

ORDAIN SAME-GENDERS (GAYS, LESBIANS, BISEXUALS)? ---- ELLIOTT #1846

This is a commentary on, with counter-proposals to, the 1984 UCC/MA Conference meeting proposal "Blue IX: Resolution on Calling on UCC Congregations to Declare Themselves Open and Affirming." The reference numbers are to the proposal's lines.

11. "use of scripture to generate hatred." I also condemn this, but why is nothing said about using Scripture to generate fear? On same-sex (or "homosexuality"), NT is anti-hatred and pro-fear (esp. by the sanction of "not inheriting the Kingdom of God").

16-17,48-49: whatever is "institutionalized homophobia"? I know of no structural, legislative, "institutional" strictures against same-genders at any level of UCC. So I take this to be pop-sociologese for "customary." In the Christian religion (not just UCC), it is customary, and more, to teach homophobia (but, again, not homomisia, i.e., hatred: the so-called "gay" movement propagandizes for itself by treating its opponents as weak, i.e., fear-ers, rather than also strong, i.e., haters--and so uses "homophobia" to cover also homomisia). The resolution's text uses the garbled, rhetorical language of the gay movement. Perhaps for the 1985 annual meeting we could have a clearer and more honest proposed resolution on this subject. As for the 1984 proposal, its biblical, theological, ecclesial, and psychosociological distortions unjustifiably threaten the peace of our Conference and even the loss of some churches. To adopt it would slightly reduce the alienation of some (i.e., same-genders) and vastly increase the alienation of vastly more others.

24-27. This is a bastard use of Jn. Robinson's "more light and truth." Our Pilgrim forebears, far from imagining contradicting the clear teaching of Scripture, fled England with the express intent of becoming more free to be faithful to Scripture and the God of Scripture. Generations after they died, the free-individual movement called the Enlightenment laid the "light and truth" basis for presentday gay argumentation: the individual is not primarily (as in Scripture) a creature in conscious relation to God and society, with the responsibilities pertaining thereto (& such rights as enable the fulfilling of these responsibilities), but rather a person of equal rights with all other persons. As citizens in our Enlightenment society, Christians should promote the latter view; but as members in the Christian Church, Christians should promote the former view (which, solidly in NT, condemns all genital sexuality outside of marriage--which transcends the question which form of genitals the particular person's psyche reaches out for). I am, and have been for decades, a promoter of gay rights in society and--with the exception of ordination*--in the church. With a lesbian student of mine, I helped write a pro-gay book; and I have had many students who were members of the gay denomination, The Metropolitan Community Church; and I support the right of that church to ordain, in obedience to conscience though (I must affirm) in disobedience to the Christian religion (which is something narrower than the Enlightenment liberationism). Conundrum: Some in our churches are more committed to the Enlightenment than to the Christian religion, and are pressuring the church to replace the latter with the former (so that the Enlightenment provides the criteria for judging Scripture and tradition, rather than the reverse). This replacement we must, at all levels of the church, condemn.

38. Add, at end, "with the exception of ordination."*

40-46. Drop.

Page 2, line 5: Add, at end, "as members."

Page 2, lines 7-14: Drop.

* See OVER for my argumentation against ordaining any who are uncommitted to the NT genital norms/taboo.

OVER

ORDINATION AND THE GENITALS

1. Every human being has a genital history--even if only, as an infant, the pleasure of manual manipulation of one's genitals. As some experience virtually no genital pleasure, they may be called asexuals. Their disinterest in interbody genital activity is not, and never has been, a hindrance to ordination. This is true also of nonsexuals, viz., those who, while able to experience genital pleasure, refrain from interbody sex with beasts (bestiality), same-sex persons (homosexuality), or other-sex persons (heterosexuality), whatever the reason(s) for this celibacy. Until after World War II, the ordination of sexuals (i.e., those practicing, or open to practicing, interbody genitality) has been strictly limited to those in legal marriage. The issue, now, is whether that stricture is too severe. I maintain that it is not--that it is necessary.
2. All cultures have regulated and do regulate social genital activity. Some even have tried to regulate autoeroticism--foolishly, futilely, harmfully, unbiblically.
3. Some cultures arrive at and maintain genital peace, the sexual mores "working" + and - (i.e., as norms and taboos).
4. Other cultures, for reason(s) one may consider good or bad, fall into genital confusion and even chaos. 1984 USA is an instance of such a culture. In sex and in many other areas of life, we're experiencing a major *Kulturkampf* (clash of internally conflicting cultures) between the Jewish/Christian biblical heritage and the Enlightenment heritage--to simplify: in the former, sex is a social property; in the latter, an individual property. (This, from Hermann Hesse, shows the complexity here: "As a body everyone is single, as a soul never."--*Steppenwolf*.)
5. In every culture, but especially in one that's fallen into genital confusion or chaos, the religious community has the right and duty to require, of ordinands and the ordained, adherence to the religious community's genital norms and taboos. (LANGUAGE NOTE: Why say "genital" instead of "sexual," in all this discussion? Because "sexual" as adjective now covers both "sex," which has come more and more to mean genital activity--and thus the area this argumentation is about--and "sexuality," which is far wider than "sex" in the narrow sense. Unbiblical, unnatural prudishness has dictated circumlocutions in Victorian and even post-Victorian sexual vocabulary--"sex"=genital activity being itself an instance. A most ludicrous instance: "sleeping together," genital excitation being the uttermost extreme from sleep! The Bible does, and we should, encourage honest and direct speech on sexuality and all other topics.)
6. Always and everywhere, cultures have intertwined sacrality and sexuality. Even recreational sex, where it has been permitted or overlooked, has been tied to the leash of the sacred; and sacred sex, i.e., prostitution as worship, has been under absolute control of the sacred. Further, freedom/order are dipolar to the sacred vis-a-vis sexuality, the cultural ideal being a homeostatis in which the sacred and the sexual both order and free each other.
7. The biblical sacred (OT and Talmud for Jews, OT and NT for Christians) has been the control sacred of "the West" (which, according to Wm.McNeill's THE RISE OF THE WEST, is the only culture ever coming close to global dominance). As Christianity has been the West's dominant religion, the distinctive literature at the root of the West's concept and practice of the sacred has been and is the NT. I am against trying to legislate the NT's genital norm and taboos outside the church; against it also inside the church with the exception of ordinands and the ordained. (NOTE: As the OT is the sacred taproot of both Talmud and NT, one is not surprised to find a high degree of correlation between Jews and Christians on genital norms and taboos.)
8. Alien to, and at enmity with, the biblical sacred is the Enlightenment's "the sacredness of the individual." These rival loci of the holy are incompatible, though "liberalism" has sought--unsuccessfully, and disastrously--to merge them. Many Christians, most of them unwittingly, have replaced the holy God with the holy person, whose needs-and-rights thus have become the criteria for judging Bible and everything else--which is both blasphemy and heresy. Two incompatible sexual ethics derive from these two locations of the sacred or holy.
9. Sexual preference is not a legitimate question for ordination or employment. This is: the practice and promotion of the NT norm, viz., genital activity only in legal marriage.