

Does the Christian View of Sexuality Make Any Sense?

How Sexuality and Social Justice Are Tied Together: A Comparative Approach

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Introduction: What You Might Think

The topic for tonight is ‘Does the Christian view of sex make any sense?’ I’m going to come at it by asking, Why do sex and social justice go together? And you might think that’s kind of an odd topic, but just thinking about it a little more, you might say, ‘Of course!’ Those two things are the makings of a great movie or story. You save the world (justice) and find ‘the one’ (sex), all in the same story. And that is true. Sex in some sense signifies the pinnacle of individual intimate relationship. Social justice, in some sense, signifies the pinnacle of broad social relationships. They are at the core of our existence. Let’s agree from the outset that these two subjects are very important to us. Newsweek magazine just this week released this cover story: ‘Sex vs. Social Justice’ in ‘The Politics of Jesus.’ In today’s U.S. politics, the ‘religious right’ has focused on sex issues at the expense of social justice issues, so there is a growing movement of Christians who want to correct that emphasis.



Some of you may be wondering whether having an emphasis on social justice means that you have to be pro-homosexual. Many of us think sex and social justice go together because they’re both founded on the idea of individual rights? ‘I have the rights about sex and equality, so don’t get in the way.’ Isn’t that the end of the conversation? So, let’s agree that they are two of the most controversial subjects that we could possibly talk about. A group of people as diverse as this has a lot at stake in these questions. At every point, you might feel like you have something to gain or lose from the way we talk about these topics.

A Crisis in Judgment

Everyone has a stake in this. Let me give you an example, starting from a larger, higher level view of the issues and how complex it gets. About six and a half years ago, my wife Ming and I were expecting our first child, our son John. We went into Brigham and Women’s Hospital for our 19 week ultrasound. While we were there in the hospital, the nurse also pointed out that John’s ultrasound pictures revealed spots on his heart. That is correlated with Down’s Syndrome. I’ve known a few kids with Down’s Syndrome and their parents, so I had a pretty good idea of what that would involve, but I was in a bit of a shock. I don’t think any parents expects or hopes for their child to be mentally handicapped. We also live in a lower income, higher crime area of Boston doing things like community organizing and such, so having a special needs child would have impacted us in some other ways. That’s just to say that it would have been significant to us. Now the nurse recommended an additional test, which is called an amniocentesis, on our next visit. It’s where they can sample the fluids in the umbilical cord to determine with more accuracy whether the child would have Down’s Syndrome. But when we went back, my wife Ming said, ‘No thanks. We don’t want to do the amnio.’ They asked, ‘Isn’t it important for you to know?’ Ming said, ‘No. We would keep the baby either way.’ The nurse and gynecologist were both surprised. The gynecologist said, ‘May I ask why?’ Ming said, ‘Well, we’re Christians who try to take Jesus seriously and he would love this child, so we will too, even if he’s not what we expected.’ They were surprised because in their experience, most people would do the amnio, and if the test was positive for Down’s, most of them would get an abortion.

Why? This incident illustrates the classical tension: The tension is, ‘Are you important because you’re a person, no matter what? Or are you important because you have potential abilities, or actualized abilities? Do you have value and ‘rights’ because you can or have achieved something in the eyes of society? Or do you have value and ‘rights’ simply because you are human? And what’s the relationship between those two things?’ Does the amount of potential you have determine how much of a person you are? In the case of abortion, there is the question of (1) whether you’re a person or (2) whether you just have the potential to be a person. But what about mentally

handicapped people, or just less intelligent people, who are indisputably persons but with less 'potential' at least as many would define it? What is justice in those cases? Is it 'just' for U.S. culture to mostly isolate these people into separate schools, communities, and most of all, institutions? The U.S. in particular treats such people quite badly, as opposed to some other countries. Now romantics and idealists would answer, 'Of course they are persons!' But in reality, that might just be a lot of talk. Peter Singer, professor of philosophy at Princeton, goes so far as to say that it is morally justifiable to euthanize, or kill, the elderly, the mentally retarded, etc. The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the one.

Ultimately I want to discuss how the biblical Christian story compares with the secular atheist story in evaluating these ethical situations. And don't worry – we'll get to issues of sexual expression and the justice related to that. But I want to back up and take a running start.

Engagement Between Stories: The Christian Story and the Ancient Near Eastern Stories

What I'm going to do is compare Genesis 1 – 11 to three major stories from the Ancient Near East that are contemporaries to it. The reason I do this is because I want to show you how your story shapes the ethics you have. For example, I was used to hearing my family's immigrant experience story, and that shaped my goals and ethics in life. Story shapes ethics. The other reason is because there's a little bit of distance between them and us, so I think we can talk about them with less emotion. So, let me survey them briefly.

Stasinus' Cypria (European)	Atrahasis (Babylonian/Akkadian)	Zoroastrian Avesta (Old Iranian)	Genesis 1-11 (Hebrew)
Problem: Overpopulation , wickedness, earth burdened	Creation (1.1-351): the work of the gods and the creation of humans	Creation: Ahura Mazda tells Yima (human) to be king over creation	Creation (1:1-2:3): God creates the world and humans and blesses them to multiply
First Threat: Zeus sends the Theban War; many destroyed	First Threat (1.352-415): Humans numerically increase; plague from the gods to limit overcrowding ; Enki's help	First Threat: Overpopulation ; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	First Threat (2:4-4:25): Genealogy of heavens and earth; the Fall; God promises victory to the seed of the woman; Cain kills Abel and settles in a city; God preserves Seth
Second Threat: Zeus plans to destroy all by thunderbolts; Momos dissuades Zeus	Second Threat (II.i.1-II.v.21) Humanity's numerical increase; drought from the gods; Enki's help	Second Threat: Overpopulation ; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	Second Threat (5:1-9:29): Genealogy of Adam to Noah; God protects Noah and family and floods the world because of human violence
Third Threat: Momos suggests that Thebis marry a mortal to create Achilles and that Zeus father Helen of Troy; war results between the Greeks and the barbarians	Third Threat (II.v.22-III.vi.4): Humanity's numerical increase, Atrahasis Flood, salvation in boat	Third Threat: Overpopulation ; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	Third Threat (10:1-11:9): Genealogy of Shem, Ham, Japheth; Tower of Babel and dispersion
Resolution: Many destroyed by Trojan War, earth lightened of her burdened	Resolution (III.vi.5-viii.18): Numerical increase; compromise between Enlil and Enki; humans cursed with natural barrenness, high infant mortality rate, cult prostitution (to separate sex and procreation)	Resolution: Ahura Mazda sends a deadly winter with heavy snowfall to punish overcrowding; Yima told to build a three storied enclosure to survive; humanity destroyed outside while a boy and girl born in enclosure every 40 years	Resolution (11:10-26): Genealogy of Shem; introduction of Abram (In 11:27ff., God calls Abram out of Ur to begin Israel.)

Notice the similarities. Genesis 1 – 11 seems to be aware of the other stories surrounding it. How can we tell? Because similar elements are there: a five fold structure, problems caused by humanity, a concern for population, divine judgment. But Genesis 1 – 11 seems to turn the tables on all those other stories because it reverses the meaning of those stories. Notice the differences. Let's look at ethics. What do the first three stories say is the big problem? Overpopulation: don't have big families! We have that attitude today, don't we? Some wealthy Americans look at certain lower-income, minority, or immigrant groups that have lots of kids with disdain. Sex becomes part of the conversation about justice because sex produces more humans. That's why these other stories provide us with barrenness, cult prostitution, and all these other ways to separate sex from procreation. They might as well mention the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama sterilizing African Americans without their knowledge in the 20th century. Or the developed world looking at the Third World and saying, 'The poor have babies in poverty, and that's their own fault.' This is by no means a debate that's over!

But what does God's story identify as the big problem? Human pride, greed and violence – the problem is our character, our inability to make room for another person. What do the first three stories defend? Cities, the symbol of power in the ancient world. What does God's story attack? Cities, symbolic of civilization. The first three stories defend civilization at the expense of the individual. God's story starting from Genesis 1 – 11 defends the individual at the expense of civilization. In fact, Kikawada and Quinn argue, "This command [to be fruitful and

multiply], so long familiar to us, is in its cultural context utterly startling, as unexpected as the monotheism.”¹ They conclude: “All other traditions view population control as the solution to urban overcrowding. Genesis offers dispersion, the nomadic way of life. Genesis 1 – 11 then constitutes a rejection of...civilization itself, if its continuance requires human existence to be treated as a contingent good. For Genesis the existence of a new human was always good.”²

As an aside, one of the reasons why I believe the Bible has a supernatural origin is that you can't explain it from sociology. Who invented these ideas? I could spend a lot of time asking how you go from polytheism to monotheism, but we'll leave that big one aside. Was it in someone's interest to say this? The 'ruling class' of 'civilization'? Or how about one tribe out of many in a tribalistic world? Hardly! How do you get a universal ethical concern??? If a story CAN be explained by sociology, then it's probably just a myth. If a story CAN'T be explained by sociology, then it's probably true...

Engagement Between Two Stories: The Christian Story and the Greco-Roman Story

Let me build the next stage of the foundation. What were the consequences of these various stories on sex and social justice? I'll focus in on two of them: the Greek, or Greco-Roman story, and the biblical story as they developed in their respective communities over time. And for this, we'll need to go a bit deeper.

Greco-Roman Story
The immortal, good soul wants to escape the bad physical body
Expected 'disembodiment' – the separation of soul from body
Death is inevitable and is the end; no one comes back from the dead (cf. Homer)
Caring for the poor is not important since the body is not important
Sexuality – where does it come from? Who knows?
Have sex with anyone since the body is not important (e.g. Greek Epicureans)

How does the story begin? How does it end? The Greco-Roman story says that the immortal soul, which is good, wants to escape the physical body, which is bad. So the Greco-Roman people expected and hoped for 'disembodiment,' the separation of the soul from the body. When would that happen? At death. Death is inevitable and is the end of the terrible union of soul and body; Homer said that no one comes back from the dead. That's why in the movie Troy, the Brad Pitt character Achilles believes that the only way to gain immortality on earth is to become famous, to have your name remembered. The important thing to note here is that story leads to action. If our souls just want to leave our bodies, then why care for the poor? Other people's bodies just aren't that important. And if your body isn't important, then why not have sex with whoever you wanted? The Epicureans believed that.

So the Greeks were the first civilization to have developed ideas about democracy. Ironically, they were also the first civilization to use mass slavery. According to Yale historian David Bryon Davis and Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson, certain Greek men were able to lounge around in the gymnasium and on rooftops philosophizing about democracy because they made slaves do all their work for them. That's the ironic legacy of the West: freedom for some built on the slavery of others.

But into this swirling mess of Mediterranean injustice came another story. A variation of Judaism sprang up from Israel and confronted the Greco-Roman world with a very different story. It was Christianity. The Christian story draws on Genesis 1 – 11 to say that we were created good, both body and soul. It was good to be physical. It was good for the soul to be in the body. Now the problem is that human sin messed things up, and we have sin in our souls and disease and decay in our bodies. But the answer to that is not disembodiment but resurrection. They wanted to come back into renewed, immortal bodies, permanently. The idea was not to be weightless souls floating around in the clouds. It was to have both feet physically on the ground, and more solid than before. This is where

¹ Isaac Kikawada and Arthur Quinn. *Before Abraham Was*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco, p.38.

² *ibid*, p.51

we get the expressions, ‘She is a person of substance,’ or, ‘He’s heavy.’ The more good you are, the more solid you are. After all, if God created the world good, and human bodies good, then the problem is decay, death, and sin. God will deal with those things, but he’ll renew us. And Jesus’ bodily resurrection affirms the fact that soul and body will be reunited when the rest of Jesus’ people are bodily resurrected.

What were the ethical implications of the Christian story? Christians wanted to care for the poor because people’s bodies mattered. That’s why the early Christians rescued and adopted baby girls that were left on Roman doorsteps to die. They established hospitals in peoples’ homes. They resigned from warfare positions in the Roman army because they wanted to love their enemies, not kill them. They also had very high sexual standards. They believed in the restoration of marriage as it was in God’s original design: monogamous, with no multiple wives for political purposes of advancing the family through diplomatic marriages, heterosexual, loving, with no adultery and very little divorce. Suddenly men couldn’t divorce their wives on a whim. They had to love and be faithful to one wife each. So the early Christians lived lives of purity and justice. The saying that circulated around Christian men was, ‘We share all things but our wives.’ It was a strong check on the power of men.

Sexual ethics and social justice go together, absolutely in either case. Have one, have the other; don’t have one, don’t have the other. It’s consistent. So here’s a chart comparing the two stories:

Greco-Roman Story	Christian Story
The immortal, good soul wants to escape the bad physical body	We were created good, both body and soul
Expected ‘disembodiment’ – the separation of soul from body	Expected ‘resurrection’ – the renewal of the physical world, including our bodies; God’s true humanity will be raised from the dead
Death is inevitable and is the end; no one comes back from the dead (cf. Homer)	Death is the enemy of God’s good creation; it will be overthrown in a fresh new creation
Caring for the poor is not important since the body is not important	Caring for the poor is important because people’s bodies are important
Caring for other people-groups is irrelevant (elite vs. barbarian)	Caring for other people-groups is fundamental (universal concern)
Sexuality – where does it come from? Who knows?	Humans were created into marriage: monogamous, heterosexual, loving and with no pre-marital sex, adultery, desertion, or divorce
Have sex with anyone since the body is not important (e.g. Greek Epicureans)	Sexual ethics are important because Jesus is restoring us to the Genesis creation story

That is impressive. Once again, you have to ask, ‘Why would anyone invent the Christian story?’ I mean, I could totally understand the Greco-Roman story. Heck, if people didn’t have to care for the poor and could have sex with anyone they wanted, AND they had all the metaphysical elements of a bigger story to support them in that lifestyle, who wouldn’t choose that? What MALE wouldn’t? Once again, if a story can be explained by sociology, then it’s probably just a myth designed to legitimate the sociology. If a story can’t be explained by sociology, then it’s probably true.

Notice also that the Christian story is in complete coherence with Genesis 1 – 11? Here are the elements: the union of body and soul, the resurrected Jesus is evidence for the ultimate reunion of a renewed body and a renewed soul in a renewed world, universal concern for humanity, care for the poorest of the poor, sexuality rooted in God’s original design for human marriage.

Engagement Between Two Stories: The Christian Story and the Atheist Evolution Story

Now we’ve laid a foundation. That’s going to be important as we evaluate the Christian story and the atheist evolution story. Let me state the obvious, that the atheist evolutionary story is a STORY. It goes like this: Fourteen billion years ago, the universe began. Five billion years ago, the earth formed. Then life began out of non living chemicals and produced human beings. There are variations within atheism about where that story went. For

simplicity's sake, I'm going to engage with Enlightenment atheists. The reason for this is because of their emphasis on individualism, which is generally accepted in the West. Rousseau said that the individual 'noble savage' existed in a good 'state of nature' until the 'state of society.' In other words, the individual is real, all other relationships are contracts or social constructs. John Stuart Mill said something similar, as did others. Sometime during the 1700's, the English word 'i' became uniformly capitalized to 'I'³ In Spanish, by contrast, 'you' (Usted) is capitalized and 'I' (yo) is not. But in English, it's the opposite. 'I' am capitalized and 'you' are not. That pretty much says it all, doesn't it? Relationships and society are important, but the individual most of all. Then, perhaps the story goes, there was America in the 1960's. Isn't that when we got racial justice and the sexual revolution? After all, wasn't that the decade of 'individual rights,' where I as an individual could just feel the shackles of both institutional racism and traditional morality falling to the ground? I could then do whatever I want. We think that sex and social justice go together in the sense that they are both under girded by the idea of 'individual rights.'

Atheistic Evolution Story (especially Enlightenment individualism)
Unexplained origin of universe, earth, life
Human beings are merely physical, chemical beings; our souls really don't factor in
Life's goal is the survival of species; relationships are social constructs
Sex is pleasurable but ultimately functional, for the survival of the species.
Individual rights were finally developed in the European Enlightenment, finally providing a firm foundation for justice

Now there are difficulties with this view. I'll skip over the first line, whether the universe began from nothing or whether life began from chemicals, though those should be topics for another time. I'd like to talk about the view of people.

Look at the second line: This story does the opposite of the Greco-Roman story. It values bodies but not souls. You are just the result of random chemicals. If you really believe that, then drugs and chemicals are ultimately the answer. If you feel depressed or lonely, just take serotonin. If you want to get better grades, just take ritalin. What matters is not your natural limits, or the root cause of pain in your soul, or the quality of your relationships. What matters is just your biochemistry. Now drugs might help in limited ways and for limited purposes. But is it just the chemical experience of our bodies that matters? Sadly, more and more psychiatrists seem to think so; they are prescribing lots of drugs but are doing very little counseling nowadays. The drug industry really likes this story. That's why, if you're an atheist, *opium is the religion of the people*. But is the basic story true?

Look at the second and third lines. Darwin gave support to the idea that relationships were important, but only matter insofar as they serve the greater goal of reproduction. Romance is just a biochemical experience inside your head. And sex? Well, sex according to Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, is this: 'Sex is the gene's means of creating more genes.' Is it true that individuals are real and relationships are just social constructs? Is it true that sex is ultimately functional? I don't think so. In fact, the story begins to unravel here, too. For example, if atheistic evolution is true, then POLYGAMY would be more normative. After all, where does the idea of monogamous, lifelong marriage come from? Does it come from MEN? Do MEN have an interest in promoting lifelong monogamy? Not at all. Anthropologists and historians have struggled to explain this, and no theory satisfies.⁴ TIME magazine a few years ago did an article on 'Infidelity – is it in our genes?' along these same lines.

³ The Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology (Wilson, 1988, ISBN 0-8242-0745-9) says: "-I~ pron. 1137 i; later I (about 1250, in *The Story of Genesis and Exodus*); developed from the unstressed form of Old English (about 725) ic singular pronoun of the first person (nominative case). Modern and Middle English I developed from earlier i in the stressed position. I came to be written with a capital letter thereby making it a distinct word and avoiding misreading handwritten manuscripts. In the northern and midland dialects of England the capitalized form I appeared about 1250. In the south of England, where Old English ic early shifted in pronunciation to ich (by palatalization), the form I did not become established until the 1700's (although it appears sporadically before that time)."

⁴ Anthropologists like Margaret Mead and Clifford Geertz have noted that marriage is an ancient phenomenon. Not only has it existed in historical reality, it is built into the fabric of ancient myths (e.g. the Greek myths, various Asian myths). Monogamous

Why would men endorse the idea of monogamous, lifelong marriage? It's against our interests. So if men really wrote the Bible, as atheists claim, wouldn't we be reading about Adam and Eve, Eva, and Evelyn? But it doesn't say that. Whenever polygamy does appear in the Bible, it's critiqued as sin. Take David and Bathsheba, for instance. And we can also tell that monogamy has existed for as long as human beings have, and that it is seen as somehow normative even when the practice doesn't measure up. Even in mythology, we see it. When Zeus cheats on Hera, he starts trouble; yes, adultery happens, but the moral of the story is *he never should have cheated!* We have no explanation for this except to say that monogamous lifelong marriage comes hardwired into us. Monogamous marriage is not a part of our legal or social evolution.⁵ IT WAS GIVEN TO US, AND WE WERE GIVEN TO IT. We can resist it or fail it, but we can never shake it off. Perhaps GOD won't let us?

Look at the fourth line. If it's true that only individual rights matter, then our descendents really don't matter because they're not individuals yet. Jewish and Christian scholars have noticed that God builds human community across time. Our ancestors and descendents get a vote, so to speak, in a democracy across time. This is what the West just has not been able to deal with. This is why the West pushes off environmental pollution *to the future*, government deficits *to the future*, the energy crisis *to the future*, and so on. It's *taxation without representation across time*. Is that fair?

Furthermore, taken as a whole, I doubt you can really live in the atheist evolutionary story. Not even Peter Singer, the Princeton philosopher, could. When Peter Singer's mother contracted Alzheimer's Disease, what did he do? He took her in. Now some reporters approached him and said, 'Look, Dr. Singer, we've read all your books. And if this were someone else's mother, you would have said to euthanize her. There is societal cost or pain to supporting mentally handicapped people or the elderly. Since they are a burden to society, and since they themselves may know comparatively less pain, it is morally justifiable to euthanize them. If what really mattered is just the survival of the species, no one is threatened by the elimination of a few old or mutated genes. Why are you creating an exception for yourself? How can you do that?' And he said, 'Well, you have to understand, she's my mother.' Well of course!!! I should hope so! There is something in us that wants to live in a bigger story, a story in which ALL OUR LIVES have more meaning than this, where ALL RELATIONSHIPS have inherent meaning. My point is not whether Peter Singer is a good example of someone in the atheist evolution story – there are others. My point is not that you will be unjust if you live in that story – you could be very just but you'll be searching for a real reason to be that way. My point is that NO ONE CAN TRULY LIVE IN A STORY LIKE THAT. And over time, your own story will irk you.

Another example: Sigmund Freud couldn't live that way either. If love is a construct, if relationships are a construct, and sex is all that really matters, then love and relationships are not rational and not real. So when Freud was dying, he said to his wife, 'Come and love me, irrationally.' He wanted something that he knew was love, but he thought there is no such thing, really. But he wanted it anyway. So he couldn't live in his own story. NO ONE CAN LIVE IN THAT STORY.

Is there an alternative story? Yes. Does it explain real history in a way that is academically respectable? Yes. Let me compare the Christian story to the Atheistic Evolution story in this chart.

Atheistic Evolution Story (especially Enlightenment individualism)	Christian Story
Unexplained origin of universe, earth, life	God created universe, earth, life
Human beings are merely physical, chemical beings; our souls really don't factor in	Human beings are physical and spiritual
Life's goal is the survival of species; relationships	Life's goal is honoring God; relationships are given

marriage in particular is also ancient. Social scientists have struggled to explain why marriage exists at all. Modern day socio-biologists are puzzled since marriage, and monogamous marriage in particular, while it benefits mothers and children in the early years of a young family's life, arguably confers no evolutionary advantage, particularly to men. So why would it have come about on its own? While it is true that the fall has corrupted humanity so that marriage is sometimes twisted into polygamous forms, or fractured by adultery, etc., this was already accounted for in Genesis 4 when Lamech took two wives. In essence, then, the Genesis account tells us that marriage is woven into our internal existence.

⁵ Liberal political philosophy (e.g. Rousseau) argues that the individual comes first and that everything else is a social construct. But biblically, monogamous, heterosexual, lifelong marriage precedes the individual, for it existed in the mind of God before He even brought humanity into being. We have been created to fit into God's ideal for human marriage, not to alter it.

are important, but social constructs	and ordered by God
Sex is pleasurable individually but ultimately functional, for the survival of the species.	Sex takes its meaning from being located in God's original ideal for human marriage: monogamous, heterosexual, loving, with no pre-marital sex, adultery, desertion, or divorce
Individual rights were finally developed in the European Enlightenment, providing a 'firm foundation' for justice	Individuals have responsibilities to God concerning how to treat others.

First line: God created the universe, earth, life. It could have been at 14 billion, 5 billion, and 150,000 years ago, respectively – that's fine; the Bible isn't specific about when those things happened, so there's no conflict about dates. Perhaps God used the evolutionary process – that's possible, too. The conflict is about God. We also have conflict on the second line: Human beings are physical and spiritual, not just physical. Third line: Life's goal is honoring God; relationships are given and ordered by God. That means they are real, and special, and have some kind of eternal significance. Fourth line: Sex takes its meaning from being located in marriage, God's original ideal for it in Genesis 1 and 2 being monogamous, heterosexual, loving, with no pre-marital sex, adultery, desertion, or divorce. Or else, to the best that I can tell, it seems to lose its meaning.

Let me pause on that one. I am not saying that this definition should be public policy; in fact I'm a moderate left of center person on the issue of gay marriage. After all, Christians don't legislate against pre-marital sex, adultery, divorce, and all the other aberrations from God's ideal. And within the Christian story, it takes God to empower people to even live for the ideal, so we can't expect people without God to be able to do so. But I am saying that the Christian view of sexuality is academically respectable. Why? Because sexual freedom is a protected category in our culture because of Enlightenment individualism, the view that all relationships are social constructs. But there is reason for us to not believe that. In fact, Enlightenment individualism is a bad theory of history, because it doesn't actually explain history. History tells us we've always lived in families. But Rousseau tells us the individualistic 'noble savage' once lived in the 'state of nature' and then entered the 'state of civilization.' WELL, WHEN WAS THAT??? You see, philosophy in the Enlightenment deviated from other academic disciplines, like history. What's the reality of it? **SO THE SECULAR IDEA OF INDIVIDUALISM IN SEXUAL EXPRESSION IS NOT MORE ACADEMICALLY RESPECTABLE THAN THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SEXUAL EXPRESSION. IN FACT, IT IS PROBABLY LESS SO.**

The fifth line: In the biblical story, it's not so much that individuals have rights, as that we have responsibilities. Neither Genesis 1 – 11 nor the New Testament say, 'We believe these truths to be self-evident, that all men [and women] are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.' In fact, the view of the Bible is that God calls each human being to be connected to Jesus and demonstrate a particular moral character, the character of Jesus. So individuals have responsibilities *to God*, concerning *other people*, but the responsibility is first and foremost *to God*. That's very different from saying that the rights reside in us. That means that Christians owe love to others, like the handicapped or people with less potential, not because of what others can or can't do, but because God commands it of the Christian. It's the difference between being an employee doing a small job for a large company versus being a member of a great family whose whole character and legacy is love.

That's why it's so important to point out that the Civil Rights Movement for social justice was led by the Black American community, which was communal and quite Christian. That is why Fannie Lou Hamer, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others started to speak out against poverty and the Vietnam War, and not just about racism in the U.S. Their politics was not just Black-centric, but a larger one that became larger and larger. Why? Because they were living in the Christian story, and they felt a responsibility to challenge the growing pockets of wealth in the black community (something that was controversial) but also America's foreign policy (very controversial). Whereas the hippie movement for sexual freedom was led by a segment of the White American community, which was influenced by the individualistic atheist evolution story, and was very self-centered. What happened in the TV show *Family Ties* with the young Michael J. Fox? Those hippies in the 70's became the yuppies of the 80's. Did we get more social justice out of them? Under Reagan?? No: Their concerns became smaller and smaller. Your story matters, because your story shapes your ethics.

The Christian story and the Atheist individualist story, broadly speaking, are both challenging. There are some things to really think through on both sides. I think the atheist story will eventually irk you; it'll bug you, because it

doesn't actually accomplish what it purports to. Not only do we have to ask, 'What story is more believable?' but 'What story is more livable?' and ultimately, 'What story is true?' If we want to be truly human, we have to choose first and foremost which story we will live in. What will it be for you? Which story will YOU live in?

So I want to invite you to make one of two decisions. The first decision would be to switch stories. Perhaps you are over here on the left in the Enlightenment Atheist story. I invite you to switch stories and enter the Christian story. You can come up to talk to me or talk to a friend who brought you about how to do that. Or, the second decision would be to stop mixing and matching stories. For some of you, Christians included, you'd like to believe that you can mix and match. Say you like the idea of a loving God, but you really want to do whatever you want with your sex life and your money. Well, you can't have it both ways and be intellectually honest. These stories don't mix. So for those of you who like to do that, I invite you to stop mixing and matching, and finally decide.

Does the Christian View of Sexuality Make Any Sense?
How Sexuality and Social Justice Are Tied Together: A Comparative Approach
Handout – A Comparison of Stories

Homer's Iliad (European)	Atrahasis (Babylonian/Akkadian)	Zoroastrian Avesta (Old Iranian)	Genesis 1 – 11 (Hebrew)
Problem: Overpopulation, wickedness, earth burdened	Creation (1.1-351): the work of the gods and the creation of humans	Creation: Ahura Mazda tells Yima (human) to be king over creation	Creation (1:1-2:3): God creates the world and humans and blesses them
First Threat: Zeus sends the Theban War; many destroyed	First Threat (1.352-415): Humans numerically increase; plague from the gods to limit overcrowding; Enki's help	First Threat: Overpopulation; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	First Threat (2:4-4:26): Genealogy of heavens and earth; the Fall; God promises victory to the seed of the woman; Cain kills Abel and settles in a city; God preserves Seth
Second Threat: Zeus plans to destroy all by thunderbolts; Momos dissuades Zeus	Second Threat (II.i.1-II.v.21) Humanity's numerical increase; drought from the gods; Enki's help	Second Threat: Overpopulation; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	Second Threat (5:1-9:29): Genealogy of Adam to Noah; human violence; God destroys the world through the flood; God preserves Noah and family
Third Threat: Momos suggests that Thebis marry a mortal to create Achilles and that Zeus father Helen of Troy; war results between the Greeks and the barbarians	Third Threat (II.v.22-III.vi.4): Humanity's numerical increase, Atrahasis Flood, salvation in boat	Third Threat: Overpopulation; Yima asks the earth goddess Armaiti to expand herself	Third Threat (10:1-11:9): Genealogy of Shem, Ham, Japheth; Tower of Babel and dispersion
Resolution: Many destroyed by Trojan War, earth lightened of her burdened	Resolution (III.vi.5-viii.18): Numerical increase; compromise between Enlil and Enki; humans cursed with natural barrenness, high infant mortality rate, cult prostitution (to separate sex and procreation)	Resolution: Ahura Mazda sends a deadly winter with heavy snowfall to punish overcrowding; Yima told to build a three storied enclosure to survive; humanity destroyed outside while a boy and girl born in enclosure every 40 years	Resolution (11:10-26): Genealogy of Shem; introduction of Abram (In 11:27ff., God calls Abram out of Ur to begin Israel.)

Greco-Roman Story	Christian Story
The immortal, good soul wants to escape the bad physical body	We were created good, both body and soul
Expected 'disembodiment' – the separation of soul from body	Expected 'resurrection' – the renewal of the physical world, including our bodies; God's true humanity will be raised from the dead
Death is inevitable and is the end; no one comes back from the dead (cf. Homer)	Death is the enemy of God's good creation; it will be overthrown in a fresh new creation
Caring for the poor is not important since the body is not important	Caring for the poor is important because people's bodies are important
Caring for other people-groups is irrelevant (elite vs. barbarian)	Caring for other people-groups is fundamental (universal concern)
Sexuality – where does it come from? Who knows?	Humans were created into marriage: monogamous, heterosexual, loving and with no pre-marital sex, adultery, desertion, or divorce
Have sex with anyone since the body is not important (e.g. Greek Epicureans)	Sexual ethics are important because Jesus is restoring us to the Genesis creation story

Atheistic Evolution Story (especially Enlightenment individualism)	Christian Story
Unexplained origin of universe, earth, life	God created universe, earth, life
Human beings are merely physical, chemical beings; our souls really don't factor in	Human beings are physical and spiritual
Life's goal is the survival of species; relationships are important, but social constructs	Life's goal is honoring God; relationships are given and ordered by God
Sex is pleasurable individually but ultimately functional, for the survival of the species.	Sex takes its meaning from being located in God's original ideal for human marriage: monogamous, heterosexual, loving, with no pre-marital sex, adultery, desertion, or divorce
Individual rights were finally developed in the European Enlightenment, providing a 'firm foundation' for justice	Individuals have responsibilities to God concerning how to treat others.