

The Caring, Welcoming Church?

The Seventh-day Adventist Church and its Homosexual Members

Introduction

In 1983, Charles Bradford, the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, invented a new slogan, which was disseminated widely: Adventism styled itself “The Caring Church.”¹ Some twenty years later, the newly reelected president of the world church, Jan Paulsen, preaching on the final Sabbath of the General Conference Session in 2005, laid out his vision of a “welcoming church.” Throughout his sermon, Paulsen frequently referred to the “need to open the Church’s doors.” He encouraged the “widely diverse church to welcome everyone into the church, not keep them out because of their differences.” “God has set before us an open door,” he said, “which is not our privilege to close and keep others out....I have a word of caution to anyone who is looking for bad grapes in the church: only God can safely grade people. God loves all people globally....I want the Adventist family around the world to be known as a compassionate family.”²

This paper tests the truth of both slogan and vision by exploring the evolution of the relations between the Adventist Church and its homosexual members. It asks to what extent the Church welcomes and cares for a group of members who are stigmatized by society.

Research Methods

The findings reported here draw on part of my research for a massive study of international Adventism, which will appear in a book titled *Apocalypse Postponed*. The research used four research methods: historical research, in-depth interviewing, surveys, and participant observation.³ The latter included eighteen years when, as church liaison for Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc., I had the role of trying to communicate with church leaders, institutions, and members on behalf of gay and lesbian Adventists.

Religious and Civil Context

Condemnation of homosexuality by Christian churches long fostered discrimination against homosexuals in many countries. This was reflected both in law, where criminal penalties were often harsh, extending to capital punishment in some parts, and in public opinion, where it was invoked to justify ridicule, physical violence, eviction from housing, and loss of employment. However, growing concern for justice and civil rights in the United States during the 1960s, beginning with discrimination against blacks and women, was extended at length to homosexuals. The new current fostered the emergence of the gay liberation movement in 1969. This quickly garnered support from key organizations such as the American Bar Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the American Psychological Association: the American Bar Association issued a call for the decriminalization of homosexual behavior between consenting adults in 1973, and the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders the same year. The more liberal Protestant churches also responded: the United Church of Christ and the Unitarian-Universalist

Churches voted to ordain openly gay and lesbian pastors, and other mainline churches began to debate such issues; some congregations declared that they welcomed gay members.

However, conservative religious groups quickly mounted a sustained counterattack: in their continuing zeal to roll back progress toward liberalized laws and attitudes, they have mounted several political crusades that tapped deep reservoirs of hatred and prejudice within society. For example, when, in 1977, Anita Bryant successfully took the lead in the campaign to reverse a civil rights ordinance that had helped protect homosexuals in Dade County, Florida, against discrimination in employment and housing, her campaign spawned bumper stickers that urged people to “Kill a gay for Christ.”

In the succeeding decades, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled state sodomy statutes unconstitutional, and several cities and states have chosen to recognize and protect same-sex relationships, with the Supreme Court of Massachusetts recognizing same-sex marriage. The Episcopal Church has ordained openly gay and lesbian priests, and consecrated its first openly gay bishop. Meanwhile, the conservative Religious Right, made up of fundamentalists, Mormons, and many Catholics and Evangelicals, has cast aspersions at people with AIDS, has gained political influence, and is pursuing state votes and a constitutional amendment that defines marriage as being limited to heterosexual couples.

Where does the Adventist Church fit into this evolving picture?

Emergence of Gay Issues

The Seventh-day Adventist Church largely ignored the topic of homosexuality until the early 1970s. The Adventists' prophet, Ellen White, never referred to it directly in her vast published works or correspondence.⁴ The Church never saw reason to commission a study of the topic; the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, published during the mid-1950s, merely repeated the traditional interpretations of the passages that have been used by conservative Christians to condemn homosexuality; otherwise, its publications rarely mentioned the topic.

Church leaders generally assumed that there were no homosexuals among their members: the categories *Adventist* and *homosexual* were regarded as mutually exclusive. This assumption was wrong. However, most homosexual members were deeply closeted, living lonely lives. Their discomfort caused many to exit the Church, and those who were discovered often faced rejection by their families and church, expulsion from church schools if they were students, loss of their jobs if they were church employed, and exposure to guilt, shame, and humiliation. For example, Vernon Hendershot, who was president of the Adventist Seminary when it was located at the General Conference complex in Washington, D.C., disappeared suddenly after being arrested during a police raid on a gay meeting place in 1952.⁵ Such experiences were repeated throughout the global Adventist Church. For example, a student at Avondale College, in Australia, in the 1970s, who confessed to being homosexual between his final examinations and graduation, was not allowed to graduate and was never awarded his degree.⁶ Church entities were concerned primarily with protecting their purity and their reputations rather than supporting such members.

Although most “sins” committed by church employees could be forgiven, this was not true of sexual sin. Of these sins, homosexuality was considered the worst. In 1983, when Grady Smoot, the president of Andrews University, the present location of the Adventist Seminary, was arrested on charges that he had propositioned an undercover vice officer, it was reported to me that several dispirited church leaders had exclaimed, “If only it had been with a woman!”⁷ Although the number of church members whose homosexuality was discovered so dramatically was relatively few, the proportion of gay and lesbian members who grew up in the Church was no doubt about average, and many others also joined as adults.⁸

Many Adventist pastors, evangelists, and publications seized on the emergence of the gay liberation movement in 1969 as a sign of the end of the world and of the imminent return of Christ.⁹ The flow of similar comments—in articles, pamphlets, public pronouncements, and two books that dealt with sex—continued throughout the 1970s, strengthening especially after mid-decade. Some condemned gay activists who demanded acceptance rather than wanting to change their behavior, and the Annual Council of the General Conference altered the rules for divorce, voting that homosexual behavior by a spouse was a biblical cause for divorce.¹⁰ An anthology of Ellen White’s writings bearing on mental health, published in 1977, injected content into her writings with a caption that identified homosexuality as “Sodom’s Particular Sin.”¹¹

Although the majority of the articles and pronouncements urged that those with aberrant drives should seek deliverance through God, both books on sex recognized that change in orientation

was unlikely and urged that divine strength be enlisted to resist temptations.¹² Most of these publications assumed that the issue they addressed was exterior to the Church; however, they elicited several letters to editors that suggested the presence of many homosexuals among its members.

In 1977, a number of gay Adventists in Southern California, emboldened by the gay movement to seek out their own mutual support, formed an organization they ambitiously named Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International. By following networks and placing advertisements in gay and lesbian publications, Kinship began to expand around North America and to reach out overseas.

As time passed, pressure on church leadership to respond somehow to the needs of gay Adventists began to build. A series of articles published in *Insight*, the church youth periodical, in 1976 proclaimed that victory over homosexuality through faith was possible.¹³ These were authored by Colin Cook, a former pastor who, after being dismissed from the ministry in New York following discovery of his homosexual behavior, had sought spiritual healing for his unwelcome drives and eventually married.

When these articles drew a spate of letters from persons who desired help, Cook began counseling those who were willing to go to Reading, Pennsylvania. In 1978, he prepared ten hours of tapes, which were widely distributed under the title *Homosexuality and the Power to Change*. In another contribution to *Insight* in 1980, he estimated that there were between ten and

twenty thousand homosexuals within the Adventist Church in the United States alone, and chastised the Church for failing to foster ministries to help these members.¹⁴

In 1979, James Londis, pastor of Sligo Church, in suburban Washington, D.C., spoke to groups of clergy in Southern California and around Washington, D.C., about the plight of gay Adventists. His sensitivity to the issue had been raised by the trauma experienced by a gay sibling. Estimating that there must be tens of thousands of gay Adventists in North America, he questioned the two solutions usually offered homosexuals within the Church when he suggested that it was not possible for most to live lives of sexual abstinence and stated that he doubted whether cure was possible for all. Reviewing modern biblical scholarship, which disputed traditional interpretations of key biblical passages, he urged that scholars study the issues thoroughly and that the Church prepare itself to minister to its gay children.¹⁵

First Kinship Kampmeeting

Church leaders were forced to address the issue of gay Adventists early in 1980, when Kinship invited three seminary professors and two pastors to participate in its first national Kampmeeting. Searching for spiritual nurture and help in answering their most agonizing questions, Kinship leaders had turned to prominent figures. However, when three of those who responded positively realized that they were all from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, they concluded that they could not attend without first asking permission. Neal Wilson, president of the Church's General Conference (GC), responded sympathetically, perhaps because he is reputed to have two gay members within his family.

When he found opposition to the request on the President's Executive Advisory Council (PREXAD), he avoided taking a vote there and took responsibility for the decision himself.¹⁶

During the final negotiations, Duncan Eva, who represented Wilson, said, "You have approached us; it is the responsibility of the church to reach out to you." However, he insisted on two conditions: Kinship could not use the participation of clergy as an opportunity to claim in the press that the General Conference had accepted homosexuality; and Colin Cook, whose claim to be able to help homosexuals change their sexual orientations was attracting favorable attention among church leaders, should be added to the five invited.¹⁷

The most emotional experience at the Kampmeeting was telling, and listening to, personal narratives, which were dubbed "the horror stories." One person after another told of the isolation each had felt because almost all had been convinced he or she was the only gay Adventist in the world; of years of unavailing struggle and unanswered prayer for a miracle that would make them heterosexual; of overwhelming guilt and self-rejection; of consequent difficulty in establishing relationships; of promiscuous patterns and more guilt; of rejection by their families and estrangement from their congregations. Since they had been taught that it was impossible to be both Christian and gay, but had found themselves gay, they had despaired because they assumed that they were eternally lost. Some told how deep depression had led to suicide attempts. Almost everyone had found no one within the Church to whom they could turn for help; those who had sought counseling there had met platitudes, such as, "It's only a phase. Get married and everything will turn out all right." But the stories of those who had married were

especially poignant, with guilt and defeat within their marriage relationships and sorrow over ultimate estrangement from their children.

The biblical scholars had been asked to help address the issue from Kinship of whether or not it was possible for gays and lesbians to be Christians, and thus they researched what the Bible had to say about the topic for the first time from an Adventist viewpoint. They concluded, as a result of their study in advance of the Kampmeeting, that the Bible was silent about persons with a homosexual orientation and that the little it said there was directed to heterosexuals. They argued that homosexuals, like heterosexuals, were called to faithfulness within a committed relationship and to chastity outside of such a relationship. The biblical proscriptions were also the same for homosexuals as for heterosexuals: sexual exploitation, promiscuity, rape, and temple prostitution. Wilson probably did not anticipate such an accepting response. The clergy were deeply moved by the stories they heard at the Kampmeeting of the trauma of growing up as gay Adventists.¹⁸

These scholars also drew up recommendations to take to the church leadership, most of which PREXAD initially accepted. However, these were soon submerged behind a series of raging but unrelated theological and fiscal controversies, which increased leader sensitivity to the criticisms of conservative members.¹⁹ Consequently, church leaders quailed before a letter campaign, orchestrated by an independent right-wing publication, querying whether the participation of GC-sponsored clergy in a homosexual “kampmeeting” indicated that the denomination had “accepted homosexuality.” The North American Division (NAD) Committee then voted that the

Church could not condone practicing homosexuals, that it could not negotiate with organized groups who called themselves SDA gays and lesbians, or even engage in “diplomatic relations” with them, since church members would interpret this as “recognition and endorsement of a deviant philosophy and lifestyle.” Indeed, it voted to seek legal counsel “as to what appropriate action can be taken to prevent such groups from using the name of the church.”²⁰

The General Conference acted on only one recommendation from the Kampmeeting clergy: that a list of sympathetic counselors be prepared. A letter seeking suggestions for such a list revealed the conflicting pressures that church leaders felt and the direction in which they were tilting. It mentioned a wish to reorient homosexuals, complained about gays who held that reorientation was impossible, and asked that word that church leaders were working on “redemptive plans” be treated discreetly because members with a “critical bent” would not favor such a concern and church leaders wished to avoid giving the impression to members that they faced “some big new threat” or that “corruption” existed “to an alarming extent in the church.”²¹

Estrangement

A series of mailings that Kinship sent to college administrators, teachers, students, and pastors caused heartburn among many Adventists. The *Adventist Review* explained that Kinship was not associated with the Church in an editorial titled “The Church and the Homosexual.” Although the editorial reiterated the usual statements that homosexual practice is immoral and that celibacy is the only morally acceptable alternative to marriage, and that erring members “must reach out for divine power to conquer the problem,” it also recognized that the testimonies “about the

ostracism homosexuals have faced in the Adventist church and the almost total absence of people—ministry and laity alike—who seem capable of treating homosexuals with compassion...[indicate] that the church has failed its mission.”²²

Church leaders, feeling the need to take a stand on the issue of homosexuality, had the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) solicit papers from scholars. David Larson, a Loma Linda University ethicist whose consciousness had been raised by the grim experiences of his gay brother, wrote the first. In it, he urged the Church to nurture gay relationships as the best option available; however, this suggestion generated considerable hostility and the paper sank into oblivion.²³ The BRI then commissioned a second paper, this time from Ronald Springett, a New Testament scholar from Southern Adventist College. On learning about this, I phoned him to invite him to participate in Kinship’s 1984 Kampmeeting so that he could have an opportunity to find out about the issues homosexual Adventists face first-hand. He was initially eager to accept the offer, but on reflection concluded that to do so would endanger his job since two of his colleagues had recently been fired on theological grounds. He explained further that the position a biblical scholar would arrive at vis-à-vis homosexuality was likely to depend on his overall view of the Scriptures, and that if he showed his hand in that respect he would really court dismissal. Consequently, he would be forced to adopt a conservative view of the Scriptures for this paper, and thus toward homosexuality. When he presented a draft of his paper to the BRI in 1985, it was greeted as a major contribution and later published as a book.²⁴

The church administrators also set out to add a statement on homosexuality to the *Church Manual*. The new statement, which was voted at the 1985 General Conference Session, for the first time labeled these “practices” as unacceptable and a basis for discipline.

In a further effort to distance the Church from Kinship, the church leadership demanded later that year that all traces of the name of the Church be deleted from Kinship’s official name: “The problem is the use of ‘Seventh-day Adventist’ and ‘SDA’ in conjunction with ‘Kinship International.’ Church leaders feel strongly that the combination implies official endorsement of Kinship International, and those leaders object strongly to that implication,” wrote church counsel Robert Nixon in a letter to the author in 1985. The letter explained that Kinship had dragged the name of the Church into the mud by participating in Gay Pride parades with banners that bore its full name. But it was that name that pulled watching Adventist homosexuals from the sidewalk into the street to ask with excitement for information about how to get in contact with Kinship. Its Adventist roots and identity were central to the reasons for its existence and ministry. Kinship’s response to the demand was that such a decision could be made only at a Kampmeeting, the next of which was scheduled for August 1986.

In May 1986, Kinship mailed material to all dormitory students at Andrews University. This included an invitation to call Kinship’s new 800 number for information. Dismayed, the General Conference discussed preparing counter materials for distribution and took further steps toward suing Kinship over use of the Seventh-day Adventist name. In June, it requested copies of Kinship’s incorporation papers from the office of the secretary of state in California. In August,

Eva sent a letter to personnel at Adventist schools: “Perhaps there is no greater challenge to our faith and our preaching of the gospel of the grace of God than the challenge which homosexuality and those who teach it as an acceptable alternative Christian lifestyle presents to our church today. Does the gospel we proclaim have power to change or does it not?”²⁵

Quest Learning Center

Church leaders were much more comfortable with the approach of Colin Cook, a self-described “recovered homosexual,” who had founded the Quest Learning Center in late 1980. His program, which proclaimed “deliverance from homosexuality,” advertised that it brought homosexuals together in Reading, Pennsylvania, for a year or more of counseling and involvement in a support group called Homosexuals Anonymous (HA). Within a few months, the General Conference opted to fund Quest and provided more than half of its budget. The Adventist Church thus became the first denomination to fund a “healing ministry” for homosexuals.

Church periodicals provided the Quest-HA program with extensive publicity within Adventism, presenting it as the answer to homosexuality. Adventist pastors and counselors in Adventist schools began to recommend that anyone who came to them with a homosexual issue contact Quest. *Ministry*, the Church’s publication for ministers, broadened the network, aware of Cook’s program by recommending Quest when it featured a long interview with Cook in an issue distributed free to three hundred thousand clergy of other denominations.²⁶ As Quest grew, it attracted a great deal of attention from both the press and TV and radio talk shows and drew endorsements from conservative clergy of other denominations, who were relieved to be able to

recommend a solution when condemning homosexuality. Adventist leaders basked in the favorable publicity: for example, they made a church 800 number available to handle inquiries that resulted from Cook's appearance on the *Phil Donohue Show* in 1986.²⁷ Homosexuals Anonymous spread rapidly, peaking at sixty chapters around North American in that year.

The Adventist Church never conducted a study of the impact of the program on counselees, nor did it even require a written report before extending funding. It ignored Kinship's informed questions and listened only to the glowing reports of Director Cook and to orchestrated testimonies from counselees who were still in the midst of their time at Quest. It failed to understand that the reported healings were claimed by faith rather than achieved in experience. Church leaders eagerly extended funding when Cook and his wife appeared hand-in-hand before the Annual Council of the church leaders: Cook became their representative "ex-gay."²⁸

The denominational role in financing and publicizing the Quest program helped make church members more conscious of homosexual Adventists. Three articles published by *Spectrum*, an independent Adventist journal, in the spring of 1982 had a similar effect. These reported in detail on the 1980 Kampmeeting, recounted ten of the personal stories shared there, and, in order to provide "balanced" coverage, provided Cook an opportunity to describe the Quest program.²⁹ The arrest of the president of Andrews University during the Annual Council in 1983 and of an associate pastor of the congregation who served many General Conference officials the following year, both on vice charges, brought further awareness. The leaders' sense that they were under scrutiny made them more eager to proclaim the success of their program in changing

sexual orientations and more careful to avoid appearing as if they were accepting of homosexuals.

As part of my sociological study of international Adventism, I conducted a series of interviews with fourteen Quest participants, completing them in the fall of 1986. These revealed that the Adventists who uprooted themselves to move to Reading to participate in the Quest program were usually fragile, very conservative church members, with high levels of guilt and self-rejection because of their homosexual inclinations. Even if they had heard about Kinship, they were so frozen in their guilt that they could not bring themselves to make contact with it: Quest, the church-endorsed program for “recovery,” was their only hope.

But Quest turned out to be a nightmare experience for them—one that they did not describe in their testimonies before church leaders. Suddenly, they found that they were no longer the only homosexual Adventists in the world: isolation was replaced by community, a community under stress because its members were trying to change their orientation, and yet were often sexually attracted to one another. The immediate result was confusion, turmoil, and considerable sexual contact. Their confusion was greatly heightened when Cook, the director of the program, made repeated sexual advances to them.³⁰ None of the interviewees reported that his sexual orientation had changed, nor did any of them know anyone who had changed. Indeed, eleven of the fourteen had come to accept their homosexuality.³¹

I had thought Quest's claims and testimonies of "healing from homosexuality" hard to believe, so I was not surprised to discover that those claims were made "in faith" that transformation had occurred, when in fact no one in my interview sample had actually been "changed." However, I was taken aback by the evidence that Cook had sexually used and abused almost every counselee. Realizing that I had a moral obligation to report such abuse, I wrote to the General Conference president, Neal Wilson, in October 1986, telling him what I had unexpectedly found at Quest.³² To try to ensure that Wilson would not ignore my letter, I sent copies to twenty-nine other church leaders and academics. Cook admitted that my findings were correct and was removed within a week. Church leaders decided shortly afterward to close the Quest counseling program, but to continue support for Homosexuals Anonymous chapters.

The Adventist press initially ignored the closing of Quest and the removal of its director, so that the widespread image of the program as *the* solution to the problem of homosexuality remained uncorrected. Eventually, I asked the editor of the *Adventist Review* about this omission, and he responded with a "newsbreak" announcing merely that Quest had been closed because of the resignation of Colin Cook as its director.³³ In September 1987, eleven months after the situation was disclosed, *Ministry* published another long interview with Cook, which, although indicating that there had been improprieties, strongly endorsed Cook's methods as the answer to homosexuality and announced (in a photo caption apparently left in by mistake) that he would "soon resume leading seminars for recovering homosexuals."³⁴ By December, Cook had recovered enough confidence to announce, in a report addressed to Wilson and copied to forty others, that he had launched Quest II and was working with his first two counselees.³⁵

In 1989, an article by Colin Cook appeared in the Evangelical publication *Christianity Today* trumpeting how he had “found freedom” from homosexuality. Cook was beginning to find new sources of support among Evangelicals and, ultimately, the Religious Right, which, because of its frequent attacks on homosexuals, sorely needed a “solution” to showcase.³⁶ In 1993, Cook moved to Denver, where he founded a new ministry, FaithQuest. This grew and became prominent thanks to close alliances with organizations such as James Dobson’s Focus on the Family, which referred potential counselees to him, and Colorado for Family Values, which gave him publicity by advertising him as a speaker in its antigay Time to Stand seminars, whose goal was to use a referendum to roll back the gay civil rights legislation that had been enacted in some of the state’s cities. Cook also reappeared once again on national television on the *Phil Donohue Show*. He spoke frequently at Adventist churches in Denver and began to get invitations to speak at Adventist colleges, such as a chapel service at Pacific Union College in California in December 1993.³⁷ These opportunities in Adventist circles emerged because of the failure of the church press, which had earlier publicized Cook’s program, to inform Adventists of his fall. Consequently, young Adventists troubled by their homosexual desires continued to contact him for help.

My interest in Cook and his ministries was rekindled when two of his new counselees brought their new painful stories to my attention. They had discovered that the would-be healer was still a sexual predator, and had learned about my earlier role in unmasking him via the Adventist grapevine. Consequently, I set out to research Cook’s activities in Denver. Since one of the counselees was willing to share with me tapes he had made of many of his counseling sessions

and a detailed diary of several days of intense “counseling” while living in Cook’s house in Denver, the data were full and compelling. In an endeavor to prevent further abuse, I provided the results of my research to the religion reporter at the *Denver Post*, who then carried out a full investigation of her own. Her report, published as a front-page story, was the beginning of a wave of publicity that caused the Religious Right to back off.³⁸ FaithQuest and Cook largely disappeared from view while the furor subsided. The Adventist Church announced that it was not connected to Cook’s seminars and counseling activities.³⁹ Meanwhile, Cook was greatly hampered because his wife, who had separated from him earlier, then divorced him.⁴⁰ Shortly afterward, he happened to ask a female researcher, whom he did not realize was a friend of mine, for help in finding a replacement, since he needed a wife to give his program legitimacy.

General Conference vs. Kinship

In December 1987, the General Conference filed suit against Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc., in the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California for “breach of trademark.”⁴¹ Because the suit had to be shaped to address commercial law, it did not even mention that Kinship members are homosexual and Adventist: its case had to be shaped in terms of unfair commercial competition. Its brief consequently made the absurd claims that by using the name *Seventh-day Adventist* or its acronym as part of its name, competition from Kinship’s newsletter was undermining the Church’s publishing empire and that Adventists were likely to contribute heavily to Kinship, mistaking it for the Church’s official tithe/offering conduit. However, the accompanying press release, titled “Church Moves Against Homosexual Support Group,” made it clear that the General Conference was rejecting Adventist homosexuals and the

ministry of Kinship.⁴² In addition to seeking to compel Kinship to change its name, the suit also demanded “exemplary, punitive, and treble” monetary damages.

This Goliath-versus-David suit was poorly timed from the Church’s point of view, for it coincided with the media’s belated discovery of the Quest scandal and the filing of a suit against the Church by abused counselees. Although the latter suit was independent of Kinship, the press drew all these issues together, which resulted in considerable negative publicity for the Church.⁴³

In filing this suit against an organization with fewer than one thousand members, church leaders expected an easy pushover. The General Conference hired two major law firms to present its case, at an admitted cost of more than two hundred thousand dollars.⁴⁴ However, it failed to take the strength of the gay movement into account: the case was accepted by National Gay Rights Advocates, which arranged for Fullbright and Jaworski, a major legal firm, to defend Kinship on a pro bono basis. Depositions were taken in the fall of 1990, and the case was argued in the federal court in Los Angeles in February 1991. The legal proceedings were traumatic for Kinship members. However, in its verdict, which was announced in October, the court rejected the suit, thus allowing Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International Inc., to keep its full name.

In her opinion, Judge Mariana Pfaelzer pointed out that the term *Seventh-day Adventist* has a dual meaning, applying to the Church but also to adherents of the religion. She found that the SDA religion pre-existed the SDA Church, that the uncontested use of the name by schismatic groups such as the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement indicated that it does more than

suggest membership in the mother church, and that, as used by Kinship, the name merely describes that organization in terms of what it is, an international organization of Seventh-day Adventists. Consequently, she found that “as used by SDA Kinship, the terms ‘Seventh-day Adventist,’ and its acronym ‘SDA’ are generic, and are not entitled to trademark protection.”⁴⁵ Left with no good grounds on which to appeal the decision, and fearing a more devastating loss in the court of appeals, the General Conference chose not to appeal this result.

The fact that a group of gays and lesbians could continue to identify themselves as Seventh-day Adventists, and that nothing could be done about this, continued to irritate church leaders. The Church spurned Kinship’s overtures after the verdict, which suggested that enmities be forgotten and communication begin concerning such common problems as AIDS.⁴⁶ The church press also persisted in referring to “Kinship International” rather than “Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International.”

Church Statements and Political Involvement.

The General Conference followed up on the change to the 1985 *Church Manual* by issuing increasingly frequent statements that focused on gay-related issues starting in 1994. In that year, a member of its legal department felt ethically obliged, for reasons related to the earlier suit against Kinship, to inform General Conference President Robert Folkenberg that he had been invited to speak at a Kampmeeting. Subsequently, the President announced that the General Conference Administrative Committee had passed the following resolution:

HOMOSEXUAL GATHERINGS—SPEAKING INVITATIONS. In view of the fact that homosexual behavior is clearly contrary to biblical teachings, Church beliefs,...and in order to avoid the appearance of giving the sanction of the Church to such behavior, it was

VOTED, to request all General Conference personnel to decline invitations to speak to gatherings of homosexuals.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, Folkenberg did not intervene to stop the person who had raised the issue from participating in the Kampmeeting.

In 1996, the General Conference Administrative Committee voted “An Affirmation of Marriage.” This reminded homosexual Adventists that their only acceptable option was celibacy: “However, the estate of marriage is not God’s only plan for the meeting of human relational needs or for knowing the experience of family. Singleness and the friendship of singles are within the divine design as well....Scripture, however, places a solid demarcation socially and sexually between such friendship relations and marriage.”⁴⁸

In 1999, as gay issues came increasingly to the fore in political debate and court cases, the Annual Council voted a new “Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality”:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church...believe[s] that by God’s grace and through the encouragement of the community of the faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God’s Word....[S]exual intimacy belongs only within the marital

relationship of a man and a woman....The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of heterosexual marriage are forbidden....For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.⁴⁹

This statement was more sweeping and negative than the one added to the *Church Manual* in 1985.

As the new millennium dawned, Adventism became directly involved in the raging political debates. In February 2000, when the state of Hawaii seemed to be on the verge of recognizing same-sex marriage, Thomas Mostert, president of the Pacific Union Conference, and Alan Reinach, head of its Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL), published articles in the *Pacific Union Recorder* calling on Adventists in California to support the Knight Amendment, also known as Proposition 22, which aimed at adding the clause “Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California” to that state’s constitution. Reinach explained that “The California Protection of Marriage Initiative, Proposition 22, is designed to insure that California need not recognize gay marriages when and if they become legal in other states.” He added, “We need not sit on the sidelines on this issue, assuring ourselves that Adventists avoid political issues....We can assist in efforts to educate our neighbors, and to get the word out, as well as urging our own church members to vote.”⁵⁰

In May 2000, as Vermont was in the process of adopting legislation that recognized civil unions between same-sex couples, officials of the Atlantic Union and the North New England

Conference raised their voices in opposition to it. In contrast, the administration of the Netherlands Union remained aloof from the debate when that country embraced same-sex marriage in 2001. However, when the courts of British Columbia and Ontario launched the process that resulted in the recognition of such marriages in Canada, the director of PARL there described it “an assault on marriage,” and declared that “Adventists have a responsibility to make their voices heard on this issue.”⁵¹

In April 2003, Reinach opposed legislation in California that would have required any organization that contracted to supply goods and services to the state to provide the same benefits to domestic partners as to married couples, because it did not include a conscience clause exempting Christian organizations. He launched a petition against the bill and urged church members to sign it, arguing that the legislation would force hundreds of church-related educational, health care, and day care institutions to observe the law or close, ultimately resulting in a tax increase. As the bill progressed through the legislative process, Reinach requested that churches make announcements urging that members sign his petition, and later, after the legislature passed the measure, he launched a petition drive demanding that Governor Gray Davis veto it.⁵² Adventists were allied with Mormons, Protestant Fundamentalists, many Pentecostals, conservative Catholics, and other elements of the Religious Right in their stance. Their opposition failed. After rereading Reinach’s news releases early in 2006, I wrote him to ask how many of the institutions he had predicted would close with passage of the law had actually closed. He replied that he did not know, an answer that suggests he had “cried wolf.”⁵³

Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court had shocked such Adventist officials when, in *Lawrence vs. Texas*, it overturned a Texas sodomy statute on the grounds that it did not treat homosexual and heterosexual persons equally. When the British government announced plans to introduce civil unions in order to eliminate one source of discrimination against homosexuals, the British Union Conference announced its opposition to the measure.⁵⁴ When Canada expanded its hate crimes law to add disparagement of “sexual orientation” to the list of crimes for which perpetrators could be charged with the equivalent of a felony in the United States, the Adventist News Network reported that pastors there were afraid that their preaching against homosexuality could result in them falling afoul of the law.⁵⁵

After a decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalized same-sex marriage there, Reinach attacked the ruling in an e-mail newsletter and suggested that Adventists support President George W. Bush’s Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which was designed to override that decision. Adventists committed to the long-held position of separation between church and state then held their breath, wondering if the General Conference would embrace DOMA, and thus set a new precedent where the Adventist Church gave official support to legislation that the Religious Right designed and supported.

Meanwhile, a number of cities had begun to perform same-sex marriages, attracting a great deal of attention from the media. These developments, together with the growing number of nations considering the legalization of same-sex unions, led the General Conference Administrative Committee in March 2004 to issue a “Seventh-day Adventist Response to Same-Sex Unions—A

Reaffirmation of Christian Marriage.” This proved to be fairly mild: although it restated the Church’s narrow position on homosexuality, it said nothing about the wisdom of legalizing civil unions or domestic partnerships or aligning the Church with attempts to amend the U.S. Constitution.⁵⁶

The official positions announced by church leaders have become narrower and more polarizing over time. Although the statements often declare that all people, including homosexuals, are children of God and that abuse, scorn, and derision aimed at them are unacceptable, the dominant tone of these statements is an insistence that gay and lesbian Adventists lead celibate lives. When questions that focus on homosexuality have been raised in the televised chat sessions that the current president of the General Conference, Jan Paulson, has had with Adventist youth, his answers have been conservative to the point of being retrogressive. For example, when asked advice by a gay youth who felt called by God to become a pastor, he replied, “the biblical expectation is for those who believe they have a homosexual orientation to live a celibate life or to limit sexual activity to within a husband-and-wife marriage situation.”⁵⁷ In suggesting that a gay person enter a heterosexual marriage, Paulson was repeating bad advice that Adventist counselors had frequently given in yesteryear.

The attempts of some church officials to involve Adventism in political debates on the side of traditional heterosexual values raised the possibility of moving the Adventist Church away from its traditional position in opposition to the enactment of morality-based law. If Adventists had taken that path in the past, it might have led them to support those who had given them the

greatest trouble on such issues as freedom to observe the Saturday Sabbath. In the 1880s well-meaning Protestants, with references to saving the family, attempted to legislate morality through laws by declaring Sunday a holy day—legislation that would have harmed Adventists severely through compromising their religious freedom. However, 120 years later some Adventist spokespersons now attempt to legislate morality by making gay marriage impossible. Although Adventists officially continue to realize the importance of taking a stand against simple majoritarian rule in matters of religious liberty and race, attempts to press for majoritarian legislation that would outlaw same-sex marriage seem to undermine their traditional commitment to church-state separation.

Adventist Ministries to Homosexuals

In 1995, Pacific Press published, *My Son, Beloved Stranger*, which recounted the story of a mother's distress on realizing that her son was gay and the events that followed.⁵⁸ The mother, Carroll Grady, was well-known in the Church, for she was married to a pastor and both had worked at the General Conference for years. Although she had published under a pseudonym, the book resulted in invitations for her to speak at Adventist meetings and to publish articles in church-related magazines. Her experience with her son had led her to realize that Adventist parents of gay or lesbian children had nowhere to turn for support. She started a newsletter, *Someone to Talk To...*, in 1996 and a support group by the same name for families and friends of Adventist gays and lesbians in 1999, and she launched a Web site in 2000.

A variety of ministries aimed at gay Adventists emerged near the end of the millennium. Redeemed!, located in San Jose, California, sought to be an “exgay ministry” offering Christian support for those who wanted “freedom from homosexuality.” It was founded by a mother of a gay son whose rejection of his orientation had totally alienated him from her. In her attempts to find a way to “save” her son, she formed a connection to the National Association for the Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH). The lifespan of this ministry, however, was short.

God’s Love—Our Witness (GLOW) was founded in 1997 by Inge Anderson, a board member of SDA Net, an Internet discussion list, where some conservative members had engaged in a series of heated attacks on others who had admitted that they were gay or lesbian. It became a Web discussion list/support group that tried to steer a “middle course”: on the one hand, it accepted the reality of homosexual orientations and therefore rejected the likelihood that change of orientation is possible for most; on the other hand, it was “designed to support those who wish to order their lives in line with a fairly literal interpretation of Scripture, which reserves sex for those covenanted to each other for life in the holy covenant of (heterosexual) marriage.” Given the close match between GLOW’s position and the statements that the General Conference has issued since Quest proved to be an embarrassing failure, GLOW’s leaders hoped to gain the official blessing of the Church and to grow fairly rapidly. However, GLOW has experienced a considerable flow-through of members, and, in spite of some growth, remains fairly small, about one-tenth the size of SDA Kinship. Its leaders have subdivided it into two overlapping groups:

Gay and Lesbian Adventists (GLADVENTISTS) is restricted to Adventists, whereas GLOW has a broader membership, of whom about one-third are Adventists.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, a ministry was launched in the San Francisco Central Adventist Church by an aging gay couple who, after many years' absence from Adventism (during which time they had owned and operated a gay bar), had returned to the Church and committed themselves to celibacy within their relationship. This program took an exhibit booth during the gay-sponsored Castro Street Fair as part of an attempt to reach out to the gay community. On its Web site, the congregation declared that "homosexual orientation is not a choice," but that nevertheless "homosexual acts" are forbidden by God, who had designed that human sexuality should be expressed within heterosexual marriage. However, "we recognize that it is not our right nor responsibility to pry into the private lives of persons, whether they are homosexual or heterosexual." Duke Holtz, the main mover behind this ministry, later added a second related ministry, God's Rainbow, which was intended to be the umbrella for all officially recognized church programs for gays and lesbians. He gained some recognition from the Central California Conference for this initiative. Duke was aggressive in pressing for acceptance of celibate homosexuals within the Church, presenting them as moral, whereas practicing gays were immoral. Both of Holtz's programs collapsed in 2004, when he moved out of state following the death of his partner.

A similar small ministry, *Rainbow of Promise*, took the form of a newsletter. It was operated by a former pastor, Ben Anderson, who had lost his job, home, family, and church about twenty-five years earlier, when he was discovered to be gay. After living in the gay community for most of

the interim, he turned his back on it, returned to the Adventist Church, and established this ministry, which advocated celibacy as a means of developing a close relationship with God.

Surprisingly, it was during this period, when ministries with differing philosophies emerged to compete with it, that SDA Kinship grew most rapidly, both in the United States and Canada and internationally. Kinship supports committed relationships among its members, and its meetings and activities provide opportunities for gay and lesbian Adventists to meet one another and pursue such relationships. It also nurtures, without judging, all gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed persons who approach it. Most members are Adventist or of Adventist background with most of its non-Adventist members being partners of Adventists. Kinship's spiritual message, which has often brought encouragement and healing to homosexuals who felt estranged from God and rejected by their church, is that God loves and accepts them the way they are.

The Adventist Press

The church press was largely silent about homosexuality until the 1990s, apart from the earlier articles by Colin Cook and those publicizing and then attempting to rehabilitate him, and the knee-jerk criticisms. However, it then became much more willing to publish articles that addressed homosexuality and related issues. In 1992, the youth magazine *Insight* published a major article, "Redeeming Our Sad Gay Situation: A Christian Response to the Question of Homosexuality," authored by the editor, Christopher Blake.⁶⁰ Blake admitted that the Church should have issued a public apology following the collapse of the Quest Learning Center and that

it had not moved ahead with any other approach to help gay and lesbian church members. In many respects, the article represented a real advance in understanding, especially in its sections titled “Nobody Chooses to Be Homosexual,” “‘Gay Bashing’ Is Never Acceptable, Especially for Christians,” “Many Fears about Homosexuality Are Irrational,” “Homosexuals Are Not by Nature Necessarily Promiscuous or Child Molesters,” “Changing One’s Homosexual Orientation Is Difficult and Rare,” and “Homosexuals Can Be Genuine, Model Christians.” However, the article defined such model Christians as those who “battle against their orientation all their lives” because “homosexual activity is sinful” and cannot be condoned.⁶¹

In November 1996, *Ministry*, whose designated audience is pastors, published an issue that addressed the question “What do homosexuals need from a pastor?” All articles stayed within the officially recommended behavioral guidelines for homosexuals. The lead article, by John Cress, campus chaplain at Walla Walla College, stated that the beginning point in dealing with homosexuals was to recognize the difference between orientation and behavior; he urged that pastors and churches “be both prophetically clear and genuinely compassionate,” and approvingly quoted an alumnus who had returned to the Church when he had advanced AIDS and who told a student audience shortly before he died that the “gospel imperative” for his life was “no sex with other people and no sex with myself.”⁶²

Insight has published ten articles dealing with homosexuality since 1992. In general, these have not contravened the official church position. One, for example, authored by a student at a non-Adventist college whose ex-high school boyfriend had later told her he was gay, told of the

trauma for both of them caused by the sharing of this news.⁶³ A sidebar by an Adventist recommended change and support ministries, for homosexuals, their families, and friends. The author had included SDA Kinship in his original list of recommended organizations, but the editor omitted it.

Another article by a mother of a gay son writing under a pseudonym appeared in *Women of Spirit* in 2000.⁶⁴ She told of traveling to meet her son's partner for the first time and of finding herself eating with three gay guys and a lesbian, who unexpectedly asked her about her faith and church. Warming to her responses, one commented that he knew little about Christianity, but would like to learn more. He then asked, "Could I go to your church? Would they be like you?" She replied: "No, Jed, my church isn't ready for you yet." *Ministry* published an article by Carroll Grady in 2003, now written under her own name and bolder and more independent in tone, asking pastors how they treat gay people.⁶⁵

As the issue of same-sex marriage became politically prominent in the United States, the tone of some articles in church publications became much more strident. In October 2003, for example, Roy Adams, associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, published an editorial, "Marriage under Siege," which featured a photo of Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop elected by the Episcopal Church. Adams referred to "the concerted push for full acceptance by a well-heeled, well-financed homosexual lobby, the media falling all over itself to push the agenda." He listed the overturning of the Texas anti-sodomy law and the acceptance of same-sex marriage by the Netherlands and Belgium and its advance through the courts in Canada and

Massachusetts, and posed the question, “What is to be our stance as a Church?” Declaring that “the spiritual crisis of the last days” is here, that we are seeing “a brazen, deliberate, concerted attack on the three foundational pillars of the book of Genesis: Creation, Sabbath, and...marriage,” he asserted that in spite of the historic embrace of the separation of church and state by Adventists, “Silence is not an option. The stakes are too high. And normal considerations of tolerance and political correctness cannot apply—in fact, would be irresponsible. This is the time for faith communities to speak out.”⁶⁶

Editor William Johnsson wrote a supporting editorial statement, asserting that observance of the Sabbath had long set Adventists apart, but now the other two fundamental beliefs rooted in the first two chapters of Genesis, creation and marriage “also seem destined to mark us out as distinctive.”⁶⁷

In 2004, an issue of *Liberty* set a similar tone. This was surprising, given the publication’s historic purpose to promote religious freedom and, in the United States, the separation of church and state. In an editorial, Lincoln Steed proclaimed that “those who see no threat to religion in recent moves to legalize same-sex marriage don’t understand the movement’s long-ago articulated intention to dismantle religious values.” “We give away too much,” he insisted, “by allowing the homosexual agenda to be framed as a civil rights argument.”⁶⁸ Elaborating on this fear in “Why Silence Is Not an Option,” Barry Bussey stated, “Religious communities that view sexual relations outside the traditional marriage of one man and one woman as immoral and a ‘sin’ ought to prepare for the greatest assault on religious freedom in recent memory”—both

externally from the state and internally from dissident church members.⁶⁹ The lead article, “Civil Rights and Homosexual Rights: A Flawed Analogy,” tried to argue that there is no parallel between African-American civil rights and gay and lesbian civil rights.⁷⁰

The ultraconservative independent press within Adventism, often considerably to the right of the official press, has had little to say about homosexuality, and what has appeared there differs little in tone and content from most of the articles published by the official publications. The main ultraconservative to write, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, a Ghanaian who lives in the United States, suggested that attitudes toward gays and lesbians within Adventism are changing. He challenged interpretations of biblical scholars who have concluded that the proof texts used to condemn homosexual relationships are misused.⁷¹

In contrast, the publications of the liberal independent press concerning homosexuality are often very different from the official publications, reflecting increased polarization over this issue. In 1995, *Adventist Today* published “Kampmeeting Supports Gay Adventists,” which described the program, participants, and interaction at Kinship’s annual week-long retreat the previous summer and summarized Kinship’s history and goals.⁷² The gathering was portrayed as a regular, successful event of interest to all Adventists. In 1999, *Adventist Today* published a cluster of six articles, including three personal accounts of finding one’s self or one’s son to be gay and its impact on self, marriage, and family, and two contrasting interpretations that addressed the biblical passages often used to condemn homosexuality. In an editorial introduction, John

McLarty warned of the dangers and unfairness of heterosexual church leaders demanding that homosexuals live celibate lives.⁷³

In the winter 2000 issue of *Spectrum*, Aubyn Fulton compared two “official statements” approved by the Annual Council in 1999. He concluded that the statement on birth control “largely succeeds in creating a moral context within which couples can make responsible reproductive decisions.”⁷⁴ In contrast, the “Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality” was concerned more with public relations than with pastoral functions:

Absent,...is a tone of respect for a full range of Christian perspectives, or recognition of related complexities and subtleties. The document lacks evidence of underlying redemptive and pastoral concern....It is hard to see how a simple ‘we’re against it’ can be of much help if it ignores complex biblical evidence as well as growing scientific data regarding the biological basis for a great deal of sexual orientation and resistance to change that orientation.⁷⁵

Spectrum’s summer 2002 issue contained a cluster of five articles on sexuality, including research on the lives of gay and lesbian Adventists, an autobiographical narrative, and a book review that surveyed a diversity of Christian views of homosexuality. In the winter 2004 issue, Gary Chartier argued that even those who condemn homosexual activity should support the legalization of same-sex marriage in order to foster social stability.⁷⁶

Several articles in the March-April 2004 issue of *Adventist Today* explored Adventist positions on gay marriage. Two were reprints: a letter from Thomas Mostert, president of the Pacific Union Conference, to legislative leaders in California, announcing the Church's opposition to a bill that could recognize gay marriage; and an article by Alan Reinach urging Adventists to "speak up" on the "marriage debate."⁷⁷ As an opposing view, I argued that "Supporting the 'Marriage Amendment' would place the Adventist Church in opposition to what is a civil rights—not a religious—issue... The recent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, the Canadian courts, and the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court have nothing to do with religious freedom or religious rites."⁷⁸

Adventist Schools and Colleges

By the mid-1990s, Adventist colleges had moved away from witch hunts focused on suspected gay students to policies of "don't ask, don't tell." In part, this is because they have gotten more accustomed to the presence of some openly gay students, but another ingredient is that they can no longer afford to lose tuition income. However, students found in compromising situations are still likely to face expulsion or perhaps some lesser form of discipline. Attitudes vary from one college to another. For example, in 1997 La Sierra University, in Southern California, asked a lesbian couple, who had been kissing and caressing one another around the campus, to be more discreet. This was a dramatic change from the automatic removal of yesteryear. The following year, it accepted a former Adventist and self-identified lesbian who planned to seek ordination in the gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Church into its M.A. in religion program.⁷⁹

Some colleges have gay support groups among students. These depend on the presence of support among the faculty and a secure administration, but especially on the presence of students with the courage to act. The visibility of each group rises and falls as active students graduate and newcomers become involved. The first such group was formed by two Hispanic students at Pacific Union College in the late 1980s; it faded after the two founding leaders graduated. By 1996, there were more substantial and active groups at Walla Walla College in Washington state and at Columbia Union College in Maryland, near the District of Columbia. Others formed at La Sierra in 1998 and at Southern Adventist University more recently.⁸⁰

Although public surveys suggest that younger people are generally more accepting of gays and lesbians than the older generations, students on Adventist campuses are more conservative than average, so gay students there face mixed reactions if they “come out.” In 2000, the *Student Movement* at Andrews University reported the results of a survey of 111 students who were asked how the Adventist Church should treat homosexuals: 55, almost exactly 50 percent, chose the option “excommunicate them.”⁸¹ A previously closeted gay student wrote a letter to the editor in which he “came out” and commented that he had concluded “there is no possible channel for talking about homosexuality on campus.”⁸²

Loma Linda University, the site of the Adventist Medical School and other related programs, has long had a reputation of being especially inhospitable to gay and lesbian students. In September 2000, its president, Lyn Behrens, declared in an interview with a local newspaper that faculty were fired and students expelled if caught or suspected of breaking the university rules banning

homosexual conduct. Student records were marked that the dismissal was because of immorality, and they were not given supporting letters or help in finding other schools. When this came to the attention of the American Civil Liberties Union, it warned the LLU administration that such policies could violate a new state antidiscrimination law that went into effect in January 2001.⁸³ When its letter of warning was ignored, the ACLU decided to focus attention on the university. It placed a follow-up article in the newspaper in February 2001.⁸⁴ This caused a furor on campus because it coincided with LLU's reaccreditation process. The administration felt vulnerable at this time because the university had earlier experienced problems with accreditation. When Ben Kemen, a former faculty member fired earlier because of his sexual orientation, showed members of the university administration a notice on the ACLU Web site that invited persons who had experienced discrimination and harassment at LLU to approach them, and informed them that more than twenty had already come forward and were willing to bring charges and testify, the university's leadership agreed to protect homosexual faculty and students who did not practice homosexuality, and to help others, when found, to relocate to other schools.⁸⁵

Nevertheless, in an August 2002 article in the *Adventist Review*, the LLU vice president for diversity reported being asked about the university's position on sexual orientation after making a presentation on health care and diversity at a national conference. His answer had been "Loma Linda has one standard applicable to both hetero- and homosexual persons: celibacy before marriage; monogamy within marriage." In response to another question, he had added that Loma Linda does not knowingly hire practicing homosexuals or extend benefits to their partners, but

that there are no witch-hunts.⁸⁶ Loma Linda University has not yet become a welcoming environment for gay and lesbian Adventists.

In spite of indications of change at Adventist educational institutions reviewed here, faculty, and especially biblical scholars, have remained afraid that their careers could be damaged if they published their positive conclusions about homosexuality. Kinship has invited many such scholars to discuss what the Bible says about sexuality at its Kampmeetings since 1980. This was a new topic for almost all of them, but their presentations showed a remarkable degree of agreement that the Scriptures do not address sexual orientation and that homosexual Adventists are called to the same standards as heterosexuals—to faithfulness within their relationships. It would have been very helpful to the debate within the Church if these scholars had published their conclusions. However, until recently, the only one to do so published under a pseudonym in the *Kinship Connection*, which meant that his article had no opportunity to make a broader impact within Adventist circles.⁸⁷ The current volume is therefore a major breakthrough.

Congregations and Pastors

Given the negativity of the Adventist Church's official statements, the diversity of voices within it, and the bitter debates within society about civil rights for homosexuals, to what extent have Adventist congregations and pastors in the United States and Canada become caring and welcoming toward homosexuals? In 1992, an article published in *Insight* concluded that "Homosexuals, as long as they are not practicing homosexuals, can be members in good and regular standing of any Seventh-day Adventist church. They can hold church offices." According

to the article, “If an alcoholic who never drinks alcohol can hold any church office, a homosexual who never practices homosexuality can hold any church office.”⁸⁸

But, in fact, there is considerable difference from one congregation to another. This was well illustrated by two interviews I completed back-to-back in Los Angeles. One of the questions on the interview schedule for pastors asked, “How many gay members do you have?” When I asked this of the pastor of a large Hispanic church, his first response was “none,” which he quickly changed to “maybe one.” He then told me of a member who had been disfellowshipped because of his homosexuality, and who had later been rebaptized because he claimed to have been “cured.” But because the members did not believe this claim, they shunned him when he attended church. The pastor did not speak to him either because, he said, this would have offended the lay leaders in the congregation. Following this interview, I made my way to a predominantly white church only a few miles away. When I asked the pastor there the same question, he told me that his youth leader, who was highly admired, was widely known to be gay and that he and his partner often sang duets in services.⁸⁹

Most Adventist churches follow an unwritten, unstable version of “don’t ask, don’t tell.” This means that it is acceptable if a gay member is single and discreet, and especially if he or she has professional stature, for a commitment to celibacy is often assumed. It is frequently acceptable for a couple to attend together as “friends,” and lesbian couples have often been able to live together, and even follow one another from one city to another as they change jobs, without raising overt suspicion. However, if a gay member is open about a same-sex relationship, severe

problems are likely to emerge. At this point, only a handful of congregations are known to be accepting of members known to be gay or lesbian. Because they are so few, and the church hierarchy has adopted a rigid, antagonistic position, the pastors of these churches have to be careful. Sadly, such accepting situations are also fragile and uncertain, for a loving pastor can be replaced by a crusader, new antagonistic members may set out to “cleanse” the church, or the conference can suddenly intervene, and in each case the previously loving community may then become poisonous.

One example of such a dramatic change occurred at San Francisco Central Church, where several gay members had found a spiritual home and also support in a ministry to reach out to members of the broader gay community. It was mentioned above that the ministry folded in 2004 when its leader moved away after his partner died. This allowed two ultraconservative newcomers to the church to change the accepting dynamic, kill the outreach program, and intimidate the remaining gays and lesbians in the congregation. Another example occurred at the North Oshawa Church in Ontario, Canada, which had supported and integrated a gay couple. Later, however, the conference intervened and, in a vicious process, a new pastor was appointed and new, compliant lay leaders elected. Both the gay couple and the former leaders were made to feel so unwelcome that they started a new, independent, congregation. The final irony was that these events so offended the United Church congregation from whom the Adventist congregation rented its facilities that it refused to continue the rental arrangement, thus leaving the restructured Adventist congregation homeless.⁹⁰

A gay or lesbian Adventist can also be left without a spiritual home if he or she needs to move to another area. In the late 1980s, a Kinship member was nominated to be head elder of his church in suburban Philadelphia. Surprised by this development, he felt it necessary to inform his pastor that he was gay, and was assured that his sexual orientation would not disqualify him; when he added that his roommate was his partner, the pastor remained steadfast. Later, the gay elder bought a house on the opposite side of the metropolitan area, and began to attend a church nearby. However, when he gave the pastor there the same information, he was disfellowshipped. He was so hurt by the experience that he exited from Adventism.⁹¹

Many Adventist pastors do not know how to minister to gay members. I have heard many complaints about derisive statements about homosexuals from the pulpit, and even insensitive jokes at their expense, from pastors who are apparently oblivious to the fact that there may be closeted lesbians and gays sitting in the pews. Some pastors have also betrayed those who have confided in them.⁹²

The evidence suggests that Adventist congregations and pastors usually offer their members conditional, rather than unconditional love. Because of this, the best way for a gay or lesbian member to survive there is to remain closeted—but this prevents strong bonds from developing because these members must try to hide who they really are. This forces them to turn instead to the gay community for genuine, caring friendships. The closet is an uncomfortable space in which to be confined. Given the negative situations that they must often endure, it is amazing how many gay Adventists remain committed to their congregations.

Homosexual Adventists around the World

Adventism has grown rapidly in recent years, especially in the developing world, resulting in a relative decline of the membership located in the United States and Canada, which now stands at only 7 percent of the total. The membership in most other parts of the developed world—Europe, Australia and New Zealand, and Japan—is quite small. Nevertheless, the Adventist Church has now become a global church, with members in almost every country, and it is especially strong in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and parts of Asia and the South Pacific Islands.

SDA Kinship has grown rapidly since 2001. In July of that year, it noted that, although it had accumulated 3,000 names in its database, it had lost contact with all but 288. However, in the four years since then, it has added 1,400 new members, and it has recruited widely because Adventists in many countries have found it after searching the Web. In 2005, its members could be found in 51 countries and 16 percent of its total lived outside the United States. Countries with active clusters of members include Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, England, the Netherlands, Brazil, Mexico, Columbia, the Philippines, South Africa, and Uganda. Europe has had its own Kampmeeting for several years, and Australia and New Zealand are planning their first. But many members are still isolated: twenty-six countries have only one each. The Internet, however, has greatly increased communication among members.⁹³

The situation of gay and lesbian Adventists in much of the developing world is grim. There are undoubtedly thousands who live in total isolation because they have never heard of Kinship or

have no means of making contact with it. Many of those who have contacted Kinship have yet to meet another gay Adventist face-to-face. Moreover, they typically confront a church even more rejecting of homosexuals than in North America, and they often live in cultures that are hostile.⁹⁴

While traveling the world doing research on international Adventism, I not only asked pastors and administrators wherever I went how many homosexual members they had, I also tried to find opportunities to meet and interview gay members personally. One in Lima, Peru, explained that he had left the Church as a youth because he had realized that it had no room homosexuals. Indeed, he was aware of many homosexuals who had been Adventists—all had exited the Church, either because it had disfellowshipped them or because they realized it had no place for them. One gay couple in Buenos Aires, Argentina, had grown up in one of the largest congregations there, but it had disfellowshipped the two after discovering their homosexuality. Still being Adventists at heart and wishing to worship God in an Adventist setting, they began to attend the headquarters church as visitors, not members. However, they were soon told explicitly that they were not welcome at services.⁹⁵

When I conducted interviews in Africa, I was almost always told that there were no homosexuals there. However, Kinship today has one hundred members in Uganda alone. About twenty of these were Adventists and the rest have come from other communions, including about ten who were Muslims: they share the experience of being cast out by their religious groups. Several, who are of school age, were expelled from their schools and homes when their sexual orientation was discovered. When I asked a gay former pastor about the impact of growing up as Adventists

on gay and lesbian Ugandans, he replied, “It is the most difficult thing you could ever think of—they tell you that you are already condemned, going to hell. No one tells you that God loves you.”⁹⁶ All of them also face a situation where homosexuality is illegal and can result in long prison sentences. That is, they face harassment and ostracism from both church and state. Another former Adventist pastor, whom I shall call Pastor Joseph, has gathered Kinship members together into a nonsectarian worshiping community. Joseph, who was also disfellowshipped after discovery of his homosexuality five years ago, spoke with excitement about finding Kinship on the Internet. A young woman assists him, leading the lesbians in separate activities. Pastor Joseph believes that God has called him to minister to homosexuals, especially Adventist homosexuals, in Uganda. He says that many gay Adventists remain hidden in the Church, living miserable closeted lives. However, all discovered, or even suspected, have been disfellowshipped—often secretly. He mentioned that some gay Adventists have committed suicide after being discovered.⁹⁷

AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was first diagnosed in 1981, and it was initially known as Gay-Related Immuno-deficiency Disorder (GRID) because it was first found among gay men in America. At the first Adventist conference that focused on the disease, sponsored in 1990 by the *Adventist Review* and Sligo Church in suburban Washington D.C., Fritz Guy challenged Adventists: “It would seem that responding to AIDS would be a natural for Adventism, because we claim that healing and caring are part of our mission, and because a sexually transmitted disease is immediately relevant to our understanding of the wholeness of man.”⁹⁸

In fact, however, church leaders were slow to recognize that AIDS impinged on Adventism. Since it was a gay disease, they saw it as God's judgment on willful sinners and a sign that the end of the world was imminent. That is, they were repelled, and frozen in inaction, because of their own homophobia. While the disease raged and gay Adventists died, the General Conference broadened the Adventist definition of adultery to include homosexual behavior as a legitimate ground for divorce, and it sued SDA Kinship in an attempt to force it to remove the part of its name that identified it with Adventism. When *Message*, the missionary magazine addressed to African-Americans, published a cluster of articles that dealt with AIDS, it omitted any reference to homosexuality and drug abuse, fearing that this could be interpreted as approval of such lifestyles.⁹⁹

Neither did the hospitals in Adventism's large hospital system in the United States go out of their way to treat people with AIDS (PWAs). Indeed, its flagship hospital, Loma Linda University Medical Center, became the object of special criticism following reports of neglect and demeaning behavior toward PWAs. The reasons given to explain this pattern included fear of infection, moral disgust with the patients, and the risk of financial problems attendant on providing care for patients who often lacked medical insurance, yet often required long stays in hospitals.¹⁰⁰

This pattern created a striking contrast with the role that Adventist hospitals played during the polio epidemic of the 1950s, when they had stood at the forefront. Indeed, their work among children who had contracted the disease so impressed the members of a prominent Ohio family

that they donated a four-hundred-bed hospital, the Charles F. Kettering Memorial Hospital in suburban Dayton, to the Church. Although the Church regarded the children as innocents, it saw those infected with AIDS differently.

Adventism's major response to the AIDS epidemic was to affirm its stance against "sexual immorality." The epidemic never became a focus during all the hype about "The Caring Church." There was no systematic education of clergy or church members in North America, and little coverage of it in Adventist schools, in spite of studies showing that students there were engaging in at-risk behavior.¹⁰¹ Neither did the Church raise its voice in advocacy on behalf of PWAs. Most Adventist PWAs slipped away from their congregations without putting them to the test, and their families were shamed into silence. I interviewed several mothers of PWAs during the 1980s, and not one of them had told her pastor, her Sabbath School class members, or her church friends about the cloud that hung over her family.¹⁰²

A few church members became prominent AIDS activists. One was Eunice Diaz, who became active in 1981, almost as soon as the disease was identified, while working with the Los Angeles County Health Department. Later, while employed by the Adventist White Memorial Medical Center, which is located in the major barrio in Los Angeles, she tried to bring people together around AIDS. However, the hospital administration demanded that she drop the issue because the visibility she brought the hospital created a "negative image." As a result, she resigned her position in 1988 and became a healthcare consultant for government and private agencies. Within months after she left the Adventist hospital, President George H. W. Bush appointed her

to the National Commission on AIDS, which was commissioned to advise the president and Congress on all matters pertaining to HIV and AIDS.¹⁰³ When church periodicals trumpeted this news, Diaz responded sadly: "With the minimal response of our church, I don't go around waving a flag saying I'm a Seventh-day Adventist." She explained, "The church has turned its back on the AIDS issue because it cannot come to grips with the issue of Homosexuality. The Leadership of the church is afraid of becoming identified with something it finds embarrassing."¹⁰⁴

Another prominent Adventist activist is Harvey Elder, a physician and specialist in infectious diseases at the Veterans Hospital in Loma Linda, California. When he saw his first AIDS patient in January 1983, he realized he was strongly prejudiced against homosexuals and drug users. However, as he interacted with his patients and learned their stories, he realized that if Jesus were in his place he would reach out to such patients; Elder accepted this as his calling. By the mid-1980s, he could see that a frightful epidemic was spreading, and, after meeting with Eunice Diaz, the two set out to prod the Adventist Church to become involved. Both received appointments to the General Conference AIDS Committee when it was created in 1987, and they served on it for a decade. However, they became frustrated when its meetings did not result in actions. Elder responded by launching a lonely crusade aimed at persuading Adventism to embrace the disease and PWAs.¹⁰⁵

The AIDS Committee failed in its attempt to persuade church leaders to put AIDS on the program of the General Conference Session in 1995. However, its members were given twenty

minutes to address the Annual Council of church leaders in 1996. Since many pastors interested in the disease found that speaking about it led people to suspect that either they or their children were gay, a result that created a caution that silenced others, the committee's speakers urged the General Conference to acknowledge that AIDS was a major crisis. They also asked that the Church advise couples in areas with high rates of infection to be tested before marriage and to use condoms if one of them were found to be HIV-positive. They also urged that the Adventist seminaries teach about AIDS, if only because the students needed to be prepared to preach suitable sermons at the funerals of PWAs. In spite of considerable opposition to the use of condoms under any circumstance, the leaders voted in favor of all of the items. However, there was little attempt to implement the measures, which deeply disappointed the committee members.¹⁰⁶

It is still true that the Church in North America has never really made AIDS its concern. According to the committee, "We don't have any idea of the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the North American Church. There is still so much shame and stigma that family members do not speak and those at risk do not attend church."¹⁰⁷ Although Adventist hospitals now treat PWAs—as those with any other disease—Elder is "not aware of any SDA hospital that has made AIDS a priority."¹⁰⁸ When the Health Department of the General Conference sponsored a conference on AIDS at Andrews University just before the General Conference Session in June 2005, only two of the one hundred attendees were from North America. A survey of the churches here, in an attempt to discover levels of interest in the topic, found that AIDS was not seen as a

major problem when compared to other medical problems. Only about 20 percent of respondents expressed some interest, the majority from black congregations.¹⁰⁹

An AIDS epidemic broke out in Africa shortly after the disease was identified in the United States. Sexual contact also transmitted it, but this time transmission was primarily heterosexual. In 1990, I interviewed Bekele Heye, president of the Eastern African Division of the Adventist Church, where AIDS was rampant, and at that time he declared that “AIDS is not an Adventist issue!”¹¹⁰ This was because he associated it with sexual promiscuity, and since the Church forbade that, he was not interested in the disease. The lack of interest no doubt contributed to the fact that I had found Adventist hospitals in his division cavalier about the risk of spreading the contagion through the use of untested blood supplies and through reusing needles when I visited in 1988–89. Heye also ignored the fact that thousands of new members were pouring into the Church there, and he could not speak to their sexual habits before their baptism. Indeed, I also stumbled onto considerable evidence of sexual promiscuity among church members and pastors during my three research-related visits to Africa. Heye’s attitude was therefore totally unrealistic.

As late as 1996, in an article titled “AIDS and the Church in Africa,” Saleem Farag, former long-term head of the Health Department in the East African Division, and Joel Musvosvi, ministerial secretary of the division, made no mention that Adventists had AIDS or that the disease had affected the Church. Neither was there acknowledgment that African Adventists were often highly promiscuous. Instead, the authors referred to U.S. data and recommended emphasis on morality and evangelism opportunities among PWAs.¹¹¹

The General Conference AIDS Committee had chosen to focus its efforts on education to prevent the spread of the disease in the developing world, and thus on promoting “moral behavior” there. This focus allowed church leaders once again to avoid dealing with homosexuals, for AIDS in these regions was found primarily among heterosexuals. However, with the evidence that an epidemic was galloping through Africa, it started to dawn on church leaders that AIDS was just another disease rather than God’s judgment on homosexuality. Nevertheless, the Church took a long time to realize that the infection rate among Adventists in Africa was high. In fact, General Conference president Robert Folkenberg did not realize that the Church was infected until Elder warned him that a significant number of pastors there were infected and Folkenberg himself saw firsthand during a subsequent visit to Africa that pastors and midlevel church administrators were dying.¹¹² Alan Handysides, current head of the Department of Health at the General Conference, gained the attention of administrators when he pointed out that the cost of medical care for one church employee with AIDS equals the salaries of four or five pastors.¹¹³ Only recently have church leaders in Africa acknowledged that multiple sex partners, incest, and rape are major problems within the church there.¹¹⁴ Independent studies show that the average number of sex partners that African Adventists have is only slightly lower than for people in the general population. Adventists’ discouragement of the use of condoms, primarily because of Saleen Farag’s views while health director in the East African Division and support he received from the General Conference, made the situation even more dangerous. Africans tend to see things in black-and-white terms, and ultraconservatives among them coined slogans such as “conduct not condoms.” Only now is this view starting to change. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) has helped, partly by introducing a new slogan, “Protection for People with an

Unregenerate Heart.”¹¹⁵ General Conference president Jan Paulsen recently endorsed the use of condoms at an AIDS Conference in Africa.¹¹⁶

When I visited South Africa and Zimbabwe in 1999, I found churches in Swaziland that had only women and children members because their husbands were away working in the mines. Pastors there told me that the men returned once a year to see their wives and “give them AIDS,” which many had contracted as a result of active sexual lives while away.¹¹⁷ In Zimbabwe, I saw the results of a confidential survey among unmarried members of the largest Adventist congregation in Bulawayo, where more than 80 percent of the males and 75 percent of the females admitted to being sexually active. I was dismayed to learn that the promise of confidentiality had been broken for respondents who had admitted to having had a homosexual experience.¹¹⁸

Handysides became head of the Health Department at the General Conference in 1998. By the following year, he realized that AIDS was an enormous problem for the Church because of the large number of members in Africa, where the epidemic was worst. He pushed to have an AIDS office established in Africa and headquartered in Johannesburg. Since then, the office has worked to persuade Adventist universities in Africa to teach a course on AIDS in their ministerial training programs as both a warning and a call to minister to PWAs, to make every Adventist Church an AIDS support center where PWAs can sew and bake goods for sale, and to help reduce transmission of AIDS from mother to child through testing and treating. However, the director’s shoestring budget severely hampers his efforts.¹¹⁹

Elder's crusade has taken him to Africa many times since 1989, and he has endeavored to raise the consciousness of the Church there about the epidemic. In 1991, he designed an AIDS course currently being taught in four of the African Adventist universities, because he felt that too little was being said to the Church youth. "I fervently hope that [the course] changes the attitude about the infected, and helps the students realize what are dangerous behaviors," he told me. "When it comes to protection, being an Adventist does not work nearly as well as a condom!"¹²⁰ Handysides concurs: he explained that HIV/AIDS challenges some beliefs that Adventists have about their purity, such as the assumption that they will not be infected by such an epidemic.¹²¹

An Adventist AIDS conference in Harare in 2003 represented a turning point, at least in acknowledging that Adventism had been slow to respond to the epidemic, that many Adventists were infected, and that those who had contracted the disease frequently faced stigmatization in their churches.¹²² Pardon Mwansa, president of the division, bravely acknowledged that a member of his family was infected with AIDS. He insisted that Adventists acknowledge the disease as their problem. Elder had demanded that the conference schedule a separate meeting for union presidents and health educators, and that these meet with Adventist PWAs. As a result of Elder's urging, presidents who attended the meeting confessed to the PWAs that they had sinned against them by lying to them about God and about them to their members.¹²³

The Adventist Church is learning to respond to heterosexual Africans who transmit AIDS through multiple partnering as it has come to realize the extent to which Adventists are infected. However, it continues to do next to nothing about the disease in the United States because it

started as a gay disease there—and it continues to reject both gay Adventists who put themselves at risk of contracting AIDS, as well as those who live in committed relationships as equally promiscuous.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to test both the fit of the slogan, “The Caring Church,” for Adventism and the extent to which the hope of General Conference president Jan Paulsen that it be a “welcoming church” has been realized in treatment of homosexual members. As measured here, the Adventist Church fails the test because it has proven itself more concerned with rules and image than with the needs of its people.

Despite the failure of the “change” program it supported and the sexual exploitation of young, fragile counselees by its director, church leaders helped restore him to a place where he could resume his activities, and it continued to insist that only homosexuals who struggle to change their orientation will be accepted. The prejudice of these leaders led them to sue SDA Kinship in order to distance themselves from gay Adventists, and it prevented them from seeing the relevance of the AIDS epidemic for Adventism, especially in places that initially considered it a “gay disease.” There is currently growing awareness in the Church of homosexuality as well as gay and lesbian Adventists, but a profound distaste for and fear of them also exists, and this has fostered growing polarization over the issue.

It is no surprise that context strongly influences and shapes churches, like any other human collectivity. It is disappointing, however, that the Adventist Church has so largely succumbed to the example of the American Religious Right. Adventists have taken a strong position against majoritarian rule in religious matters ever since their founding mother prophesied that they would face persecution, especially in the United States, and attempts at legislation during the 1880s that would have made Sunday sacred by law seemed to indicate that the fulfillment of that prediction was at hand. The logic of the long-held position should surely be that government may not refuse equal status and protection to any group. However, although Adventists have come to support equal civil rights in the areas of race and gender, they generally continue to withhold support for such rights in relation to sexual orientation. Indeed, they have followed the Religious Right's attempts to take away recent gains.

There have been some positive shifts, however, at the local level, where individual cases are most often addressed. These shifts seem isolated and incremental because of diverse situations. Nevertheless, in the years since the first Kinship Kampmeeting, a remarkable change has occurred in the tone of stories that newcomers tell about growing up gay in the Adventist Church. For the first few years of Kinship, these were known as "horror stories." Such a designation is rarely apt today in North America or much of the rest of the developed world, even though the stories often still reflect pain, confusion, isolation, and rejection. A number of factors have made a remarkable impact: the very existence of SDA Kinship; the fact that gay Adventists currently find it more easily and at a younger age; the ready availability of information on the Web; and changing attitudes in society and church, especially among

Adventist parents. This is not yet the case in the developing world, where both church and society still typically reject gays and lesbians and where “horror stories” still abound.

Kinship continues to make an extraordinary contribution in the name of the Church, sometimes to the latter’s chagrin. Kinship is reaching out with increasing effectiveness to young Adventists who have questions about their sexuality; no longer does it need to send mailings to Adventist campuses because most young homosexuals find it easily on the Web. It nurtures gay Adventists spiritually, encourages them to think through the ethics of being a gay Christian, and fosters stable relationships among them. Its members have proved, even through the long ordeal of the suit that the General Conference brought against Kinship, astonishingly tenacious with their Adventist heritage.

Yet the main message of Adventism to its gay and lesbian members—a slogan that appears in some form in almost all official statements that bear on homosexuality, and is repeated again and again in publications and sermons—is that Adventists “love the sinner, but hate the sin.” This attitude, in fact, judges the faith and lives of the people whose sin is “hated,” and may best be translated as “we will truly love you only when and if you meet our standards.” It thus offers conditional rather than unconditional love. This is neither welcoming nor caring.

Notes and References

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2. Jan Paulsen, report of sermon at General Conference Session, *Adventist News Network*, July 9, 2005.
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7. Ibid.
8. This statement is based on personal stories told at SDA Kinship Kampmeetings.
9. Kenneth Wood, "Power to Counter All Deviation," *Adventist Review*, July 15, 1971, 2; and Dan Day, "What about Homosexuality?" *Insight*, Dec. 14, 1971.
10. Miriam Wood, "Anita Bryant and Homosexuality," *Adventist Review*, Oct. 6, 1977; Robert Pierson, press statement, June 24, 1977, quoted in Pearson, *Millennial Dreams*, 248; and

“Annual Council Passes Action on Conciliation, Divorce, and Remarriage,” *Adventist Review*, Feb. 17, 1977, 18.

11. Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1977), 232. When he found this, Larry Hallock, a Kinship member, conducted a long correspondence with the Ellen G. White Estate, which eventually agreed that the quotations used under this caption had been taken out of context. It promised to change the caption if there were ever another edition (Hallock to White Estate). However, when the estate published *Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery, and Divorce* in 1989, it included a heading “Homosexuality” with out-of-context passages where White had referred to Sodom.

12. C. E. Wittschiebe, *God Invented Sex* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1974), 187; and S. Kubo, *Theology and Ethics of Sex* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1980), 83.

13. Colin Cook, “God’s Grace to the Homosexual,” parts 1, 2, and 3, *Insight*, Dec. 7, 14, 21, 1976.

14. Colin Cook, “The Church’s Responsibility to Homosexuals,” *Insight*, Dec. 16, 1980, 9–11.

15. Interviews.

16. Neal Wilson, interview, *Walla Walla College Alumni Review*, winter 1981; and idem, personal conversation with the author, May 1981.

17. Ronald Lawson, notes from participant at La Guardia Airport meeting, May 1980, in author’s possession. Those present at the meeting, which took place at LaGuardia Airport, in New York City, were Eva, Professor James Cox, and the author (representing Kinship).

18. Anonymous, "Growing Up Gay Adventist," *Spectrum* (May 1982):38–48. One of the five clergy invited by Kinship (Londis) knew at that time that his brother was gay. Two others later discovered they had a gay sibling and gay son, and then thanked Kinship for the preparation that the Kampmeeting experience had provided in helping them relate to that family member. I was the one who compiled the selection of personal stories that appeared in *Spectrum*: the editor insisted that it appear without attribution.

19. The firing of theologian Desmond Ford, whose trial occurred immediately following the Kampmeeting; what became known as the Davenport Affair, where church leaders had invested the funds of church entities in a pyramid scheme operated by Doctor Davenport that went bust; and the research of Walter Rae, an Adventist pastor, which suggested that Ellen White had plagiarized other sources when preparing her "inspired" writings.

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21. Duncan Eva to Josephine Benton, Jan. 13, 1981, in author's possession.

22. "The Church and the Homosexual," *Adventist Review*, Apr. 26, 1984.

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27. *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, Mar. 25, 1986.

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29. Elvin Benton, "Adventists Fact Homosexuality," *Spectrum* (May 1982):32–38; Anonymous, "Growing Up Gay Adventist"; and Colin Cook, "Church Funds Program for Homosexuals," *Spectrum* 12.3 (May 1982):46–48.

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39. "NAD Leaders Comment on Colorado News Stories," *Adventist Review*, Dec. 14, 1995, 6.

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