

PHILIP YANCEY

“turning the grace of God into lasciviousness” Jude 4

When you go into any modern ‘Christian’ bookstore it will be virtually impossible not to be confronted at some point by books written by **Philip Yancey**. He is without doubt one of the best selling ‘Christian’ authors of this age and some of his best known works include *‘What’s So amazing About Grace’*, *‘Where Is God When It Hurts’* and *‘Soul Survivor’*. In March 2002 he was the *Banquet Speaker* at the *Christian Booksellers Convention* held in Doncaster.

As a freelance ‘Christian’ writer he serves as *‘Editor at Large’* for the pseudo-evangelical publication *‘Christianity Today’*. His writings have [rightly] attracted criticism and controversy from ‘conservative’ Christians despite a claim by **Yancey** in an article published on 21 September 2002 by Alf McCreary [Religious affairs correspondent of the Belfast Telegraph] that **‘My calling is not to be successful but to be faithful to God’**.

One of the areas where his **‘faithfulness to God’** has been challenged has been in how he views homosexuality and lesbianism and its compatibility with the professed Christianity of those who pursue such life-styles. In relation to his book *‘What’s So Amazing About Grace’* I have on file some comments made about it by two Christians.

One report was sent to me by an ‘ordinary’ Christian lady called **Mona** and in it **Mona** wrote **‘This writer [Yancey] gives a long, involved portion of his book reasoning in favour of homosexuality based on his strong friendship with this “Christian” [Mel White] who left his wife to resume a homosexual lifestyle which he could not resist. At the same time Christian “hate” attitudes are reviled, and while these may not be endorsed, neither is there justification for what God calls an abomination, nor is there any Biblical injunction to “pour grace on it” [homosexuality].’**

Mona told of how **Yancey** accompanied his ‘gay Christian’ friend Mel White on the ‘gay’ march in Washington in March 1987 and how **Yancey** **‘relates the shocking behaviour of Christian protesters at the march, but commends the “gay Christian” response – “Jesus Loves Us”’**.

In the other report written by **Pastor Gary Gilley** of Southern View Chapel, **Pastor Gilley** wrote **‘Yancey has a fundamental flaw that runs throughout all of his writings – he doesn’t always draw his thoughts and principles from Scripture...this serious flaw of not basing his concepts squarely upon the Scriptures eventually leads Yancey astray. Yancey does not know the difference between tolerance and arrogance; between grace and license; between boldness and harshness. By Yancey’s definitions John the Baptist and Elijah would be men of “ungrace” but God did not seem to think so...Certainly Jesus loved and spent time with prostitutes, but He did so to call them to repentance, not to accept their way of living. Yancey’s method of dealing with a homosexual, who is also a church leader, may seem like “grace” to him, it may seem like what Jesus would do, but it is clearly out of sync with the teachings and examples of Scripture’**.

In recent days I was sent the transcript of an interview with **Philip Yancey** that is posted on the website of a ‘ministry’ called **‘WHOSOEVER’** [<http://www.whosoever.org/index.shtml>]. **‘WHOSOEVER’** is subtitled **‘An online magazine for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and transgender Christians’**.

From the **‘What We Believe’** section of the website much can be learned of how this ‘Ministry’ views the teaching, authority and relevance of the Word of God and as you read some extracts of their statement [with my own comments added] perhaps, like me, you will be reminded of how Peter warned of people who being **“unlearned and unstable, wrest [twist] as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” [2 Peter 3:16]**.

Point 3 states *'we are called by God to never return evil for evil, and to turn the other cheek. We can expect persecution as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered Christians. But we are warned not to stoop to the level of our persecutors'* Luke 6:27-29 - "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To those who strike you on the cheek, offer the other also"; Romans 12:14 - "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them"; John 15:18-19 - "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you of the world, therefore the world hates you."

Comments The Scriptures quoted here are the Lord's instructions to true disciples as to how they should behave when they suffer for living a Holy, Faithful, Godly, and Christian life. Paul states that **"all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"** [2 Timothy 3:12]. Whilst not in any way condoning 'persecution' of gays etc [whether by professing Christians or by the world at large] the point to note is that they are not being 'persecuted' for **"living godly in Christ Jesus"** and they cannot therefore appropriate these scriptures to themselves as a defence.

Point 4 of the statement declares *'We believe that salvation is between God and the individual and is not open to criticism, question or judgment by others. We believe faith in Jesus Christ is the only justification needed'*. Philippians 2:12 - "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; Ephesians 2:8-9 - "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."; Galatians 2:21 - "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain".

Comments It is true that 'salvation' is not based on 'human works' but the 'human works' of those professing to be Christians will evidence true 'salvation'. God's word encourages Christians to **"test the spirits whether they are of God"** [1 John 4:1]. The validity of someone's profession of being a Christian can be tested by **"their fruits"** [Matthew 7:20] so God's Word not only sanctions *'criticism, question and judgment'* but commends it **"Brethren, if any one of you do err from the truth and one convert him, Let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins"** [James 5:19-20]. Paul didn't hold back from telling professing Christians in Ephesus how they should live in the light of their claimed conversion as we read in Ephesians 4:17-24. In verses 17 & 19 he says **"walk not as other gentiles walk...who being past feeling [having no conscience] have given themselves over unto lasciviousness** and in verse 24 he says **"put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness"** – Paul expected to see the **"fruits"** of genuine conversion to Christ in the lives of these professing Christians.

Point 5 states *'We believe that we are all equal in the eyes of God, regardless of sexual orientation'*. Galatians 3:28 - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus".

Comments Galatians 3:28 teaches the 'equal standing' before God of all true believers, irrespective of their racial background, their social background or their God-given gender. It does not teach an 'equal standing' before God for all, irrespective of their moral life style. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church that was plagued by problems of immorality, said **"Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God"** [1 Corinthians 6:9-10]

Point 6 states *'We believe God made us as gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons and has opened God's realm to us without reservation'*.

John 15:16-17 - "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father (Heavenly Parent) in my name, God may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another".²

Comments This statement point fails to take into account that the pinnacle of God's "good" creation [**Genesis 1:31**] was humanity – "male and female" [**Genesis 1:27**] and that the only sexual relationship blessed by God was that between man and woman [**Genesis 2:24**]. In **Hebrews 13:4** we read "**Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed [the place of sexual intimacy] undefiled**". Pastor John MacArthur comments 'God highly honours marriage which He instituted at creation...Sexual activity in a marriage is pure but any sexual activity outside marriage brings one under divine judgment. God prescribes serious consequences for sexual immorality'. Any deviation in moral behaviour from God's "good" pattern came as a result of the entrance of sin as detailed in **Genesis 3** and God does not bless such sin as many passages in the Word of God teach clearly. A passage such as **Romans 1:18-32** teaches that God did not 'open God's realm' to immoral sinners but rather God "gave them up" [abandoned them] [verses 24, 26 and 28] to their sinful lusts.

Point 7 states *'We believe the Bible is the inspired word of God that must be read in the context it was written. Many of its truths are universal and can be directly applied to modern times. But a majority of canonical scripture is situation and time specific to the culture of its time. Therefore, one must use exegesis and prayerful communion with the Holy Spirit before applying canonical scripture to today's culture'*.

1 Corinthians 2:10-13 – "God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what person knows another person's thoughts except the spirit of the person which is in them? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who possess the Spirit."

Comments The ongoing authority and application of God's Word is taught in the Scriptures themselves. The Apostle Paul wrote in his last letter before being martyred for the Gospel "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" [**2 Timothy 3:16-17**]. Speaking of His second coming, the Lord Himself said "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away" [**Luke 21:33**] and 4 chapters earlier, when again speaking of His second coming, He likened future conditions to those of "the days of Lot" when God, angered by the immorality of Sodom, "rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all" [**Luke 17:28-29**]. God's view of sinful immorality is not 'situation and time specific' but eternal "truth" [**John 17:17**] because "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" [**Psalms 119:89**]. Unrepentant "fornicators" of whatever 'orientation' will spend eternity in "the lake which burneth with fire" and will find the door of "the Holy city, new Jerusalem" permanently closed to them "for outside are...fornicators" [**Revelation 21:8; 21:2; 22:15**].

Point 8 states *'We believe God is alive and is speaking to God's children even today. God's words are found in the Bible but God continues to reveal truths not found in scripture through the Holy Spirit'*.

Hebrews 4:12 - "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than a two edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Comments The Word of God teaches that Christians are not to seek 'truths not found in scripture'. The Apostle Paul instructed believers "not to think above that which is written" [**1 Corinthians 4:6**] and there is another clear warning to God's people that teaches "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar" [**Proverbs 30:6**]. The same book of **Hebrews** quoted in this point 8 of the statement also teaches how God spoke in Old Testament times but how He has now finally spoken to the world through His Son –

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” [Hebrews 1:1-2]. Bible commentator, *F B Hole* wrote ‘We are at once brought face to face with the tremendous fact that God, who had spoken to the fathers of Israel by prophets in former days, had now spoken in divine fullness and with finality in His Son’. [*Epistles: Vol: 3: pages 1-2*].

Moving on from the ‘*What We Believe*’ section of the website I want to comment upon the interviewer who is referred to on the website as the ‘*Rev.*’ **Candace Chellew-Hodge**. Her personal details, beside her photo [in clerical robes] include –

Candace is the last of five kids of a Southern Baptist minister, and is herself ordained through Gentle Spirit Christian Church of Atlanta, Georgia. She has worked in journalism and public relations for nearly 20 years. She founded ‘**Whosoever**’ because “there were simply no good Christian magazines to read that didn’t bash gays at some point.” **She and her partner, Wanda**, live in the sticks of South Carolina with way too many cats and dogs.

At the conclusion of the interview posted to the website we read the following –

Candace Chellew–Hodge is a recovering Southern Baptist and founder/editor of Whosoever: An Online Magazine for GLBT Christians. She is an ordained minister and holds a master’s in theological studies from the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. She is a spiritual director trained through the Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta. She has worked for the past two decades in journalism and public relations.

The fact that this lady styles herself as ‘*Rev.*’ shows her disobedience to the prohibitions of the Bible concerning women and teaching [see **1 Timothy 2:12**]. As you will have read in the title to this article, I have quoted **Jude 4** that speaks of “**certain men [who] crept in unawares [secretly, who escaped notice]...ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness**”.

The problem of “**lasciviousness**” amongst professing believers is something that the Scriptures pay much attention to. We must first understand what “**lasciviousness**” is and **Vine’s Expository Dictionary** defines the word on page 353 as denoting ‘**excess, licentiousness, absence of restraint, indecency, wantonness...one of the evils that proceed from the heart [Mark 7:22]; one of the evils of which some in the church at Corinth had been guilty of [2 Corinthians 12:21]; classed among the works of the flesh [Galatians 5:19]; among the sins of the unregenerate who are “past feeling” [Ephesians 4:19]; one of the sins against which believers are warned [Romans 13:13]’.** Vine also links the “**pernicious ways**” of **2 Peter 2:2** to ‘**lasciviousness**’ and to the “**filthy manner of life of the wicked**” in Sodom and Gomorrah from which Lot was “**delivered**” [**2 Peter 2:6-7**]. Vine concludes ‘**The prominent idea is shameless conduct**’.

In the light of this website’s ‘*What We Believe*’ section, I believe it is clear that those involved in and sympathetic to this ‘ministry’ are seeking to justify a lifestyle that the Bible condemns as ‘**lasciviousness**’.

What I want now to address is the interview given by **Philip Yancey** to the ‘*Rev.*’ **Candace Chellew-Hodge** and to consider whether **Mr Yancey** is likewise guilty of “**turning the grace of God into lasciviousness**”.

The preamble to the interview, written by ‘*Rev.*’ **Candace Chellew-Hodge** is itself quite enlightening as it reveals how she changed her initial perception of **Mr Yancey** as a result of reading some of his books.

In the preamble **Candace Chellew-Hodge** wrote –

'I first heard of Philip Yancey when his book "What's So Amazing About Grace?" came out in 1997. Even though many people whom I respected raved about the book, I was not interested in reading the book. Why would I? It was written by a man who regularly wrote for Christianity Today - a magazine that was less than gay friendly. I'm not one to spend my precious reading time on authors who bash gays and lesbians - or authors that I perceive might do that. I know their positions and their arguments. Reading their books seemed like a waste of time.

I must now confess that I unfairly judged Yancey. I let a silly "guilt-by-association" taint my opinion of him even before giving his books a chance. I regret that, but perhaps God knows best. If I had read Yancey in 1997 I might not have appreciated his gentleness, his grace or his mercy quite as much as I do now. I finally gave in and read Yancey's work only after I had subscribed to the audio book service Audible...

Audible has a great selection of Christian and spiritual books and I've consumed most of their catalogue. It was during a dry spell, when I had exhausted much of the collection that interested me that I turned to Yancey's new book, 'Rumours of Another World'. I had been in spiritual crisis and was looking for someone to explain to me how to reach that supernatural world that we know exists, but somehow cannot relate to or forget about in our daily rush. The description of the book sounded intriguing so I put my preconceived notions of Yancey aside and downloaded the book. What a blessing! The book was just what I needed.

I did, however, cringe through the chapter on "Designer Sex," waiting for that bash against gays and lesbians. It never came. I was deeply shocked - an evangelical who didn't use a chapter on sex to take a pot shot at homosexuals? It was hard to imagine.

The tone of the book led me to make another selection by Yancey. 'Reaching for the Invisible God' was another book I listened to with an eager hunger. Finally, an author offered an intelligent treatment of faith, doubt and how we relate to a God we cannot see. I was beginning to see why so many people loved Yancey - and why others would not like him at all - especially if they clung to a fundamentalist, black and white faith.

Finally, I decided to read "Grace". This book left me speechless and utterly blessed. I want to start a church based solely on the teachings of this book - of God's "grace on tap" for every person who walks through the door. I think it should be required reading for every single church member on the face of the earth... It was Yancey's description of his friendship with Mel White in "Grace" that touched me most deeply.

White's story, documented in his own book 'Stranger at the Gate', has been well documented in the gay and lesbian community... Shunned by his former employees, White went on to found 'Soulforce', a social action group dedicated to the spiritual equality of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender believers. Yancey's steadfast support for his friend Mel, and *his own struggle with the sinfulness of homosexuality* is documented in the book and is one of the most honest accounts of grace in the face of struggle that I believe I have ever read. It was this chapter that led me to write to Yancey and tell him how much his books had moved me. He was kind enough to send me a reply that emboldened me to ask for an interview. He agreed to an email interview, given his busy schedule. I was amazed that he would lend his name to a publication like 'Whosoever' - and eternally grateful. I cannot recommend his work strongly enough. If you thirst for grace, peace and joy, read Yancey's works. You will not be disappointed.

I can confirm [as the result of email exchanges with Candace Chellew-Hodge] that the phrase in this preamble 'his own struggle with the sinfulness of homosexuality' does refer to Philip Yancey's 'struggle' and not to any 'struggle' by his homosexual friend, Mel White. It is not my intention to publish and analyze in full the interview given, but rather to quote extracts and to make comments.

The full interview, detailing all the questions posed by **Candace Chellew-Hodge** of **Whosoever** and setting out, in full, the answers given by **Philip Yancey** can be viewed by following this link <http://www.whosoever.org/v8i6/yancey.shtml>

Question by Whosoever: In your book "What's so Amazing about Grace?" you tell about your friendship with 'Soulforce' leader Mel White and your support of him at the ['gay'] March on Washington in 1987... What is your position on gays and lesbians in the church?

Answer by Yancey:...Mel was one of my closest friends for years before he revealed to me his sexual orientation. (He still is, by the way.) He had repressed and hidden his homosexuality, and in fact was married and was making a fine career in Christian publishing and ministry.... I get hate letters full of equal venom from both sides: from conservative Christians appalled that I would maintain a friendship with Mel and write compassionately about gays and lesbians, and from the other side wishing I would go further with a full endorsement...**I'm sure of what my own attitude should be toward gays and lesbians: I should show love and grace. As one person told me, "Christians get very angry toward other Christians who sin differently than they do."**

When people ask me how I can possibly stay friends with a sinner like Mel, I respond by asking how Mel can possibly stay friends with a sinner like me. **Even if** I conclude that all homosexual behaviour is wrong, as many conservative Christians do, I'm still compelled to respond with love. **As I've attended gay and lesbian churches, I'm also saddened that the evangelical church by and large finds no place for homosexuals. I've met wonderful, committed Christians who attend **MCC churches, and I wish that the larger church had the benefit of their faith. And at the same time, I think it's unhealthy to have an entire denomination formed around this one particular issue--those people need exposure to and inclusion in the wider Body of Christ.**

When it gets to particular matters of policy, like ordaining gay and lesbian ministers, I'm confused, like a lot of people. There are a few--not many, but a few passages of Scripture that give me pause. Frankly, I don't know the answer to those questions. My church in Chicago spent a couple of years carefully studying the issue. The church had openly gay members, but did not allow practicing homosexuals in leadership positions (as they did not allow unmarried "practicing heterosexuals," whatever that means).

The committee studying the issue looked at the biblical and theological and social aspects and **finally came down in** the same place: **welcoming but not affirming homosexuals in leadership roles.** Conservatives got mad and left. Many gays and lesbians also left, hurt that the church reinforced their "second-class citizen" status. I don't have a magic answer, and I can't see one on the near horizon. Whole denominations are struggling with the very same issue, as you know.

****MCC** refers to what is know as the **Metropolitan Community Church** and from the website of the **MCC** in West Hollywood, California we read the following – **'The first Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) was founded by Rev Troy D. Perry in 1968 in Los Angeles, CA (USA). This Fellowship of Churches plays a vital role in addressing the spiritual needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community around the world. For those of us who were raised in a religious atmosphere, homosexuality was usually associated with shame and guilt. As a result, many of us were cut off from the spiritual dimension of our lives. Metropolitan Community Churches provide an opportunity to explore a spiritual experience that affirms who we are'**.

Comments: From the answer given by **Mr Yancey** the following conclusions can be drawn: -

1. **Mr Yancey** asserts that sexually active professing 'gay Christians' are to be shown '**love and grace**' and not to be challenged about their sexual activity and are to be viewed simply as Christians who MAY BE SINNING in a different manner to other Christians. **Mr Yancey** is clearly uncertain about whether homosexuality etc is sinful in the light of his phraseology such as '**Even if**', '**I'm confused**', '**there are a few passages of scripture that give me pause**' and '**I don't have a magic answer**'.
2. The concept of '**gay and lesbian CHURCHES**' appears to pose no theological problem for **Mr Yancey**. He views the **Metropolitan Community Church** as a bona-fide Christian '**denomination**'. He appears to have acquiesced to the willingness of the Church he belonged to in Chicago accepting '**openly gay MEMBERS**' even though they did prohibit such from leadership roles.
3. Despite being a hugely successful 'Christian' writer **Mr Yancey** appears not to understand the term '**unmarried practising heterosexuals**'. Someone in his position and with his influence should surely know that the Bible identifies such people as "**fornicators**" [**Fornication: In its more restricted sense fornication denotes voluntary sexual communion between an unmarried person and one of the opposite sex – Marshall Pickering Evangelical Dictionary of Theology page 422**].
4. **Mr Yancey** reduces the MANY PASSAGES of Scripture that identify sexual activity outside the confines of the God-ordained marriage relationship of one man and one woman [Genesis 1:27-28 & Genesis 2:24] as being sinful to '**there are a FEW PASSAGES of scripture that give me pause**'. In the use of this terminology I hear echoes of "Yea, hath God Said?" [Genesis 3:1].

Question by Whosoever: How can other Evangelical Christians develop an attitude of grace (if not acceptance) toward gay and lesbian Christians?

Answer by Yancey: **The only way is through personal exposure.** It's amazing how feelings change when suddenly it's your daughter or your brother who comes out of the closet. In my case, it was my friend Mel. The issues I had read about suddenly had a face, a person with a story. When that happened, everything changed. That's one reason why I think it's sad that the churches have so little contact. **I have attended gay and lesbian churches whose fervency and commitment would put most evangelical churches to shame.** Disapproving conservatives should have contact with those people, and vice versa.

Comments: From the answer given by **Mr Yancey** the following conclusions can be drawn: -

1. The concept of unrepentant **'gay and lesbian Christians'** is obviously acceptable to **Mr Yancey** who commends them for their **'fervency and commitment'**.
2. The phrase **'attitude of grace'** appears to be interpreted by **Mr Yancey** as the eradication of **'Evangelical'** Christian disapproval of homosexual/lesbian sexual activity – activity that the Bible clearly identifies as sinful. In effect **Mr Yancey** is encouraging an attitude of [to paraphrase **Isaiah 5:20**] **'accepting evil as good'**. God's **'grace'** never involves **'accepting evil as good'** and **Mr Yancey** is encouraging an attitude and approach to sin that Paul warned against in **Romans 6:1-2** **"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we [true Christians] that are dead to sin, live any longer in it?"** *Matthew Henry* in his commentary on these verses wrote *'The apostle is very full in pressing the necessity of holiness...he shows that connection between justification and holiness are inseparable. Let the thought be abhorred, of continuing in sin that grace may abound. True believers are dead to sin; therefore they ought not to follow it. No man can at the same time be both dead and alive. He is a fool who, desiring to be dead unto sin, thinks he may live in it.'*
3. **Mr Yancey** encourages **'disapproving conservatives'** to **'have contact with these people'** – he obviously means for **'conservative'** Christians to tolerate such sinful practices amongst professing Christians by having what he calls **'contact'** with such people rather than disapprovingly confronting them. This advice by **Mr Yancey** conflicts with the Biblical commendation already quoted from **James 5:19-20** and with the concern expressed by Paul, who didn't tolerate sinful sexual, immoral activity by professing Christians, but rather declared that he would **"bemoan" [lament and mourn over]** those engaged in such sin [**2 Corinthians 12:21**].

Question by Whosoever: When my [lesbian] partner and I moved to a new state, we began searching for a church home. I wrote a letter to the local Episcopal rector explaining who we were and asked if we would be welcome in his church. His response, in a nutshell, was that we would be very welcome, if only we gave up our "sinful lifestyle" and sought out good, Christian (presumably Episcopalian) men to marry. This is the reaction of many Christian churches to gays and lesbians. We must give up our sexual orientation to be accepted. What do you say to churches like this?

Answer by Yancey: I'm probably not the best person to address a church like that--you are. Obviously, if a church is saying you need to give up sexual orientation, that church needs some education. I know of some ministries who try to change sexual behaviour, but none that try to change sexual orientation...

I would probably approach that rector differently. I would point to how Jesus dealt with people who were moral failures--I'm starting where the rector is, who sees you as a moral failure. Jesus chose one such woman, a woman who had had five failed marriages, as his first missionary. I would also ask if he requires all who attend his church to leave their "sins" at the door.

Comments: From the answer given by **Mr Yancey** the following conclusions can be drawn: -

1. **Mr Yancey** clearly accepts the notion of diverse '**sexual orientation**' because very subtly the questioner has directed attention to what she calls '**sexual orientation**' and diverted attention away from '**sexual activity**'. This '**orientation**' approach seeks to legitimise '**sexual activity**' between those of the same gender by suggesting that diverse '**sexual orientation**' is a perfectly normal and an integral part of God's "**good**" created order. God's "**good**" created order included humans created "**male and female**" [**Genesis 1:27**] and there was no mention whatsoever of what might be termed '**cross orientation**'. The '**sexual activity**' attributed to this '**cross orientation**' [homosexuality and lesbianism] is regularly identified in many passages of the Bible as an "**abomination**" in the sight of God.
2. **Mr Yancey** identifies a woman [see **John 4:1-29**] who had '**five failed marriages**' as a '**moral failure**' and explains how Jesus chose her to be '**his first missionary**'. Does **Mr Yancey** want to convey the impression that Jesus would use as a '**missionary**' someone who was **still** enmeshed and wedded to sinful immorality?

Has **Mr Yancey** forgotten the Lord's words to another '**moral failure**' when he said to the woman who had been caught in the very act of adultery "**go and sin no more**" [**John 8:11**].

In Paul's second letter to Timothy he instructs those who "**name the name of Christ [to] depart from iniquity**" so that they may be "**a vessel unto honour, sanctified and fit for the master's use**" [**2 Timothy 2:19 7 21**].

Much more could be written, not only on this topic of homosexuality and lesbianism but also about other worrying aspects of **Mr Yancey's** thinking when he makes statements like "**I also find a lot of spiritual nourishment in Catholic writers across the centuries. They understand the mystery, and many of them spent their entire lives exploring that mystery**" and when the interviewer makes comments like "**Your books convey an obvious intelligence and depth about your faith. You incorporate the thoughts of many serious theologians including Soren Kirkegaard, Simone Weil and Thomas Merton**".

Leaving these additional concerns aside and returning to **Mr Yancey's** comments on this whole issue of '**gay and lesbian Christians**' I firmly believe that there is only one conclusion that can be arrived at.

Measuring **Mr Yancey's** comments against the teaching of the Word of God **Mr Yancey** is guilty of what **Jude** warned against in **verse 4**, namely of **“turning the grace of God into lasciviousness”**. **Mr Yancey** is either not equipped or simply unwilling to articulate God's clear views on this moral issue and as a result he is giving false spiritual hope and comfort to those who are in danger of suffering the same judgment as their ***‘sexually orientated ancestors’*** as we read in **Jude 7** of **“Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth, for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”**.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 5 July 2004