

## Judging

*“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.” – Jesus*

I recently spent extended time with several relatives. I listened to severe condemnations of a range of persons and person-types (homosexuals for instance). I’m part of an extended family that demonstrates extreme intolerance and judgmentalism towards certain others in their ideas and beliefs: religious beliefs for instance. I jokingly call this phenomenon “relativism”. It got me thinking of late...

It occurred to me that some of this severe judging originates from impotence: it seems equally experienced along the continuum of conservative and liberal. One is/feels so often helpless to change things or others. So one loses patience and rages – or at least expresses strong disapproval/judgment. The trick here surely is: one person’s whipping boy is another’s truth. A friend, Bruce Hiebert, wrote a paper entitled, “Why is Go(o)d Up? Investigation of the innate neuro-geometry of morality.”, and another applying these insights to the homosexuality issue: “Mennonite brains, morality & the Queer inclusion struggle”. Our morality, surprise (?) is function of brain activity that predisposes us greatly towards certain moral positions, regardless of facts, or (if one is religious) Scripture.

So back to “relativism”. Rage against others’ moral viewpoints may largely be misplaced, certainly ineffectual, if Hiebert’s research is right<sup>1</sup>.

Another observation is the repetitive nature of the “relativism” recently experienced. It reminded of the joke about the preacher’s sermon notes at various places: “*Weak point. Thump pulpit loudly!*” I have heard a lot of pulpit thumping from my relatives over the years. I conclude that the very repetition is an attempt often enough to convince themselves. This includes, at times, a seeming bizarre stringing together of various (unrelated – to me) issues, all similarly excoriated. Perhaps it is trade in sheer volume that makes this form of “relativism” convincing...

Jesus’ terse command is how this reflection began. Several translations include rightly a note of (forensic) condemnation. Another observation I make, more generally, is that indulgence in condemnation does not a happy camper make! It seems in fact direct inverse of the fruit of the Spirit which is: *love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Galatians 5:22). Jesus was onto something ubiquitous in the human condition when he said “*Judge not.*” We miss out, if we miss it.

Enough. True confession: I have indulged in “relativism” too, and must bring this reflection to a close before indulging again!

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<sup>1</sup> With Bruce’s permission, you may contact him directly to have sent copies of his papers: [brucehiebert@shaw.ca](mailto:brucehiebert@shaw.ca).