

# Living Forever



Christianity asserts that every human being will live forever. This is an assertion that, regardless of one's opinion, is either true or false.

Now it is true that we will all die. Death is the end point of living. It cannot be avoided — there has been no "fountain of youth" yet uncovered. But what happens when our life ends? Is your physical death the final, ultimate, absolute, complete and total end of you? Period!

Humanism, to the extent that it deals with the reality of death, suggests that we should be content to be recycled into nature's great food chain. Yet, Peter Berger, in *Rumour of Angels*, asserts that while we can imagine other people's ends, we cannot conceive of our own. Built into our spirit — the essence of who we are — is a sense of immortality, a sense of continued existence.

Christianity asserts that each individual person will live forever. That eternal existence is not some continuous life-death-life cycle, with final liberation (absorption) into "Absolute Being." It is, rather, a continued existence or "walk" with God and others, in a transformed state of individuality within community. That transformed state bears a continuity, not discontinuity, to life on this side of eternity. That is, life after death is neither one of white-robed and winged cherubs playing harps, nor horned devils with spears tending eternal fires fed by evil humans.

I have heard it said that eternal life is God eternally granting us our wishes and behaviors unrestricted. If we are perverse, ruthless, oppressive, dishonest, obnoxious, and conniving now, and selfish in it, that will be extended eternally. Further, if we do not now wish to "walk" with God, that is, to not have anything to do with God, that wish will be granted eternally.

Imagine, on the other hand, if we desired the very opposite. What if we

sought to respond positively to God, and seek to be honest, just, truthful, merciful, gracious, kind, and loving — the moral kinds of attitudes and behaviours to which God calls us? We know now how these actions and behaviours make ourselves and others feel. Imagine if that were to be extended eternally.

There is a common notion that Christian morality is a "kill-joy" — slavish obedience to boring rules. Not so! God created humans a certain way. They function best, most fruitfully and most efficiently when they recognize and respect their limits, and we do have limits. Joy, prosperity and health come within the parameters prescribed, not outside of them.

The "parry-hardy, live for the moment" lifestyle may bring temporary pleasure, but its continued indulgence is a definite push against the limits. We slowly, or sometimes quickly, feel the consequences. Better to enjoy the goodness of the earth and all that is within it — including others humans — in a moderate balance than to greedily, selfishly and lustfully consume it. Moral behaviour and attitude is really then, at least as a first step, a means of preserving the self and others.

One might argue that moral behaviour and attitude is essential, whether we live three score and ten years or eternally. That's true enough. If we live only 70 years we could perhaps get away with a 60-40 (or 70-30) balance and still have lived a good life and left a good impression. Not so with life eternal.

If there is a God and we do live forever, a moral attitude and behaviour is important for another reason. On this side of eternity we can choose, for the

most part, how we want to spend our 70+/- years. Here we have some control. But if we do live forever, and we eternally live out our heart's desire, it is another matter. If our heart's desire is hatred, greed, lust, oppression, injustice, and a rejection of God, then one will live that out eternally. And the consequences may very well be pure hell!

What then about "heaven," and an opposite heart's desire? Some feel that a perfect moral life is required to get to heaven. No so, on two accounts. One, we cannot live perfect lives. That's too difficult for us, and we know it. That does not mean we ought not to try, however. Just as we strive for perfection in so many other areas of life — optimum grades, health, safety, environmental conditions, etc. — and find ourselves falling short, so we should strive for moral perfection. Even 75% is better than 50%.

Two, good works will not grant us God's ultimate favour. No amount of our "goodness" will get us in. We cannot match God's standards. That is where God's grace comes in. In spite of ourselves, God loves us.

So, who are the possible candidates for an eternal "heaven" or "hell"? The Scriptures assert that Christ plays a crucial role in this, with a kind of "metanoia" function — changing or converting human hearts. C. S. Lewis adds some further insight: "If people have not got at least the beginnings of those [moral] qualities inside them, then no possible external conditions could make a 'heaven' for them, that is, could make them happy with the deep, strong, unshakable kind of happiness God intends for us." (*Mere Christianity*, 74). Something to think about!

# Lesbigan Youth: Growing Up In The 90's, Part II

The present circumstances have placed an entirely new set of social forces that have created some pleasant and unpleasant situations for lesbigan youth. What this means is that society has progressed somewhat from the "Dark Ages" of the past in order to address the social ramifications of the present and future. The past few years have seen an emergence of issues dealing with homosexuality, bisexuality and other associated terms. Despite the continuation of negative perceptions of lesbigan matters, society has made some progressive leaps into equalizing certain aspects of social life to include people of different sexual orientations. This is where lesbigan youths face the dual-edged choice of coming to terms with their sexuality. The progressive stance of certain elements in society are balanced by the negative issues that continue to plague equality of the sexes and sexual orientation. Lesbigan youths are socialized within this context and must deal with the duality of society's perceptions while coming to terms with their homosexuality or bisexuality. Michelangelo Signorile (*Out*, 1994) has heard the term "Post-Queer" generation, with regards to the current lesbigan movement and youth. Last week, I addressed the issue of growing up lesbigan in society from the point of view of a heterosexual social order. Now, I wish to address the problems lesbigan youths face while dealing with the adult lesbigan community. Perhaps, more than with the heterosexual community, lesbigan youths tend to have just as difficult a time when confronted with the larger adult lesbigan community.

One issue centers around society's negative connotations of "recruitment" of youths by homosexuals and bisexuals. The particulars of this point refer to the heterosexual perception that lesbigans recruit naive and impressionable youths to become gay, lesbian or bisexual. And that coercion, the changing youths' beliefs, and proselytizing are the hallmarks of homosexuality/bisexuality. These false claims have, unfortunately, pervaded much of society's misconceptions of homosexuality and bisexuality to the point that even lesbigans must occasionally succumb to this belief. What is meant by this is because of the social misconception of the recruitment of youths, often the adult lesbigan community needs to walk on eggshells when lesbigan youths and adults are encountered together. Whether this is during a youth meeting, benefit, community organization or rally, the larger adult lesbigan community is sometimes required to keep a distance from lesbigan youth, even though there is a desire to extend some support for them.

In addition to this dogmatic stance of "recruitment," there is also the concern that members of the adult lesbigan community may prey on lesbigan youths in a sexual manner. The concerns are genuine, but hardly a solitary problem to homosexuals and bisexuals. In fact, approximately 95% of child/youth sexual assaults are committed by heterosexuals (Dr. Benjamin Spock, c. 1980's). Nevertheless, a small percentage of the lesbigan community do have relations with lesbigan youths. In some cases, lesbigan youths are attracted to older lesbigans, which creates a similarly difficult scenario. (Silverstein & Picano, 1992). Heron (1994) presented some

writings from lesbigan youths wherein a number of them made advances toward older lesbigans who shied away from them in terms of sexual relationships. However, what many of the lesbigan community do try to help lesbigan youth with, are provisions of support, a comfortable and nonthreatening environment, and offer a sympathetic ear for listening to their coming out experiences.

Aside from these concerns, there is also the "generation gap" between past and present lesbigans. As one gay youth remarked in Signorile's article ("The Post-Stonewall Generation" in *Out*, 1994) "I think most older people and the larger gay movement are disconnected from queer youth." There needs to be an understanding between the adult and youth members of the lesbigan community, and certain studies have addressed this issue. Cook and Pawlowski (1991) presented their paper for the Respect All Youth Project which stressed youth and homosexuality. Likewise, Mercier and Berger (1989) proposed letting lesbigan youths tell their own stories and experiences. In Fredericton, there are a number of resources that can be used by lesbigan youth. The formation of a lesbigan youth organization, Rainbow Pride, the P-FLAG organization for family and friends of lesbigans, GALA for university youth, FLAG resources, and the Harriet Irving Library has some literature on lesbigan issues. If you are a lesbian, gay or bisexual youth coming to terms with your sexuality, or want to find more information on homosexuality and bisexuality, contact the aforementioned organizations. Counseling Services can also provide some information and support at 453-4820.

# Men sign on to stop violence against women

It is not a secret that violence against women exists in our society. And it is not a secret that this violence is almost exclusively carried out by males. Yet we refuse to talk about it. Do we hope that keeping silent will solve the problem?

The truth of the matter is that silence is the problem. It is our silence that allows the violence to go on, and as a result, it is our silence that keeps women afraid. As men, we will never understand the feeling of insecurity that is experienced by a woman in her everyday life. Little things, subtle things, things that we would never have to worry about; things such as parking your car close to the library because you know it will be dark when you leave to go home. Or, wondering what kind of a day your spouse had because you know that if he had a "bad day" that it will be on you that he will take out his "frustrations." These are things that, as a man, I never have to think about. But for many women, on any given day, these are very real anxieties. Even a simple trip to the library at night requires careful planning by a woman, because there is always a risk that she

could be harassed, beaten, raped, even killed if she is not careful.

We, as men, must do something to end this violence. We must put an end to this very unacceptable and oppressive behaviour. In short, we must change our ways. It is our responsibility to do so, and we must acknowledge and accept this responsibility. This is a first and necessary step if we are to truly eliminate violence by men against women. This will involve not only changing the way that we behave, but more so changing the way we think. We must realize that by violence, we aren't simply talking about the carrying out of extremely violent acts, such as physical or sexual assault. Violence against women can manifest itself in many different ways. It can be as subtle as a rude offhand remark, or as blatant as a sexist joke. However it is manifested, it's still a type of violence, it's hurtful, and it's wrong. We must begin to see these things for what they truly are, and do what is necessary to put an end to all of the violence. Every woman has the right to feel safe.

On February 3rd and 4th, men will be asked to voluntarily sign a

declaration that expresses their commitment to putting an end to all forms of male aggression against women. This will include being asked to wear a purple ribbon as a symbol of this commitment, so that others may become aware of what it is that we are trying to do and join us in this final step. Signing this declaration and making this commitment is not a solution to the problem, it is simply a start. We must not be so arrogant as to think that our signature on a piece of paper will be enough. It is only a first step, nevertheless it is a most important first step, one that must be taken if we are to end the violence.

Signing this declaration is about accepting responsibility as men for the things that we say and do, it's about taking a better look at ourselves so that we can recognize the ways in which we hurt women everyday, most of all it's about changing our attitudes and our actions. On February 3rd and 4th, I call for all men to join me in this declaration.

Steve Allard, Political Science Student's Association

# Womynsay

"If man is human, what is woman?"

"The male is only a male at times; the female is a female all her life and can never forget her sex."

- Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

This statement made by Rousseau is pure misogyny in that it was not an observation, but rather a prescription for how it should be. That sexism existed to such an extent in the eighteenth century is nothing that should incite shock, but the fact that Rousseau's words still ring true today should leave us stunned.

Why is it true that a male is only a male at times? Because first and foremost he is a human being. We can refer to a man as a teacher, lawyer, doctor, redneck, or asshole, but beneath all of these things we can find a prototype for 'person'. When we peel away the characteristics of each occupation we are left with a neutral frame—or what we have accepted as

neutral. The fact is, what we would describe as a 'person' in its pure and neutral form (absent of sex), would be a description of a man.

If you have watched cartoons lately (Looney Toones in particular) you have witnessed a perfect example of this phenomenon. Here we have an entire team of sexless characters who are able to express pure individualism without the conflict of gender interaction or the messiness of a gender identity. Then suddenly, as you are watching, a new character enters the scene. It looks like Bugs Bunny but...there's lips, hips, breasts and a frilly dress...this thing is female! Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig, Silvester, Tweety, Taz, and Road Runner have all of a sudden acquired gender; they have turned into males by virtue of the fact that there is a female in their midst. Bugs would never have been anything but Bugs (an androgynous rabbit) until the presence of the 'she-bunny' made his sex relevant. Because of this phenomenon, which

manifests itself less perfectly in real life, women have the inability to be neutral, objective, or anonymous. Whatever women say or do will always be connected to her sex. Men have the monopoly on objectivity because the basis of everything that exists has been defined by men. For thousands of years knowledge has been developed with the exclusion of women. Science, religion, business, and even social norms have been created by men and therefore anything that we see as neutral within them may not actually be so. Something that has been constant for thousands of years will inevitably take on the character of something unbiased, but this is an illusion.

That we have accepted "mankind" as synonymous for "humankind" for such an incredible length of time is concrete proof that we are expected to see man as neutral and woman as other.

Julianne Fraser



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