

Homosexuality and Creation Theology

Colleagues,

Not everybody was pleased with last week's critique (ThTh 352) of those 17 prominent theologians urging the ELCA to reject what the sexuality taskforce proposed.

Samples:

Sorry Ed, but I think you may have gone a bit too far—from a guy who was “liberal” until about a year ago.

I find the whole process fails the double-dipstick test, including to some extent the critique given by Tim, because it fails to name the shortcoming of both poles/ parties (those desiring “change,” those desiring “enforcement of the policy”). Both poles want Christ-AND something.

Looks to me like ‘Crossings’ theology has come adrift from the revelation given to the Apostles. Antinomian teaching Ed, I would say. Sad to see THE gospel abandoned “so quickly” (Gal. 1:6). Only this time, it is not a reversion to Judaism's Culture, but to Western Culture.

[Comment: Both libs and non-libs have said no to the hermeneutics being used on this issue in ThTh postings. So ours must be a third option. Which it is. Neither of them is interested in Gospel-grounding. That makes all the difference. Seems to us similar to Luther's third option in his day between the “fundie” establishment and the wild revolutionaries—all of whom hyped the Bible, but no law-promise hermeneutics for how to read it. The “theology of freedom”—in three recent ThTh postings (346, 349, 350)—arises from the same hermeneutics that Hoyer was

using last week. If one leads to “gospel abandoned,” then both do. But our claim is: on the contrary, both are the consequences of gospel-grounding. So if you liked the freedom theology, then(fill in the blank).]

One of you, who seemed not displeased, said: “It’s all about God the creator. If God does indeed create some people homo, some hetero, the debate is over.” Well, maybe. But that got me into the C.S. Lewis mood of fantasy, “a fanciful design or invention.” Not that the ghost of CSL has to worry about any competition. Narnia is in no danger.

An imagined scenario.

Scene: Judgment day.

God speaking: Just in case you didn’t notice—I create stuff via “big bang” (explosion outward) and “black-hole” (implosion inward). Just as I create matter and antimatter. Bodies and antibodies. Gravity and antigravity. Type and anti-type (one of St. Paul’s favorites). North poles and south poles. Magnetism and anti-magnetism. Electricity that flows this way, electricity that runs that way. Ditto for sexual electricity in the human images of myself—some people wired hetero, some wired homo. Paradox, you say in English: “seemingly contradictory or opposed to popular opinion, yet nevertheless true.”

That’s my style of creating. Anomalies to you, “deviating from the norm,” but not to me. Perhaps your God is too small.

And some of you straight folks call the homo folks defective, degenerate, sinners, and even worse names. I take that as a personal affront. Your problem is not with the gays and lesbians—their morality or lack thereof. That’s on the surface, literally, super-ficial. Your deep problem (D-3, they call it in

the Crossings paradigm) is with me their creator—and your creator too. The depth diagnosis of your hang-up with homosexual people is a God-problem. You disapprove of what I do. Your enmity finally lands at my front door, me your creator. That's the way I see it.

Didn't you ever read the Bible? I'm not talking about those dicey passages you always talk about on this issue when you say: But the Bible says . . . (see my comments below). I'm talking about Isaiah (29:16), "Shall the potter be regarded as the clay? Shall the thing made say of its maker . . . the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding?'" Or later (45:9ff), "Woe to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter! Does the clay say to him who fashions it, 'What are you making'? or 'Your work has no handles'? [It's defective. You botched.] Woe to him Thus says the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker: 'Will you question me about my children, or command me concerning the work of my hands?'"

St. Paul cites this text as he copes (Romans 9-11) with his #1 personal paradox that God's chosen people rejected God's own Messiah. He concludes chapter 11: "How unsearchable are God's judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his advisor?"

Paradoxes, anomalies, that you earthlings cannot figure out? That's my style. Homo and hetero too.

Didn't it ever register with you that Hitler designated homosexuals as the #2 group of "degenerates" to be shlepped off with the Jews to Auschwitz? Have YOU no understanding?

Interlude. No fantasy. This really happened.

Couple of summers ago Marie and I were on our way to the 50th anniversary gathering of her graduation class from St. John's College, Winfield, Kansas. Driving southwest out of St. Louis on Interstate-44, we stopped to eat our brought-along lunch at a rest stop. Over at the next table was a family doing likewise. As both groups headed back to our cars, which happened to be parked next to each other, I got into conversation with Jim, the family father. With a few exchanges I learned that he was a Montana rancher in the summertime and a high school guidance counselor in Alaska(!) during the school year. And born-again Christian.

I told him that I too was a Christian and that I'd been only once to Montana, where I actually witnessed a dinosaur-dig under the direction of superstar dinosaur digger Jack Horner. "Na," said Jim, "I know they're there, but I don't believe that millions and billions of years stuff. That Grand Canyon, for instance. I know from experience how fast erosion can work. Millions of years for the Grand Canyon? Nonsense. A couple thousand years, that's all. We creationists know better."

So I said: "Jim, suppose that on Judgment Day as we stand side-by-side before Jesus, he looks straight at you and says: 'Jim, it really was millions and millions of years.' What will you say?"

Said Jim: "Na, that won't happen. I'll give him a hundred thousand. But no more."

Back to imaginings—

So who will be in charge on judgment day? The pot or the potter? Who is already "in charge" of patterning creation? Cracked-pots giving backtalk to the potter wind up as smashed pots. Better would be not to wait that long before granting the potter his

prerogatives.

That's the grim picture in the last parable that Jesus tells in Matthew 25. Those whom we heteros may designate the "least" get Christ's kudos—"my siblings." And those who treat these siblings as nobodies—or even worse—do also get an evaluative word from Christ: "Depart from me you cursed . . . "

Homo-hasslers have a God-problem, and the end of the line is the opposite of the word "blessed." Here too God runs both (seemingly contradictory) operations.

God continuing:

And about those verses in Leviticus. Have you ever read that book? All those awful kill, kill, kill mandates—and the holocaust prescriptions for what the Israelites should do when they got to Canaan? What kind of a God do you really believe I am? Yes, I kill and I make alive. But I don't authorize any one people to exterminate another people, anymore than I authorized Hitler to murder Jews and homosexuals. Baal authorizes such stuff. And I get "Baal-ized" by my own people all over the place in the O.T. Also here in Leviticus. Which is why I sent all those prophets. "I Yahweh am 'holy' [root meaning: different]. Not like the sacrifice-bingeing Baal bunch. And you my people shall be different too. In the same way. Just like me." But in vain. So finally I sent my own Son. Talk about being different! Paradoxical! And you are his disciples. Well then...

And all that sacrifice stuff? Didn't you ever hear what my beloved Son said (quoting Hosea): "I (God) desire mercy, not sacrifice." Do you think I mandated all that sacrifice stuff? Who inserted that into the OT? Did I consent?

If I am against sacrifice-stuff (remember, Jesus said so too), then don't expect to find much of me in Leviticus. How could THIS God have authorized Levitical theology— and the similar

kind of God-talk in Numbers? Luther had such an "Aha!" when he called Leviticus the "Juden-Sachsenspiegel"—Jewish civil law, no more universal than the civil law of Saxony. And surely not, he insisted, God's law FOR US Christians now living in Saxony. Incidentally, Luther also caught on to my penchant for paradox in my workings in the world: deus absconditus, deus revelatus. Seemingly contradictory, yet true.

Dare I say this? Leviticus-theology with its focus on extermination—at the altar, in the courtroom, on the battlefield—is a priestly power-politics forgery inserted into MY scriptures. It is against my will and is prima facie evidence of the unending repetition of clergy takeover (and eventual destruction) of my people. Jesus here too is my last word "against" such clergy tyranny. So he "cleanses" the temple of its clergy-tyranny and puts himself in its place. Mercy, not sacrifice. If that sounds shocking, read Matthew 23. Every word from the mouth of Jesus.

And God continuing:

About those two Greek words in the NT that some of you render in English with "homosexual," did you ever think of this possibility? Malakos (literally, softie) refers to fat folks, obesity, gluttony. That's the sin Paul is condemning. And there's lot of that going around today in the Western world. It's a no-no. I'm agin it! And the other word: arsenokoites (literally, male-bed-persons) refers to guys who stay in bed and don't get up to work in the morning. Parallel Pauline text is: Whoever will not work, neither shall he eat. I'm agin such folks too!

Here endeth Ed's fantasy. But not quite this posting.

Summa:

And then the judge (this time it's Jesus) will say: Insofar as

you did not give automatic full-acceptance to these people whom God created homo, you were doing so to me. Your hang-up with homos is a GOD-issue, a false-god issue, an idolatry issue. Check Matt. 25:46 for the (un)grande finale of this. It is nothing blessed.

The homo hassle among Christians is all about theology of creation, some of us pots giving orders for what the potter may or may not do. How far away is that from the serpent's primal pitch in Gen. 3? We're acting like mini-gods ourselves, "knowing what's good and evil by our own criteria," and then having the chutzpah to give instructions to the De Facto Deity on what is kosher and not kosher to create. "I'll give him a hundred thousand. But no more. I'll give him heteros, but not homos. No way."

How near or far is this precipice from where all of us are standing as the hetero-homo-hullabaloo roars on? Yet even for us, the Precipice-rescuer comes in cross and resurrection. The result is a new creation even more "unsearchable and inscrutable" than the continuing "old" creation. What is not inscrutable at all, however, is his offer: "Hear my voice. Follow me!" It's really that simple.

And therefore Peace & joy!

Ed Schroeder

P.S. Some corollaries-

1. CREATION

The "orders of creation" is a mis-translation for what in Luther's theology were the "creator's ordainings." Not any fixed blueprints laid down in Genesis 1, but God-creator ordaining the distinctive specs of my personal life (yours too, quite different from mine). What Lutherans are talking about when they recite Luther's First Article

catechism text: "I believe that God has made me linked to all creatures, has given me my body, soul, eyes, ears"... etc. (the whole laundry list of some dozen or more of the God-given unique specs that make me me). Also some homo, some hetero.

2. MALADY

All heteros, all homos, come under the sinner-rubrics of Augsburg Art. 2. "Since the fall of Adam [N.B. "since" not "because"] all humans are born in sin." But neither "h" word predisposes us to be sinner or non-sinner. The sin specs are "not fearing God, not trusting God, and being curved into one's own self." Here there is absolute equality—homo and hetero—and all fall.

3. REMEDY

Consequently "there is no distinction, since all have sinned, and fall short of giving God the appropriate glory; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus . . . effective through faith" (Rom 3:22ff.)

4. LIFESTYLE

And as you "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father . . . work out YOUR OWN salvation with fear and trembling." (Phil. 2:11f.) And if you need help (and who doesn't), ask a Christ-sib for it. Note well—YOUR OWN salvation. Devote your fear and trembling to the salvation agenda God has assigned to you. Resist appropriating someone else's. If and when you're asked to help co-confessors with their agendas, "always be ready to give a reason [lit. in Greek: give the word] for the hope that is in you." (1Peter 3:15) Which brings all of us back to Good Friday and Easter. It's really that simple.