

VII.7.2 Gay marriage and marriage trivilization,

In my judgment coming out to endorse “gay marriage” is something like being converted to a religious doctrine and practicing a ritual to declare the belief. Declaration of acceptance is like an offering of incense to a god of the Durkheimian religion of Western societies. (See Mary Douglas’ *Purity and Danger*,ⁱ for an account of how a society’s civil religion makes sacred the basic structure of the society.) Anecdotal evidence indicates that switching to support of gay marriage is similar to having a conversion experience. My interpretation is that heterosexuals who come out for gay marriage are switching to a progressive stance on sexuality. A progressive stances changes significant boundaries between males and females. Endorsing gay marriage sacralizes this new social structure.

In the Durkheimian sense of religion, a new religious outlook is emerging. This new religious outlook does not fit well with religions of the Judeo-Christian tradition. We can be told that nothing much will change if there are same sex marriages. So, why not accept them? Indeed, offering incense to the emperor did little or nothing except corrupt early Christians who succumbed to threats. Fidelity and honesty requires holders of the paternal principle to speak against and to vote against same sex marriage if they have an opportunity to do so. If same sex marriage is not made a public issue, it is best to keep silence and hope the silliness passes away. I suggest regarding gay weddings as outrageous “camp.” The seriousness with which some heterosexuals discuss homosexual marriage is comic. They include the president of the United States whom I otherwise take seriously.

To gain some understanding of camp in the gay life style, see David Hailperin's *How To Be Gay*.ⁱⁱ Participating in camp is a way of compensating for a homosexual's sense of being marginalized. Dramatic mockery of structures, practices and institutions taken seriously in the larger society helps in some way to expose the boundaries of structures marginalizing homosexuals as ultimately not serious. Basically it is all role-playing in a tragic comedy.

Today there are many ways of forming households. There is need for serious debate over the privileges, rights and duties of the members of the various types of households. We do not, though, live by bread alone. We guide our lives by words, symbols, concepts. Words can hurt words. When our valuable words are hurt we are hurt. 'Marriage' is still a valuable word. Thus pro-homosexuals are grasping for it. If they get it, what the word conveys won't be worth wanting. All of us will live on with the loss of a valuable ideal for guiding the important and demanding roles of male-female bonding.

Progressives promoting same-sex marriage have standards for moral evaluation of homosexual acts. They use standards such as coercion and age of the participants. What is a likely effect of extending marriage to cover homosexual relations? An effect could be having marital status for moral evaluation of homosexual acts. In general, pre-marital and extra-marital sexual acts have been morally condemned. So same-sex marriage might provide a standard for moral condemnation of most male homosexual behavior. However, in these times it is unlikely that there will be an increase in moral condemnation of most homosexual behavior? Would not a more likely result be that use of marital status as a moral standard for sexual behavior is weakened even more than it is

now. It is not improbable that in our mainline society marital status becomes morally irrelevant for judging sexual behavior. Of course, being morally irrelevant to evaluation of sexual behavior does not make marriage totally irrelevant to sexuality. However, marriage would be far less significant than at present. A slogan promoting same-sex marriage is “Marriage Equality.” Marriage equality equals marriage trivialization.

The sexual dysfunction of same sex attraction is an affliction. The possibility of some of the most rewarding of human relations is lost. The loss is not recovered by stealing the name ‘marriage.’ Friendship is a consolation. Marriage is more and less than friendship. Married people frequently love one another and sometimes become friends. But “bottom line” marriage is duty. Friendship between men is rare. It is to be envied and respected. But to call it marriage is to make both the friendship and marriage comic.

ⁱ Routledge and Kegan Paul London, 1966

ⁱⁱ Belknap/Harvard U. Press, Cambridge MA, 2012. Reviewed by Edmund White, *New York Review of Books*, Oct. 25, 2012