

PROMISCUOUS (INDISCRIMINATE) EQUALITY AS IDOL

Reflections on yesterday's "Confessing Christ" consultation on
"Same-Sex Marriage?"

2891 5.7.98
ELLIOTT THINKSHEETS
309 L. Ellz. Dr., Craigville, MA 02636
Phone/Fax 508.775.8008
Noncommercial reproduction permitted

God equally creates all creatures, but it'd be an invalid leap of logic into nonsense to conclude that he creates them equal (to each other). While the leap is not logical, it makes political sense in the egalitarian atmosphere of our time. Two parties (say, men & women) are (on secular grounds) said to be equal; then the divine sanction clicks in to "explain" the (alleged) equality (a nonlogical move, in a form of reversible proposition). Thus do liberal Christians keep their right hands (their Faith) from knowing what their left hands (their Enlightenment egalitarianism) are doing. When (to shift to another figure) thus the Faith & the ideology are experienced as cozy bedmates, the chn. they produce begin life with the burden of the parents' illogicalities....This Thinksheet will get around to putting "same-sex marriage" in this psychosocial context. The inferential slide is smooth: (1)*Men & women are = (so, gays & lesbians are =). (2) Straights & homosexuals are = in having parallel "natural" (unchosen) sexual identities (parallel also with those of men & women). (3) Christianity teaches that we are all = before, in the presence of, God, who created us equals (as the Declaration of Independence, though not the Bible, proclaims). (4) The Church, accordingly, should give = recognition to couples, married & same-sex, both couplings expressing "natural" sexual preferences. (5) The recognition should include offering =ly to both a ritual affirmation-blessing of = dignity & seriousness. (6) The easiest way to accomplish this is to call both rituals "marriage." (7) The couple in a same-sex "marriage" should be accorded all the church-&-state rights & privileges now accorded to opposite-sex marriage, the two "marriages" being =....* The ultimate transcendentalization of this is that in the diety, masculine & feminine are = & therefore the Bible's exclusive use of masculine pronouns for God is a theological error; & it follows (?) that the social effect will be to obscure the fact (?) of fe/male equality.

1 None of the more than 100 participants in the consultation went all the way to the bottom of said slide (though some, in the small groups & in informal conversations, may have done so). The national UCC office's Andy Lang--a devout Christian** who brilliantly uses the Christian mind, classical Christian thought, on whatever he addresses--went farthest: he stopped short of calling the ritualized same-sex unions "marriage": that stretch on the word would "obscure" the primacy, in the divine order, of the fe/male relationship. He favors the practice of the homosexual denomination, Metropolitan Community Churches: "union." (Besides other strengths & virtues, Andy's a man of courage. After the first session--the consultation was 9am-3pm--he was attacked by partisans on the left of him, those one might call Full Sliders....He did not get into [7].)....**Said he's homosexual.

2 Max Stackhouse, Princeton Seminary's eminent Christian ethicist, presented himself as "a nonpracticing polygamist"--cluing us into his "liberal Puritan" approach to the-divine-order handling of one's feelings....John Burgess, theologian from the national office of the Presbyterian Church in the USA, was moderator of & commentator on the consultation--his gentle spirit & sharp mind enriching the experience for everyone.

3 Being of liberal mind (though conservative heart), I'm comfortable as a freedom-fighter & painfully uncomfortable when I must fight against freedom--in this case, the freedom-"right" of homosexuality (& thus same-sex unions) (1) to be **tolerated** in all situations & (2) to be treated as **equal** (because "**natural**") to heterosexuality....All three of these celebrated virtues need looking at here....Tolerance correlates not only with the virtue of magnanimity but also with the vices of anomic & anarchy....Equality correlates not only with fairness but also with ethical relativism & "nonjudgmental" pluralism/multiculturalism....And what's "natural" can mean many things: (1) Independent of supernatural (as, eg, "n. selection"); (2) Without any human decisional element (ie, "born that way"--on which there's no socioscientific consensus vis-a-vis homosexuality); (3) Good--but what's natural (eg, genetic/congenital/developmental defects) is not therefore good. I have had to make my way thorough the world with doubly defective eyes. And while these developmental

defects may be considered to have been good *for me* (my spiritual development, with childhood eye-surgery), they are in themselves certainly not good, but bad--in the sense that homosexuality is bad/sad as a hypotrophic developmental defect.* the final stage in biosexual development, the hetero-crossover, did not occur (as my eyes never reached their final biodevelopment, viz, binocularity).

4 Andy Lang is an honorable & keen thinker, but his conclusion for the priestly blessing of "covenantal" same-sex unions is built on "natural" sand. In the order of my comments on "natural" in §3, notice: (1) Andy converges super/natural: homosexuality is God's doing, so who is anybody to challenge the work of God? The logic here, if Andy were to follow it out, which he doesn't, is that whatever happens in "nature" is God's doing/will: a quietism which would forbid science & (as in strict Hinduism) compassion. (2) Several times in plenary, Andy negated the decisional element for most gays--eg, this (p7 of his text, which I thank him for giving me, without my asking, a copy of): "Homosexuality is most often experienced as inherent, as a 'given,' not a 'choice.'" But even if a given, is that in itself credentialization for homosexual behavior? And is not the community to be involved in answering that question? Pederasty is apparently so solidly a "sexual orientation" that society tends toward first-offense life-imprisonment: the community condemns adult sexual lust for children even though the lust is apparently not chosen but given: tendency is not either divine or societal permission to act. (3) Without a decisional element, there can be no ethical good (ie, no virtue): what then can be inferred from saying that what is (say, an aberrant "given" sexual orientation---homosexuality, pederasty) is "good" because natural? Calling all embryos good mindlessly (ie, without further thought & decision) rules out abortion: calling all sexual "orientations" (except pederasty?) good likewise mindlessly rules out refusal to accept & bless, to be "open and affirming" & for the ordination of practicing homosexuals & the priestly blessing of same-sex unions.

5 Andy Lang has a number of sanctional buttresses on his Gothic structure for the official church blessing of same-sex unions (p11: "the church's pastoral concern for these couples necessarily requires the public, liturgical expression of the vows that bind them together"). The bio-buttress is the alleged **natural** "givenness" of the same-sex orientation. In his critique of Lang, Burgess pointed to the logical flaw that a given must be a God-given & therefore a God-approved. The theological sphere within which this givenness=Gift works is the double predestination of scholastic Reformed thought, which Andy certainly does not hold. But he does move directly from "given" (a metaphor for [another metaphor] the cards you're dealt) to Giver (p9): Sexual orientation being "not 'chosen,' but 'given,' one therefore has to ask who 'gave' this orientation, and for what purpose [a possible but not necessary reification of the metaphor]?" (Rhetorically, this works as a language game; & I use it against Darwin's "natural selection" when I ask "Who did the selecting?" Andy's paper, an intricately careful work which doubtless well pleases the UCC national office for its multiple holds on "Confessing Christ," deserves to be looked at as a work of art, rhetoric, science, philosophy, biblical criticism, theology, pastoral concern, & ecclesiology.)

6 I said (§4) that Andy's argument rests on "natural" sand. It rests also, I must argue, on **hermeneutical** sand. Gay revisionist hermeneutics, from even before Robin Scroggs, has pulled the teeth of the Bible's condemnation of homosexual activity (esp. Lev.18.22; 20.13; 1K.14.24; 15.12; 22.46; 2K.23.7; Ro.1.27; 1Cor.6.9; 1Tim.1.10; Jude 7; Wis.Sol.14.26 [lit., "alteration of generation"]); some of these reff. are against cult prostitution, but show the revulsion against any religion-blessed sex outside of marriage). The (false) claim is that the ancients were too unsophisticated to know about "sexual orientation" (something good, whatever) & therefore could not protect it from the general condemnation of sexual perversion (ie, deliberate switching of sexual partners from the other to one's own sex--which is something [presumably] bad [despite some bisexuals' claim that only their position can be called fully natural & therefore fully good]).

Let's look just at the only text--Ro.1.27a--that Andy treats of (p8). Paul (& his times) didn't know about sexual orientation, so every instance of homo-sex "must have been a conscious act of rebellion against the will of the Creator." Andy

* PC's promiscuous egalitarianism denies this, to affirm that all humans are sexually = though "differently-abled" sexually. Theologically put, God is said to have given us different sexual assignments, all =.... But see §9 for the bio-base as "a political fiction."

(over)reads "exchanged" (sexual activity from the other sex to one's own) as conscious choice of the doer rather than, as the historical interpretation of the passage sees it, as the author's way of emphasizing the action's deviation from the norm (viz, hetero-sex). (Here, "exchanged" refers to lesbianism; the word here for gay unions is "giving up" hetero-sex.) The overarching category (previous vs.) is "degrading passions." The 2nd clause (vs.27b) speaks of the "penalty [including AIDS, now?] for their error" (a possible--probable?--ref. to VD, which did not come up in the plenaries). The following vs. associates thinking (a "debased mind") with behavior ("things that should not be done"): the distinction between (eg) pederasts' urges & actions is decisional space: morality is mind-space between thought & action. The passage is electric with revulsion against homo-sex (see #2890, "The Repugnance Factor..."), (vs.24) "the degrading of their bodies among themselves." As for the notion that only consciously chosen behavior is sanctioned (negative sense) in the passage, that is eliminated by the comparison with idolatry, which is condemned outright even though almost all idolaters are born that way (vs.23: "exchanging" God for idols; vs.25: "exchanging the truth about God for a lie")....Conclusion: Whether or not homo-sex is to be judged a perversion, this homo-exculpatory exegesis is a perversion of honest Bible-reading. As a buttress for Andy's case, it's only a broken reed, of no architectural use.

7 And here's another perversion, a third supposed buttress for Andy's case: While Andy does not pervert "marriage" to include same-sex unions, he does pervert "covenant" to include something Scripture condemns, viz. same-sex unions. His moves here are slippery but (I'm convinced) not deliberately disingenuous. Here's the **theological** sand:

(1) The biblical doctrine of vocation, calling, election is complex. In the UCC Statement of Faith, God "calls the worlds into being." Persons & peoples have special calling. All human beings are called to obedience, to obeying the Divine Will/Word. A call does not assume human quality/ability or divine approval: all pederasts are called, but that's not good news for pederasty. Some are called to marriage & some to celibacy (on the latter, Andy's paper is excellent). We are all called to discipline our desires/feelings to others' good (on which, too, Andy's paper excels): "not freedom *from* but freedom *for*."....Not so fast! God's call is both freedom from and freedom for, inseparably. A practicing pederast cannot be said, biblically, to be answering God's call, for (who would disagree?) God calls pederasts to be nonpracticing (in spite of that "orientation"): whether a practicing homosexual can be said to be answering God's call without becoming nonpracticing is a question for some Christians but not a question for most Christians (who, with the church through the ages, answer no) & a few Christians (who with Andy answer yes). Andy exercises a slippery glide over the question, so "vocation" (falsely) buttresses his Gothic case. At least it must logically be said that something ambiguous is treated as though it were an unambiguous support for church-blessed same-sex unions.

(2) Andy's doctrine of sin is canonical-classical-Christian, & he correctly uses the Barmen Declaration & the Heidelberg Confession: we're all sinners for whom Christ died & rose, & we are to receive--and be in perpetual joyful gratitude for--this redemption. "Sin distorts our life together as the Body of Christ, so that no dispute--particularly over a difficult issue like sexual morality, which exposes our deepest fears of alienation, loneliness and disorder--can possibly be discussed without anger and mutual recrimination." This seems to mean that absent sin, church-blessed same-sex unions could be discussed in church without fear (read "homophobia"), anger (though it's a healthful response to blasphemy & pollution), & recrimination (though the NT vigorously warns against accepting novelties of thought & behavior). Andy's hypotext: Cool reason, under the impetus of God's unconditional-inclusive love, would persuade the churches to my (& the UCC national office's) position vis-a-vis the right-"rite" of same-sex union; & to think-feel otherwise is to sin against "love."

(3) Which brings us to the doctrine of covenant, what Andy considers the pinnacle & conclusive support for his point of view--as in his title, "The Gift of Christian Covenant in Marriage, Celibacy, and Same-Sex Unions."....Andy makes

two moves he hopes will mollify the opposition: (1) He concedes (as does the homo-sex denomination, the Metropolitan Community Churches) that same-sex unions should not invade the category "marriage"; (2) he states that marriage is superior as the model for other forms, which "depend" on it & are therefore not its equal. But in blanketing the three behaviors under "covenant," his title reveals that in the perspective most important for him, the covenantal perspective, celibacy & same-sex unions actually are equal to marriage. (Cleverly, he quoted, in support of his covenantal idea, a book of his opponent: the last chap. of Max Stackhouse's COVENANTS AND COMMITMENTS: Faith, Family, and Economic Life [Westm/JK/97], p155.)....Let's look closer:

Using a current fad in trinitarian doctrine, viz. that the Trinity is itself a covenant community (a Feuerbachian delight!), he snuggles all three of his sexual "covenants" right up next to the triune God of Christianity. Neatly, this makes opponents of a same-sex-union church rite fighters against God, the rite's protector (as the rite, as covenantal, participates in the very life of the covenant God).

Next move: If marriage & celibacy are rightly "sealed by vows" (as I agree), how can the church deny a parallel vow to same-sex unions? What is obscured here is that "nihil obstat," nothing stands in the way of the two traditional vows (given, as I do, that Luther & Calvin were wrong in abolishing the vow of celibacy as a church rite)--but something does indeed stand in the way of blessing a homosexual union, viz. our religion's solid biblical-historical condemnation of homo-sex, so that a same-sex rite is a oxymoron.

Andy's communitarian logic breaks down: he supports celibate communities (celibates needing mutual support as they live/work for others), but does not follow through in the case of homosexuals. You would expect him to support homosexual communities (& doubtless to some extent does support the Metropolitan Community Churches, in which gays/lesbians/bisexuals find mutual support & encouragement to live/work together & in dispersion for others). But he, as a faithful UCC communicant, wants the generality of churches (not just special homo churches) to bless same-sex unions. That pressure, right now in at least four denominations, is causing massive dissension, revulsion, rebellion, even a level of divisiveness threatening breakup. The usual homo response to this is, "The churches will just have to learn to overcome their homophobia, & the same-sex-union rite should help." A propaganda element here: Fear is weak (so opponents are "homophobes"), hate is strong: we are to hate what God hates, & that may include homosexual behavior, for which the word paralleling "homophobia" is "homomisia." The only senses in which I fear in-your-face, out-of-the-closet, practicing homosexuality are (1) as a demonic disruption in the churches & (2) as an at least implicit solicitation, to children of insecure sexual identity, to (p7) "hear God's call to this way of life." I hate the biology, psychology, sociology, theology, anthropology, & ecclesiology of this "God's call" pitch. I do not hate any slices of humanity (pederasts, Jews, women, men, homos, etc.). "Christ died for all" us sinners, & church membership should be open to all penitents.

Next, let's notice that Andy moves directly from "covenant" to God-established covenant, sliding over the nontheological use of "covenant" (as the more serious form of civil marriage, in an increasing number of states). The "Covenant of the League of Nations" was a solemn secular contract without implied divine warrant. A sexual union between adult human beings should be a solemn contract involving the self-giving virtues, & all societies & subsocieties (churches, eg) should ritually support (hetero) marriage. But each society & subsociety must decide for itself the extent to which, if at all, it can recognize/support/ritualize same-sex unions--an issue that should not be fudged by a lexically weak special pleading about "covenant" as implying divine warrant, which if accepted locks churches into the conclusion that (p10) same-sex unions "have a specific claim on the ministry of the church" because "God creates these relationships" (so, back to naturalistic determinism).

8 Andy, in his appropriation of the church-kosher word "covenant" for what the Church Universal considers unkosher behavior, is properly representing his church's 21st general synod ('97) of the UCC, which passed a resolution titled

"Fidelity and Integrity in All Covenanted [sic] Relationships." The resolution slyly slips, alongside marriage as an undoubted "covenanted relationship," same-sex union, which is doubted-debated as to whether it's "covenanted" in a sense acceptable in the Christian lexicon. What should be debated is assumed in the phrase "marriage and other covenanted relationships"--then the text encourages "a church-wide dialogue" looking toward the synod of '99. (The 5.7.98 "Confessing Christ" consultation was pursuant of this suggestion.)....Here's how the divine sanction is used to promote, by adverb, a same-sex-union church rite: "we are all made in God's image, as persons loved by God, and are called to accept ourselves and our sexuality fully." Presumably "accept" has the force it has in Rein. Niebuhr's prayer, "accept what cannot be changed." Can this mean, in the resolution's text, that we "ourselves" cannot be changed? I hope not! Can it then mean that "our sexuality" cannot be changed? A demonstrably false idea (transformationists effort being more successful than the gay community wants to believe). So that leaves "fully": are we accepting our spirituality only partly if we are nonpracticing pedrasts? if we are homosexuals in a committed relationship we choose not to be ritualized in church? Debaters' tricks are characteristic of resolutions as a literary genre, but slippery language in itself invites distrust--a heavy price to pay for church-political victories won by getting resolutions passed....In his paper Andy avoided "equality" language, but the resolution as floated for debate does not: "This [resolution] is a resource for the Equal [sic] Rights in Covenant Life dialogue within the UCC." The logic is geometrical: rites equal in "covenant" are equal to each other. The logo of ERCL is "=" in two circles surrounding the UCC logo. And its "Vision Statement" invites conversation on, among other topics, "Equal Rights for Same Gender Couples." The "vision" pretends to be open, but the organization's name itself announces the opposite: sexual couplings, straight & homosexual, are "equal." A church gets on "the ERCL database" & is immediately sent "an ERCL [propaganda] Starter Packet," mailings to follow. The dialog process promises to "enrich the life of our [UCC] church," which it might do if the "resources" were not so loaded with egalitarian ideology as to threaten more confusion & conflict than clarity & enrichment.

9 Given his presuppositions, Andy understandably presses his case against resistance to same-sex-union church rights (p11). We are told that the church is responsible to try to lock same-sex unions into good behavior: "The congregation cannot legitimately expect conformity to ethical norms for same-sex partners if it is unwilling to witness the vows in which those partners commit themselves--in the presence of the community--to fidelity and mutual obedience." That insults not only same-sex unions but all other covenants/contracts/agreements in private & public life that go officially (ritually) unblessed by the church. Without any rite, a same-sex couple who are members of the church receive the same motivators to keep their commitments as do all other members with the sole exception of official wedlock. The church has the right to expect faithfulness in marriage, but not in same-sex coupling, which is doctrinally in a penumbral gray (if not dark) area...."If a congregation permits pastoral care but denies the public rite of union it is saying, in effect, 'we expect you to honor your covenant [!] but we don't want to hear about it outside the pastor's office.'" Here Andy wrongly assumes that the church would "expect" a homo couple "to honor their" mutual commitment (here described by the sneaked-in word "covenant"): why? A homosexual relationship is a private matter, no business of a church unless gay activism forces it on the church as an issue. Pastoral care, yes; but why would a congregation "want to hear about it"? Next, Andy puts hetero/homo couplings on the same, equal, basis: If "Don't ask, don't tell" "were imposed on heterosexual partners, I doubt that many marriages could survive." But the condition is contrary to fact: The Great biblical-historical Tradition blesses marriage & expects marriages to exist under church-public scrutiny; no such blessing, & no such church-public scrutiny, applies to same-sex unions....The same illicit mixing of the two occurs in this sentence: "The alienation of same-sex unions from the liturgical life of the community plays into the hands of the secular ideology that marriage [sic] is only a private contract between individuals who are accountable to no one but each other." Persons in same-sex unions are not (at least in our UCC) excluded from

any aspect of "the liturgical life of the community," though their union is not to be incorporated into the roster of liturgies. As for how "secular ideology" would see the matter, why does the absence of a same-sex-union rite strengthen the notion "that marriage is only a private contract"--instead of weakening that notion, by the church's practice of making marriage the exclusive sexual relationship blessed by the church? Again, Andy asks that hetero/homo sexual unions be considered as a category: low view of one, low view of the other. But Christianity's high view of marriage is all the higher in view of its low view of same-sex union, something secularists can be trusted to be bright enough to understand.

In a brilliant & detailed article in THE JOURNAL OF HUMAN SEXUALITY, "Same-Sex 'Marriage'," Anton N. Marco explodes the presuppositions the gay community uses as its starting-point in fighting for gay rights everywhere in American society. For one, gays claim to be a "minority," but fail on all three U.S. Supreme Court criteria to establish their claim: they are not low income, have inadequate education, or lack opportunity; they are not politically powerless; & they do not have immutable characteristics (Kinsey Inst.: 84% of homosexuals shifted or changed "sexual orientation" at least once in a lifetime). Genetic orientation is a political fiction. Gay author Jon. Ned Katz puts it plainly (THE INVENTION OF HETEROSEXUALITY, p190): "Contrary to today's bio-belief, the heterosexual/homosexual binary is not in nature, but is socially constructed, therefore deconstructable." The innateness argument is politically expedient, but unscientific. If they were to break into the "oppressed minority" status, they would use to the full their antidiscrimination legal powers. And if they were to break into the "marriage" status (thus destroying the privileged status government now accords legal hetero unions), they would use legal sanctions to coerce religious communities not only into accepting same-sex couples but also into ritual "marrying" of same-sex couples. (For both projections, Marco masses up evidence.)

10 The small groups were to address four questions: "1. What is the strongest argument on each side of the debate?...the weakest? 2. How should the Christian define marriage? 3. What makes sexual expression good or sinful in God's sight? 4. What understanding of God underlies the arguments on each side of the debate?"

11 Max, who is UCC, characterized the UCC's promotion of a church rite of same-sex union as an instance of "false prophecy," an "odd convergence" of narrativist theologies, historicist relativism, & cultural pluralism, in denial of "normative order and end." The "Biblical Witness position is more valid; but often not well argued, can't be heard." Confessing Christ is "promising," but is it so Barthian as not to have "a place for Public Theology & Ethics"? (When privately I reported to him that some were saying that "you don't seem to realize that Constantinianism is dead," he replied "Then let's resurrect it!") Instead of mucking around with the "unsorted category" of "sexual minorities," the UCC should stand "in the center of society" & fight for the "liberal Puritan" values of "fidelity, fecundity, & family-formation--the Puritan family." Andy's arguments for tending to the former are "tired." I've moved, he said, from "mere descriptivity" "toward normativity." "Liberationism leads to church disaster." (With good reasons, "the churches have resisted the gender-studies' agenda.") "Liberationist sexual politics" aims more at legitimation than at communion. He sketched the modern history of the family vis-a-vis economic changes, & worried about the impact of public & church acceptance of same-sex unions: "No civilization survived without strong structure/order for family and sexuality," in which "clergy are the key!" "Natural" is fallen, not necessarily good: "Christians should never be natural; for 'nature' is the accident between creation and redemption." Gay activism in society & church leads to counterproductive "confusion of categories."

12 Andy is a faithful sheep in the flock of the Lord. But on this issue, he's a wolf in sheep's clothing.* By using Christian language in defense of behavior that Christianity biblically-theologically-historically considers repugnant, he seduces Christians into critical somnolence--as Socrates accused the sophists of making evil look good. With a good heart & (I want to believe) without guile, (see "Titanic") he dresses steerage Jack in upperclass clothing so he'll be acceptable at a first-class party. It saddens me. And it's subtle-persuasive enough to worry me.

* And, from another Greek story, a Trojan horse.