

## To Believe or Not Believe

Chris Dill

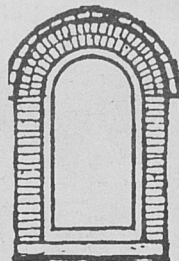
When I first began writing this article about the Community Church and its Burlington store, Strictly Vermont, I planned on writing an article filled with anger and indignation. My mind, filled with the quotes from their pamphlet, *Back to the Garden*, grew defensive and aggressive. Yet upon talking to some of the members of the Community during and after protests held outside their store, I have changed my direction of thought.

It seems that what the Community is at fault for is simply ignorance and narrowmindedness. They are ignorant for example in thinking that gay men, lesbians and bisexuals feel they are trapped in the body of the wrong sex. They are ignorant of the real love, emotional and physical, that can occur in a homosexual relationship. Yet even their ignorance of what it means to be gay can be dispelled by their willingness to listen and talk to gay individuals. What cannot be dispelled and keeps these individuals from recognizing the validity of a homosexual lifestyle is their literal interpretation of the Bible.

What can we say? At this point there is not much to say. Either you believe the Bible word for word, or you do not. For myself, I choose not to. For me the Bible is a collection of stories reflecting a predominantly straight and male dominated society in existence over two thousand years ago. For me, revelation is not an occurrence that took place some thousand years earlier, but a continual process of strengthening my awareness. Revelations don't occur only once; they happen throughout our lives.

The Community members at Strictly Vermont are not guilty of hatred, nor of wishing to spread violence (they guaranteed that they would mention their disapproval of any anti-gay violence in their next pamphlet). But they are guilty of closing their minds to diverse thoughts. They are guilty of following their own path and refusing to see any other path as valid.

I do not believe we should harbor any strong feelings of anger towards this group, nor should we interpret their actions as being hateful, for after all they honestly do see their actions as being motivated by love, and they believe homosexuality to be another form of suicide. However, I feel that you should not buy items from their store unless you are willing to help pay for their sexist and homophobic pamphlets. The inability to accept others for who they are is the greatest danger to life and to peace. Throughout history it has caused the greatest harm. To give money to Strictly Vermont is to give money to the intolerance that inhibits peaceful cohabitation. ▼



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