



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Conversations about Sex

Thank you for publishing the congenial exchange between Ellen Brodersen and George W. Brown regarding Christianity and homosexuality (spring 2006). As these conversations continue, I hope that we can consider the following:

1. "The homosexual lifestyle" does not exist. Homosexual men and women arrange their lives in just as many different ways as heterosexuals. In both cases, our responsibility is to clarify which of these is better and worse.

2. Unsuccessful heterosexual unions do more damage to the institution of marriage than do successful homosexual ones. The latter cause fewer husbands, wives, children, friends, and relatives to despair of happy married life than do the former.

3. Although I do not know this for certain, I suspect that the percentage of homosexual men and women who violate children is no greater than the percentage of heterosexuals who commit these crimes. In any case, child abuse rather than the orientations of the abusers should be the focus of our attention.

4. Our sexual rules and laws should be applied evenhandedly. To punish more severely homosexual fornication and adultery than their heterosexual counterparts is hypocritical at best.

5. Homosexual men rarely brutalize and murder heterosexual ones, whereas heterosexual men frequently act this savagely toward homosexual ones. This log in the eye of the majority is a bigger problem today than the sliver in the eye of the minority.

The question now before us is not whether homosexual men and women should be liberated, but whether heterosexual ones can be minimally decent.

*David R. Larson
Loma Linda, Calif.*

I grew up with missionary parents in the mission field, the same mission field in which Leif Lind grew up and at the same time. I am also one of the nieces he wrote about in his article (winter 2006). Now I find myself in a strange dilemma, needing to expand on his article, to put forth the other side as tactfully as possible and come to the defense of God. There is an old Norwegian saying: "No matter how thin the pancake, maybe there are still two sides."

I do not want to diminish the pain and agony that Leif went through with his struggle; it was real to him, I am sure, as it has been for countless others. No doubt, it was traumatic and there are many people still struggling with the issue of homosexuality. As

family members, we found it hard to comprehend and absorb the news, too.

This is where I must part company, however. After reading the article, I found that it left one with the impression of Leif justifying himself. Leif mentions that several topics discussed by Adventists lead to differing opinions, especially when texts may say one thing but on further inspection say something entirely different. This may be true, but to a limited extent. A root word in Greek or Latin or Hebrew may have other meanings, much like a word in the dictionary has several connotations. But the Bible give us clear guidance on this particular topic, and however you may want to dissect the verses they are there nonetheless. The Bible has withstood centuries of secrecy, burning, banishment, and so forth, yet it is still intact. God must have had a hand in that for a reason.

Satan knows all the chinks in our armor. Where there is a flaw in our nature, in our upbringing, or whatever, Satan sees that weakness and uses it. We are all flawed, whether our flaws involve drug addiction, alcoholism, gossip, envy, deceit, anger, or homosexuality. Ephesians 6:12 says; "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The Holy Spirit

must be the guide for us in prayer.

We can be wholly compassionate with the struggle of homosexuality in a person, but we are lacking in truth if we turn a blind eye to the sin. If a double standard is allowed to remain in the Church, what kind of message are we sending to those struggling with real issues of their own? It will eventually tear the Church apart. God's high moral standard for us will be tarnished if we lower the bar to suit ourselves and feel comfortable in our sins. We cannot ask God to bless what he has forbidden. We are all sinners and expected to reach out to one another in love.

However, we are not expected to close our eyes to sin, whatever it may be—even in the politically correct climate in which we live.

There are two forces in the world, which we cannot see: God with his moral code and Satan with his counterfeit. For every law God has set in place for our safety and well-being, Satan has a counterfeit.

Scripture is very clear on homosexuality; there is no way around it. How much clearer can God be than when he states, "Thou shalt not..."? Simply stated, it is sin. Homosexuality is no worse a sin than murder, gossip, theft, adultery, envy, and so on. All sin separates us from God.

When I was young, my father, who is a retired minister, explained to me in simple terms how sin works. His words made a lasting impression on me. He depicted all of us being attached to God by a string. When we sin, the string is cut and we fall; we are disconnected from God. No matter what sin we engage in, the result is exactly the same. Thankfully, with Christ's grace the string is reconnected.

We cannot hope to live lives pleasing to God without abandoning sin, no matter how we justify it in our minds. There are some issues in our Christian walk that are ambiguous and not necessarily crucial to our salvation, since they are based more on tradition. God made us individuals with different personalities. He doesn't want cookie-cutter Christians, but there are some subjects that are black and white and allow no wiggle room. God loves the sinner, not the sin. He also said, "Go and sin no more."

I still stand by my original letter. The Bible backs me up. My heart hurts for Leif and those struggling with this same issue. I can only pray that the Holy Spirit intervenes. God bless each of you as you read this.

*Linda Moyer
Via the Internet*

Your articles on "In the Church and Out of the Closet" (winter 2006) are emotional and heartrending, but I would like to question an assumption that comes through loudly and clearly: Gays and lesbians should have full rights and privileges in the Adventist Church and be treated as normal people because that is how they are born and they cannot help themselves.

I want to be on record as stating that the gay lifestyle is not a salvation issue. There will be gays and lesbians in heaven. Since right behavior is not the basis for our salvation, then wrong behavior cannot keep us out of heaven. We are saved by grace from first to last. This does not mean that right behavior is unimportant (it is very important), but it is not part of justification and

the basis of our salvation.

Now back to my point. If it is true that gays and lesbians are born that way and cannot change, then we are in serious trouble. The Bible makes it clear that we are all born with behavior that is unacceptable to God: "All have sinned and fall short [the tense in Greek is more accurately translated as 'continually falling short'] of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23); "All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Rom. 3:12).

It is true that there are a few Adventists who follow the ancient English monk Pelagius, who believed we are not born sinners, that we do not inherit any sin from Adam, but this is not the understanding of the vast majority in the Christian faith.

We are born sinners; we are born selfish; we are born unable to change without divine intervention. We teach that a person must be born again, that a person cannot change his sinful orientation without divine help, without a miracle, that God must do what we cannot do. Without going into the pros and cons of the gay/lesbian lifestyle (which is an entirely different issue), I am simply dealing with the assumption that being born a certain way precludes change.

If that assumption is correct, then to be consistent we should apply the same logic to everyone and say that since we are all born sinners we cannot change and therefore God should accept us anyway. But if God can perform a miracle to change a sinner why cannot he perform a miracle to change the gay or lesbian?

It seems that if we are going to argue the acceptability of the
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gay/lesbian lifestyle, we must give up this assumption and build our case on stronger evidence.

*J. David Newman
Silver Spring, Md.*

Daring to Disagree with Schneider

My response to one of the articles in the spring 2006 issue of *Spectrum* might be titled "Daring to Disagree with A. Gregory Schneider."

In his article about James Dobson, Schneider seems to be trying very hard to be fair to Dobson, without quite being successful.

He challenges Dobson's reference to the "Judeo-Christian Ethic" by a rather elaborate description of what he feels are their historical roots on the assumption that the beliefs are false without any real proof that they are indeed false.

This type of approach is similar to the procedure that C. S. Lewis deplored when secularists entered into lengthy descriptions of the historical process of why Christians believe in God by assuming that their belief was faulty without any real proof of it.

It seems to me that Dobson's statement "Judeo Christian ethics" has considerable support from the Bible itself, and could be titled "biblical ethics."

Toward the close of his article, Schneider describes groups that may be unfavorably affected by Dobson's views—homosexuals, unmarried pregnant women, and never-married single mothers.

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Although I am in total agreement that a high level of compassion should be practiced toward all these groups, to me it is inescapable to conclude that the practices of these people are out of harmony with biblical standards.

—Charles G. Edwards

with biblical standards. And it seems to me that Schneider comes close to being antinomian, or denying any distinction between right and wrong.

The same Jesus who said, "Neither do I condemn you" in John 8, also said, "Go and leave your life of sin."

*Charles G. Edwards
College Place, Wash.*

Church Identity Crisis

David Thiele's article, "Who Is the Seventh-day Adventist in 2006?" (spring 2006), raises important questions about the continuing Seventh-day Adventist "identi-

ty crisis," but it ends without giving any real answers and suggests that "deeper" and "more complicated" issues are involved.

The "deeper issues" to which Thiele vaguely alludes have to do primarily with the continuing baleful influence of the exegetical (or eisegetical!) legacy of William Miller's time-setting "theory or system" of prophetic interpretation.

The Achilles' heel of Miller's thought is the key assumption that the twenty-three hundred *ereb boqer* (evening morning) of Daniel 8:14 and the seventy weeks of Daniel 9:24 commenced in 457 B.C. In its full original context, Daniel 8:13–14 refers back to the career of the little horn of Daniel 8:9–12, which arose, not in the Persian period in 457 B.C., but centuries later in the Hellenistic period (Dan. 8:9, 23).

This error was carried over into the more specific time-setting modifications and reinterpretations of Samuel Snow and his Seventh-Month Movement and included in the post-Disappointment acceptance of Hiram Edson's heavenly reinterpretation of the Great Disappointment. Its uncritical acceptance was due largely to the Founding Father's confidence in Ellen G. White's inspiration and her strong confirmation of Edson's reinterpretation.

If the Church continues to make 1844 its primary "foundation pillar" (and "stumbling block"), thus rejecting (at least to some degree) its True Cornerstone—the Rock Christ Jesus—eventually the current identity crisis will lead to an even greater disappointment than Millerism experienced. Then both past and present Adventist leaders' worst fears will prove to be self-fulfilling prophecies!

*Arlin Baldwin
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