

Homosexuals Can Be Made Whole!

Endtime Issues No. 57

14 November 2000

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

During the past few months Americans have been bombarded by political speeches from presidential candidates and their supporters. One aspect of the political campaign that caught my attention, is the constant polling of public opinion by market research specialists. On the basis of public opinion polling, political candidates are advised on how to sell themselves and their programs.

Both presidential candidates have repeatedly spoken on what appear to be the popular issues at this time: social security, health insurance, education, lower taxes, cleaner environment, and continuing prosperity. The result of the thousand of campaign speeches delivered at a crescendo rate as the voting date of November 7 drew near, is that the Americans are equally divided on the choice of their future president. The recounting of votes taking place in Florida at the time of the writing of this newsletter, shows that ultimately a few hundred votes will determine who will be the 57th President of the United States.

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

While watching the animated political campaign for a new American President, I could not help but reflect on the relevance of the political process to the life of the church. For the sake of brevity, I will make only two observations.

First, public opinion can easily be swayed by promising people what they want—a fact that politicians know all too well. Unfortunately, what people want, is not necessarily always what they need. For example, giving back to the people the Federal surplus income in the form of lower taxes or refunds, may not be in the best national interest. Using up the surplus may make it difficult to pay back the national debt and to meet unexpected emergencies.

Church Growth Based on Supply and Demand

What is true in the political life, can also be true in the life of the church. Many Christians want the church to give them what they want: soothing sermons, entertaining programs, physically stimulating beat music, good schooling for their children, delicious fellowship dinners, great social programs, professional counseling services, etc. Those churches which best identify the services people want and succeed in providing them, grow and sometimes become mega-churches with thousands of members.

Church growth based on market research, raises serious questions, because the mandate of the Church is to give people what they need, and not necessarily what they want. What Christians need today is not always what they want to hear. For example, Christians need to be constantly reminded of the sacredness of God's Holy Day, of the sanctity of life and of their marital commitment. They need to be instructed on the Biblical distinction between sacred music for worship and secular music for entertainment. They need to be reminded to accept and respect everybody, whether rich or poor, black or white, educated or uneducated. They need to be taught how to live "sober, upright and godly lives" in a secularly minded and perverse generation (Titus 2:12).

A church that addresses these issues and upholds high moral standards, may not be popular. Its growth may be slow and may never become a mega-church. But Christ never promised that the Church He founded would become a popular movement. The

history of the Early Church is largely a story of a moral minority being ridiculed and persecuted by an immoral pagan majority deeply offended by the exemplary lifestyle and noble teachings of Christ's followers.

The point is that the church is not like a political party that can construct a platform based on the expectation of the masses. To tailor the message of the Gospel and the programs of the church to meet popular demands, means to adulterate the mission and message of the church.

The Swaying of Public Opinion

A second observation made during the presidential campaign is the swaying of public opinion by charismatic speakers. After the Republican National convention, there was an immediate increase in the support for the Republican part. Few weeks later, after the Democratic National Convention there was an immediate substantial increase in the public support for the Democratic party. This is not a new phenomenon. In ancient Rome eloquent "ORATORS" were hired by those in power to influence public opinion. Eloquent speakers moved the masses to support the programs of their rulers.

The influencing of public opinion by eloquent speakers, which is so characteristic of the political process, is not foreign to what happens in the church life. I recall what happened few years ago when the issue of women ordination came up for a vote at our university campus church. Before the vote the pastor preached a compelling sermon on the Biblical role distinctions in the home and the church. The point of his sermon was that ordaining women to serve in the headship role of elders, would violate the role distinctions between men and women established at creation. When the vote was taken, the congregation voted overwhelming against ordaining women as "Elders."

Gradually, however, the pro-ordination movement gained momentum on our campus. It was not long before the same pastor sensed the need to be politically correct by preaching a different sermon. This time he argued that after much study and prayer, the Lord had revealed to him that role distinctions apply only to the home, not to the church. The main reason given is that the church is not a family, but a service organization where leadership is assigned on the basis of competence, and not of gender.

This "new revelation" caught me by surprise, because the Bible clearly teaches that the church as "the household of God" (1 Tim 3:15), and leadership in the church largely depend upon the tried virtues of fatherhood: "For if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church?" (1 Tim 3:5). At any rate, when the vote was taken after the second sermon, the majority of the same congregation voted in favor of women's ordination.

The point I wish to make is, like in a political campaign, all too often the opinion of church members is influenced by charismatic speakers, rather than by personal investigation of Biblical teachings. This trend reminds me of what a neurologist told me sometimes ago. He said that only 5% of the people do the thinking in our society. Of the remaining 95%, 15% think that they think, and 80% do anything but think.

The inability or unwillingness to examine the teachings of popular speakers in the light of Scripture, helps us to understand why some many people accept heretical teachings. For example, recently a good number of Adventist members have embraced the New Covenant theology promoted by such former Adventist pastors and Bible teachers, such as Dale Ratzlaff, Clay Peck, Richard Frederick, Harry Krueger, and others. These former Adventists were carried away by the charisma of these men, who misled them into believing that the Sabbath is part of the Old Covenant, no longer binding upon Christians today. Unfortunately, these people failed to follow the example of the Bereans, who, we are told, "examined the scripture daily to see if these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

My appeal to all the readers of this newsletter, is to follow the example of the Bereans in reserving the right to test the validity of any new teaching in the light of the normative authority of Scripture. The eloquence or the spirituality of any leader, is not a safe criteria for determining what is truth. Let us apply our minds to diligently studying the Word of God in order to discover for ourselves the beautiful truths contained therein.

UPDATE ON WEEKEND SEMINARS

Capacity crowds have attended the recent weekend seminars. On November 3-4, the Lynwood SDA Church in Spokane, Washington, was packed with people who came from near and far. Some had driven 4 or more hours from such places as Seattle, WA and Kalispell, MT. Among those who attended the SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, there was also the Pentecostal Minister who is currently renting the Lynwood SDA church on Sunday. He showed a genuine interest to reexamine the Sabbath for himself and for his congregation. I donated him a gift copy of THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE.

Pastor Roger Cain was thrilled to see his Lynwood SDA Church filled to capacity, especially since he is working hard to reclaim many of the members who recently left the church. Few years ago the Lynwood SDA Church had about 600 members, but, when Pastor Cain took over the church two years ago, there were only about 50 members attending on the Sabbath.

A major factor that contributed to the decline in church membership, according to Pastor Cain, was the introduction of a rock band and beat music for worship service. Many members were offended by the music and left the church. Eventually the people promoting celebration worship style left the church to organize a new congregation. Nobody seems to know what has happened to them. Pastor Cain is working hard to reclaim many of the former members. About 200 members are now attending the Lynwood SDA Church. Twice as many attended the seminar.

In a future newsletter I will update you on the devastating effects of rock music in Adventist churches in North America and overseas. I just received today several reports from North America and a very informative report from Australia. Initially I intended to share these reports in this newsletter, but they would lengthen it considerably.

This past Sabbath, November 10-11, it was truly a memorable experience for me to present my SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR at the Atlanta North SDA Church before a capacity crowd of over 500 persons. Chairs were brought in to accommodate the overflow. The church pastor, Michael Leno, told me that only once before he had seen so many people. The response was truly overwhelming.

Sunday Services in Some Adventist Churches

A question that several members of the Atlanta North SDA Church asked me this past Sabbath was regarding the Sunday morning worship services conducted in some Adventist churches. The question came up because their previous pastor is now planting a new Adventist church in Atlanta by holding a regular Sunday morning worship service, in addition to that of the Sabbath.

What this pastor is doing is not unique. During the past few months I have received reports from different parts of North America about SDA churches conducting regular Sunday morning services. I have been repeatedly asked to comment about this practice. So far I ignored these reports because I felt that they represented few isolated cases. Evidently, that is no longer the case. More Adventist churches are adopting Sunday worship service, in addition to that of the Sabbath, to facilitate the outreach to their communities.

In my view there is nothing wrong with holding meetings on Sunday as part of a temporary outreach endeavor, like an evangelistic campaign or various types of seminars. The problem arises when Sunday worship services become a regular feature of an Adventist church. The predictable result is that gradually the Sunday morning service will displace and replace the Sabbath service. This is the lesson of history.

As a church historian, I am reminded that Sunday worship began, especially in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire, as an addition to Sabbath worship. Gradually, however, Sunday worship replaced completely the Sabbath worship, especially since it was more convenient to go to church on Sunday—the day that was made a civil holiday by Constantine in A. D. 321.

History often repeats itself. The current promotion of Sunday worship in addition to Sabbath worship, is no exception. An example is recent adoption of Sunday worship by several former Adventist pastors and Bible teachers, who have embraced the so-called “New Covenant Theology.” These men initially promoted the introduction of Sunday worship in addition to Sabbath worship. But it was not long before they moved their church services exclusively to Sunday. I predicted this development two years ago while debating some of these former Adventists. I was accused of using defamatory and scaring tactics. What has happened has proven the accuracy of my prediction. I was simply reading the current development in the light of what has happened in the past.

On the basis of the same historical perspective I dare to predict that those SDA churches that are now conducting regular Sunday worship services, in addition to Sabbath services, will eventually for convenience sake eliminate altogether church services on Saturday. How can we expect Sundaykeepers to accept the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping when they are invited to worship regularly on Sunday in an Adventist Church?

The notion of conducting a regular Sunday worship service as a way to reach Sundaykeepers who are more free and accustomed to go to church on that day, is inspired not by Scripture, but by the Willow Creek mentality. The underlying philosophy of Willow Creek is to give to people what they want. By contrast, the Biblical philosophy is to give to people what they need. Going to church on Saturday may not be popular and convenient for some, but Jesus never promised that it would be easy to follow him. The problem is that many want to wear a crown without carrying the cross.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER!

If you are looking for a special HOLIDAY GIFT for family members and friends, you may wish to consider offering them some of the timely books I have authored on vital aspects of our Christian life and faith. You will find a description of the 16 books at my web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>

Of the 16 books that I have authored, I would recommend as a Holiday Gift especially the following four:

THE MARRIAGE COVENANT: This book articulates the biblical principles for building a happy and lasting marital relationship. Many couples have told me that this book has strengthened and, in some cases, saved their marriage. Recently the book was recommended by Dr. Laura Schlessinger in her Radio Talk Show and web site.

THE CHRISTIAN AND ROCK MUSIC: This timely book defines the biblical principles to guide us in making good musical choices. A much needed book today to counteract the trend to adopt beat music for church service. You or your church can order this timely book by the case of 26 copies for only \$170.00, that is, \$6.50 per copy, instead of the regular price of \$20.00.

THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE: This book has helped many church leaders of different denominations to accept the Sabbath during the past two years. It provides compelling Biblical answers to the common arguments used to negate the Sabbath. An ideal book for sharing the Sabbath truth.

IMMORTALITY OR RESURRECTION: This book unmasks with compelling biblical reasoning the prevailing deception of conscious life after death. Over 100 scholars of different denominations have favorably reviewed this book.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER UNTIL DECEMBER 15, 2000:

Until December 15, 2000 you can order **TWO BOOKS**, same or different titles, for **ONLY \$25.00**, postage paid, instead of their regular price of \$40.00.

You can also order the **COMPLETE SET OF MY 16 BOOKS FOR ONLY \$120.00**, postage paid even for overseas, instead of the regular price of \$305.00. You can find a description and sample chapters of each book at my web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>

You can order by phone by calling us at (616) 471-2915 or by email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>. If you prefer to mail us your order by regular mail, our address is: BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of my upcoming weekend SEMINARS on the Sabbath, Second Advent, and Christian Lifestyle. Each seminar consists of three presentations: Friday evening at 7:30 p. m., Sabbath morning at 11:00 a. m., and Sabbath afternoon at 4:00 p. m. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area during the coming year. I am in the process of developing my calendar of speaking engagements for 2001 and I still have few open weekends.

November 17-18: Rally In Basel, Switzerland

Location: Adventhaus, Rümelinbachweg 60, 4054 Basel (across from Rialto, next to the zoo).

For information call Pastor Claude Richli in Basel at (0041) 61 281 77 81

November 23: Meeting With Clergy In Birmingham, England

Location: The meeting with the clergy will take on the campus of the **Federation of the Selly Oak Colleges, in Birmingham**. These are a group of colleges run by varying denominations and Missionary Societies in association with Birmingham University. The meeting is sponsored by the Center for Black and White Christian Partnership. My plan is to make a confessional presentation on how the Sabbath has helped me to conceptualize and internalize Christ's presence, peace, and rest. Rev. Garnet Parris will respond to my presentation. A questions/answers session will follow.

For information call Pastor Malcolm Watson at (01564) 771-353

November 25: Rally In Manchester, England

Location: Camp Hill SDA Church

For information call Pastor Malcolm Watson at (01564) 771-353

November 26: Rally In Manchester, England

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

December 1-2: Wenatchee SDA Church

Location: 508 North Western Avenue, Wenatchee, WA 98801

For information call Pastor Dan Serns at (509) 663-4032

December 8-9: Silver Spring, Md: Round Oak Baptist Church

Location: 15812 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD.

The seminar is sponsored by the Southern Asia Adventist Association.

For information call Premi Rathan RajMy at (301) 622-3213.

A PERSONAL NOTE ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER

The many messages received about Samuel Pipim's essay on "Homosexuality and the Adventist Church," posted on ENDTIME ISSUES No. 55, have made me forcefully aware of the fact that homosexuality is a much greater problem in our Adventist Church than I had anticipated.

Reading the messages received as well as some articles published in our Adventist church papers, it would appear to me that there is a trend toward a qualified acceptance of unpracticed homosexuality. The latter is seen as compatible with Biblical teachings. The reasoning is that homosexuals do not choose to be gay. They are born that way, and consequently they should not be held responsible for their sexual orientation any more than we hold people responsible for the color of the skins.

This view is expressed, for example in the article "Are Homosexual God's Children?" published in *Adventist Review*, April 1997. The writer says: "For starters, I have learned that homosexuality is a *condition*, not a *behavior*" (p. 26). In closing the article, the writer urges the church to demonstrate love and compassion toward homosexuals, without "condemning them for an orientation over which they have no control."

The popular view that human behavior is largely, if not exclusively, predetermined by one's environment or genetic code, is incompatible with the Bible's view of the human freedom of choice. The fact that a person may have inherited or cultivated certain tendencies, does not make him/her morally unaccountable toward God or society. Were this so, God could not rightly hold every human being accountable for their conduct on the day of judgment. Yet, the Scripture affirms that "they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20).

Furthermore, the claim "I was born gay and I cannot change my attraction for people of the same sex," negates the power of the divine grace to help us "overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to sin" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671; cf. *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 175-176).

The testimony you are about to read is written by a current Adventist pastor who uses the pseudonym of Victor J Adamson, to protect his identity. He wrote his testimony largely as a response to the article "Are Homosexual God's Children?" which appeared in *Adventist Review*, April 1997. The article, as noted above, views homosexuality as a hereditary, permanent orientation that cannot be changed.

Adamson does not share this view. The story of his pilgrimage from bondage to freedom shows that by God's grace "Homosexuals Can Be Made Whole!" He concludes his testimony with the reassuring words: "To those who believe that gay people never change, may I say: "Yes, they can change. God's transforming power and grace can make them whole. This is what He did for me." I trust that you will enjoy reading this testimony. Feel free to share it with your friends.

HOMOSEXUALS CAN BE MADE WHOLE!

Victor J. Adamson (A pseudonym)

If you had asked me nine years ago why I had chosen to be gay, I would have answered you as I did countless times before, "I did not choose to be gay! I chose to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. I chose to be educated in Seventh-day Adventist Christian schools. I chose to be a student missionary. I chose to earn a degree in Theology and to graduate with honors. I chose to marry a Seventh-day Adventist young lady. I chose to have Seventh-day Adventist babies. I did not choose to be gay! I just finally came to grips with reality and accepted the fact that I was gay. I came to believe that I was born gay."

For years after my "coming out" of the closet and experiencing the devastating breakup of my home, I dared anyone to tell me that my "condition" was a matter of choice. I had made all the right "choice" in my life. While struggling with the nagging yearnings of my heart, I had prayed relentlessly that God would "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me." I wanted God to help me to love and to be in love with my wife. But, all my efforts were of no avail.

Finally, I succumbed to those nagging yearnings and fell into the "gay" life of homosexual relationships, totally convinced that my "condition," or "behavior," was not the result of my wilful choice. What Christian would willingly choose to be so radically out of sync with society, and the church? I had to be either the victim of my own environment, or just born that way.

My parents, friends, and family all thought of me as a gentle person, thoughtful and considerate of others. In their eyes I was intelligent, likeable, courteous, and talented in many areas. Most of all, I was known to be deeply spiritual.

The Tensions of My "Gay" Lifestyle

Upon entering the "gay" lifestyle, I still live up to that image, except that I was no longer "deeply spiritual." I refused to be a hypocrite. There was no way I could reconcile my homosexuality with the calling to be part of the Remnant people who love God and keep His commandments. To me the Bible was very clear in teaching that "homosexual offenders" will not enter the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9)

Looking back upon the years spent in the "gay" lifestyle, I can honestly say that my life became full of disgusting, depraved, and perverted behavior. Like every homosexual I knew, I became lustful and obsessed with sex. In public and among friends, however, I masterfully maintained the image of a decent, gentle, thoughtful, polite, considerate person, both loving and lovable.

Before returning to God, for sixteen years I blamed Him for everything wrong with my life, especially my homosexuality, because I had prayed that He would take it away, and He had not. So, I reason, It was God's fault, not my own if I was "gay."

During those self-serving years of "love," promiscuity, pleasure, self-exaltation, and self-gratification, I experienced much loneliness, misery and heartache. However, my parents and family never made me feel unloved, unappreciated, or unaccepted. In His mercy and patience, the Lord worked through my family members to reveal to me the true meaning of unconditional love toward me, a sinner, without condoning my sinful lifestyle. They manifested their unconditional love and acceptance, not only toward me, but also toward my friends and lovers. Their unconditional acceptance of me demonstrated the meaning of Jesus' words: "Neither do I condemn thee." In their loving acceptance, however, they did not dismiss the rest of Jesus, statement: "go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

Some Troubling Questions and a Dream

The unconditional acceptance of my family members eventually led me to stop blaming God for my condition. Instead, I began to look honestly at myself. After all, I thought, I can blame God all my life and still be lost. I asked myself: "What is the point is to pretend there are no consequences to my lifestyle, or that I could be saved in spite of it?" Gradually I became aware that I was deceiving myself. I needed to stop running and hiding from God, seek instead guidance in His Word.

The statement "All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan (GC 620), seem to speak to my own predicament. That was me. I had become totally overcome by Satan.

I began to think, "Wouldn't it be tragic to find myself standing some day outside the New Jerusalem, with "a good excuse." For several years I was troubled by a recurring dream in which I experienced the horror of being lost as I gazed into the face of Jesus coming in the clouds of glory. Apparently Jesus used this dream to reach out to me, a homosexual, saying, "My son, give me thine heart, before it is too late." Incidentally, since coming back to Him, I have never experienced again the nightmare of that dream!

Jesus warns us about the fate of the wicked, saying, "Depart from me, you evildoers. . . you cursed, into eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 7:23; 25:41). Tragically, the lake of fire will contain an innumerable host whom God dearly loves unconditionally. He loves them so much that He gave His only begotten Son that they need not perish. But they choose to reject the gift of eternal life. God honors their choice. The result is their eternal separation from the Source of eternal life.

The Challenge of Beginning a New Life

In childlike reasoning and logic, I prayerfully studied God's Word to find either justification for my homosexuality, or the remedy for it. Try as I might, I could not find justification anywhere in God's word for continuing my homosexual lifestyle. More I studied Scripture and more I became convinced that God designed marriage to be a union of one man with one woman, the two becoming one flesh.

The intimate relationship of a man with a man or a woman with a woman cannot fulfill God's purpose for marriage. Furthermore, the Scripture condemns same sex relationships as "abomination" (Lev 20:13), which will prevent entrance into God's Kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-10). These and other texts convinced me that there was no way for me to legitimize my homosexual lifestyle.

It was presumptuous for me to live as though I had the gift of eternal life when in reality I was knowingly earning the wages of sin "death." As I began pondering my eternal destiny, gradually I became convinced that my life had to be changed. But, I felt powerless to make that change. In retrospect, I can understand that the sense of helplessness resulting from my violating God's moral principles, was designed to awaken within me a realization of my *need for a Savior*.

In my helplessness I found reassurance in the fact that God is the omnipotent Creator and Re-Creator of our lives. Through the enlightening of His Word and the enabling power of His Spirit, I sensed that I could be cleansed and made whole. I came to realize that it does not matter whether I was born homosexual or I had chosen to become one. Every descendant of Adam is born with tendencies to sin. I gained reassurance in the promise that God's grace could enable me to overcome both inherited and cultivated sinful tendencies.

As I continued to study and pray, I sensed more and more God's unconditional love for me, though I was a homosexual. I sensed that no matter how sinful my past had

been, God could forgive and cleanse me. What I needed to do was to develop a hate for sin and a love for truth and righteousness.

I was given the assurance in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 that I could be cured of my homosexuality. Paul speaks of this very sin, among others, when he says: "And such WERE some of you [past tense]; but ye ARE washed [present tense], but ye ARE sanctified, but ye ARE justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, [How?] and by the Spirit of our God."

As I continued my self-evaluation, I came to realize more and more that I had been deceived into thinking that I was living a life of freedom, when in actuality I had been in terrible bondage. What I desperately needed, was not freedom from God's law, but freedom from the bondage of sin: my addictive sexual perversion. Such freedom became possible through the enabling power of God's grace which can bring "into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor 10:5). Thank God for His amazing grace that restored a sinner like me into the family of God and made me a productive, working member of His cause.

Perhaps the greatest challenge in beginning a new life, was convincing my Adventist fellow believers that by God's grace I was no longer a homosexual. My attitude and sexual orientation had changed. How distressing it was for me to hear ministers and laity alike discrediting my conversion experience by saying, "Sure, I believe in victory over sin. But gay people never change! I have never known anyone coming out of the gay lifestyle who has remained straight for more than two years! Beware of him and to keep your children away from him." Such critical comments reveal a lack of faith in God's power to forgive us and to cleanse penitent sinners from all sinful practices, including homosexuality.

Soul Searching Questions

The sarcastic comments I often heard from fellow believers, caused me to search my soul and frequently ask myself: "Have my feelings and emotions toward men miraculously changed upon my conversion? Have I really experienced a radical change of attitude, a psychological change in my sexual orientation? Or, do I still have the same gender orientation?"

These questions are of paramount importance for those who are sincerely seeking for deliverance from besetting sins of whatever nature. They deserve a definitive explanation. But the answer is not always easy to find, especially when someone, like myself, had undergone a traumatic experience. I terminate my relationship with the man whom I deeply loved. My feelings and emotions toward him at all had not changed, but my attitude toward the Man Jesus Christ and the teachings of His Word had radically changed.

The Struggle of a New Life

Being faced with a choice between my male lover and the Man Jesus, I decided to follow my Savior, regardless of consequences. Like the words of the popular hymn, for me it became a matter of "Trust and Obey." I began to trust my Creator, realizing that "Father truly does know best." And in this ever increasing trust, I began to obey Him in spite of my feelings and emotions, knowing that His will for me was for my own present and eternal happiness.

I accepted the biblical truth that "the just shall live by faith," not by feelings and emotions. In practicing this Biblical principle, I discovered that the right feelings and emotions did not emerge immediately. They came gradually as I learned to accept by faith the will of my Creator for my life. Had I waited until I had gained victory over my sinful inclinations before trusting and obeying Christ, then I no longer need a Savior!

As a homosexual, I needed to be saved from my sin, just as an unfaithful spouse, a thief, a murderer, or a liar need to be saved from their sins. Salvation from sin is not a human achievement, but a divine provision of grace. It is a work of work of divine therapy, reprogramming, redirection, recreation.

Leaving behind the love of my sinful life, I entered my new world as a helpless, newborn babe. As an infant begins his life with inherited tendencies to evil, I began my new life with all the same tendencies I had cultivated during my previous life. But, trusting God, my Father and Christ, my Savior, I renounced my homosexuality and submitted myself to divine directives and sought fellowship within the family of God.

One important principle that I learned was to “protect my new environment.” The inherited and cultivated evil tendencies are somewhat like a ravenous lion seeking whom he may devour. That “beast” must be starved while another, the Lamb of God, is to be nurtured and cultivated. Evil must be replaced with good. Perverted feelings and emotions can be gradually starved out and replaced by right feelings and emotions when we follow the instructions laid out for us in the “Operator’s Manual” given us by the Creator of sexuality.

The new struggle I faced when I decided to turn my back upon everything and everyone I had known, reminded me of the struggle I faced when fleeing from God earlier in my life. I had to separate myself totally from the gay scene and lifestyle, fleeing from them for my very life, as it were fleeing from doomed Sodom and Gomorrah.

I started a new life surrounding myself with everything I knew to be right for me. These were not necessarily everything I wanted around me! But, no Christian can afford to depend on what feels right. Neither could I! The spiritual mind is to rule over and bring into subjection the lusts of the flesh.

Guarding the Avenues of My Mind.

I learned the importance of guarding well the avenues to my mind, by not placing myself in the path of temptation. This entails being careful over what I watch, what I read, and what I listen to. It requires a daily determination not to give Satan any advantage over me. Like the apostle Paul, I, too, must “die daily” (1 Cor 15:21), and continue to “pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27).

And when Satan plants those impure thoughts and desires into the heart, (and he does...!), God’s enabling grace is sufficient for my struggle against homosexuality. His grace enables me, as Paul puts it, to bring “into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). I practice using my power of choice to “*turn the page,*” and to “*change the subject.*” God helps me do this, when I place my will in His hands.

The biblical injunction to “Submit yourself therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7), has become very meaningful to me. When tempted, I repeat the words of Philippians 4:8: “Whatsoever things are true, ...honest, ...just, whatsoever things are pure, ...lovely, ...of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

Another principle I learned to put into practice is to accept with gratitude the gift of a female companion offered to me by God. In the Garden of Eden, God created a woman, not a man, as an helpmate for Adam. In His infinite wisdom and love God gave man the gift of a woman to be by his side. There was no better alternative. God did not make a mistake. He knew what He was doing when He designed a female partner for man. Can we not trust God with His own creative plan?

God went to great lengths to provide for man the wonderful gift of a woman. Some of men have turned up their noses at this gift, and, instead, burn in their own lust for one another (Rom 1:27). I was one of them. Did God stop loving me? No! Of course not! He

continued to love me though I chose to use my sexuality to love a man rather than a woman. It is with great disappointment that the Creator sees men perverting the intended use of their sexuality.

It is not a sin for a person to live without the gift of a marital partner. For different reasons many people end up living their entire lives without the pleasures of marriage. But it is wrong for people to indulge in sexual behavior outside of marriage. And it is wrong for us men to pervert the gift of our sexuality which was designed for a procreational and relational functions. It is equally wrong for a woman to lust and covet after another woman whom God has created for man. It has taken time for me to learn to be grateful to God for what He has provided for my best interest.

Overcoming Homosexuality

The secret to overcoming the sin of homosexuality, or any other besetting sin, is to be found in helping someone else to overcome sin. This premise is based upon the Biblical principle for happiness: self-less-ness. True happiness comes in helping someone else to be happy: Jesus first, Others second, Yourself last, creates the acronym for JOY.

Joseph, far from home in the land of his captivity, never forgot this principle. "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" he cried as he fled from the temptation of Potiphar's wife. His concern was not "fear of punishment," nor was it "hope of reward." No; his faithfulness in obedience resulted in disgrace and confinement in a dungeon. Joseph's concern was a total self-less interest in the will and honor of his God; regardless of consequences. He also loved and honored his master Potiphar, putting his master's interests above his own.

All the heavenly host are focused upon the happiness and well-being of others, including you and me. Except for sinful man, all unfallen creatures live for the benefit of the rest of creation. This principle of self-less-ness has been of great value in the process of reconditioning myself from my former homosexual lifestyle. It has helped me to abandon the old practice of self-gratification, seeking instead fulfillment within the sacred realm of marriage.

By practicing these and other Biblical principles, I have become totally comfortable in my new life as a heterosexual. The thought of returning to my old life has become foreign and repugnant to me. Submitting myself to divine reconditioning and therapy has truly resulted in a new creation. And I rejoice in the words of Paul about my new life in Christ: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor 5:17)

Why should Christians doubt that this promise can be true for the homosexual as well as for anyone else? My new victorious heterosexual life is a testimony to the power of God to save people from the depth of their sins. And I praise Him every day for demonstrating the power of His grace in forgiving, cleansing, and renewing my life.

By cleansing and renewing my life, the Savior has commissioned me in the same words He spoke to the cleansed demoniac in Mark 5:19, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Accordingly, I love to tell the story through the spoken word and my published autobiography *That Kind Can Never change! Can They?* of how the Lord has rescued me from the depths of degradation, into a new life of service for Him.

This story of my pilgrimage from bondage to freedom, is designed to encourage not only homosexuals seeking divine deliverance, but also anyone struggling with besetting sins of whatever nature. In this book I share those Biblical principles which have helped me to gain victory over homosexuality and now sustain me in heterosexuality.

In closing I wish to testify that my life was changed not through human reasoning, logic, philosophy and counseling, but through the Word of God and the saving grace of Jesus Christ. By His grace, this homosexual prodigal child has been delivered from his sin and redirected into a productive and fruitful new life of service as a Seventh-day Adventist minister of the gospel. I am happily married with children.

I praise the Lord for His compassion, mercy and marvelous power manifested in saving even me from my life of sin! To those who believe that gay people never change, may I say: "Yes, they can change. God's transforming power and grace can make them whole. This is what He did for me."

A THANK YOU NOTE

Thank you for taking time in your busy schedule to read this lengthy newsletter. If these Bible studies enrich your understanding and experience of Biblical truths, be sure to invite your friends to subscribe to our ENDTIME ISSUES newsletter. All what they need to do is to email me a request at: <sbacchiocchi@qtm.net> As a result of your promotional endeavors over 12,000 people are already benefiting from these Bible studies.

Contact Information

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.
Retired Professor of Theology and Church History
Andrews University
4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103

Phone (616) 471-2915 Fax (616) 471-4013
E-mail: sbacchiocchi@qtm.net or sbacchiocchi@csi.com
Web site: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com>