

SPECTRUM

IN THE PINK "Don we now our gay apparel"

by James Gill

I am attending the Grad Class Christmas Formal tomorrow night. The name and nature of the event raise two issues which I think deserve a little bit of thought.

The first one is the name. Now I am willing to concede that for the vast majority of people, 'tis the season to be jolly." However, think for a moment what it is like to be, for example, Jewish during the months of November and December. Regardless of how commercial and secular the holiday has become, it is still a Christian festival. From the beginning of November on, we are inundated with Christmas advertising, Christmas decoration, pictures of Santa Claus, and an endless litany of Christmas music. Young Jewish children and their parents have a difficult time during the holiday season. It is very difficult to explain to a six year old why all of her friends receive so many more presents than she. It requires a great deal of maturity for a child to appreciate the value of religious and cultural heritage and identity.

Many sensitive individuals try to shift the focus away from Christmas to the more secular idea of a holiday season. Instead of "Happy Christmas" we say "Season's Greetings". This may seem like a small issue, but it serves to include those of us whose religious beliefs, or lack thereof, would otherwise exclude us. The message of peace and goodwill is one for all people, and should be celebrated as such.

So why does this appear in an article about gay, lesbian and bisexual issues? The issues are analogous. Just as society holds an inherent Christian orientation, so too it is inherently heterosexist. Just as Jewish children must reconcile themselves to rejoicing in their difference, despite the hardships (both real and imagined), so too lesbian and gay people must accept a lower social status.

Some people will object to my drawing an analogy between religion and sexual orientation. The analogy is justified. We give protection to people of different religions and attempt to ensure that they are given equal respect and concern in society. This is because religious belief is regarded as something which ought to be respected for its relative immutability. Indeed, all of the characteristics which we use to determine human rights protection are immutable to some degree. It is not possible to rid oneself of a physical or mental disability; to change one's race, or national or ethnic origin; marital status can be changed, but we give respect to the marriage relationship, by forcing people neither to enter into, or terminate one; religion can be changed, but we accord the same respect to religious belief; gender can be changed as well, but with even more difficulty. Sexual orientation has a similar degree of immutability.

It is clear to everyone by this point, I am sure, that I do not view my sexuality, or anyone's, as a matter of choice. I respect, however, that others disagree with me. Even if one maintains that sexual orientation is a matter of choice, it is to be regarded like a choice of religion, to be accorded respect, and the consequent protection of the law.

The other issue that comes to mind in regard to this event is the fact that though I will be attending, I will be doing so unescorted. I might add that this is not because of my deliberate choice, but rather because my boyfriend is working that night. Were we to go together, (not even considering the question of dancing together!) I can well imagine the reaction. However, fully ten percent of the members of the class are gay or lesbian, and a fair number of them will be at the ball as well. Will they be there with their partners? I think not. Rather, some of them will go on their own, or as part of a larger group, or with a date of the opposite sex. Instead of having the pleasure of attending a function like this with those to whom we are close, our enjoyment is curtailed. Some might say that this is a matter of choice, but anyone can choose to put their head in the lion's mouth.

Next GALA Meeting: Tuesday, December 5, at 8:00 pm in Room 203 of the SUB (across from the Ballroom). All gay, lesbian and bisexual members of the university community and heterosexuals with gay, lesbian and bisexual positive attitudes are encouraged to attend.

HOMOSEXUALITY: A LIE?

Part III

by Marcel Lebrun

So what is the author of "In the Pink" really trying to do? Is he trying to "convert" us? No. Is he trying to advocate homosexuality as a practice that should be totally accepted by a rational modern society? Perhaps. There is an underlying theme in his articles that we are, and should be moving toward the acceptance of the homosexual community as an influential and vital part of our society.

He clearly states that one of his goals is this: "... I began writing this column... with the desire not only to present gay and lesbian issues, but more importantly, to present lesbian and gay prospective on social issues." Often it seems that he tries to show that he wants acceptance of the homosexual community to grow. Obviously, gay life would be much easier if society accepted it as being normal.

Paul, in his letter to the Romans, warned the people that the homosexual community would be advocating their practice. He said: "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

So what would happen if society did accept homosexuality? Would not the gay person feel more comfortable? He would have no reason to think that homosexuality is wrong. Although some might miss a "worthy" struggle; the tension present today would be gone. The choice would be made easier, almost invisible. The "lie" that Paul talked about would be more blinding than ever, and the truth of God would be unconsidered. In fact, anyone who accepts homosexuality on this basis, would be equally deceived by the lie. It so happens that the very nature of rebellion against God affects society as a whole.

Generally, I agree that society will eventually be moved into believing that homosexuality is acceptable, if not proper. Society has rejected any foundation for its moral standards, and is therefore easily swayed into accepting anything, particularly that which looks good on the surface. Lacking this basis or foundation, society had accepted this new ethic: the "If it does not harm anyone else, that it is o.k." ethic. Our society has no way of testing any new ethics, philosophies, or a new way of thinking. It is therefore open to being attacked by any idea, good or bad. If fact, society has difficulty to even define good and evil. In closing, I would like to echo the warning Paul gave to the Colossians:

"See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depend on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ."

The views found in SPECTRUM are not necessarily those held by the BRUNSWICKAN. Writers interested in writing for SPECTRUM should submit at least three articles of no more than 500 words each. The BRUNSWICKAN retains the right to publish material at its own discretion.

LEGALEASE THE OMBUDSMAN

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN?

The Ombudsman is someone who has been appointed to take responsibility for investigating the complaints of individual citizens against public authorities.

In New Brunswick the Ombudsman is appointed by the Legislative Assembly. If an individual has a complaint against a government department, organization, or official, he or she may make a complaint to the Ombudsman, who will then investigate it.

HOW IS A COMPLAINT MADE?

Complaints must be made in written form. For more information on the actual process, you must write, call, or visit the Office of the Ombudsman.

WHAT SORT OF INVESTIGATION DOES THE OMBUDSMAN MAKE?

The Ombudsman may be able to access information which was unavailable to you. In order to do this, he or she might have to make such a recommendation under the Right to Information Act.

The Ombudsman may summon people to appear before him or her in order to gain more information. He or she also has access to all records that are related to the complaint under investigation.

In conducting the investigation, the Ombudsman attempts to determine whether the actions of the government department or official have been unjust, oppressive, or in any way discriminatory. An attempt will also be made to determine whether a decision has been made due to a mistake of law or fact or both.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE INVESTIGATION?

When the investigation has been completed, the Ombudsman may make a recommendation to the Government or Legislative Assembly if it turns out that there was a valid complaint. If nothing comes of the investigation, the matter is dropped and the complainant has not lost anything as there is no charge for the investigation.

IS THERE AN OMBUDSMAN ON CAMPUS TO DEAL WITH STUDENT COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE ADMINISTRATION?

Many disputes between the administration or faculty, and the students are dealt with by the Dean of Students. Like an Ombudsman, the role of the Dean of Students is to act as a liaison between officials and the ordinary person.

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