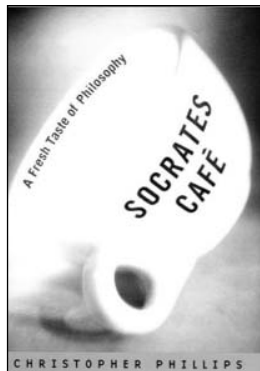
One of the distinctives of the school where I teach is its commitment to allow students the freedom to express their uncertainty. The policy manual reads, "Students are treated as young adults and are encouraged to develop their own convictions. This will inevitably mean that at times students may challenge their parents' beliefs and question their own. The school seeks to create an environment where students are able to respectfully raise honest questions and express doubts within a community of loving acceptance and intellectual inquiry. Our community is committed to the pursuit of truth. Convictions are to be held and beliefs maintained on this basis alone."

There are obviously many reasons why a person becomes a Christian. We all have our stories. But ultimately, Christianity is to be believed because it is true. It is True Truth, as Francis Schaeffer used to say. More than true for me; rather the truth of reality. But to recognize this, one must first learn to ask honest questions.

To this end, I teach Plato's *Four*

Dialogues, also known as *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, to seventh grade students. We seek to learn the art of questioning. There is no doubt that Socrates was a master questioner. The Socratic method is a powerful tool for sharpening our thinking and exposing what we don't know. It is a powerful pedagogical tool but a disastrous epistemological one. This contrast is revealed in Christopher Phillips' new book, *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy*.

Christopher Phillips is an intriguing person with a fascinating mission in life. He hosts Socratic dialogues. National Public Radio has called him the "Johnny Appleseed of philosophy." Phillips travels the country holding conversations in coffee houses,



We say we are concerned about truth. But we do not pay the dues truth demands.

bookstores, senior centers, elementary schools, prisons, and yes, even in universities. His aim is to bring probing conversations about the important questions to common people. This book is the story of how he began and a chance to listen in on these Socratic Cafés.

Christians are suspicious of a "skeptical mind." We don't doubt well. We tend to prefer compliance and conformity. The net result is that we tend to prefer ignorance. We rarely ask "Why?" Our convictions are too often based on social conformity rather than personal reflection. We say we are concerned about truth. But we do not pay the dues truth demands.

Coleridge warned, "He who begins

by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all." Evangelicals create seeker-friendly churches, often without the humility of being seekers of truth themselves. Thus there is much we can learn from those who have developed questioning minds. Christopher Phillips is such a person. When, for example, have you reflected deeply, or had a sustained conversation on matters that matter, but we take for granted? Consider the questions Phillips asks in the Socrates Cafés: What are the Big Questions and what makes them so? What is a question? What would life be like without questions? Why am I here? What is home? Where am I stuck? What is a friend? What is wonder? What is

silence? What is old? Am I asking the right questions? What am I meant to do? What is love? What is what? Why ask why?

Socrates claimed that an unex-

amined life was not worth living. If we live without consideration of its destination, and whether the road traveled will get us there, then we are fools and not wise. Or as Jesus asks, "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" The greatest danger of truth is not falsehood, but diversion and indifference. The most important thing is to ask "Why?" As Nietzsche wisely observed, with a "why" one can endure any "what."

We need Christopher Phillips, for we need Socrates. Evangelicals need the Athenian Gadfly once more. We need our shallow pretentious self-confidence humbled. For humility is the beginning of

& the Christian Mind

knowledge. Only when we realize that we don't know are we ever ready to learn.

We also need to learn how Socrates interacted with people. The secret of Socrates' instruction was that he was able simultaneously to engage the minds and the hearts of his listeners by confronting their errors from within rather than from without. Let me explain.

First, Socrates always showed his opponents deference. By putting himself in the position of the learner rather than the teacher, he avoided raising in his opponent feelings of suspicion or defensiveness. "Rare friend!" Socrates says to Euthyphro, "I think I can not do better than to be your disciple." The first lesson of Socratic argument is: Never put your opponent on the defensive. It is this open attitude that Phillips brings to his discussions. Intellectual seriousness is coupled with a disarming relational sensitivity.

Second, Socrates sought to frame the discussion in such a manner that his opponents took ownership of the points being made. The goal was for it to become their argument, not his. He consciously avoided adversarial language and sought to position

the discussion as two fellow seekers of truth. "Come, then," Socrates says in the midst of a dialogue, "and let us examine what we are saying." He keeps his arguments short. There are no long speeches that pile up fact upon fact and reason upon reason. Rather it is with patient step-by-step agreement that Socrates leads his opponent to face his own inadequacies. The second lesson of Socratic argument is: Encourage your opponent to make the argument his or her own. The Socrates Cafés demonstrate that we are far better talkers than listeners. Yet it is listeners that control a conversation.

Third, Socrates called his opponents to a higher standard of truth and integrity. Rather than implying that he was right and his opponent was wrong, he called for his opponent to help him find the truth so that both could live more consistently. Socrates made the search for truth a shared task. Socrates was not a sophist or relativist, happy to win an argument merely on personal opinion or force of rhetoric. He responds to Euthyphro, "I have no particular liking for anything but the truth." The third lesson of Socrates is: Seek a shared higher standard.

Sadly, it is here that Christopher Phillips fails. The Socrates Cafés are based on a post-modern epistemology. There are no gods or God to appeal to. There is no Oracle at Delphi that establishes the ground of wisdom. In the hands of Phillips, "The Socratic method is a way to seek truth by your own lights." For Phillips the questions are the end not the means to an end. As Francis Schaeffer wisely noted, "If the search for truth is the goal, then you've found it. There is nothing more." It is truth that we must love. It is truth that we must seek. The questions, however important, are only the means to that end. To love the question is to be shackled by an inferior love. ■

~David John Seel, Jr.

John Seel, Ph.D. is the Headmaster of Logos Academy, a Christ-centered classical college preparatory school in Dallas, Texas. He is a frequent speaker on contemporary culture and parenting. He is the author of Parenting Without Perfection: Being a Kingdom Influence in a Toxic World.

Book reviewed: *Socrates Café: A Fresh Taste of Philosophy* by Christopher Phillips (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2001) 224 pp.

Loving God with our Mind

One of the formative experiences of my spiritual pilgrimage involved reading *The Universe Next Door* by James Sire. It helped me understand what a world view was, and why it mattered. Over the years Dr. Sire has published a series of thoughtful books (*Discipleship of the Mind, Why Should We Believe Anything at All?*), in which he has celebrated the truth of Christianity and called the church to both love and live that truth. His goal in his latest, *Habits of the Mind*, he says, "is to encourage you to think more and better than you did before reading it, to strive toward 'the perfection of the intellect,' to enjoy the proper habits of mind." One of the highlights of *Habits*, besides the obvious opportunity to learn from a master teacher, is the fact that Sire has literally littered the book with quotations.

This book is about "not what a Christian should think, but how a Christian can think better." ■

Book noted: *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* by James W. Sire (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; 2000) 224 pp. + notes + index.

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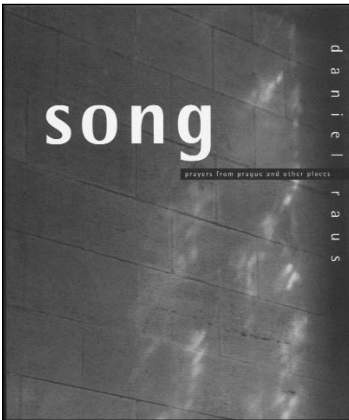
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Daniel Raus



On the back cover of Daniel Raus' book of poetry, *Song: prayers from prague and other places*, is written: "the best things in life come through a friend / don't let this book be an exception."

And so, this is the spirit in which we recommend *Song* to you. With a spare and simple style, Raus celebrates everyday faith, marking those places where the divine and the mortal come into life-altering contact.

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As one friend to another, we hope you will enjoy this beautiful book as much as we do. ■

~Marsena Konkle

ORDER INFORMATION:

Song is available by mail order for \$11 (includes S&H). Send check made out to "SEN-USA" to: SEN-USA, P.O. Box 622, Hobart, IN 46342.

Please include the following information with your check: Number of Raus' *SONG* desired; your name and address; and the total cost (quantity x \$11), and that you heard about it in *Critique*.

Raus, p. 20

one day when I walk up these stairs
I'll put aside all burdens
one day when I walk up these stairs
I'll be surprised how much I was carrying
one day when I walk up these stairs
I'll find I won't need any of it
one day when I walk up these stairs
I'll take a look back at all who head up burdened
one day when I walk up these stairs
I'll take a deep breath and say -
at last
one day when I walk up these stairs

Raus, p. 30

not even in the middle of a desert can it be claimed
that water does not exist
not even amidst the ocean's waves can it be denied
that there are trees and mountains far away
that's why I teach my impatient mind
to wait
that's why I urge my dulled ears to listen
that's why I implore my doubting heart
to believe

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1. To call attention to resources of interest to thinking Christians.
2. To model Christian discernment.
3. To stimulate believers to think biblically about all of life.

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