

## **We "Spin" More than the Civil War**

E. J. Dionne has been helpful as he "uncover" those who would revise, deny or sanitize the racism of slavery and segregation by calling them by other names. I suggest persons do this for at least 2 reasons: First, the contradictions of slavery and segregation are so at variance with the essence of democracy and Christianity that it is difficult to admit that at one time they were sanctioned by most of the nation and the Church. Second, a personal recognition that if a person once supported through silence or advocacy, slavery and/or segregation, and now acknowledges the contradiction of his/her contradictory behavior; revision, denial and sanitizing become ways to minimize/deny individual acts of compliance with what is now recognized as evil.

I once through silence, sometimes as an accomplice, supported the denial of ordination of women in the Methodist Church. My actions were linked to accepting Biblical interpretation that declared that the "role" of women in church and society was described in "The Bible," as different from the role of men. I "used" the Bible to support and sustain what in actuality was my bias and bigotry toward women. There were times when I have avoided using the term sexist to describe what was once denominational policy that I at the time agreed with, because in retrospect, I now realize and accept the fact that the Church and I were wrong. There is something within us as humans that causes us to avoid "fessing up" to the racism and sexism of the nation and the Church because to do so compels us to "fess up" personally. We therefore like the Governors of Mississippi and Virginia and others, engage in actions of avoidance in talking about institutionalized sexism as they avoided talking about institutionalized racism.

But race and gender are not the only matters that provoke/evoke revision, denial and sanitization from us. The recent repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell by the Congress and by some Judges, and the growing acceptance of same-sex unions and marriages by society, are "setting the table" when many are beginning to create "stories" of why the years of anti-same gender loving language and legislation by The United Methodist Church are not as negative, contradictory, anti-Scriptural and at variance with Jesus as they actually are.

We are approaching a time in society and soon in the Church when our denominational denial of the civil and religious rights of same gender loving persons is going to become as contradictory as the denial of civil and religious rights to persons because of their gender and/or race. Already there are signs of "spin" among some who know that "The Times They Are A-Changing." They know that political gain in politics or the Church will no longer be aided and abetted by demeaning, sometimes demonizing, those among us who are same gender loving. Thus, as a way to appeal to younger persons and to bring The United Methodist Church into the 21st century, they are beginning to "spin" the years of anti-gay language and legislation of the denomination.

I have sought not to "spin" our denominational history of anti-woman language and legislation and my support of it. Rather, I have found First Corinthians 13: 11-12 helpful to describe my Church and myself. A King James Version of Scripture is nearby and thus I quote it: "When I was a child, I spake like a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

If only those who would "spin" the Civil War as a way to avoid the reality of racism [wouldn't]. If only I had been able earlier to avoid "spinning" my and my denomination's support of sexism, and if today we could avoid "spinning" our denomination's heterosexism, and simply admit that we are no longer children. If only we were able to say we have become adult enough to admit that we have and still "see through a glass darkly."

Sexism and racism persist in church and society because we have not been Biblical enough to admit that they are signs of childishness. We have been able to make some progress in their eradication by "growing up" a bit. We are living in a time when we are beginning "to see through a glass" more clearly the God-given reality of same gender affection and love. Is it not time for our beloved denomination on this matter, to move from childhood to adulthood?

As I read Dionne's article, I took joy in his "pulling the covers off" of those who would minimize and distort the reality of slavery and the significance of the Civil Rights Movement. But as so often happens, as I with Dionne pointed a finger of blame at others, I realized that in doing that, I was pointing 3 fingers at myself.

It is childish whenever we take delight in criticizing others. If we do not engage in self-criticism that reveals, we, too, possess some of the traits we see in others.

Gil Caldwell