

SPECTRUM

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GAY FORUM

By Terry Richards

Role Models

Should homosexuals be teachers?

Two of my high school teachers were male homosexuals. One taught Latin and the other taught English. Both had a great effect on my life as they encouraged me to develop my writing talents. During my years in high school not one faint hint of improper conduct was made by either of those teachers. I was, however, seduced by a 30 year old female biology instructor...

(From the New York Times, November, 1977)

Last year in "The Brunswickan" I publicly announced that I was gay and that my academic career was aimed towards me becoming a high school teacher. What followed was a great amount of controversy as some believed that homosexuals would never

be suitable as teachers because we were seen as unfit role models. One's sexual preference was little to do with his/her ability in performing in a career. Just as there are gay doctors and lawyers we also have gay teachers who perform extraordinary careers.

There have always been homosexuals in the teaching profession. The fear today stems from the fact that people think gay teachers will influence students to become gay. Studies have shown that a person's sexual orientation is determined way before they reach elementary school.

I am also willing to wager that all of us at one time or another have been taught by a gay teacher or professor. Has this really made a difference in our lives? A teacher, no matter

if he/she is gay, teaches we don't go on recruiting drives to convert people to become like us. Another important point to make is that the overwhelming of molestation on children is carried out by heterosexual males. So, is this a valid reason for banning straight men from the teaching profession?

An interesting poll was taken in the January 2, 1989 edition of "Maclean's" magazine where 63% of Canadians stated that if they learned the teacher of their child was gay they would leave their child in that teacher's class; 21% would remove the child; and only 16% would try to remove the teacher. Currently in Canada and the United States many teachers' federation have affirmed the right of qualified

homosexual teachers to educate in schools at every level.

Also, as teachers who are gay become open about who they are (the way heterosexuals do) the attitudes of the students are bound to be influenced towards a positive attitude in response to gay life. Observation of gay teachers will no doubt in my mind, eradicate the irrational fear and hatred of homosexuals.

So, since we have come to the conclusion that homosexuals are teachers can they be parents? In all reality homosexuals are parents. According to "Newsweek" there is now an estimated 3 million to 5 million gay and lesbian parents who have had children in the context of a heterosexual relationship. These relationships existed because the gay person, in most cases, wanted to give the impression of heterosexuality. There is simply no evidence that show that a parent's homosexuality has had any kind of bearing on their capacity to be loving, caring, responsible, and dependable mothers and fathers.

As is the fear with gay teachers people believe gay

parents will adversely influence their child. Because of this, many gays and lesbians are denied the rights to raise their children or even visit them. However, there have been many medical experts who have testified on the part of gay parents. Dr. Judd Marmor, a former president of the American Psychiatric Association states "I know of no evidence that predominantly heterosexual parents are more loving, supportive or stable in their parental roles than homosexual men and women. What is even more interesting is that more gay couples are having children through adoption, artificial insemination, or arrangements between gay "undes". In San Francisco alone over the last 5 years 1000 children have been born to gay and lesbian couples.

Homosexuals can be role models. As long as values such as love not hate, are taught by parents and teachers (no matter what their sexual preference) children can be brought up to be intelligent and caring adults.

METANOIA

By John Valk (Campus Ministry)

Earthkeeping: The religious dimension

Judaeo-christianity and the environment

By now it is clear that we Western types have not been very environmentally friendly. We are a minority of the world's population. Yet through our consumptive lifestyle we are the biggest culprits in ozone and resource depletion, air, water and noise pollution, garbage disposal, and rain forest destruction. We are slowly killing the earth. Some perceived this as matricide, others as spitting in the face of God. Some still don't perceive at all.

A hard message to drive home is that all things are interconnected in life. Every action has a reaction. As such, convenience luxury, a booming economy comes with a price. Our high standard of living puts tremendous pressure of the environment.

We might, out of sympathy, wish for everyone in the world a similar standard of living. But that is actually a death wish. The environment cannot sustain such for everyone, and we would in all likelihood kill the earth and ourselves in turn.

We face, therefore, a dilemma.

We are, to our credit, trying to change our lifestyles. It is a slow process. With the help of new and improved methods of science and technology we are beginning to turn around, however small. But, we are still trying to have our cake and eat it too.

That, unfortunately, might still be the problem. Our value systems, our sense of what is meaningful and important, and our love-affair with power may still to do us in. What we need is a metanoia, a radical change or conversion. And, that is why earthkeeping has a religious dimension, something we too often neglect.

David Suzuki, perhaps more than anyone else, has challenged, prodded, even shocked us into taking the ecological crisis seriously. A household name, Suzuki has devoted his time to haranging those who mistreat the earth and put us all in peril. He too senses that the crisis is more than ecological; it is also a religious. I agree

with him.

A little harder to take, however, is that Suzuki and others have fingered Judaeo-Christianity as the environmental culprit. According to them, it is the attitudes of Judaeo-Christians, but especially Christians, that have led to the ecological mess we are in.

They single out an attitude frequently found in Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christianity: excessive individualism. Personal salvation and the saving of individual souls is high on the agenda. Little time or interest is bestowed, as a result, in matters related to the here and now. The salvation or preservation of our bodies -- our earthly habitat -- is accorded little value.

The 'other-worldly' attitude results also from the view that this physical earth is indeed to be "burned up." God thus really has only passing interest in human activity vis-a-vis terra firma.

Most damning, of course, is

Judaeo-Christianity's attitude regarding the command "to have dominion and subdue the earth" (Genesis 1:28). There exists a mentality that sees the earth as a "thing" to be exploited. Minerals, forests, lakes and land are perceived as commodities to be subdued and dominated for economic gain.

What is one to think? It is a fact that the West, assumed and even acknowledged by many to be Christian (or Judaeo-Christian), is also the most environmentally destructive. Of course, other world religions do not necessarily come off any better. But, the destruction resulting from their attitudes pales in light of that in the West.

In spite of such damaging evidence, I nonetheless disagree with those who place the blame on Judaeo-Christianity. Oh, they may be quite correct in pointing to the dismal track record of Judaeo-Christians. But, there is a failure to make one clear and important distinction: there is a world of difference between the actions

of Christendom and the message of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures. A careful look at the latter will indicate that the Scriptures are indeed very environmentally friendly. And, they were so long before it ever dawned on us to become such.

Why is this of consequence? Think about this. Where do we get the notion that we ought to be concerned with more than just ourselves? And, if you do have that more caring notion, within what bounds do we implement it? More on that next week.

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