

HUMAN SEXUALITY:
THE ELCA DOCUMENT AND THE HEBREW BIBLE, OUR CHRISTIAN OLD TESTAMENT

An Outline of a Presentation and Discussion
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1. INTRODUCTION

- to the speaker and the subject. I have prepared a number of materials (Handouts) and I plan to emphasize certain topics which the document does not highlight.

- Questions and comments are welcome throughout my allotted time.

2. BIBLIOGRAPHIES

- Handout: Human Sexuality: A Brief List of Relevant Articles in Standard Bible Dictionaries.

- Handout: A Brief Bibliography: Human Sexuality in the Bible, The ancient Near East and in our own Time. I will comment especially on pages 10-15. The author(s) of the OT section in the document have done excellent work. There is only one glaring omission: the reason for OT sexual ethics. The reason, goal and aim of OT sexual ethics was the control of THE GODDESS (=the divinization of erotic, sexual attraction and expression). The document is very well aware of the work of THE GODDESS in chapter 5. Specific Issues of Concern Today.

- Handout: materials on Job 31.

3. GOD AND ETHICS

- Handout: Who is this God Jews and Christian Worship?

The most important commandment, as far as ethics (including sexual ethics) is concerned, is the commandment against the making of images: Exodus 20:1-4; Deuteronomy 4:15-19, etc. See, e.g., Cox, Harvey, *The Secular City* (New York: MacMillan, 1965, pp. 26-32, "The Sinai Covenant as the Deconsecration of Values, esp. p. 28ö). The message is clear: the covenant community must take responsibility for the wellbeing of individuals and of the community and work out the details of ethical behavior. The commandments outline God's policy, not the specifics for each age and culture. The specifics are the responsibility of the covenant community in any age and culture.

4. THE ELCA DOCUMENT

Additional comments, which have not been made, as yet. Questions, comments, esp. on the following:

. Comments on Genesis 1:

- Gen 1:27. ADAM (the human/groundling) = Male and Female. To be human means to be a sexual creature. Therefore, humans, although individuals, are immediately directed towards communion/society because of their sexuality. It is not possible to be human by one self (one would not even come into existence!). One needs others to be human.

- Handout: Genesis 1:26-28

. further discussion of "image and likeness" of God. Cf. my bibliography p. 11. The human task is expressed in FIVE verbs (v. 27): 1) *prh*, "be fruitful, bear fruit," (have children, educate the next generation), 2) *rbh*, "multiply, be many" (have enough children for the task and the circumstances), 3) *ml*, "fill" (be present on the earth everywhere as God's ambassadors, stewards, cultivators. Of course, this is not a commandment for overpopulation or for having children which are not loved and educated properly), 4) *kbsh*, "subdue" (like a good king/government subdue, defeat, anything hostile and destructive to the wellbeing of humans, animals and the earth--what a task!), 5) *rdh*, "have dominion, drive, lead, direct, guide, govern, manage, steer" (like a good king/government, exercise responsible leadership, of course, in God's stead, for God's purposes and not human ambition and objectives!). THIS is the image which God has of humans and their task (male AND female). To behave like good kings (cf. e.g., Ps 72:12-14) and not like bad kings/governments (cf. e.g. Ezekiel 34:2-4).

- Handout: "The Status of Man and Woman," from McCurley, F. R. and J. Reumann, *Word and Witness*, I (Philadelphia, 1977), p. 176.

Comments on Genesis 2:

- Handout: "We are more than just a man's spare rib!" Someone gave me this picture, but without a reference. The suffering, which is expressed in this statement and in the picture, was and is unnecessary. This, of course, makes the suffering even worse. It is based on ignorance of the Hebrew text and the culture in which it was composed and the purpose for which it was written. It may also be based on malice (the purposeful misrepresentation of the Bible's message).
 - The reason for the creation of woman: to be *`eser*, "ally."
- Handout: Genesis 2:22-23. Sexual recognition and ecstasy.
- Handout: "Woman formed from man's rib," from Gaster, Th. H., *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the OT. Vol. I* (Peter Smith: Gloucester, Mass, 1981 [1969]), p. 21.
- Handout: p. 133 from Hamblin, Dora Jane, "Has the Garden of Eden been located at last?" *Smithonian* 18.2 (May 1987) 127-135.
- Handout: Genesis 2:23. The Hebrew Words for "Man" and "Woman" and their Message: if one takes God's vision for humans and their task out of the male female relationship then one ends up with a DOUBLE fire.
- Handout: "The Creation of Woman" or "The Gift of Eros."
 - A sermon by Walter L. Michel. Gen 2:24: covenant/marriage.

Comments on Song of Songs:

- Reading of selected passages (Pope's translation).
- Handout: "The Sublime Song"/Song of Songs/Canticles 8:6c-f.
 - . The Hebrew text, transliteration, translations by M. Pope and W. L. Michel, and explanation of the Hebrew words from J. J. Owens, *Analytical Key to the OT* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).
- Handout: from Pope, Marvin H., *Song of Songs: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1977), pp. 668-673.
- Handout: "The Song of Solomon illustrated for our literalist friends," *The Wittenberg Door* 41 (1978) 32.