

SPECTRUM

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Dear Adrian Park

I want to thank you for your column of last week, entitled "AIDS, innocence, guilt and the 'Wrath of God'." Your points are well taken, and well made. They emerge, it would seem, from having endured some self-righteous indignation from others. A certain pain, and a clear anger, can be detected from your writing, and understandably so.

Your two main points are particularly striking. First, you correctly point out that throughout its history Christianity has nurtured within its fold some who assume a great deal of moral self-righteousness. Many of these have ascended to positions of great authority. Claiming to know the mind of God, as well as those whom God prefers, they have unleashed their unyielding and uncompromising power against others deemed "unfit" for the Commonwealth of God. In an odd mix of political, social and ecclesiastical hegemony with the (perceived) will of God, lepers, prostitutes, mentally handicapped, homosexuals, Jews, etc., suffered untold horrors, physically, socially and emotionally. "Deviants" were held at bay, if not imprisoned, strangled or burned.

Was this action of God? Surely we would not say so today. Our present attitudes, contributions from the medical profession, and the entrenchment of individual human rights in law has greatly changed our thinking. Greater protection has been given to those who some may still today so label as "deviant".

Does God purposely inflict AIDS on homosexuals? Are they particularly an abomination in God's eyes? I doubt it. I also doubt that God operates that way. Further, homosexuals are no worse sinners than heterosexuals.

None of this means, however, that our actions, whatever they may be, do not have consequences. No action has a neutral result. Quite often our actions serve to better our human condition, individually or corporately. Sometimes they do not. Actions stemming from our ignorance, arrogance or greed do inflict pain and devastation, and no less on those least deserving.

Our sexual behavior is one example. Much of our sexual expression has positive outcomes, in the form of sharing love, strengthening marriage bonds, begetting children. Some of it has negative repercussions, in the form of violence, exploitation and disease.

In regard to the spread of AIDS, it now appears that homosexuals are becoming more cautious in

their sexual behavior than are heterosexuals. The catastrophic outbreak of AIDS worldwide also indicates that it is hardly a "gay disease". Further, many professionals - doctors, health care specialists, social workers, clergy - have made it quite clear how AIDS is spread, and how it can be prevented, even eliminated.

Your second point is even more germane. Compassion and concern ought to be the hallmark of Christians. Jesus Christ did not hesitate to reach out to the "deviants" of his time. The lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, even women, who were rejected by most of the religious elite, found a listening ear, an open heart and a healing hand in him.

The example has instilled the hearts of countless thousands, who in turn have spent their lives and endured untold suffering

themselves to visit the sick, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, welcome the stranger (Matt 25:35-37). The history of Christianity has also birthed and nourished vast numbers of these courageous people, whose efforts and devotion are not recorded in the history books. Not judgement, condemnation or rejection, but rather the face of God are seen by them in persons with disabilities, infirmities, or orientations other than their own.

That you have much higher regard for this expression of Christianity is not at all surprising. We all should. As we all should realize that our (in)actions frequently give hollow ring to our eloquent words.

The great commandment of God to love one another ought to keep us far too busy to render judgements on others. But alas,

On Being Female

As a child, there was one thing that I found incredibly difficult to deal with: the fact that I was female. You see, it didn't take me long to figure out that all the things that I enjoyed most were rather unconventional for my sex. I liked climbing challenging trees and playing war, I found dresses terribly impractical, and tea parties bored me. I envied the males who were encouraged to learn about cars and machinery, while I was sentenced to the sewing room. I was dumbfounded when the neighbourhood boys, who I had once been able to wrestle to the ground on a whim, developed intimidating muscles seemingly overnight. No longer was I welcome to the secret "fort", and my "blood brothers" confessed that they were being mercilessly tormented at the playground for hanging around with me so much. The older I became, the taller my confusion grew.

It really didn't make sense. Why couldn't I be who I wanted to be? Who the heck created all these stupid rules to follow and why the heck was everybody following them? I bluntly interrogated every adult that I knew, but, (and in retrospect not surprisingly), nobody was able to provide a satisfying answer. Finally, one day my oldest sister had had enough of my righteous railing, and decided to sit me down and set me straight. She calmly explained that I was female because of something called chromosomes and that it was about time that I started getting accustomed to the idea. She also pointed out that there was no point in praying for a sixty second sex change because it was unlikely that it was

going to happen without anyone noticing no matter how many rosaries I recited (now that was sobering).

My sister did offer me another perspective. She recommended that I begin spending my energies on enjoying the special qualities and gifts that females share. She pointed out that males were also restricted by social dogma. She agreed that many of the unwritten rules that I was denouncing were senseless and damaging, but she suggested that I try to challenge them as a female, as someone who was proud of their sex and who believed that they were worth fighting for. I didn't agree with everything she said that day and I still don't, but some of what she said really made sense. I began taking pride in the fact that I was

The Brunswickan requests that all Spectrum columnists make every effort to have their work submitted by Wednesday at noon. All columnists and potential columnists are also requested to submit 3 columns in advance so as to have back-up material for weeks in which they are too busy to submit.

Metanoia by John Valk

the dark side of our human nature often gains the upper hand. In the end though, it is not what we do or how we behave that makes us recipients of God's unconditional love. It is rather who we are.

Having said all this, however, I am also reminded of the Biblical story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11). Jesus challenged those who brought the women to him to stone her, "if they were without sin". They knew they weren't, and they left quite deflated. But the story doesn't end there. Although Jesus

also did not condemn the women, he did say to her "go and sin no more".

We are challenged to remove whatever is sinful or aberrant in us, both individually and communally. That challenge applies equally to homosexuals and heterosexuals. And, it applies to a vast array, if not all, of our thoughts, words and actions. Alas, we must determine what is sinful and aberrant in us. That is not necessarily so clear and obvious, especially among those who seek to be sincere.

The Wimmin's Room

among the lucky, the gifted, the special, the important, the talented, the wonderful: I was female.

Since then I have come a long way (baby). I still become very frustrated when I'm patronized, or objectified, or any of that rather long list of really insulting and stupid things. But I have become much more aware (and grateful) to the wonderful aspects of being female. I enjoy our point of view - I find it fresh and fascinating. I enjoy our friendships - they hold an intimacy and an endurance that

I treasure. I enjoy our perseverance - our ability to hold on to what we believe in and not to give in. And so this list goes on. I am sure that each female is happy to be so for personal and unique reasons (which, by the way, is another reason I enjoy being female). The one thing that I, and many, many others are working on is shattering as many of those earlier mentioned conventions/restrictions as we can, so that our daughters won't ever have to wish that they were male. Won't you join us?

*don't eat the
yellow snow*

