

The mainline churches' **war** over homosexuality is being fought on many fronts & at all levels (congregational, judicatory, & national). It's the Big One, all other issues being, at least for the present, less disruptive....This Thinksheet (1) asks why, which might serve the cause of reconciliation, & (2) takes a position, which (whatever it is!) cannot avoid alienating at least some who are of other positions....I've pressed this Hot Button in a dozen previous Thinksheets, but never from this angle with this central concern.

1 In the mainline churches, the homosexual-rights push is an ir/resistible force up against an im/movable object, viz **the Bible**. The diagonals raise questions about the subject (will the push prove irresistible, or will the effort abate?) & about the object (will the OT-NT condemnation of homosexuality limit homosexuals in church, & if so how [member if out of the closet but celibate? member if known to be an active homosexual? ordination if out of the closet but celibate? ordination if active or pro-active?])?

2 Hermeneutic efforts to "say it isn't so," ie that what the Bible condemns is something other than what we now mean by homosexuality, are, no matter how sophisticated, disingenuous. The Bible says nothing about, eg, abortion, but its revulsion-rejection of homosexual practices is clear & uncompromising.

3 Our culture's **equality dogma** is so powerful that it irrationally levels off actual superiorities/inferiorities among human beings. For a quarter century, the current women's movement was in denial of female/male differences, till reality checks caught up with the self-delusion--which reversed the rhetoric: now the differences are feminist ammunition....The equality-dogma sermon of the homo-rights movement is that "Every life-style is as good as any other life-style," "as good as" being the entitlement to full rights, ie life without particular limits....The equality-dogma's "family values" sermon that "Every family is potentially as good as any other family," a pathetic rhetorical rag in view of the fact that the father/mother/child pattern has a potential far ahead of all its competitors.

4 What's the homosexual equality-dogma sermon in the mainline churches? It has these three points:

(1) **Spiritual** God loves all of us human beings as we are & yearns for our penitent return of love, without regard to merely earthly distinctions of gender, race, class, or sexual orientation. No problem here till the sermon passes through specifics to inferences.

(2) **Biological** God by nature, not nurture, gives each of us a particular sexual orientation along a strong-hetero to a strong-homo inclination. Biology is destiny, & to say otherwise is to be a fighter against God. This teaching obscures (1) the fact that the nature/nurture debate is still inconclusive, scientific opinion remaining divided, (2) the homo-orientation is an organismic immaturity, the sexual development not coming to completion into heterosexual orientation, & (3) the fact that some homos (by counseling, drugs, changes of living conditions & human relations) become heteros proves that the claim that "Sexual orientation is as given as skin pigmentation" is at least an overstatement....Perhaps a useful parallel: In SUSPENDED ADOLESCENCE (Beach Hill Pub., Dublin NH/94), Rich. DeSantis & Gerald Manney extensively display the evidence that children who are permanently frozen by psychotropic drugs in emotional immaturity can by therapeutic drugs level off their childish highs/lows & thus simulate, against their retarded emotional development, emotional maturity....My considerable experience in counseling gays & lesbians, chiefly in NYC, leads to these remarks vis-a-vis said obscurations. Most are adamant that the debate has been settled in their favor, so there's no volitional-moral factor. Almost all deny that their condition is any sort of immaturity. And all claim that converts to heterosexuality "were not really homosexuals."

(3) **Psychosociological** The sermon's third point is that gays & lesbians are as worthy of all forms of participation in the church's life & ministry

as are straights, so no limitations should be imposed on them. This bypasses (1) the biblical problem & (2) the modeling problem.

5 The biblical problem is not just that the Bible stands against homo-sex; it's also that being "open & affirming" (as UCC Synods say our churches should be) of homosexuals in church ("affirming" including the ordination of active homos) **splits** church & Bible, the church on this matter being over against the Bible. To be a biblical literalist is ignorant, insane, & (if you know better) sinful. In all things, including hermeneutics, we are to worship God "with all your [critical] mind." In a recent book, Bill Coffin points out that the OT's central attack on homo-sex, Lev.18.22, 20.13, is in the Holiness Code most of which we'd not practice today. But that befogs the issue of what one is to do with one's sex-drive, which is a moral concern: much of the Holiness Code is only of a ritual concern that nobody but an orthodox Jew would be bothered with. Why was the Holiness Code so strong here, even (in the second ref.) prescribing the death penalty? Probably the pagan practice of male cult-prostitutes was a factor (IK.14.24, 15.12, 22.46; 2K.23.7); & possibly the sacrality of semen. But those factors are insufficient, I believe, to explain the ages-long proscription of homosex. In the Apocrypha, Wis.Sol.14.26. In the NT, Ro.1.26-27, against gays & (the NT's only specifically anti-lesbian passage) lesbians; ICor.6.9; ITim.1.10; Jude 7.

Since the church is commissioned to teach the authority of Scripture, what happens to the authority of Scripture, its esteem among church members, when the church deliberately contradicts Scripture on a matter on which the Bible is clear & firm? How is the church to explain this deviation? "We know better now"? "We should face the fact of 'evolving standards of decency'"? (The quoted phrase is in current anti-capital-punishment legal argumentation, the implication being that we are more decent than our ancestors; in the case in point, more decent than the Bible.)

6 The **biblical-authority** factor is weighty in the current Lutheran & Presbyterian homo-ordination wars. An AP release in late Feb. said "The United Church of Christ is the only major Protestant denomination to allow the ordination of homosexuals." I straddle: I'm for the ordination of celibate homosexuals, not actives or pro-actives. My church more reflects than resists the culture, & on this matter I'm for half resistance in the church, though I'm for nonresistance in the state (ie, the secular government, except in the military, should not lean against homos while leaning toward the promotion of the father/mother/child family, formerly called just "the family").

The pro-homo publications of mainline-church national offices read much the same. *Argumentum e silentio*: Jesus didn't condemn homosexuality, so the church shouldn't. ANSWER: Nor did he condemn pederasty (adult sex with children) or bestiality (human intercourse with animals). The solid interpretive principle is that where Jesus does not expressly cross Jewish tradition, he accepts it; & Jewish tradition is solidly opposed to homosexual behavior. *Argumentum ex post facto*: If Jesus had known that homo-orientation is natural, ie nature-given & not in any sense chosen, he would have approved of (I quote from the ELCA [Lutheran] report, "The Church and Human Sexuality") "loving, just, committed homosexual relationships." ANSWER: That's a non-loop-hole. The modernizing of the ancient mind by proleptically reading back into it our feelings/distinctions is invalid. Further, note the argument's from-silence assumption that Jesus was not aware of (again, the report) "involuntary sexual orientation." Nor does Paul analyze why some "burn with lust" (Ro.1.27) for their own sex: the practices to which this lust, whatever its source(s), "naturally" lead are declared sinful. (The notion that to be sinful, an action must be voluntary is a modern conceit.) Those who have an unfortunate developmental disorder are nevertheless responsible for what they do with it.

7 While my compromise is to tolerate-accept homosex without approving of it, the homosex lobby is bucking for full promotional rights on the basis of the false doctrine of **moral equivalence** of life-styles. It insists that public-school children be taught to value "sexual diversity," that the schools be forced to hire gay teachers, & that gay equivalence should be represented K-12, with eq in kindergarten "Heather Has Two Mommies." Not all nay-sayers are homophobes!