

An Opinion on the Sexuality Report by **Jim Douglass**

The following article is a discussion of the Sexuality Report as produced by a Task Force of the Uniting Church.

I have attempted to summarise and comment on what is said in the report.

I admit any summary is selective. However, I have attempted to isolate the key ideas in what I recognise as the general argument. These summarised ideas are followed by the paragraph reference (in brackets) so that any reader can check the accuracy or context of the remark. The argument is summarised in the six chapters of the report. After each chapter summary I have indicated my opinion.

I do not agree with the report in either its assumptions or its conclusions.

The overall argument with some implications appears to me to be as follows:

- Chapter 1. The church must listen to the world. The world is changing in its values (particularly its sexual values). We should not only recognise these changes but accommodate them. Although the report is about Sexuality it is principally about homosexuality. The goal of the report appears to be to set up a standard or understanding of morality in the church that endorses and enhances (encourages?) homosexuality in fellowship and ministry. The accepting church means that if it happens in the world it can and should happen in the church.
- Chapter 2. The Bible is no reliable guide to contemporary morality. The Bible is plagued by patriarchal attitudes, ancient world views, changing moral standards, barbarous rituals and confused theologians.
- Chapter 3. A new morality is required that is relevant to the current non-discriminating age. This is the morality of 'right relationship'.
God in Trinity is relational.
Creation is relational.
Human beings in society are relational.
Christ was supreme in relationship.
Relationship is energised by passion. You do not prescribe relationship, you get into it.
Agape is energised by lust/passion.
- Chapter 4. The features of right relationship are intimacy, trust, honesty, mutuality, acceptance. Love, the main virtue of Christianity, is made up of caring and passion. Passion is the driving force of love impelling the lover towards unity with the beloved. Sexuality is the basis of identity and the resource for spirituality. The implication is that good sex produces the master spirit.
- Chapter 5. Children, adolescents, single adults, divorced, aged all have sexual needs and require wise sexual counsel. People who cohabit outside of marriage should be recognised for the integrity of their relationship.
Marriage is a derivative of relationship. Relationship produces marriage. Marriage does not necessarily generate relationship. Engaging in sexual (genital) activity depends upon the maturity of the relationship.
The relationship justifies the behaviour.
Homosexual behaviour is justified (made right) by the quality of the relationship.
Any relationship having trust, intimacy, vulnerability, openness, should be blessed by the church otherwise the relationship is offended. The only time sin is seriously considered is violence against relationship as in marriage breakdown (5.59).
- Chapter 6. Once relationship is established as the key virtue, ministry proceeds from and justifies relationship in any of its forms.

The following is a summary of each chapter with a chapter response.

Summary Chapter 1 The World.

The Report claims that the church must listen to the world and recognise that changes are taking place. The 'Year of Listening' represents the Committee's attempt to listen to the world including values and experiences of church people not usually accepted in the mainstream of church thinking and relating.

The Report focuses on sexual attitudes and experiences, particularly those sexual attitudes and experiences not accepted by mainstream religion.

Topics listened to include:

- inadequate sex education (1.7)
- various sexual activities (1.10)
- divorce (1.11)
- living together (1.13)
- sex outside of marriage (1.16)
- role of women (1.17)
- Homosexuals and Lesbians (1.18)
- women's control over their own body (1.20)
- HIV/AIDS (1.23)

The Report is saying that:

People involved in these activities or requiring instruction are 'hurting' (4.8). The Church is at fault for creating this hurt and rejection, therefore the Church must repent and unconditionally accept hurting and marginalised people. This is the Spirit of Jesus Christ (6.1 - 6.9).

Response to Chapter 1.

I do not believe that the world sets the agenda for the church. Changing values in the world may cause changing approaches in ministry but not in basic ethic. Pagan society refuses to recognise God and the struggle to know God. Therefore, it will be hostile to godly values. Of all people, Christians have the resources to be in the world but not of the world. Christians can work in areas of the most desperate need and yet not be influenced by the corruption that creates the need. This is not an argument for insensitivity or lack of involvement with the human situation. It is an argument for a strong moral base in order to be independent of the problem. Christian workers may change their skills, techniques or language but not their basic moral and spiritual territory. Otherwise they, too, become part of the problem they were meant to solve.

It is true that current society is far more explicit about sexual events and processes. But being more explicit does not change the morality of the situation. There is nothing new about the sexual behaviours except current attitudes to them. Human nature is not changing. Moral truth is true at any time and may be recognised by anybody.

With this onslaught of alternative moral opinions Christians had better know where they stand. The world is not the source of values for the Christian. Sexual behaviour, as all behaviour, is a question of moral choice. I can marginalise myself by my choices. I have to accept responsibility for my behaviour. I design myself by my choices. Choices may be institutionalised and exert great pressure on individuals choosing. But at all times I am responsible for my behaviour. God will see to that.

The Report commences by affirming the centrality of Scripture (2.2). However, the Scripture must be interpreted within the believing community (2.3) recognising the distance in time and cultural assumptions between the biblical world and our own (2.4). There appears to be little consensus on how we listen to and interpret Scripture. The Scripture informs the church as it seeks to live in faithful response to God (2.5).

The Church recognises the Word of God as authoritative but the words of the Bible as not authoritative (2.6). The Holy Spirit leads us into new understandings as we live in faithful response to the Grace of God (2.7).

The Bible was written in predominantly patriarchal cultures and often reflects patriarchal culture assumptions (2.9).

The historical distance between our times and biblical times means we cannot simply translate the writers conclusions about sexuality into our own (2.10). It is not clear that simple references to Scripture are helpful in our century which has different understandings of and extended information on sexual orientation (2.10). God requires we use our own discernment and imagination (2.11).

There is no definitive biblical view of marriage (2.13). Paul appears confused in his teaching on love (2.14). Quoting texts can be a tyranny that usurps our responsibility for living in faithful response to the gospel in our time and place (2.16). Consultation on the one hand is with Scripture in all its diversity and on the other hand with a diverse and inclusive community of interpreters (2.18).

Recognising the Church holds the Bible as the primary witness to God's word, the Report acknowledges Scripture's diversity, the need for careful interpretation, the diversity of the church and the need to listen to each other. This allows for faithful decisions and faithful response.

Response to Chapter 2.

The key criticism I make of this chapter is the way in which the Biblical witness is marginalised and defused.

To draw a distinction between the words of the Bible and the Word of God (2:6) implying that we reject the former and accept the latter helps to set Scripture aside.

I agree that Scripture must be interpreted. But I also maintain that it is possible to get a plain meaning from Scripture without the deliberate obfuscation of 'cultural bias', 'contextualised ethics', or 'historically remote cultures'. I maintain that we do not need to 'understand the mind of the writer' to understand what is being said. Who wrote what is not of central importance. The task as always is to determine what is being said.

I make the following statements about the Bible.

- the Biblical text is extremely well preserved (particularly when compared with other ancient documents).
- the Scripture is self-interpreting. That is, Scripture explains Scripture.
- the Scripture is consistent in its teaching (although it describes many deviations from its standards).

- the Scripture contains values (behaviours) prescribed and described. Because an event is described in the Bible it does not follow that the Bible approves it. Indeed much Old Testament behaviour is ‘ungodly’ and usually carries a judgement on it.
- it is very difficult to separate the text from the meaning of the text. It is true that God, not the text, is alone to be worshipped. But a close examination/reading of the text is always rewarding and basically cannot be substituted for, or replaced by, our revelation of God.
- Scripture corrects our experience.
There is a deep human tenacity for private, personal experience. We all pursue our own logic.
Too often Scripture can be bent to accommodate personal revelation and current or popular experience. Scripture is a corrective to the distortions of need-based experiencing. This is what it means to bring one’s self under Scripture - to submit to what Scripture says.

The question is ‘How is Scripture being used?’.

Is the use going beyond the plain sense?

Is the interpretation radically changing the plain statement of Scripture?

Scripture is meant for instruction, correction, direction (2 Tim 3:16). To set aside Scripture as an objective standard condemns the user (as in this Report) to the mire of world-mediated moral subjectivism. The point is, I do not contain in myself the answer to me. God contains the answer to me. *I am not the answer to me - God is*; particularly as God reveals himself in the Scriptures which are the external, independent, objective data about God.

I agree that the Bible always requires interpretation, both in translation and life application. It is also true that nearly any attitude or value can be supported by quoting some Scripture. However, this does not render Scripture meaningless or unconvincing. Rather it shows the capacity of human beings to distort Biblical reference when it is wrapped around personal desire.

It seems to me that Scripture is saying something plain and intelligible. Any text is open to various interpretations and religious language is always open to layers of meaning. The statement ‘He is not here he is risen’ seems to me to be a plain statement that Jesus has risen from the dead. To claim that the resurrection is an invention of the disciples to keep the ‘Jesus thing’ going deliberately distorts the plain statement.

To claim that resurrection only means ‘Jesus is alive in my heart’ deliberately denies the plainly stated historical event of resurrection. These reinterpretations set aside the plain statement of Scripture concerning the event of resurrection.

On the term “faithful response”

This phrase recurs in the Report. What does it mean? It sounds pious and submitted but in fact it is being used as a mechanism to avoid the imposition of commandment. Does it mean faithful to God, to the Bible, to the world’s need, to my authenticity, to the hurting or to all of the above? It’s use in the Report suggests to me that we are to be faithful to the world in our response to the world. Hence, we put God aside. According to the Report, to apply Scripture is only to create confrontation and offence.

In this Report what the Bible is confronting is a pre-arranged pagan philosophy that at its very foundation is hostile to Biblical Christianity. A church that will not tolerate the Bible can by its own convoluted reasonings accommodate anything.

Summary Chapter 3 God and the Person.

God has created humankind in his own image (3.0).

God trusts us to be responsible to discern his will (3.1).

In Trinity, God is relational. Relationship is essential to God's nature and therefore to our nature in his image (3.2).

The Christian attitude to sexuality is not to commence with outlines of appropriate behaviour but to assert the God-giveness of sexuality and relationship. The question arises how does our use of sex show forth the gospel (3.2) ?

The Word becoming flesh indicates God's affirmation of our sexuality and spirituality (3.4).

'Letting go' in the sexual act is as 'letting go' in our struggle with God (3.4).

Sexuality is a God given desire to unite us with others (3.5).

This drawing or God given attraction is between people of the opposite sex and people of the same sex (3.6).

Intimacy is the key to relationship (3.4). Intimacy in sex guards against exploitation (3.10).

Masturbation is natural and can be a positive experience (3.12).

'Agape' love and 'eros' love should not be opposed to each other (3.14). In the Septuagint (Greek OT) agape is used to translate many forms of love (3.15).

Agape, Philia, Eros, Libido collectively point to the rich unity of love (3.16). Each needs the other (3.17). Agape releases sexual desire, erotic aspiration and mutuality from self centredness in relationships (3.15).

(Christian) Freedom is found as others call us out of our self-absorption and into relationships of love (3.20).

The Bible is about God's action and reflects God's liberating purpose at that time. The key to God's creation is relationship (3.23).

God calls us to mend broken relationships and care for the marginalised and those who suffer discrimination (3.25).

Response to Chapter 3.

The new morality is motivated by love (as specially understood).

However, love has to be redefined to include motivating passion.

The report seizes on the various Greek and Latin words for love.

The report lists four (sic) Greek words for love.

Actually there are three Greek words, agape, philia and eros, and one Latin word, libido.

Agape is God's love or God's way of loving, caring.

Philia is affection, fondness;

eros (Greek) is lust or passion;

libido (Latin) is lust or passion.

It is the intention of this report to inject lust into love, passion into piety, sexuality into spirituality. Chapter by chapter, this is done by

listening to the world (internalising the world's cultures)

demolishing Scriptural standards

transforming love into passion

redesigning morality as relationship

including the excluded (particularly excluded moral values)

disempowering ministry by accommodation

The signs of love become

intimacy,

vulnerability,

impulse.

The mechanisms of love become

unconditional acceptance
accommodation beyond any distinctions
passion for 'unitive force'.

The new standard of love is unviolated relationship.

To sin is to violate relationship.

In my opinion these arguments are initially against Scripture and ultimately pagan.

It is noted in 3.4 that 'letting go' in the sexual act (= orgasm) parallels 'letting go' with God to obtain God's shalom. Is this suggesting that orgasm is a means of revelation? If (following Marshall McLuhan) "The Medium is the Message" is the Report suggesting that orgasm is revelation?

This is the reduction of the spiritual to the experience of vulnerability. If so, elevating eros to spirit empties the spiritual of content. It is the reduction of the spiritual to the experience of vulnerability and "entering or being entered by the other". It is wandering in the pathless wastes of sated desire and the enigma of otherness.

Give me the known ways of God anytime!

God's will in creation and redemption is for human beings to be in right relation with God, other people and creation (4.1).

Christian identity is baptismal identity (4.2).

Right relations are loving relations.

Loving relations are modelled on God's unconditional love (4.3).

Feeling and passion are a part of love.

Right relations are characterised by

Honesty, Intimacy is honest openness to the other

Trust

Vulnerability

Commitment

Equality and Mutuality

Freedom

Recognition of Limits

Growth and change

Communication

Community Foundation (4.6)

Right relationships requires sexual expression being congruent to the level of trust and intimacy (4.7).

When someone is hurt, then the one who has offended needs to repent and take responsibility for their actions (4.8). Right relations resist the abuse of power (4.12).

Response to Chapter 4.

If one listens to (takes one's cues from) the world and rejects the objective standard of Scripture, one must produce a substitute morality. This is precisely what the Report does. The new morality (set of values) is based around relationship. All behaviour and virtue are described and justified in terms of relationship. The signs or values of the new morality are as listed (4.6). Good relationship is enhanced by intimacy, trust, vulnerability, freedom etc. Hence they are the new values. (Compare these with the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5:22-23).

The implications of this argument are as follows:

Any relationship that manifests these virtues is good and therefore should be supported by the church. Any relationship, adolescent to adolescent, male to male, female to female, married to unmarried, married to married-to-another can manifest these values. In fact it does not matter what the combination as long as the relationship manifests the virtues of intimacy etc. As long as adolescents, for instance, are intimate, open to the other, communicating, mature, then sexual activity is permitted. That is, as long as the relationship is not violated.

Violation of relationship is when these virtues are not present. Sin is the violation of relationship (3.23). It is interesting that the Report uses the word 'sin', since the word usually creates offence. For the Report sin is not disobedience to God but violation of human relationship. For instance, adultery is sin according to Scripture because God forbids it. (The Bible gives no other reason.) However, adultery may or may not be sin according to the relationship rule. In adultery, which relationship is being violated or enhanced? Is it my relationship with my spouse, my adulterous companion, their spouse, other people, my children, or my relationship with myself. Cannot adultery be a grand statement of my self-determination, sexual inventiveness and authentication of my being? Some win, some lose. I guess that's life. It most certainly isn't God.

Children: Gender roles are learnt. Sexuality is learned behaviour (5.1)
Sex Education as a baptismal responsibility for the church (5.4)

Adolescents: Many young people are sexually active (5.6).
The church needs to help young people handle their sexuality (5.7)
The church has a role in promoting sexuality as a normal aspect of being human (5.10).

Adolescents are encouraged to express their sexuality in proportion to the maturity and depth of commitment of their relationship. The deferral of sexual intercourse is to be encouraged until a person is mature enough to enter into a relationship of mutual commitment and responsibility such as marriage (5.11).

Single Adults: Adults who choose to be sexually active could consider the elements of right relations. They are encouraged to develop, in dialogue with their partner, a personal ethic appropriate to the level of intimacy (5.14). Intimacy in relations is essential and marriage is a means of satisfying the need for intimacy (5.16).

People Living Together: Effective contraception means many are sexually active while they work through commitment (5.20).
The phrase 'Living in Sin' is alienating and does not take people's situation seriously. It fails to reflect the uniqueness of relationship. Such relationships are to be affirmed and supported (5.22).

Engaging in Sexual activity: The key question is - How can our sexuality reflect the Grace of God. (5.23) ?
The level of sexual expression must be congruent to the level of intimacy, trust, honesty in the relationship (5.24).

Questions to be asked are: Will sex enhance the relationship?
Will vulnerability be respected?
Will others be hurt?
Is safe sex being practised?
Will unease in either partner stop the sex?
Does the sex reflect genuine self-giving love? (5.24)

Answering these questions should place a limit on casual or exploitative sex. Genital sex requires careful consideration. For the young careful consideration needs to be given to the level of responsibility.

Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual.

Men and women of faith who recognise themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual have to struggle with the church's attitude. Homosexuals who are honest about their sexual orientation are punished for their openness (5.26). For homosexual Christians the controversy over homosexuality strikes at their very identity (5.30). (This is based on the assumption that sexuality is identity).

Four attitudes to homosexuality exist in the church.

1. Rejection of homosexuality, making no distinction between sexual orientation and sexual practice.
2. Rejecting homosexuality but accepting the homosexual. However, sexuality and identity are closely associated.
3. Qualified acceptance. The homosexuality is accepted but its expression is not.
4. Full acceptance of homosexual persons.

Same sex relations can express God's will as much as heterosexual relations can (5.34).

In dealing with homosexuals what is needed is love not law, acceptance not rejection, relationship not standards (5.36).

If the Bible texts on homosexuality are accepted why not accept slavery and the submission of women on Biblical grounds? Who is my homosexual neighbour? (5.38)

The Triune God is a God of love and unconditional acceptance, not a God of texts taken out of their historical context (5.38).

From the standard of right relations hetero- and homo-sexual relations are equally valid (5.39).

The church should develop liturgical resources to celebrate (recognise and affirm) homosexuality and homosexual relationships (5.41).

Marriage

Marriage is a social construct. Therefore it varies from society to society. Marriage does not lead to family life - family life leads to marriage. Historically only the rich got married (5.43).

The modern marriage ceremony dates only from the 16th century (5.45).

Marriage is redefined by each culture.

What makes a marriage Christian is how it reflects right relations (5.49)

Christian marriage is characterised by:

- relationship of equals
- lifelong exclusive union
- the primary committed relationship
- symbol of co-humanity of God's creation
- has potential for raising children (5.51)

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce and remarriage is a fact in our society and church. This usually involves feelings of brokenness, failure and bitterness (5.56).

The church celebrates the gifts and graces that divorced and remarried people bring to Christian life and ministry (5.57)

The church should encourage liturgies to celebrate divorce (5.60).

Response to Chapter 5.

The central morality of relationship is now applied to different social groups namely, children, adolescents, single adults, people living together, lesbian, gay and bisexual people. The implications of these arguments are as follows

For children sex education is a baptismal responsibility for the church. This implies learning to lust or the cultivation of passion is the genesis of love and a force for maturity.

For adolescents the argument is that sexual activity depends upon the (level) of maturity of relationship. However, does sexuality require maturity? The desires of sexuality appear a lot sooner than maturity. Indeed the development of passion depends upon release of self-control. But the argument is sex generates passion and at the same time cultivates maturity. Because right relationship is claimed to be prior to marriage, sexual activity does not require marriage. Can relationship restrain sex or is it a vehicle of sex? . to me, the Christian position is that sexual passion requires strong controls. These controls do not require maturity. However,

maturity is often an expression of balance and wisdom in applying controls. Maturity does not dissolve standards but sees the wisdom for them.

For single adults, it is argued, intimacy is natural and necessary. Need-based relationship should be satisfied. For the church to not facilitate sexual expression is to deny a need, frustrate a passion and oppose God in the way he has made us. This thinking turns Christian morality on its head. It is saying that God's law creates the sinner therefore God's law is at fault.

For people living together the report claims the church should affirm the relationship otherwise people are alienated from the full expression of their desires. That is, the uniqueness, logic and passion of the relationship is denied. In fact what happens is the immorality overwhelms the relationship and sensitivity to need is swamped by ever growing desire. Often people are bored with the relationship but obsessed with the sex.

The report requires that sexual activity is geared to quality of relationship.

Following the questions of 5.24 related questions may be asked:

Does sex enhance relationship or use relationship?

Does passion respect vulnerability or exploit it?

Is lusting after each other being mutual or being equally manipulative?

Can sex reflect or express the depth of faithfulness?

Is there such a thing as sex that is safe?

Will passion decline before unease or be incited by it?

How can need-based passion become self-giving love?

Obviously the report approves of sex between any couple, of any age, at any time, as long as it is caring and mutually supportive. What is caring is the attitude of the partners in any particular activity. Sex without the protective structure of marriage rapidly becomes exploitive and self indulgent. Because sex is need driven even marriages come under the pressure of indulgence and selfishness. Only if the marriage vows of caring are performed can the marriage survive.

In the section on Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals, the guiding justification is "right relationship". Ultimately the Report implies that while anybody is in right relationship any behaviour that enhances relationship is approved. Sexual behaviour because of its closeness to intimacy is supposed to be relationship building. However, sexual behaviour is relationship using rather than relationship building. Relationship is built by attitude. People can obviously have sexual intercourse and not be intimate. This is the basis for prostitution. The tragedy for a prostitute is the ever declining ways of achieving intimacy although being sexually active.

The section on marriage involves the redefinition of marriage as relationship. Marriage is made derivative of relationship and is only a need-based social construct.

Apparently marriage should express co-humanity. Co-humanity acts as a euphemism for uni-sex which is the attempt to obliterate the male-female distinction. 'I, a person, take you, a person, to be my legally wedded person'.

Hence people may argue: I have a relationship therefore I don't need to get married or again I may be married but I need a new relationship. Marriage based on relationship must be insecure. Marriage based on Christian vows can handle changes in relationship.

Divorce and remarriage continues the basic argument that placing obstacles in the way of satisfying passion (wherever it may lead) offends relationship, inspires hurt, accentuates unacceptance and alienates the sensitive. The church because it maintains a standard,

becomes the offender. The church therefore is being encouraged (cajoled) to bend its standard to accommodate any value supported (anointed) by “right relationship”. After all is not accommodation next to acceptance? Total acceptance requires total accommodation, that is the relaxation of every standard to avoid any offence. Again, consider the offence that divorce is to the original marriage. Who and what is being offended here? Playing the ‘I am offended if you do not give me what I want’ game turns ‘hurt’ into a weapon of selfishness and dissolves moral restraint. Here morality is designed to promote passion and endorse a false understanding of the purpose of life.

Summary Chapter 6 Church and Ministry

Jesus Christ is central to ministry.

- Jesus - chose relationship with the marginalised
- was a servant
- restored people to wholeness
- attacked the powerful creating a fellowship of equals
- accepted the ministry of women
- was moved with compassion (6.1)

The kingdom of God is marked by humility, servanthood, equality, mutual care, inclusiveness, forgiveness, restoration and reliance on God’s grace and love (6.2).

Paul the Apostle says the church

- celebrates diverse gifts
- makes no distinctions
- makes no judgements
- takes the form of a servant
- builds each other up (6.3)

Many, as they struggle to live as sexual people, do not experience the church as inclusive, compassionate or gracious but as judging, rejecting and conditional in its acceptance (6.5).

The Church needs to repent from the pain and exclusion it inflicts on people. The critical moral issue in the church is the devaluation of people as sexual-spiritual persons (6.6). To continue to postpone full acceptance of homosexuals within the church is unjust. The key is loving acceptance (6.7). The homosexual is as capable of ministry as the heterosexual.

All relationships that reflect mutual commitment, servanthood, compassion, forgiveness, building each other up, humility and vulnerable openness are worthy of the Church’s recognition and blessing (6.9).

Before 1987 the statement ‘celibacy in singleness, faithfulness in marriage’ (6.11) was generally advocated. In 1987 the church noted this as an expectation only. In 1994 the statement (6.11) had no status as a formal decision of the church.

The UCA assemblies of 1988 and 1991 declined to endorse the statement (6.11). Such a statement elevates genital sex above just relationship in discerning fitness for ministry (6.12).

The model of relating says all relationships are to be marked by mutual commitment, equality, justice, honesty and mercy (6.16). There is no prescriptive category for membership of the church, therefore there should be no prescriptive category for leadership in the church (6.18).

The requirement of heterosexual and homosexual clergy is to model just relationships. (6.19).

Response to Chapter 6.

Ministry is now justified and motivated by relationship.

The person and work of Christ is not his place as mediator and Saviour but as relator and acceptor.

The work of Jesus for the marginalised was for the poor, blind, the broken hearted, the captives, the oppressed (Lk 4:18 quoting Is 61:1). These are those abused by the power structures (ultimately) of evil. People can be marginalised by the abuse of others or by self abuse. This report is not about those sexually abused by others. The report spends one sentence on their plight (the last sentence of 4.10). This avoidance is justified in 1.25 even though, in practice, the impetus of the 'sex culture' is to generate those used by the culture. Nearly all the report is about those who marginalise themselves because of their sexual preference. How I use my sexuality is my choice for which I must accept responsibility. Whatever happened to the argument that homosexuality was to be "only between consenting adults in the privacy of their own bedroom"? The Gay Mardi Gras has become a most unprivate procession of manufactured titillation, drug-induced imagery, ribald drama and paraded lust.

The morality of acceptance means that we must obliterate distinctions, make no judgements, hear no evil, see no evil. This implies that ministry is not to confront but to model relationship, vulnerability, intimacy. To be moved by another's plight (self imposed) should not call for objective counselling but subjective mutuality and opportunity for passion (love).

Relationships can move in and out of mutuality. Sometimes I am vulnerable and sometimes (for survival) I am not. The problem with relationship as the standard mechanism for ministry is that relationships can take many forms and have various uses in the same person at the same time. Therefore there has to be a standard for right relationship. The standard of right relationship must offend other forms of relationship. Is ministry reduced to deciding who is using who? The clarity, perspicacity and objectivity of Scripture is a much safer ground for ministry.

The authority Jesus had would be alienating to equality and mutuality (ask the pharisees). Jesus was a leader rarely a confidant. Jesus was sensitive never vulnerable.

It is interesting to attempt to define relationship, which is not attempted in the Report. (Note, it is not a Scriptural word.) It is a pragmatic term, popularised by modern American psychology, that brings with it all the cultural baggage of inter-personal and intra-personal preoccupation with psyche processes, personal postures and flights of ego fancy. Relationship is the state of being related (Concise OED). Relationships between people can be of all kinds, good and bad, right and wrong. The Report sets up right relationship as its standard for ministry. Without it ministry does not occur. But where is the minister in the give-and-take of relationships? What is characteristic of relationship is its fluid nature. People can move in and out of relationship, meet simultaneously at different levels of relationship and function believing certain things about a relationship that may or may not be true. Sex as a need-based behaviour will basically use relationship. The Report claims that sex will cultivate relationship or, at least, support an attitude maintaining relationship. Can this be guaranteed? I assume manipulation is not accepted in right relationship, but how do you stop people using a relationship? Usually a person is in relationship because it is of advantage to them. To support a spouse is usually to be supported by the spouse. At various times people lean on the relationship and get more than they give. Sex makes demands on the relationship. Sex uses the relationship (sometimes wrecks the relationship) in its attempt to authenticate and validly express its need.

Neither Christian marriage nor ministry is based on relationship. Both are based on vows. A marriage or ministry still exists whether the relationship is good or bad or even non-existent.

The power of the marriage/ministry is in its conformity to its vows. The vows are the rock that stabilise the fluidity of the relationships that are pummelled relentlessly by human needs.

Summary

"...the Karma Sutra's tantric theme of uniting eros with the Spiritual".

Time Jan 3, 1997 p31.

This quote from Time sums up the spirit dynamic that I believe motivates this Report. It is basically a Pagan document. In this Pagan, tantric sense, sexual congress is symbolically equivalent to the rapture of divine union. In this sense nothing is closer to godliness than sexual ecstasy. To me, the idolatry of sex is plain.

The Report treats

sexuality as spirituality
the Bible as non-standard
the world as the value source
love as passion
morality as relationship
God as endearing (non-offending)
ministry as acceptance
leadership as non prescriptive

and so

the Church of the Lost becomes the Lost Church.

This Report is an example of the church as an ideological institution absorbing foreign ideology.

In this Report the access that the foreign ideology has to Christianity is via the very flexible English word 'love'. Because the Bible contains the phrase 'God is love', anything that can masquerade as love from passion to sacrifice claims divine acceptance. It then is supposed that the Christian must support/promote any particular interest group's peculiar experience of love.

Another key word invading Christianity is authenticity which is a mixture of the root meaning of truth and wise life-style. Why must the church be the receptacle for any search for meaning which justifies its unchristian conclusions with the veneer/invocation of authenticity?

Love and authenticity are not peculiar to Christianity. Christians have their understanding of what love and authenticity are. In our understanding of the human scene, the Bible is the bulwark against the invasion of Pagan ideology.

The basic logic of this Report is

- accept the world as the norm
- reject the Bible as irrelevant
- recognise sexuality generates spirituality
- devise a sexuality to meet your needs
- cultivate relationship
- believe an all loving God will tolerate any behaviour.

The Homosexual Holocaust is upon us.

The fires of its passion are consuming its devotees.

Yet,

the ultimate fire is the wrath of Almighty God

before Whom we shall all stand to give account.
So let it be.