

# Homosexuality And The Adventist Church

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### Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

The last newsletter (No. 54) on the Vatican Declaration *Dominus Jesus* (September 5, 2000), generated considerable interest. Several editors requested permission to use it in their publications. By reiterating the traditional teaching that the Catholic church provides the sole sure path to salvation, the Declaration offended Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim leaders.

Last Sunday (October 1, 2000), following the Mass and the canonization ceremony of Chinese saints, the Pope sought to repair the damage done by the Declaration to relations with other religions. The Pope said that the document had been misinterpreted because the Catholic church recognizes that other religions have “precious elements of salvation.” The claim that “the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church,” represents for the Pope, “not human merit, but a sign of God’s fidelity.”

In his homily, the Pope attempted to make more acceptable the claim that the true Church of Christ “subsists” only in the Catholic Church by attributing the responsibility for such a choice to “God’s fidelity.” In my view, this explanation hardly repairs the damage done by the Declaration *Dominus Jesus*. On the contrary, it makes matters worse, because it gratuitously assumes that God chose the Catholic Church to serve as the only true Church of Christ on earth, with power to dispense salvation.

This interpretation of the Church of Christ as a hierarchical organization subsisting in the Catholic Church, is clearly negated by the witness of the New Testament, where the Church consists, not of a hierarchical organization, but of believers who have responded to the Gospel invitation. The very term “Church” derives from “Ekklesia,” which is the compound of two words, “Ek—out” and “Kaleo—called.” The term suggests that the church is made up of believers who have been called out from the world “to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called [them] . . . out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 1:9).

The fundamental problem with the Vatican Declaration and with the Pope’s latest clarification, is a blatant misinterpretation of Scripture to justify traditional Catholic teachings. This is evident even in the final exhortation of the Pope’s homily: “May Mary, to whom the Lord on the Cross entrusted us as our Mother, help us to grow together in faith in Christ.” Nowhere the NT suggests that Christ on the Cross entrusted His followers to the care of Mary—a godly woman who rests in the tomb awaiting the resurrection morning. The Gospel tells us that Jesus entrusted Mary to the care of John, the beloved disciple (John 19:27), and not the Church to the care of Mary.

The Vatican arrogance in claiming that “the one Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church,” should serve as a warning to all Christian churches, including our own SDA church. It is not uncommon for some Evangelical churches to claim to be the only true church with an exclusive monopoly on “truth.” This kind of triumphalistic and exclusivistic claims only serve to feed spiritual pride. Let us be humble and recognize that the Church of Christ extends beyond denominational barriers, because God works in a mysterious way through different people to accomplish His purpose on this earth.

## AUSTRALIAN LECTURE TOUR: MARCH 2001

During the past few months I have received numerous invitations to present my seminars in Australia. I have visited Australia five times before, and each time I have received a marvelous reception and response. Looking over my 2001 calendar, it would seem that March 2001 may be the best time for me to undertake this lecture tour. Having officially retired from 36 years of teaching, it is easier for me now to plan my itinerant ministry.

At present I have received invitations from churches in Auckland (New Zealand), Brisbane, and Melbourne. If there is an interest, I would like to speak also at a rally in Perth and Adelaide—two cities where I spoke many years ago. Perhaps, the recipients of this newsletters living in Perth and Adelaide, may wish to inform the local church leaders about this possibility. There will be no financial obligations as such. Only a freewill offering will be taken toward the expenses of the lecture tour. Feel free to contact me via email at sbacchiocchi@qtm.net or by phone at (616) 471-2915.

## SPECIAL OFFER ON *THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE*

During the past few weeks I have received several telephone calls and letters from pastors of different denominations, expressing appreciation for the enlightenment received from reading *The Sabbath Under Crossfire: A Biblical Analysis of Recent Sabbath/ Sunday Developments*. A minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church told me on the phone that the book “had made a convert” out of him. He ordered a complete set of my books. Another pastor of the Baptist church asked me to pray for him as he plans to share with his congregation his newly found Sabbath truth.

Of the four volumes on the Sabbath I have authored, I can truly say that *The Sabbath Under Crossfire* is proving to be the most effective in helping people to understand and accept the validity and value of the Sabbath for today. Apparently the reason is that the book provides a comprehensive examination and refutation of the major arguments used to negate the continuity, validity, and values of the Sabbath. Each chapter addresses a major argument commonly used against the Sabbath.

The first chapter on “Pope John Paul II and the Sabbath” provides a compelling analysis of the biblical, moral, historical, and legal arguments used by Pope John Paul in his Pastoral Letter *Dies Domini* (The Lord’s Day) to emphasize the “grave obligation” of Sunday observance and the legislation needed to facilitate compliance with such obligation. Excerpts of this chapter have been published in numerous magazines and newspapers.

For example, the *Washington Post* (January 23, 1999) published a forceful article entitled “**When is the Lord’s Day? Adventist Says Pope Unfairly Promotes Sunday Sabbath**” (page B11). The article has the picture of the Pope next to mine and appeals to my research to challenge the Pope’s attempt to make Sunday the Biblical Sabbath. I would be glad to mail a copy of the article to anyone interested.

To facilitate the circulation of *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*, I decided to offer this timely book until the end of this month (October 31, 2000) **for only \$25.00 for two copies**, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$20.00 per copy. **The special offer for a complete case of 32 copies is only \$190.00, postage paid, that is, \$5.90 per copy**, instead of the regular price of \$20.00 per copy. Thank you for informing your church about this special offer. Your church may wish to order a case of this timely book to donate copies to the local libraries and clergy. You will be pleasantly surprised to see the positive impact of the book on the thinking of the readers.

## GUEST CONTRIBUTOR TO THIS NEWSLETTER

Recently I thought about the possibility of inviting guests to contribute from time to time to this newsletter. This will alleviate my burden, especially since during the next few months I will be travelling extensively across North America and overseas. Preparing every two weeks a 20 pages Bible study which addresses contemporary issues from a Biblical perspective, requires more time and efforts than many realize. This means that if you have written an essay dealing with current issues (family, health, children education, worship, music, prophecy, drugs, doctrines, lifestyle, etc.) from a Biblical perspective, do not hesitate to submit it to me for evaluation. I am eager to share with our subscriber any study which can enrich our understanding and experience of Biblical truths.

Providentially this past week I received a timely essay dealing with the hot topic of homosexuality which is gaining acceptance in our Adventist church. The author of the essay is Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, Ph. D., a bright young man from Ghana, who recently earned his Ph. D. in systematic theology from Andrews University Theological Seminary. The essay is excerpted from Pipim's forthcoming book *MUST WE BE SILENT? ISSUES DIVIDING OUR CHURCH*. The book candidly examines the common arguments used to justify homosexuality, women's ordination, racism and racially separate conferences in North America, worship styles, etc.

Currently, Pipim is serving as the Director of Public Campus Ministries for the Michigan Conference. He has taught courses in theology and ethics on different campuses around the world. He is best known in the church for his book *RECEIVING THE WORD*.

What impressed me about Pipim's article is its comprehensive and compelling analysis of the major Biblical and non-biblical arguments commonly used to legitimize homosexual lifestyle. This study is urgently needed today when "Adventist" homosexuals are coming out of the closet and clamoring for acceptance. A recent issue of *SCANNER*, a newsletter published by the Glendale City SDA Church, reports that "going by conservative estimations, there are at least 5,000 gay Adventist in Southern California."

The presence of Adventist homosexuals is not limited to California. There exists a national organization known as "KINSHIP," which functions, to use its own words, as "a support group for gay and lesbian Seventh-day Adventists." Its aim to convert Adventists to its belief that "God can bless a committed homosexual relationship." They want the church to accept homosexuality as a natural gift from God. The influence of this ideology can be seen and felt in our college campuses where some students openly discuss their homosexual or lesbian relationships. Pipim's forthcoming book amply documents this development. May I urge you to take your time to read this timely study and save it for future reference.

## **HOMOSEXUALITY HAS COME TO CHURCH: Should this “Born A Gay” Lifestyle Be Baptized?**

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Next to the issue of ordaining women as elders and pastors, homosexuality is the “hottest potato” item on today’s theological menu. It is so “hot” that anyone attempting to touch it is bound to be “burned.” To challenge the morality of homosexuality in today’s climate of “enlightened” ethical sensitivity is considered “wrong-spirited and wrong.” Those who dare to do so are often perceived as “uninformed,” “un-compassionate,” and “judgmental” (as in the case of Christ’s disciples, who condemned a congenitally blind person as a sinner [John 9]).

Already, in certain quarters of our own church, individuals who forthrightly express their views on the twin ideological issues of women’s ordination and homosexuality are considered “divisive,” “controversial” and “extreme fundamentalists.” These uncomplimentary labels have exerted powerful psychological pressure on some church leaders and scholar either to endorse the unbiblical practices, or at a minimum, to remain silent. But should Bible-believing Adventists be intimidated by these labels? Should they remain silent or neutral when established biblical doctrines are being undermined? The courage of biblical convictions requires that we “prove all things and hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess 5:21; cf. 2 Tim 4:1-5).

Let it be stated at the outset, that all manner of sin, including homosexuality, can be forgiven, provided we admit our wrongdoing, repent, and turn away from it. But there can be no forgiveness when sinners are in denial—when they insist that their lustful desires and practices are not sinful, when they re-interpret Scripture to justify their sins, and when they defiantly maintain that they will not turn from their sinful ways. Such is the case today with a sin called homosexuality.

### **Homosexuality Has Come to Church**

Almost two dozen years ago, a former dean of the Theological Seminary at Andrews University perceptively noted: “The gay crisis has come to church. Some homosexuals are coming to church not only for forgiveness and mercy but to say to the church, as they have to the world, ‘Homosexuality is not sinful; it is natural to me. God made me this way. He accepts me and my homosexuality as good. Therefore the time has come for the church to accept me as I am and join me in saying that gayness is good.’”<sup>1</sup>

The above statement aptly captures the essence of the “born-a-gay gospel” and its varied “ministries” or “support groups.”<sup>2</sup> Though advocates of this gospel employ the term “ministry” to describe their “outreach” to gay and lesbians, such “ministries” for the most part do not teach homosexuals to repent of their particular sin. Instead, they suggest that the church itself must be “educated” to own up to its “immoral” past, when it failed to “understand” and recognize homosexuality as a morally legitimate lifestyle. Regrettably, an increasing number of Christians are uncritically embracing this new “gospel”!

Even in our own Seventh-day Adventist church the attitudes of some are changing on the issue of homosexuality. We may find evidence for this change in Adventist discussions on the Internet, in written declarations by some scholars, in discussions at annual professional meetings of the church’s Bible teachers, in some carefully written, yet troubling, articles that have been published in our church publications, and in the mumblings, if not deafening silence, from our pulpits. Discussions at the last two General Conference (GC) sessions in Indianapolis, IN (1990), and Utrecht, the Netherlands (1995), over the innocuous wording of certain portions of the *Church Manual* also reflected this shifting mood.

The same theological view was promoted in booth #1109 at the 2000 Toronto GC session. The booth was listed in the GC Exhibition book as “Someone to Talk To,” an organization claiming to be for “Adventist Families and Friends of Gays and Lesbians.” Its organizers placed a two page advertisement in the book in which they claim that the NAD Family Ministries Department has recognized their organization.<sup>3</sup>

The question before us is: Should we embrace the “born a gay” gospel as a morally legitimate part of the Christian lifestyle? This article is not about how we should relate to homosexuals who, like other sinners, come to church for God’s help to overcome their sin. Rather, we are concerned with the biblical soundness of the arguments undergirding the “born a gay” gospel.

### **The Changing Attitude Towards Homosexuality**

Homosexuality is not a new sexual behavior that has suddenly burst upon our modern culture. The practice has been present in almost every human society. Not unexpectedly, the Bible also deals with the subject in such texts as Genesis 19 (cf. Jude 7; 2 Pet 2:6-10); Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; and 1 Timothy 1:8-11. If there is anything new about the practice of homosexuality, it lies in the fact that contrary to the churches’ response in the past, many churches in our day are accepting homosexuality as a morally legitimate lifestyle.

Why are Christian churches favorable towards this practice today? Probably the major factor is the vigorous campaigns by various homosexual lobbying groups and by civil rights organizations to end not only discrimination against homosexuals generally, but also to decriminalize homosexual practices between consenting adults. Beyond this, they seek to liberalize public opinion, attitudes, laws, and policies on homosexuality.

For example, in 1973 the American Bar Association urged legislators to revoke laws which in the past had placed homosexuality in the category of *crime*. That same year, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental *illness*, and the American Psychological Association also decided that homosexuality was no longer an *abnormal* behavior. Once homosexuality was removed from the categories of crime, illness, and abnormal behavior, it did not take long before Christian churches began to hear calls from pro-gay advocates, urging the church to remove homosexuality from the category of *sin*.

In their effort to remove homosexuality from the category of sin, advocates of gay theology have employed two major methods to silence or challenge the Bible’s negative valuation of homosexuality. First, they argue that the Bible texts which have been understood historically as condemning homosexuality are either obscure or refer to the *abuse* of homosexuality. By this they mean certain kinds of homosexual practices, notably gang rape, idolatry, promiscuity, and prostitution, but not genuine homosexual orientation as we know it today.

Second, they put forward some Bible characters as examples of allegedly healthy and loving homosexual relationships. For example, the friendship love (*philia*) between biblical characters like Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1-4) and David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18-20) they interpret to mean sexual love (*eros*). Consequently, they present these Bible characters as Christian models of lesbian and gay relationships. Advocates often argue that Ruth and Naomi exchanged their lesbian marriage vows when Ruth said to Naomi: “Wherever you go, I will go with you, wherever you stay I will stay with you; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. . . . *Till death do us part*” (Ruth 1:16-17; my translation).

Regarding David and Jonathan, advocates of gay theology string together the following interesting argument to suggest that they were two “male lovers”: The Bible itself says Jonathan “loved” David (1 Sam 18:3); David declared publicly that Jonathan’s love was “wonderful”—passing even “the love of women” (2 Sam 1:23); Jonathan

allegedly “stripped” in David’s presence (1 Sam 18:4), the two “kissed” each other (1 Sam 20:41), subsequently “wept together” and (David) “exceeded” (1 Sam 20:41)—terms advocates take to mean a sexual encounter! (Readers may wish to read the Scriptural account of the relationship between David and Jonathan to ascertain for themselves what the Bible actually says.)

Other proponents of gay theology also consider Joseph and Potiphar (Gen 39), Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel (Dan 2, 4), as well as Jesus and John (“the disciple whom Jesus loved”—John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2) as genuine models of loving and committed homosexual relationship. Some even consider the virgin Mary as a lesbian, describing her as “one courageous woman who did not need a man to have a child.”

Even though we may easily dismiss the above examples of allegedly healthy gay and lesbian relationships in the Bible as frivolous inventions, not all the arguments of pro-gay theology can be so rebuffed so handily. Some of the arguments are quite sophisticated, often invoking scientific, philosophical, or logical arguments to show that (i) people are born homosexual (i.e., homosexuality is genetic or inborn); (ii) the sexual orientation of people “born gay” should be viewed as a natural or normal trait of their identity, like the color of the skin, eyes, or hair, or as a God-given gift; (iii) a person’s “God-given” homosexual orientation is morally neutral and unchangeable; and (iv) the Bible is silent, or does not condemn, homosexuality as such, but only its abuse.

Sincere, Bible-believing Christians are often caught off-guard by the subtle and plausible-sounding arguments in favor of homosexuality today. In an effort to clear away the smoke-screen which often clouds this issue, I will list some of the arguments in circulation, following each with a response which I hope will make clear the fundamental issue at stake for the Christian. I believe that the reader will find in Scripture a clear and consistent guide to God’s will in this highly-charged matter.

Because of space limitations I can only summarize and respond to some of the major arguments put forth by those attempting to reconcile the “born a gay” ideology with the Bible’s “born again” theology. Those seeking a fuller discussion and documentation on the subject should consult my forthcoming book, *Must We Be Silent?* (see note 3).

## **Non-Biblical Arguments for Homosexuality**

### **1. “To learn the truth about homosexuality, talk to real homosexuals”**

For many advocates of gay theology, it is not sufficient to trust the Bible writers as the dependable source of truth on this matter. They argue that in order to “learn the truth about homosexuality,” we must update our knowledge by actually listening to homosexuals themselves. This seems to be the point in some recent Adventist publications.

For example, one Adventist mother wrote that after she had spent “years of reading, observing, and eventually talking to people,” her homosexual son finally confirmed to her that indeed, “homosexuality is a condition, not a behavior. Whatever may cause a homosexual orientation, it is not something a person chooses.” Her son “told us that from his earliest memories he knew he was ‘different.’” She also reported learning that God may change a person’s sexual orientation only “on rare occasions,” and that one can be a homosexual and be “deeply spiritual.”<sup>4</sup>

A Princeton Theological Seminary professor of Old Testament Language and Literature, an ordained elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA), best articulated why we supposedly need to go to homosexuals themselves to learn the truth about homosexuality: “I used to believe that homosexual acts are always wrong. Listening to gay and lesbian students and friends, however, I have had to rethink my position and reread the scriptures. . . . I have no choice but to take the testimonies of gays and lesbians seriously. I do so with some comfort, however, for the scriptures themselves

give me the warrant to trust that human beings can know truths apart from divine revelation.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Response to Argument #1**

We must offer a sympathetic ear to the pains and genuine struggles of homosexuals. But Bible-believing Adventists need to ask whether the testimonies and claims of homosexuals are an adequate basis to learn the truth about homosexuality. Are homosexuals, by virtue of their experience, more qualified than the Bible writers to speak on homosexuality? The inspired writers of the Bible served as dependable spokespersons for the Creator of human sexuality. Is the attempt to justify homosexuality on the grounds of personal experience or empirical studies, rather than biblical revelation, a legitimate starting point for any investigation regarding sexual morality? Are the testimonies and claims of homosexuals necessarily true?

We are dealing with the fundamental question of how to know truth, a study philosophers call “epistemology.” I will restate my response: Does one really have to be a homosexual in order to fully understand the truth about homosexuality? Must we experience a particular kind of sinful tendency in order to understand that sinful reality? Assuming even that homosexual orientation is part of a person’s constitutional make up (just as a person’s color or gender is), can true knowledge about that condition can only be accurately obtained by persons with that kind of sexual identity? If so, does this mean, for example, that one has to be black, African, and a woman in order to fully understand and accurately address the pains of people in that category? By analogy, could Jesus, a single Jewish male, have understood the experience of, say, Maria, a single-parent Hispanic woman?

## **2. “People Are Born Homosexual”**

When advocates of pro-gay theology assert that people are born gay, they actually go beyond the generally accepted view that genetics and environmental factors *influence* a person’s behavior. They suggest that homosexuality is largely *caused by* a person’s genes. They cite “scientific studies” which allegedly offer conclusive proof that people are born gay.

### **Response to Argument #2**

First, although future studies may one day bear this out, the research findings often cited as evidence of the “born a gay” condition are, at best, inconclusive and are questionable at worst.<sup>6</sup> I am not suggesting that genetics has no influence toward a homosexual predisposition. I contend simply that the studies often cited for the claim that “people are born gay” are not as conclusive as proponents would have us believe.

Second, even if one could prove that homosexuality originates in the genes, the hormones, or the environment, would this make homosexuality morally legitimate? Does being “born” alcoholic, pedophile, or gay make alcoholism, pedophilia, or homosexuality right? It seems that “the studies” are put forth to imply that homosexuality is not a sin to be repented of, but a mark of one’s identity to be celebrated.

Third, the studies are flawed because they are based on the deterministic philosophy of behaviorism. In such a view, people have practically no choice in their moral actions and therefore may not be held morally accountable for their actions. Human behavior, according to behaviorism, is largely, if not exclusively, predetermined by one’s environment and one’s genetic code. But behaviorism or biological determinism is incompatible with the Bible’s view of man. Human beings

are created in the image of God and endowed with freedom of choice. We cannot correlate a belief in behaviorism's naturalistic philosophy with the biblical doctrine that we are accountable to God for our conduct (the doctrine of judgment). Furthermore, this "I did not choose, I cannot change" philosophy raises serious questions about Christ's power to help us "overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to sin" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671; cf. *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 175-176).

### 3. "Homosexual Orientation Is Natural or Normal"

Based on the debatable assumption that homosexuality is inborn, that is, of genetic origin, advocates argue that we should accept homosexuality as a natural or normal human condition.

#### ***Response to Argument #3***

This argument is also flawed. Leaving aside the important issues of the manner in which the scientific "research" is conducted and the kind of interpretation given to the research "findings,"<sup>7</sup> even proving that homosexual orientation is inborn will not make homosexuality normal or desirable. Many defects or handicaps today are inborn, but hardly anyone would call them normal for that reason alone. Why should homosexuality be considered natural or normal, even if it might be inborn?

When we say that something is natural, we refer to what happens repeatedly in the world of nature; we do not assign moral judgment to it. For example, spiders kill and eat other spiders, including their mates. "But as a moral category natural refers to something that is in accord with God's intention. Actions are good or bad: for example, people sometimes kill and eat other people. But the fact that cannibalism happens in the world--perhaps in satisfaction of deeply held religious beliefs or peculiar culinary tastes--does not make it *natural* in the sense that it conforms to God's will. In summary: that which is *natural* to human experience or human desire is not necessarily *natural* in God's moral design."<sup>8</sup>

### 4. "Homosexual Orientation Is God-given"

Many homosexuals claim that since childhood they have *always* had homosexual feelings. Hence, they say, their "natural" homosexual tendencies are from God.

#### ***Response to Argument #4***

Scripture nowhere suggests that if a thing seems natural it is inevitably God-given. On the contrary, the Bible teaches that many "natural" states and desires are not of God and are contrary to His will.

For example, "The natural man does not receive the things of God" (1 Cor 2:14). Before conversion, we "were by nature the children of wrath" (Eph 2:3). "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Rom 8:7). Scripture teaches that we are a fallen race, born in sin: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity" (Ps 51:5; cf. Jer 17:9; Rom 5:12). Sin has marred our physical and spiritual natures (1 Cor 15:1-54; John 3:5-6). We cannot therefore assume that because something is natural or inborn, it must be God-ordained.

### 5. "Homosexual Orientation Is Morally Neutral"

From the assumption that people are born gay, proponents argue that we should view homosexuality as a neutral expression of human sexuality. Like heterosexuality, homosexuality can be rightly used or abused. The abuse is wrong. But, they argue, homosexuality within a loving, consensual, and monogamous relationship is morally right.

## ***Response to Argument #5***

Just because homosexuality may be natural or inborn (an unproven assertion), is it morally neutral or legitimate? If we would demonstrate conclusively that adultery, incest, pedophilia, violence, and lying are inherited, would we be justified in considering them legitimate or neutral? Should the standard for morality be determined by what is inborn?

Contrary to this teaching of the “born a gay” gospel, the Bible teaches that homosexuality is immoral. Like other sexual deviations, any practice or lusts outside the context of a loving, consensual, monogamous, heterosexual marriage is an abomination (Lev 18), whether that practice or “orientation” is inborn or acquired. “And immoral behavior cannot be legitimized by a quick baptism in the gene pool.”<sup>9</sup>

Morality is not determined by what *is*, even if inborn. The Ten Commandments and God’s pre-fall order provide the moral guidelines for whether homosexuality is moral and immoral. The leap from *what is* (alleged “facts” of the homosexual condition) to *what ought to be* (the morality of homosexuality) is too large for us to make.

## **6. “Changing the Homosexual Orientation Is Difficult and Rare”**

Proponents claim that because homosexuality is an inbred condition, the homosexual has no (or very little) hope of ever changing. And since there is no hope or possibility for the homosexual to change, any changes must come from the institutions of society, including education, law, and religion.

### ***Response to Argument #6***

The oft-repeated claim that “changing one’s homosexual orientation is difficult and rare” almost suggests that it is impossible to change one’s sinful tendencies.<sup>10</sup> This may indeed be the case if the work of transformation is a human work. But if God performs this operation, as Scripture and Ellen G. White teach, then changing a person’s sinful orientation is not “difficult and rare.”

Even if we suppose that it is “difficult and rare” to change the homosexual condition and that no amount of prayer, counseling, and effort of any kind can make a homosexual easily change his orientation, do the “difficulty and rarity” of change make homosexuality less sinful? Definitely not. The statement of one former homosexual is worth quoting: “There is no contingency factor in any scriptural reference to any kind of sin, in either the Old or the New Testament. We never read anything like: ‘Thou shalt not do thus and so! (Unless, of course, you tried hard to change, went for prayer and counseling, and found you just couldn’t stop wanting to do thus and so. If that’s the case, then thus and so is no longer sin. It’s an inborn, immutable gift and you can [feel free to] indulge in it!’”<sup>11</sup>

Second, the “it’s difficult and rare to change” doctrine, if accepted, leads to a “once a sinner, always a sinner” doctrine. Since I will deal with this argument in the next section, here I will simply mention that this cardinal pillar in the “born a gay” doctrine challenges Christianity’s “born again” promise. It implies that even after conversion, an addict to drugs or alcohol or a habitual or compulsive liar or sexual pervert will always remain as they were. But thousands of miraculous conversions and transformed lives in our day negate this pro-gay argument that changing one’s sinful orientation is “difficult and rare.”

## **7. “Once A Homosexual, (Almost) Always A Homosexual”**

This is where the logic of biological predestination eventually leads: People are born gay; it's difficult and rare to change their condition; they will always remain gay. If anyone has to change, it must be the institutions of society and the church, not the homosexual. The laws of society and the Bible must change to accommodate the homosexual who, once gay, will always be gay.

### ***Response to Argument #7***

Perhaps the most important question the issue of homosexuality raises is whether Christ has power to help people overcome sin in their lives. This is of course an important question if homosexuality is sin. It forces us to answer the question of whether the transforming power of God is more effective than the impotent power of psychological therapy.<sup>12</sup> The testimony of Scripture exposes the lie that "once a homosexual, always a homosexual." Homosexuals can be, and have actually been, changed through the transforming power of Christ.

Writes the apostle Paul: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor *homosexual* offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. *And that is what some of you were [past tense]. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God*" (1 Cor 6:9-11 NIV, emphasis mine).

Similarly, Ellen G. White stated unequivocally that "a genuine conversion changes *hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong*" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1101). Indeed, "Those who put their trust in Christ are not to be enslaved by any *hereditary and cultivated habit or tendency*. Instead of being held in bondage to the lower nature, they are to rule every appetite and passion. God has not left us to battle with evil in our own finite strength. *Whatever may be our inherited or cultivated tendencies to wrong, we can overcome through the power that He is ready to impart*" (*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 175, 176). Again, "Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome *all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil*, and to impress His own character upon His church" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671).

In short, "We are a spectacle unto the world, to angels, and to men. Angels and men are taking note of us to see what manner of spirit we are of, to see whether we are meeting the approval of heaven. You may feel that you cannot meet the approval of heaven. You may say, 'I was born with a natural tendency toward this evil, and I cannot overcome.' *But every provision has been made by our heavenly Father whereby you may be able to overcome every unholy tendency.* You are to overcome even as Christ overcame in your behalf. . . . *Christ died on Calvary that man might have power to overcome his natural tendencies to sin.* But one says, 'Can I not have my own way, and act myself?'--No, you cannot have your way, and enter the kingdom of heaven. No 'my way' will be there. No human ways will find place in the kingdom of heaven. Our ways must be lost in God's ways" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Feb. 23, 1892, emphasis mine).

### **8. "There's A Difference Between *Being* A Homosexual And *Practicing* Homosexuality"**

Discussions on homosexuality often define it in two ways: (a) homosexual *orientation, inclination, or tendency*--an inborn, sexual attraction, predisposition, or desire toward a member of one's own sex, and (b) homosexual *behavior or practice*--an erotic activity with a member of one's own sex, an activity that may or may not be morally right.<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of this distinction, some writers argue that homosexual *orientation* or *condition* (also referred to as “ontological” or “constitutional” homosexuality or “inversion”) is a permanent and unchangeable part of the individual’s constitutional make up. It is like the color of a person’s skin--a non-behavioral trait, morally neutral, and a condition from which no one can change. On the other hand, they argue, we must judge homosexual *practice* or *activity* according to morally acceptable norms. “*Being* a homosexual is not sin,” they claim, but “homosexual sexual *activity* is sinful--it is apart from God’s will.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Response to Argument #8**

Many have embraced this argument uncritically. But the argument is meaningless, if not misleading and erroneous. Is homosexuality something that you *are* (like being black or elderly or handicapped or female), or is it something sinful you *do*, *cherish*, or *lust for* (like adultery, or incest, or lying)? This question goes to the heart of the pro-homosexual claim that “there is a difference between *being* a homosexual and *practicing* homosexuality.”

Let’s think a little more carefully: Can a person really be a homosexual without practicing homosexuality?

The fallacy of the above statement becomes obvious when we change the sin of homosexuality to that of adultery or polygamy. The statement will then read: “There is a difference between *being* an adulterer and *practicing* adultery!” “There’s a difference between *being* a polygamist and *practicing* polygamy!” These statements are meaningless: An adulterer is a person who practices adultery; a polygamist is one who practices polygamy; and a homosexual is one who practices homosexuality!

But more than this, the argument that a difference exists between *being* a homosexual and *practicing* homosexuality is also a subtle error. Though few realize it, this pro-gay argument elevates the sin of homosexuality to a morally-neutral mark of a person’s identity. Rather than distinguishing between *being* a homosexual and *practicing* homosexuality, it is more theologically sound to distinguish between the *temptation* to act upon one’s sinful homosexual tendency (being tempted itself is not wrong) and actually *choosing* to cherish and act upon that temptation (a wrongful choice). If allowed to stand unchallenged, the distinction made by pro-gay advocates between “being homosexual” and “practicing homosexuality,” would raise a number of theological and ethical questions.

First, the Bible writers do not adopt today’s distinction between homosexual *orientation* (condition) and homosexual *practice* (behavior)--between *inversion* (constitutional homosexuality) and *perversion* (the abuse of homosexuality). Biblically, such a dichotomy is a questionable rending of actions and attitudes. For how can the *practice* of homosexuality be wrong, and yet the cherished inclination toward or the longing for that action be neutral? Jesus dismissed this argument when he stated that the sin of adultery includes lusting in the heart after a woman (cf. Matt 5:27, 28; 1 Jn 3:15). Obviously, a person who has an *orientation* or strong desire towards a sinful act needs as much help to overcome that inclination as the individual who has already succumbed to or acted upon that sinful desire--whether it be lying, stealing, adultery or killing, etc.

Second, homosexuality is no more inborn than adultery, polygamy, bisexuality, or bestiality. They are all distortions of human inclinations and sexuality. If homosexual *orientation* excuses the sin of homosexual desires, does it not imply that other sinful orientations (such as compulsive lying, compulsive adultery, compulsive racism, compulsive stealing, compulsive disobedience to authority, etc.) should all be excused as irreversible sinful conditions? Wherein, then, lies the power of God’s transforming grace?

Third, we are all born morally corrupt, with weaknesses and tendencies to evil (Ps 51:5; 143:2; cf. 14:3; 1 Kgs 8:46; Prov 20:9; Rom 3:23; 7:14-24; 1 Jn 1:8). But does the universal human sinfulness mean that our sinful tendencies or propensities are morally neutral, and therefore, not something to be repented of or overcome by the power of Christ (Rom 7:25; 8:1; Eph 2:1-10; John 1:13; 3:5; 2 Cor 5:17)? Because we are all morally corrupt, provision has been offered for rebirth (“Ye must be born again” [John 3: 5]). This spiritual rebirth is an actual rebirth at the moral level. When homosexuals (or adulterers) are born again, they cease to be homosexuals (or adulterers; see 1 Cor 6:9-10). They may be *tempted* by those sins; but unless they cherish, yield, or act upon them, they cannot legitimately wear those sins as badges of identity (James 1:12-15)! “If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor 5:17).

## 9. “God Does Not Want Homosexuals to Give Up ‘Who They Are’”

Based on the assumption that people are born gay, and on the basis of texts like Psalm 139:13 (“For you created my inmost parts”) and Psalm 100:3 (“It is he that hath made us and not we ourselves”), pro-gay advocates maintain that peoples’ homosexual *orientation* or *condition* is part of their identity, defining who they are as sexual human beings. Consequently, it is argued: “Since God made me the way I am, and since I have had my orientation from my earliest memories, why shouldn’t I express my God-given sexuality? Why would God ask me to change something which He Himself has given me?”<sup>15</sup>

### **Response to Argument #9**

The fact is that God wants every one of us, including homosexuals, to give up something we have had all our lives--*our selves*, our sinful selves. The Bible condemns all forms of self-love or self-indulgence as expressions of idolatry and presents *self-denial* as the hallmark of Christian discipleship (Lk 14:26-27; cf. Rev 12:11). The only way really to find one’s self is by losing it (Mark 8:34-37). We cannot change ourselves; but Christ can change us if we truly want to be changed from our besetting sexual tendencies.

## Biblical Arguments for Homosexuality

### 10. “Scriptural references to homosexual acts do not suffice to determine God’s will for homosexuals today. They are ‘culturally conditioned’”

Probably the major reason why Christian churches accept homosexuality as an acceptable lifestyle is the sophisticated scriptural arguments many employ to justify the practice. Proponents either maintain that the Bible is “silent” on the issue or that scriptural passages which condemn homosexuality (Gen 19 [cf. Jude 7; 2 Pet 2:6-10]; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:24-27; 1 Cor 6:9-11; 1 Tim 1:8-11), if “rightly” understood, are either ambiguous, irrelevant to contemporary homosexual practice, or refer to pederasty or cultic prostitution.

In short, advocates of gay theology argue that because Bible passages on homosexuality only deal with specific historical situations, they are “culturally conditioned” and no longer relevant for Christian sexual ethics today.

### **Response to Argument #10**

Undergirding these new reformulations of biblical teaching on homosexuality is liberalism’s unscriptural view of biblical inspiration, interpretation, and authority. One writer correctly noted: “There are only two ways one can neutralize the biblical witness against homosexual behavior: by gross misinterpretation or by moving away from a high view of Scripture.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, many of the homosexuals’

biblical arguments are “strained, speculative and implausible, the product of wishful thinking and special pleading.”<sup>17</sup>

Jesus refuted the “culturally conditioned” argument when He stated unequivocally that God’s will for our moral life is the original ideal He instituted in the Garden of Eden. He asked the Pharisees, “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” (Mt 19: 4-5; cf. Mk 10:6-8). With the expression “at the beginning” or “from the beginning” (Mt 19:8; Mk 10:6), Christ teaches that *all cultures* must bow before the unchangeable standard He instituted at creation. That standard is that only “male and female” can legitimately “cleave” and become “one flesh.” Indeed, if Christ intended a homosexual relationship He would have created “Adam and Steve, not Adam and Eve.”

### **11. “Jesus said nothing about homosexuality in any of the Gospels”**

The argument is that, as followers of Christ, Christians should base their beliefs on the teachings of Christ. If Jesus Christ, the founder of biblical Christianity, was silent on the issue of homosexuality, why should we go beyond our Master by condemning the practice?

#### ***Response to Argument #11***

The lack of record in the Gospels of a statement from Christ on homosexuality does not mean that He never addressed it during His earthly ministry. According to John, if the Gospel writers had attempted to record all the works of Christ, the world could not contain all the books (John 21:25).

Moreover, the recorded teachings of Christ in the Gospels are not the Christian’s only source of authority. “All Scripture”—from Genesis to Revelation—constitutes the normative authority. The fact that one section of the Bible says nothing explicitly on a subject does not mean the other sections are silent.

Furthermore, it is incorrect to say that Jesus is silent on homosexuality. As we pointed out earlier, Christ’s statement in Matthew 19:3-8 and Mark 10:2-9 (“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”) reveals that God’s intention at Creation regarding human sexuality—namely, a monogamous, heterosexual relationship—is the only context for the expression of human sexuality.

### **12. “The Bible writers did not know about homosexuality as we know it today”**

Some argue that the kind of homosexuality the Bible writers condemned was that which was connected with rape, prostitution, or idolatry. They claim that even if the Bible writers did condemn homosexuality as we know it today (i.e., the so-called loving, committed, and faithful homosexual relationships), this is not the first time Bible writers have been wrong. They were wrong on many things, including the practice of slavery, polygamy, and the subjugation of women. These practices were later allegedly corrected by the “Spirit’s leading.” If the Bible writers were wrong on these issues, they argue, why can’t they be wrong on homosexuality? And if under the Spirit’s leading the church came to embrace slave emancipation, monogamy, and women’s equal rights, why should not the church, led by the same Spirit, accept homosexuality?

#### ***Response to Argument #12***

First, if we believe that the Bible is God’s inspired Word and not simply the personal opinions of ancient writers, and if we believe that the Bible is the

all-sufficient guide in doctrine and practice for all people living at all times (2 Tim 3:16-17; cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21), then “it is unthinkable that God—who is no respecter of persons—would be so careless as to offer no guidance in His revealed Word to the thousands of homosexuals He knew would exist throughout time, if indeed their relationships were legitimate in His sight.”<sup>18</sup>

Second, it is without foundation to argue that the Bible writers (Moses and Paul) were ignorant of today’s more “enlightened” scientific and theological view of homosexuality. These men were erudite in their intellectual training and discerning in their calling as God’s prophets. The reason why they never made the fine distinctions cited by today’s pro-homosexual advocates is because there is no validity to recent distinctions between the homosexual act and the condition, the latter being something about which homosexuals allegedly have no choice. The Bible writers condemned homosexuality of itself. They also offered God’s miraculous transformation as the cure for this sin (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Third, the suggestion that the Bible writers were wrong on a number of issues arises from contemporary higher criticism (the so-called historical-critical method). In an earlier work I have challenged this discredited method of liberal interpretation as incompatible with the tenets of biblical Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, the claim that the Bible writers accommodated or tolerated (some say encouraged) slavery, polygamy, and the subjugation of women—practices later allegedly corrected by the “Spirit’s leading”—is a scholarly *myth* that responsible Bible scholars have invalidated.<sup>20</sup> The Bible writers never once *commended* the practices of slavery, polygamy, and the subjugation of women. But they did repeatedly condemn the practice of homosexuality (see, for example, Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26ff. 1 Cor 6; 1 Tim 1:8ff.).

### **13. “Sodom was destroyed because of pride, inhospitality, and/or gang rape, not because of homosexuality”**

When the men of Sodom demanded of Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them” (Gen 19:5), pro-gay advocates argue that the men of Sodom were only violating the ancient rules of hospitality. Some assert that the Hebrew word *yadah*, which is translated “have sex with” (or “know” in KJV) appears 943 times in the Old Testament, and carries sexual meaning only about 10 times. They thus argue that the men of Sodom had no sexual intentions towards Lot’s visitors; they only wanted to “get acquainted” with them or interrogate them, fearing that they were foreign spies being harbored by Lot, himself a foreigner. Furthermore, even if they had sexual intentions, the condemnation of their action would be the condemnation of homosexual gang rape, not a consensual homosexuality as such.

#### ***Response to Argument #13***

Indeed, Sodom was destroyed because of pride and inhospitality (cf. Ezek 16:49-50; Jer 23:14; Lk 17:28-29). But it is a false distinction to separate inhospitality from sexual sin. What the men of Sodom sought to do was another form of inhospitality. Also, inhospitality and pride were not the only reasons for Sodom’s destruction. The city was punished also because of its “abominations” (Ezek 16:50), a veiled reference to its sexual deviations. The Bible describes various things as “abomination,” a word of strong disapproval, meaning literally something detestable and hated by God. But since the word is used in the so-called “inhospitality passages” of Ezekiel 16 to describe sexual sin (v. 22, 58), and since the word refers to same-sex acts in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, the “abominations” of Sodom are not exclusive of sexual deviations.

Two New Testament passages make this point explicitly. The apostle Peter indicates that, among other things, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of their “filthy conversation,” “unlawful deeds,” and their “walk after the *lust of the flesh*” (2 Pet 2:6-10), a reference that includes adultery, fornication, and other sexual perversions (cf. Gal 5:19-21). Jude specifically linked the destruction of these wicked cities to their sexual deviations: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to *fornication, and going after strange flesh* are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). The “*fornication and going after strange flesh*” are obvious references to sexual perversions (so NIV, RSV, NRSV, Phillips, TEV).

Pro-gay advocates incorrectly assert that the Hebrew word *yadah* as used in Genesis 19 means “to get acquainted with,” not “to have sex with.” But Lot’s reply to the men of Sodom shows that he understood their demand in sexual terms: “No, my friends. Don’t do this *wicked thing*” (Gen 19:7). In fact, in the very next verse the word *yadah* is translated “slept with.” Lot, acting out of sheer desperation and hopelessness proposed: “Look, I have two daughters who have never *slept with (yadah)* a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them” (v. 8). Lot definitely had no reason to think that the men of Sodom merely wanted to question or get acquainted with his daughters! One Bible commentary puts it neatly: “It would be grotesquely inconsequent that Lot should reply to a demand for credentials by an offer of daughters.”<sup>21</sup> The fact that Lot refers to his daughters’ virgin status also indicates he understood the *sexual* content of the request. Clearly, then, *yadah* in this passage refers to sexual intercourse.

This much can be said: The men of Sodom were not interested in Lot’s desperate offer of his virgin daughters. They were proposing a homosexual rape. But for such rape to have involved “all the men of the city, both young and old” (Gen 19:4), homosexual activity must have been commonly practiced--one reason why Jude records that their “*fornication, and going after strange flesh* are set forth [in Scripture] for an example [and warning unto us]” (Jude 7). As we will see, other Bible passages condemn all homosexual activity, not just homosexual rape.

#### **14. “The Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 passages, condemning homosexual activity as sinful, do not condemn homosexuality as we know it today”**

In these passages, God forbids a man to “lie with” another man “as with a woman.” Doing so is an “abomination.” Advocates of gay theology, however, argue that the practices condemned as “abomination” (Heb. *to`evah*) in these passages of Leviticus have to do with the kind of homosexuality associated with pagan religious practices. In the view of pro-gay writers, God was not prohibiting the kind of homosexuality practiced today by Christians, but only the kind connected with idolatry. Even if the passages condemn homosexuality in general, they argue, these passages in Leviticus are part of the ceremonial holiness code that has no permanent binding obligation on Christians.

#### ***Response to Argument #14***

First, if these passages condemn homosexuality only because of its association with idolatry, then it would logically follow that other practices mentioned in these passages--incest, adultery, polygamy, bestiality, and child sacrifice--are also condemned as sinful only because of their association with idolatry. Conversely, if incest, adultery, polygamy, bestiality, etc., are morally objectionable regardless of their connection with pagan practices, then homosexuality is also morally wrong, regardless of the context in which it is practiced.

Second, in context, both Leviticus 18 and 20 deal primarily with morality, not idolatrous worship. When God wants specifically to mention the practices of cultic or idolatrous prostitutes, He does so, as in Deuteronomy 23:17: “No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute.” The lack of such mention in Leviticus

18:22 and 20:13 indicates that God is dealing with homosexuality per se, not with any alleged specific form of Canaanite religious practice.

As for the contention that Scripture always connects the word “abomination” (Heb. *to`evah*) with idolatory or pagan ceremonies, one biblical example will discredit the claim. Proverbs 6:16-19 describes God as hating such “abominations” as a proud look, a lying tongue, murder, etc. Are we to believe that pride, lying, and murder are morally acceptable as long as they are not carried out in idolatrous pagan contexts? Certainly not.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 condemn homosexuality, alongside incest, adultery, polygamy, and bestiality, in the strongest terms. These moral concerns are still relevant today. Also, since the New Testament again denounces these sexual deviations, we may conclude that the moral content of these Leviticus passages is permanently normative, not part of the ceremonial holiness code’s temporary provisions.<sup>22</sup>

**15. “In Romans 1:26-27 Paul does not condemn individuals who are homosexuals by nature; rather, he refers to idolatrous heterosexuals who have ‘changed their nature’ by committing homosexual acts”**

According to this argument, the real sin condemned by Paul is two-fold: (I) the changing of what is natural to a person into what is unnatural, and (ii) homosexuality committed by people who worship images, not God.

***Response to Argument #15***

Advocates of pro-gay theology often argue that if a person is homosexual, he or she can never become truly heterosexual. And yet they often quote the Romans 1 passage as an example of truly *heterosexual* people committing a sin by becoming truly *homosexual*. We may therefore ask: If a person who is a heterosexual can change and become a homosexual, why cannot a person who is a homosexual be changed and become a heterosexual? It appears, however, that advocates of the pro-gay view point do not see the inconsistency of their position.

For a number of reasons, it seems inconceivable that Paul could be describing predominantly heterosexual people indulging in homosexual acts. First, he describes the men and women committing these homosexual acts as “burning in lust” for each other. Are we to understand this as heterosexuals who are simply experimenting with an alternate lifestyle?

Also, if verses 26 and 27 only condemn homosexual actions by people to whom they did not come naturally (i.e., heterosexuals who are practicing homosexual acts), but don’t apply to individuals to whom those same actions allegedly *do* come naturally (“true homosexuals”), then consistency and intellectual integrity demand that the sinful practices mentioned in verses 29 and 30--fornication, backbiting, deceit, etc.--are permissible as long as the people who commit them are people to whom they come naturally.

Is Paul’s use of “natural” purely subjective (what is “natural for me” in my orientation) or is it objective (what is “natural for everyone” regardless of orientation)? The context of Romans 1 suggests that Paul is describing homosexual behavior and other sinful practices as objectively unnatural. They are part of the practices that result when men “exchange the truth about God for a lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator.” “He was talking about an objective condition of depravity experienced by people who rejected God’s will.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, it is the very nature of the sexual conduct itself that Paul considers unnatural. Homosexuality is unnatural to the man as a male (Greek

*arsen*) and to the woman as a female (Greek *gyne*), not because of what may or may not be natural to their personality, but because of what is unnatural according to God's design when he created male and female.

Finally, if we are to accept pro-gay arguments that Romans 1 condemns only homosexuality committed by people who worship idols, then consistency and honesty demand that we also argue that the other sins listed in that chapter—fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, pride, etc. (vv. 28-32)—are sinful only because they are committed by idol worshipers. I don't believe that even the most strident advocates of homosexuality will embrace this logic. The point is thus obvious: Homosexuality is unnatural, whether it is committed by idolaters or those who worship the true God.

**16. "Paul's 'arsenokoitai' and 'malakoi' statements in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10, denouncing the 'effeminate and them that defile themselves with mankind,' are actually a condemnation of an 'offensive kind of homosexuality,' not the 'offense of homosexuality'"**

In both passages, Paul lists those who engage in homosexual behavior among such lawless people as fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, thieves, drunkards, kidnapers, etc. According to pro-gay advocates, the Greek terms *arsenokoitai* (translated in 1 Cor 6 and 1 Tim 1 as "them that defile themselves with mankind") and *malakoi* (translated "effeminate" or "soft" in 1 Cor 6), which the apostle uses to denounce homosexual activity, refer to homosexual *abuse*, not its right use. Thus, these passages do not condemn today's "loving and committed" homosexual relationships, but rather offensive kinds of homosexual activity, such as homosexual prostitution.

***Response to Argument #16***

For good reason the terms *arsenokoitai* and *malakoi* have been understood traditionally as a reference to the active and passive partners in a homosexual relationship. The first term (*arsenokoitai*) literally means "male bedders" (reference to a man who "beds" another) and the second term (*malakoi*) refers to "soft" or "effeminate" men, specifically males who play female sexual roles with the "male bedder." There is no hint in these words that Paul was condemning only a certain kind of homosexual abuse, as in prostitution, rape, or pagan ceremonies. He condemns homosexuality in itself as sin.

Further, note that *arsenokoitai* is derived from two words--*arsen* (referring to man as male) and *koite* (a term that appears only twice in the New Testament, and literally means "bed" or "couch." In Romans 13:13, it appears in "Let us walk honestly. . . not in chambering [*koite*]"); and in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honorable . . . and the bed [*koite*] undefiled."). The combination of the two terms *arsen* (male) and *koite* (bed) does not even suggest prostitution, rape or idolatry--only sexual contact between two men. In other words, homosexuality is wrong, regardless of the reason why it is practiced.

Note also that when Paul used the term *arsenokoitai* to condemn the sinful practice of homosexuality, he apparently derived it directly from the Greek translation of two verses in Leviticus 18, which reads in part: ". . . *kai meta arsenos ou koimethese koiten gynaikos*" ("and you shall not sleep in bed with a man as with a woman"; Lev 18:22); ". . . *kai hos an koimethe meta arsenos koiten gynaikos*" ("and whoever may lie in bed with a man as with a woman"; Lev 20:13).

Therefore, Paul's condemnation of homosexuality in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:9-10 presupposes Leviticus's condemnation of homosexual acts. Is it any wonder that Paul lists homosexuality among "lawless" deeds that would bar a person from the kingdom of God? Homosexuality in any form is sinful. To attempt to sanitize a sinful practice by describing it is "loving and committed" and to

attempt to silence the Bible's categorical condemnation of the practice is an irresponsible exercise in biblical gamesmanship.

In summary, the Bible is not morally neutral on homosexuality. Paul's statements in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, and 1 Timothy 1, along with the Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 passages, clearly show that homosexuality in all of its various forms is a sinful practice. Homosexual behavior, like heterosexual fornication, is sin, whether it results from one's orientation or from conscious choice. In other words, the Bible condemns all homosexual lust and behavior, including today's so-called loving and consensual homosexual relationships.

## Conclusion

What then should we say in response to homosexuals who are coming to church “not only for forgiveness and mercy but to say to the church, as they have to the world, ‘Homosexuality is not sinful; it is natural to me. God made me this way. He accepts me and my homosexuality as good. Therefore the time has come for the church to accept me as I am and join me in saying that gayness is good’”? Should the “born a gay” lifestyle be baptized?

In the light of our discussion in the preceding pages, we cannot but borrow the following words to respond to attempts at domesticating homosexuality and lesbianism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church:

“The church cannot condone homosexual activity without betraying its biblical, historical, and spiritual heritage. Its conscious acceptance of the authority and inspiration of Scripture would need to undergo such a radical, liberalizing change that the fundamental teachings of the church would be left without foundation.

“The consequences of such change with its ramifications for theological, ethical, and moral teaching might be labeled by some as progressive, calculated to enlighten the church and produce a more compassionate laity accommodated to the modern society in which it lives. But in reality such a move would be a giant step toward repaganization of the church. The resulting religion would not be a Bible religion or that of the prophets, the Lord, or the apostles, not Christianity except in name.”<sup>24</sup>

In today’s climate of “enlightened” ethical sensitivity, the above words and the theological position adopted in this article may seem “judgmental” or “uncompassionate” to some. If so, we must make it absolutely clear that God’s grace covers every kind of sin for any believer in Jesus who contritely turns toward God and makes a decisive commitment to turn away from sin. “God can forgive homosexual sin as well as heterosexual sin, sin which is socially acceptable as sin and sin which is not. But the first step in receiving forgiveness is to recognize our wrongdoing as sin.”<sup>25</sup> This starting point should be the non-negotiable theological foundation for any “ministry” or Christian “support group” that seeks to reach out redemptively to gays and lesbians.

## Endnotes

1. Raoul Dederen, "Homosexuality: A Biblical Perspective," *Ministry* (September 1988): 14.
2. In this article, the term "homosexual" or "gay" will be applied to any person (male or female) who, for whatever reasons (genetic, hormonal, environmental, situational, etc.), has an erotic attraction to, or sexual preference or desire for, members of the same sex; "lesbianism" refers to a female homosexual. While a "bisexual" is one who has an erotic attraction to members of both sexes, a "heterosexual" is a person who has an erotic attraction to members of the opposite sex. Gay theology or the "born a gay" gospel refers to the attempt to make homosexuality compatible with biblical Christianity.
3. Space limitations will not permit me to document here Adventism's changing attitude to homosexuality. I have, however, done so in my forthcoming book, *Must We Be Silent?* Among other things, this eye-opening work explains the factors leading to the favorable attitude within our ranks to homosexuality, women's ordination, racially separate conferences in North America, and liberal methodology. The book also offers a probing critique of the major arguments often advanced in support of these secular ideologies. This article is a summary and adaptation of my previous work titled "Born A Gay and Born Again: Adventism's Changing Attitude on Homosexuality" (1999), to be published in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*.
4. Kate McLaughlin, "Are Homosexuals God's Children?" *Adventist Review*, April 3, 1997, pp. 26-29. Cf. Suzanne Ryan, "When Love Wasn't Enough," *Insight*, December 5, 1992, pp. 2-3; Christopher Blake, "Redeeming Our Sad Gay Situation: A Christian Response to the Question of Homosexuality," *Insight*, December 5, 1992, pp. 4-5, 6.
5. Choon-Leong Seouw, "A Heterotexual Perspective," in *Homosexuality and Christian Community*, ed. Choon-Leong Seouw (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 25.
6. The studies often cited as evidence that homosexuality is inborn include: (1) the 1991 study of neuroscientist Dr. Simon LeVay (whose gay lover's death sparked his research on the brain structures of 41 cadavers); (2) the 1991 research by Northwestern University psychologist Michael Bailey (a gay rights advocate) and Boston University School of Medicine psychiatrist Richard Pillard (who is openly homosexual) on homosexual twins; and (3) the 1993 study by Dr. Dean Hamer of the National Cancer Institute on the genetic markers on 40 non-identical gay brothers. But these oft-quoted "research findings" have been shown to be misleading and exaggerated (at best inconclusive). For a succinct review and evaluation of the findings of the above cited researchers and supporting references, see Thomas E. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow: Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 137-142; Joe Dallas, *A Strong Delusion: Confronting the "Gay Christian" Movement* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1996), 107-131.
7. For more on this, see Joe Dallas, "Born Gay?" *Christianity Today*, June 22, 1992, pp. 20-23.
8. Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow?* 133.
9. Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*, p. 117.
10. This view is articulated in the December 5, 1992, issue of *Insight*, a publication for Seventh-day Adventist teenagers. This particular issue is devoted entirely to the subject of homosexuality. While the then editor of the magazine maintains that "there is no scriptural support for practicing homosexuality," he nevertheless endorses the pro-gay theology when he asserts that: "There's a difference between *being* a

homosexual and *practicing* homosexuality”; “Nobody *chooses* to be homosexual”; “Changing one’s homosexual orientation is difficult and rare”; “Homosexuals can be genuine, model Christians”; and “Being a homosexual is not a sin.” See Christopher Blake, “Redeeming Our Sad Gay Situation: A Christian Response to the Question of Homosexuality,” *Insight*, December 5, 1992, pp. 4-16.

11. Dallas, *A Strong Delusion*, 121.
12. See Andrews University psychology professor John Berez’s, “How I Treat Gay and Lesbian Persons,” *Student Movement*, November 11, 1992, p. 7, where he asserts that seeking help in the complex area of homosexuality from “untrained nonprofessionals,” such as a local pastor, “is a bit like asking your mailman to remove your gall bladder. If you’re seeking sexual re-orientation therapy, a competent professional trained in sex therapy is your best hope.”
13. See, for example, D. S. Bailey, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London/New York: Longmans, Green, 1955), xi.
14. Blake, “Redeeming Our Sad Gay Situation,” p. 11, emphasis mine. While condemning homosexuality as a sin, B.B. Beach and John Graz also write that “there is a difference between ‘being gay’ and ‘practicing a homosexual lifestyle.’” See B. B. Beach and John Graz, *101 Questions Adventists Ask* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2000), p. 55.
15. Thus, the Andrews University student newspaper carried an article by David Rodgers (pseudonym), a denominationally employed Andrews University campus outreach coordinator for the gay group, Kinship. Rodgers states that his homosexuality “certainly wasn’t a choice. . . . God made me this way and it’s not something I should change. Or can change” (Yoonah Kim, “The Love that Dares Not Speak Its Name,” *Student Movement*, November 4, 1992, p. 9). The same article refers to “Ann,” a 28-year old lesbian who seeks to transfer her church membership to the Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University. Ann speaks about her committed homosexual relationship in which God plays an important role: “I am a lesbian because God knows that that’s the best thing for me. My homosexuality has actually brought me a lot closer to God than if I was a heterosexual” (ibid).
16. Stanton L. Jones, “The Loving Opposition,” *Christianity Today*, July 19, 1993, p. 13.
17. Richard Lovelace, *The Church and Homosexuality*, 113.
18. Dallas, *Desires in Conflict*, 276.
19. See my *Receiving the Word* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Berean Books, 1996), pp. 241-249, esp. pp. 279-321. Cf. my unpublished article, “A Bug in Adventist Hermeneutic,” 1999, a summary version of which is to be published in a future issue of *Ministry* under the title, “Questions in the Quest for a Unifying Hermeneutic.”
20. Readers will benefit from the following works which challenge the above “accommodation” hypotheses: Ronald A. G. du Preez, *Polygamy in the Bible* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1993); Theodore D. Weld, *The Bible Against Slavery: Or, An Inquiry into the Genius of the Mosaic System, and the Teachings of the Old Testament on the Subject of Human Rights* (Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1864). These two works offer compelling biblical evidence showing that God at no time tolerated polygamy and slavery as morally legitimate practices for His people. On the issue of the subjugation of women or “patriarchy,” George Knight, *Role Relationships of Men and Women: New Testament Teaching* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1985), and Guenther Haas, “Patriarchy as An Evil that God Tolerated: Analysis and Implications for the Authority of Scripture,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, September 1995, pp. 321-326, have

challenged the notion that male headship (in the home and church) is an evil practice that God tolerated.

21. Derek Kidner, "Additional Note on the Sin of Sodom," in *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1967), 136-137.
22. For an argument supporting the permanently binding nature of these passages, see P. Michael Ukleja, "Homosexuality and the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140/3 (July-September 1983): 259-266, especially 264ff. on "The Relevance of the Law." See also du Preez, *Polygamy in the Bible*, pp. 70-81.
23. Carl Bridges, Jr. "The Bible Does Have Something to Say About Homosexuality," in *Gay Rights Or Wrongs: A Christian's Guide to Homosexuals Issues and Ministry*, ed. Michael Mazzalongo (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 160.
24. Ronald Springett, *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures: Biblical Authority and the Church Today* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1988), pp. 163-164.
25. Bridges, Jr., "The Bible Does Have Something to Say About Homosexuality," 169.

## WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of my upcoming weekend SEMINARS on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle. Each seminar consists of three presentations: Friday evening at 7:30 p. m., Sabbath morning at 11:00 a. m., and Sabbath afternoon at 5:00 p. m. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area.

### **October 6-7: Colville, Washington**

Location: Auditorium Community College of Spokane  
Address: 985 S. Elm Street, Colville, WA 99114  
For information call Pastor Douglas Pond at (509) 684-5845 or  
LeeRoy Holmes at (509) 684-3362

### **October 13-22: East Caribbean Lecture Tour**

October 13-15: St. VINCENT: National SDA Church Convention  
October 16-18: DOMINICA: Temple and Roseau SDA Churches  
October 19-22: BARBADOS: National SDA Church Convention

### **November 10-11: Atlanta North SDA Church**

Location: 5123 Chamblee-Dunwoody Road, Atlanta, GA 30338  
For information call Pastor Michael Leno at (770) 399-6884

### **November 17-18: Rally In Basel, Switzerland**

Detailed information will be provided in the next newsletter.

### **November 23-25: Rally In Birmingham, England**

Location: Camp Hill SDA Church  
For information call Pastor Malcolm Watson at (01564) 771-353

### **November 26: Rally In Manchester, England**

For information call Pastor Michael sSmpson at (01204) 531 661

### **December 1-2: Wenatchee SDA Church**

Location: 508 North Western Avenue, Wenatchee, WA 98801  
For information call Pastor Dan Serns at (509) 663-4032

## **Contact Information**

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