

SPECTRUM

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The forgotten son METANOIA

By John Valk (Campus Ministry)

There have been in our human history a number of great religious teachers. These preeminent figures, both past and present, male and female have given to humankind unique insights into the spiritual realm. Furthermore, they have challenged us to think of the spiritual realm not as something apart from or in addition to our day-to-day activity, but as an integral aspect of our lives. In other words, our search for meaning and purpose in life is to be found in living our spirituality.

Few would deny that one of the religious teachers par excellence was Jesus Christ. Most in the Western world are not unfamiliar with this figure. His name is frequently mentioned, if not from the pulpit, meditation books, etc., then in casual or angered utterances from the unguarded and disrespectful.

There was something sufficiently unique about this person that created a 2000 year legacy. Today in the late 20th Century, no doubt, the institutions that attempt to further that legacy appear to be dwindling in social and spiritual influence. Nonetheless

a large majority of Canadians say they still "believe in" Jesus.

What was unique about this historical figure? Perhaps his constant going against the grain, his ignoring of accepted social conventions and his ability to focus on the heart of the issue made him stand out. Let me illustrate.

It might surprise us to realize that Jesus may have been one of the first feminists on record. He spoke to women, when it was not accepted practice for religious teachers (rabbis) to do so. He allowed women to be the first witnesses to his resurrection, at a time when women's testimony was deemed unreliable.

Jesus was not afraid to associate with society's undesirables. He mingled with prostitutes, social misfits, and lepers — the modern day equivalent of AIDS victims. He gave them of his time because he valued them as humans.

He surprised the intellectual elite with his depth of perception. He challenged the best and brightest minds of the day to seek wisdom, not self-aggrandizement. He con-

fronted lawyers who knew everything about the letter but little of the spirit of the law. He castigated religious experts who knew everything about keeping an ecclesiastical institution afloat but little of what it ought to be doing.

Jesus was no modern day Rambo type, meeting opposition with hostility, power and aggression. Instead, he did what today might be considered "wimpish"; he turned the other cheek. He said we needed to forgive those who cross us — not quite the "don't get mad, get even" message of today.

It was well known to Jesus that wealth and power would not quench the restless spirit. Neither would (material) poverty and weakness. He advocated instead spiritual poverty. What did he mean? Maybe this. We all seek to enrich our spirit. Hence, self-image, self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction have become part of our modern day spiritual journeys. Jesus said we needed to let these go. The "poor in spirit" are precisely those who realize they gain nothing unless they empty themselves of all pursuits of the

ego, of the self. Only they are spiritually blessed and fulfilled who realize that without God there is nothing. Augustine put it succinctly: "I will find no rest until I find my rest in Thee (God)."

That becomes particularly poignant in light of suffering. We can insulate ourselves from the world of pain, for a time. But tragic losses, personal rejections and painful circumstances can bring fear, frustration and anger. In time we can work through those but we need not do it alone; we need not be cosmic orphans.

Jesus also faced a rough journey, which ultimately led to his death. What had he done? He had simply encouraged us to love and forgive one another. He cautioned us against being judgmental. Instead we are to go easy on each other, all the while living morally and upright. He warned against being arrogantly puffed up with our own sense of pride an accomplishment. We should rather help each other especially those in need.

In his greatest moments of both joy and despair, Jesus maintained that only one thing was really of any consequence: belief

in God and living accordingly. Nothing else mattered.

His followers, when they finally recovered, came to see that he was more than just a perceptive teacher and man of superior conviction. They spent the rest of their days affirming his divine/human nature and the need to model his behavior.

In Canada there are 79% of us who apparently also affirm that. But, perhaps many of us have forgotten what that means. Would a metanoia (a change or conversion) help us through our rough times, as well as remove some of our rough edges?

GAY FORUM Homophobia

Homosexuals are halves of a male whole pursue males, and being slices, so to speak of the male, love men throughout their boyhood and take pleasure in physical contact with men. Such boys and lads are the best of the generation, because they are the most manly...

(From Plato, *The Symposium*)

In many ways homophobia is as serious as racism because a distinct group of individuals can have their rights taken away from them. Discrimination against homosexuals is akin to discrimination against blacks as people who are gay can lose their jobs, be evicted from their homes, and be rejected from family and friends. Where do we draw the line? Why are people so afraid of us?

Last March Martin Luther King III gave

a speech in Pough Keepsie, New York after which he said "Something must be wrong with homosexuals". Many gay leaders were opposed to his comments and he then apologized saying "His father's legacy was to rid the world of bigotry and discrimination." He also stated that "he had to examine his own attitudes towards homosexuals".

In earnest there is simply no way to describe the prejudice against homosexuals in North America. We are discriminated against income taxes, housing, employment, insurances, and inheritances, and gay-bashing in very much a growing problem in many cities, Fredericton included.

I have come to the conclusion that there are people who simply do not like us and yes they will go to any extreme to make our lives miserable. Heterosexuals have to realize that although they may not like our lifestyle, we are still human beings. When

Andy Rooney of CBS' "60 minutes" condemned us last February probably the biggest comment he made was that he wouldn't want to be locked in a room with a bunch of us. It is obvious that he doesn't like homosexuals, but did he ever stop to think that it is the act of homosexuality he hates and not so much the person? As "Newsweek" reported "Rooney's comments would be tolerable only if gays were having sex in the room". People fail to realize that a person's sexual preference is only a part of a person's personality (albeit a large part). So many other qualities make a person. Just because I have family and friends who smoke doesn't mean I hate or condone them just because I hate cigarettes.

I'm using the term "homophobia" mainly because it has come into common usage. I do so reluctantly because it signifies the phobic avoidances of homosexuals rather than the aggression that the anxiety evokes.

Most importantly the term is inaccurate because this hatred appears to be secondary in our society to the fear and hatred of what is perceived as being feminine in other men and in oneself, and not of homosexuality per se.

Most homosexuals are perceived as feminine by heterosexuals because we desire to have sex with and love other men, whether or not we are conventionally feminine or masculine in our behavior or appearance. The more feminine or different a gay man appears the more hostility he will evoke, unless he can be "campy" enough to make himself look straight. Studies have also shown that men tend to be more homophobic than women.

Homophobia is also more prevalent when men are selected to participate because of their masculinity. In these situations gay men must repress who they are to maintain

the public or private image of the group in order to continue belonging. Such organizations of this sort are the military, CIA and the FBI. Homophobia is basically found where a value is placed on an individual's image of "being a man," where its priced within the structure of the institution or as part of the public image of that institution. For some men groups like the Catholic Church have a paradoxical situation which may cause a high degree of anxiety and conflict about one's feminine qualities.

AIDS has also triggered a homophobic attack on gay men who have been vilified for causing and spreading the disease. A letter from the American Family Association soliciting signatures for a petition read: "if you want your family's health and security protected these AIDS carrying homosexuals must be quarantined immediately. These disease carrying deviants wander the streets possibly making you the next victim". Gay men do not cause AIDS, a virus does and it is when people practice unsafe sex and share needles that the virus is spread.

It may be true that some gay men did flaunt the right to their sexuality during the liberated '70's and early '80's, but to say that all homosexuals have been sexually promiscuous is nothing short of asinine stating that all gay men flaunt their sex lives is a pernicious stereotype directed at us.

Richard Isay, a psychiatrist and author of the 1989 book "Being Homosexual: Gay Men and Their Development" sums up what homophobia really is. He asserts that homophobia has little to do with the sex act itself. "This hatred of homosexuals appears to be secondary in our society to the fear and hatred of what is perceived as being feminine in other men and in oneself." It is only when people realize that gay people are not some kind of perverse creatures living in some part of the earth that homophobia will finally be eradicated.

By Terry Richards

Changing your name

Your name is important; it identifies who you are. There are, however, instances where people wish to change their given names. One such example is when a couple marry. It is traditional for the wife to assume the husband's surname.

It is legally possible to have your name changed. You must be over the age of 19 or have your parent's consent. If you are being married the age requirement does not apply. If you are old enough to get married, you are old enough to have your name changed.

It is not a requirement of marriage that a wife adopt her husband's last name. In New Brunswick, the Change of Name Act used after provides several options for choosing the surname that is to be used after marriage. These choices include the following:

A) you may retain the surname you have been using immediately prior to marriage. This may be your maiden name, or a surname from a previous marriage. There is no legal requirement that a wife and husband use the same last name. It is now widely accepted in our society that a woman may wish to retain her maiden name.

B) you may assume the name of your spouse. Usually this means that the bride will assume her husband's name. The reverse is also possible, but quite rare. There have been several cases in New Brunswick, however, where the groom has assumed the bride's family name.

C) you may create a combination surname from the names of both spouses. For example, you may have a hyphenated name such as Smith-Jones. A combination surname can only contain two parts and must have a hyphen.

D) you may wish to revert to your original surname.

Children born within a marriage may be given the mother's surname, the father's surname or a hyphenated surname composed of the names of both parents. There is no legal requirement that a child take the father's surname, although it is common to do so. If the parents are not married when the child is born, the father must give permission before the child may be given his name.

When a child is adopted, he or she will be given the surname of the adopting parents. The child's previous surname will be erased

by sealing the records containing the old name and replacing them with the records of adoption which contain the new name. This is done when the court issues the adopting order.

In addition to changing surnames, it is also possible to change first names. Requests to change first names are rarely refused, except when the change would cause confusion. For example, a request might be refused if you decided to take the name of a famous person.

To change your name, you must apply to the Registrar General of Vital Statistics. The application must include the following documentation:

- A) a certified copy of your birth certificate
- B) your marital status
- C) present and previous address
- D) occupation
- E) reason for applying for change of name
- F) particulars of:
 - 1) criminal record
 - 2) any continuing court action
 - 3) any registered financial commit-



ments
4) previous change of name application.

Minor changes, such as the spelling of your name may not require all documentation.

There is a fee for changing your name. Fees vary depending on the type of change. Check with the Change of Name Office for details.

To have your name changed, you may apply in writing to:

Registrar General of Vital Statistics
Change of Name Section
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB
E3B 5H1

You may apply in person to:

Room G-74
Change of Name Section
Centennial Building
640 King Street
Fredericton, NB
Telephone: 453-7411