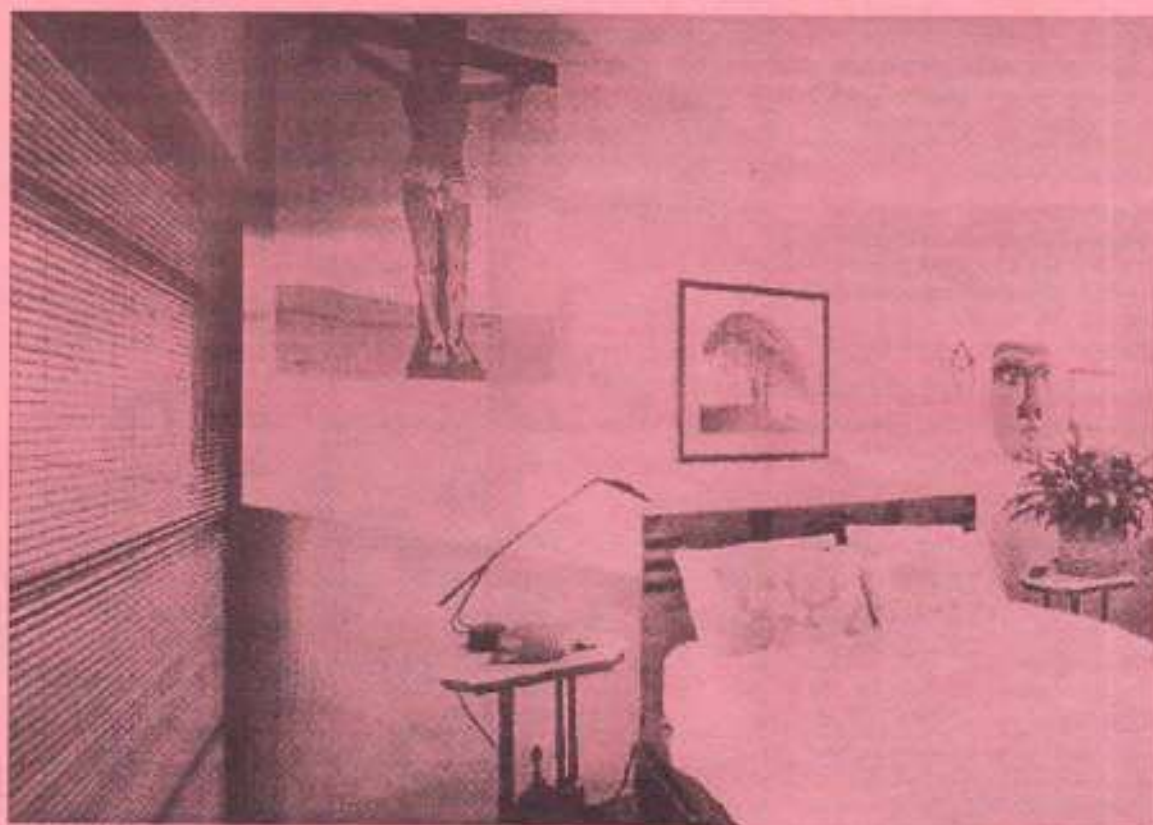


CONNECTION

The Journal of Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc.

Better Houses and Plantings



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stories, do we?

Who we are...

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, Inc. is a support group which ministers to the spiritual, emotional, social, and physical well being of Seventh-day Adventist lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and their families and friends.

SDA Kinship facilitates and promotes the understanding and affirmation of homosexual and bisexual Adventists among themselves and within the Seventh-day Adventist community through education, advocacy, and reconciliation.

Founded in 1976, the nonprofit organization was incorporated in 1981 and has a board of 15 officers and 10 regional coordinators. The current list of members and friends includes well over a thousand people in 16 countries.

SDA Kinship believes the Bible does not condemn, or even mention, homosexuality as a sexual orientation. Ellen G. White does not parallel any of the Bible texts, which are often used to condemn homosexuals. Most of the anguish imposed upon God's children who grow up gay or lesbian has its roots in a misunderstanding of what the Bible says.

Kinship operates solely on contributions from its members and friends.

SDA Kinship supports the advancement of human rights for all people.

Support Kinship

Kinship depends on you. Kinship is supported solely by contributions. Help us reach out to more gay Adventists by making a tax-deductible donation to SDA Kinship International. Please send your check or money order to the address below. SDA Kinship, P.O. Box 7320, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677, (714) 248-1299.

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Pseudonyms: Walt Elias, Donald Freeman, Lee Stover, and possibly others.

CONNECTION readers

Continuing what you want.

AS REQUESTED FROM KAMPMEETING QUESTIONNAIRES

At Kampmeeting last year, attendees filled out a questionnaire asking them to tell us what they would like to see in the CONNECTION. The most requested thing of course was the stories, and we featured those once again in a recent issue. Other suggestions and interests emerged from the questionnaire as well. One interesting suggestion was a request that we have articles about, and show pictures of gay people's homes.

This issue, in response to that suggestion features an article on a most interesting home in Australia belonging to Dolf Boek. Dolf has contributed a number of times to the CONNECTION in recent years, and we are privileged to be able to show his elegant home.

The article we present on page 6 originally appeared in newHome. Also in this issue was an editorial which spoke of the courage of Dolf as he undertook the challenge of creating, at a most difficult time in his life, a beautiful and magnificent home.

The following editorial first appeared in newHome, May 2 - 8, 1998 Herald Sun & Weekly Times

It is often said that from adversity inspiration springs. Courage too. As a very old man, Winston Churchill was invited to the annual prize-giving at the school he had attended as a youth. As the day drew near, the school was a buzz with excitement at the prospect of an inspiring address from the "greatest living Englishman", the man who, in Britain's darkest hours of World War II, declared: "we will never surrender."

Churchill was introduced by the headmaster and invited to the podium. The man with an unrivalled gift for public speaking simply said: "Boys, never give up, never ever give up." He then returned slowly to his seat. There was a stunned silence, followed by applause that nearly raised the roof as the import of his profound message sank in. In *newHome* today, Natasha Perera tells the inspiring story of a man who also refused to give up. Diagnosed with cancer, Dolf Boek was given six months to live. Did he wait to die? No, sir. Dolf decided to build a house, no ordinary house, either. He has converted a 1920s North Melbourne factory into a stunning place of space and light that represents his own, deeply personal triumph over adversity. Natasha's story is on page 6. Tony Hitchin, Editor.

Will o'God

BY RITCH BARRON

My Dad, Evangelist Dick Barron, taught me to never accept something simply because somebody said it. His faith was active and investigative. He also taught me that what your head was thinking was more important than what your body was doing. Christ said it this way: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines." Matt 15:8 So early in my life I began to study for myself. God's will was too important to be left for others to decide for me.

Over the years, I have learned that it is not always easy to know the will of God. It is usually even more difficult to follow. God's choices seem to always go against the will of the majority. Following God WILL lead to trouble. But then, Christ said it would be that way.

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is not always easy to
know the will of God.*

Last year, a committee was set up by my local SDA congregation to establish whether an openly gay person could be a member in good standing. In the process of the study, they asked me to "Justify" my life-style. I was, quite reasonably, offended by the way the question was worded. But, in the interest of trying to inform the three members of the committee who seemed genuinely interested in learning, I prepared an answer. In a 30 minute presentation, I told them how my being gay fit into the Will of God for my life.

My understanding of the will of God is informed by four witnesses: Scripture, Tradi-

tion, Reason and Experience.

First and most important is Scripture. "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20 Unfortunately this witness has been misused and abused. Scripture has been used to justify anti-semitism and racism. It was the fuel that kindled the fires of the Spanish Inquisition and was the foundation of the Salem Witch Trials on this side of the Atlantic. Thus it must be examined carefully. Surface reading often leads to errors. "These Jews were more receptive than those in Thessalonica, for they welcomed the message very eagerly and examined the scriptures every day to see whether these things were so." Acts 17:11

The second witness is Tradition. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "Stand firm and hold fast to the traditions that you were taught by us ..." 2 Thess 2:15 Traditions can point us in a correct direction. They help to make religion stable and familiar. But traditions must change and adapt to new situations. The traditions Paul refers to above were less than 100 years old and followers had given their lives because these traditions were unacceptable to the established church. Traditions must be examined closely. Learning how they initially became accepted can help. Each new generation must either reestablish these traditions because they still work, or replace them with a better view of God and His will. Of the four witnesses, tradition is the most dangerous. It is resistant to either examination or change. Changing tradition causes anxiety and is often met with resistance. But Christ himself pointed out that tradition can be wrong. "So for the sake of your tradition, you make void the word of God." Matt 15:6 Ellen White adds, "Time will not turn error into Truth." So we must examine traditions in the light of the other three witnesses.

The third witness is reason. While it is not necessary for me to always understand God, I must respect Him. This respect, however, is NOT an act of will. I cannot, through gritted teeth, force myself to respect a God which I do not like. Rather, this respect must be a response of love. Even when I don't understand God's action, I must believe and trust him to find the best for my life. I must see in God a character which I want to emulate. The God of the Old Testament Bible appears quite similar to the gods of paganism. He is arbitrary, selfish, vicious and heartless. This is not the God I see reflected in Jesus. The God of Jesus does not

Ritch Barron has remained true to his religious beliefs despite less than honorable treatment by some church members.

make arbitrary rules. His purposes is to make our life better and fuller. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest ... for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matt 11:28, 29. This God is not afraid to be challenged. He tells us to "prove" him. He is patient with angry people. It is one of the things I like best about him. This is a God I can both love and respect.

Finally, there is experience. This is the most subjective of the witness, yet it well grounded in Scripture. Peter was given a vision which persuaded him to go to the gentile household of Cornelius. After preaching Christ to these gentiles, he watches in amazement as they speak in tongues just like the Jews on Pentecost. His response to this experience was: "Of a Truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Acts 10:34. It was Paul's experience on the Damascus road that converted him to Christ. Repeatedly, God used experience when all other means failed.

Let me, then, share what these

*"This is a God I
can both love and
respect."*

witnesses say to me regarding the issue of homosexuality.

SCRIPTURE

There are seven passages of Scripture which are usually used to form the doctrine against homosexuality. Genesis 1 & 2, Genesis 20, Judges 19, Leviticus 18, Romans 1, 1st Corinthians 6, and 1st Timothy 1.

Genesis 1 & 2, the story of Creation does not mention homosexuality. It is used to suggest that God had only one idea at creation - Mo-

nogamous, heterosexual union with the sole purpose of procreation. The vast majority of people of the Bible are thus outside God's one idea. Samuel never married. David, a man after God's own heart, had hundreds of wives. Most of the patriarchs do not fit this one idea. This is also used to suggest that sex is only for procreation, an idea which of course cannot include homosexual physical expression. However, it also does not include those couples who find themselves unable to have children or

*Even a casual reading shows that they are
not about homosexuality. What the evil
men of these tales want to do is rape.*

those who are past the child bearing years. To follow this logic, these also must not engage in sex. If you allow these other groups to engage in physical love and deny it to same-sex couples, it is your prejudice, not scripture, which you are following.

Genesis 20 and Judges 19 are very similar stories. Even a casual reading shows that they are not about homosexuality. What the evil men of these tales want to do is rape. It was a common practice in Bible times. The victorious treated a conquered enemy "Like a woman", that is, they would force them to take the passive role in sex. It was brutal, cruel and humiliating. The rape of a woman is not an expression of heterosexuality and the rape of men mentioned here is not an expression of homosexuality. Rape is not about sex, it is about power, superiority and violence. There is nothing loving about it.

Every biblical reference to Sodom indicates that lack of hospitality, greed and ingratitude were the sins of Sodom. Some of them talk about having sex with devils, but none of these references even allude to homosexuality. These sins had already earned the city a sentence of destruction. The angels which they wanted to rape were merely

there to help Lot and his family escape the coming destruction.

Christ referred to Sodom and Gomorrah when speaking about the cities who refuse hospitality to his missionaries. If homosexuality were the reason for this destruction, this reference by Christ would make no sense. If the sin is lack of hospitality, it makes perfect sense. These stories cannot be used to establish that homosexuality is a sin.

Leviticus 18: We in the 20th

Century have taken the word "abomination" to mean something which is intrinsically evil. The Hebrew word used here is "Toevah". Unfortunately for those who would use this text to condemn homosexual, this word does not have anything to do with evil. Instead, it is a word which means ritual uncleanness. Pork is Toevah, a woman on her period is Toevah. Having a wet-dream is Toevah. Participating in the pagan sexual religion of Canaan was Toevah. These prohibitions were designed to make Israel stand out as different from the neighbor canaanites. The only thing these writers knew about homosexuality was that it was used in pagan ritual.

Speaking of the Levitical Toevah, Paul says that "He (Christ) has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances (Toevah)." Eph 2:15. With the exception of applying this text against gays, Adventists do not consider the ceremonial laws to be morally binding. We teach that eating pork is unhealthy, we no longer teach that it is a sin. This is a false dichotomy. If being homosexual is a sin based on this text, then it must be a sin

See "Will" on page 12

A House to Live For

CONTRIBUTED BY DOLF BOEK, WRITTEN BY NATASHA PERERA

Dolf lives in Australia. He is a regular contributor to KinNet.

I'd like to share with you an article that appeared in the weekend press to a readership of 1/2 million. The article is about my house. It's an unusual house in many respects, but one of its most significant features are two paintings by the same artist and their placement in the house. Both appear in photographs accompanying the article.

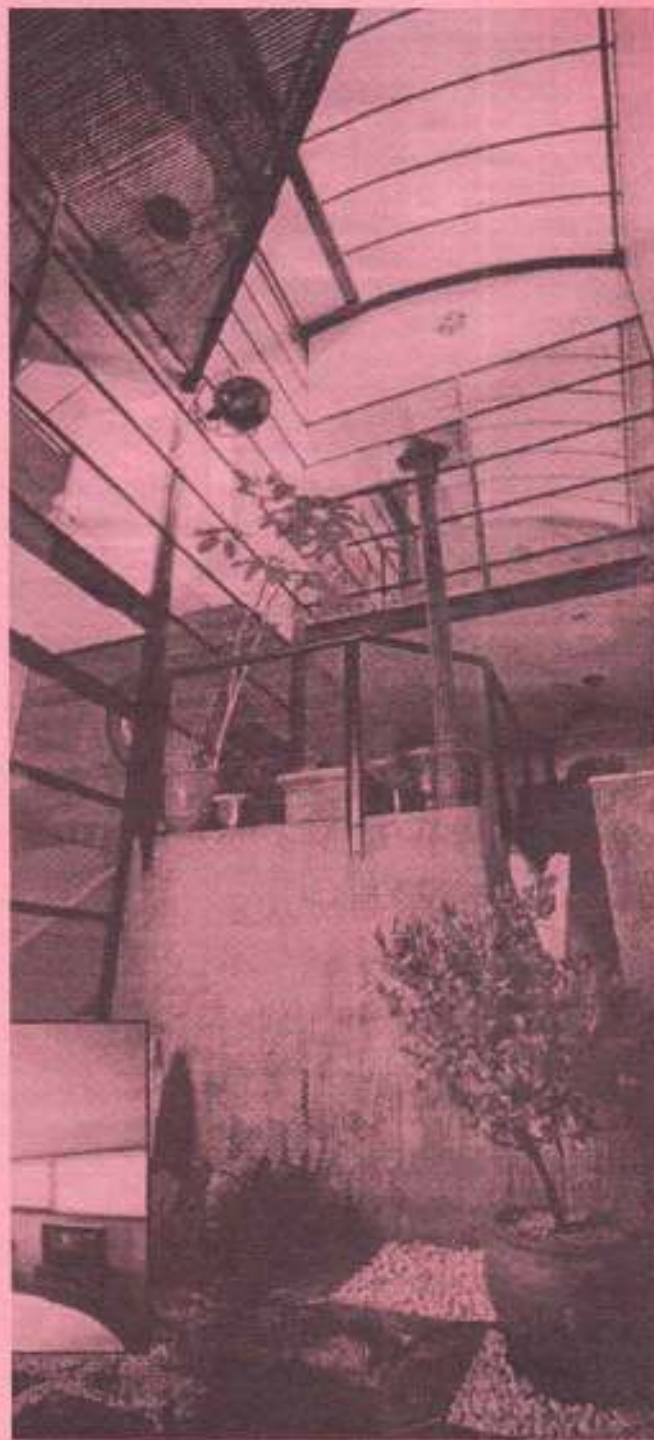
One 7' x 4' painting entitled "Hospitality" which is specifically mentioned in the article as a modern interpretation of the 10th station of the cross (Veronica's veil), embraces the viewer as part of the painting by the use of similar colors within the dining room and kitchen.

The other painting, a cartoon/realistic impression of the crucifixion as a portrait of myself, hangs in the bedroom, symbolizing the crucifixion of the flesh with Christ.

For me, these symbols and their placement within the house at the main places where we have our union with others in a shared humanity, serve to remind us of another place where there is comfort and regard shown for another.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." [John 14:2-4]

Dolf



Panoramic View of atrium looking up:
Dolf is no quitter, so against the advice of friends he decided to build a house



His place: Dolf Boek at home

This house was born out of a desire not to give up on life. Diagnosed with cancer not so long ago, Dolf Boek was given six months to live and only a 10 per cent chance of

survival.

But Dolf is no quitter, so within weeks of receiving the shattering news and against the advice of friends, he decided to build a house.

Part of him thought he would never live in it, but, more than 12 months down the track, Dolf's

*Dolf Boek was
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cancer is in remission and he is enjoying every aspect of his distinctive home.

Built in the 1920s, this North Melbourne property has been a garage cum factory cum warehouse. From the outside it still has a grungy, industrial feel to it, but

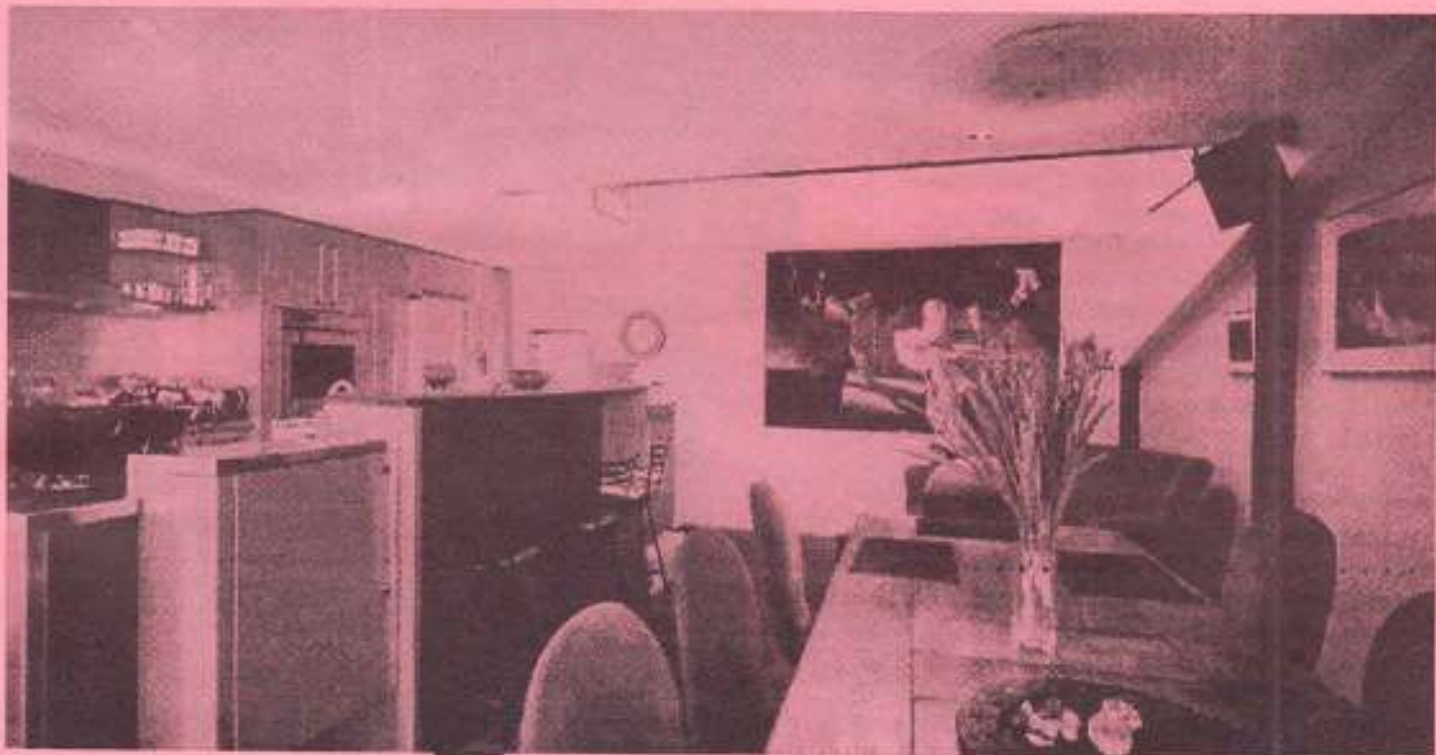
an old bank nightsafe used as letterbox is a small teaser to what lies inside. It has a most unusual floor plan, divided into 6 levels of individual yet functional spaces.

The garage, with internal access to the home, forms the first level. The second level is the living room, the third the combined dining and kitchen, and the fourth and the fifth levels feature a bedroom and bathroom. The sixth level is home to the study and the deck into the atrium, which takes the breath away as it soars more than 25 feet up through the center of the home.

And, as if by magic, the retractable, curved glass roof opens to the elements, letting in the light and the rain that allows Dolf to indulge his interest in gardening - indoors.

He says there is nothing more magical than sitting on the deck with the roof open in the evening and gazing up at the stars. "There

See "Home" on page 8



Kitchen quirks: Unusual colors and black highlights make a bold statement

is no reference of where you are in the world as you look up at the sky," he says.

"Sometimes when it's raining I leave the roof partly open to allow the rain to water the garden. It's a magnificent experience - almost like being in a rainforest after it has rained."

In this atrium Dolf has used vertical space to cleverly create a sense of the horizontal. This way he has maintained a sense of openness and at the same time managed to define the different areas. For instance, a 5 foot vertical drop defines the boundaries of the kitchen and dining room from the living room.

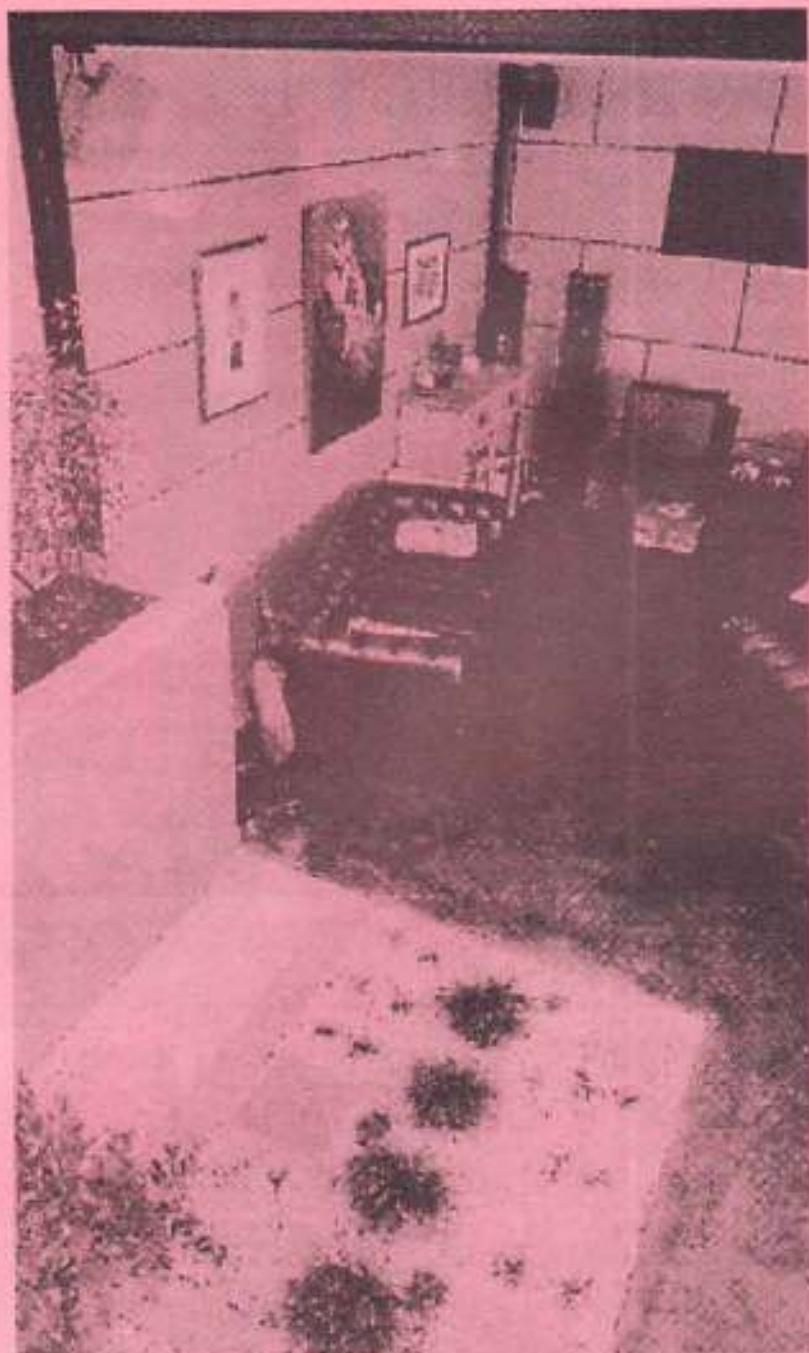
"People comment about the sense of comfort, vitality and vibrance. I wouldn't expect that bricks and mortar could necessarily create that," he says.

The entire frame of the house is steel and the inner walls are glass. "It creates the feeling of looking into someone else's house but you are actually looking inside your own home. It turns on its head the conventional view that windows should be on the outside of the home and not on the inside."

Timber panelling features in much of the living areas. And in the living room, orange lights cast a soft glow up the wall. "Against the black and blue of the vene-tians, this lighting gives the feel of sunset," Dolf says.

His kitchen combines gold colored cabinetry within stainless-steel benchtops and appliances. It's an unusual color combination but, together with the black highlights, the end result is amazing. The focal point of the meals section is what Dolf refers to as his "hospitality" painting. In fact, the choice of colors used in the house is an extension of the painting. It is a modern interpretation of the 10th station of the cross and the soft yellow ochre on the walls draws attention to the work.

Dolf has successfully blended the old with the new. Pre-World War I ships lights, a Corinthian-style column and a kitchen benchtop made from a Victorian slate mantel-piece offset the modern architecture wonderfully. "If somebody saw all these raw materials sitting in a shed somewhere they would probably say they couldn't work together," he says. ▼



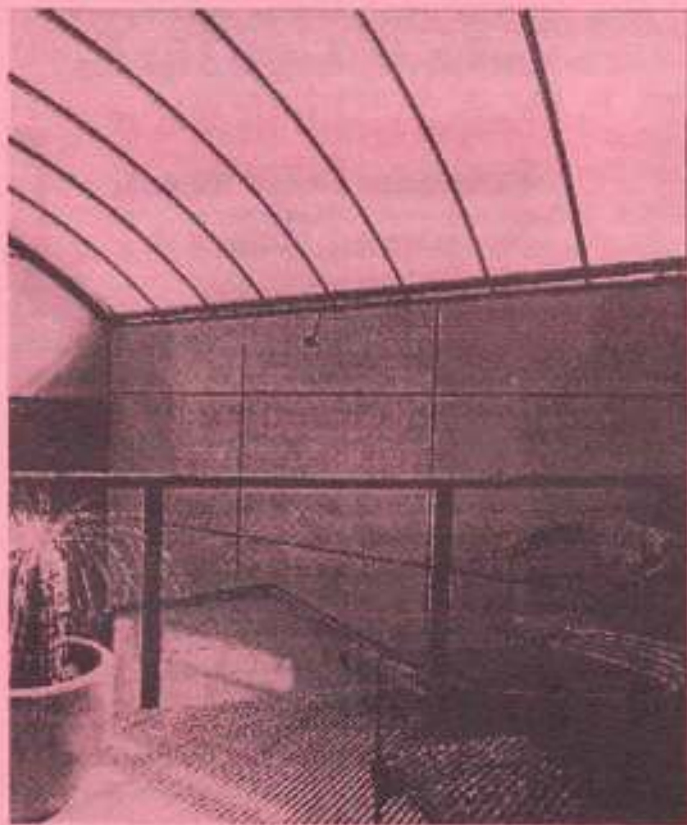
Dramatic: Lighting sets the mood

Cover:

Up to bed:

The fourth level. Glass interior walls look down into the atrium

Fooled you:
A bit of industrial grunge on the outside...



Just teasing:
Soaring magnificence on the inside

My F A L L

From Glory

BY JAMES

It has been said
that it is better to
have loved and lost,
then never to have
loved at all.

During my whole life I had denied being gay, and finally, I admitted it. I finally outted myself to my family and friends. This set the stage for what was to follow. Just over a year ago, if I remember correctly, I got an e-mail from a friend of mine in Oregon who told me he had someone for me to meet. This was someone that he'd been trying to set me up with for a long time.

I was still adjusting to my sexuality, but I finally agreed to talk to this friend of his. Soon I recieved a phone call, and somebody with a very deep and happy voice was on the other end. He introduced himself as Dwight, the friend that I'd heard about. We chatted for bout two hours, just visiting and getting to know each other. We had fun!

The next day I was still thinking about him and he called AGAIN! He said he'd had fun the night before and wanted to talk more, so we did, this time for about four and a half hours! (His poor phone bill!) This became a nightly routine, he'd call after he got home from work at around Midnight and we'd talk for 3 or 4 hours. After about 2 months of this he decided to come visit.

One Friday night (or more like Saturday morning) there came a knock at my door at 2 am, and there he was. At 6' 3" he filled my doorway right up. I'm not small really, I'm 6' 2", 260 lbs., and pretty well built, but he was a BIG man! We chatted till late that morning, and ended up falling asleep leaning against each other there on the couch. It just seemed natural. I'd never felt more comfortable around ANYone in my life.

Later that day I was going to a family reunion about which Dwight hadn't known, but he agreed to go. What could it hurt, right? So he and I hopped in my little Escort GT and zoomed off to Oregon for the reunion.

Upon arriving at the reunion, I had second

thoughts about taking Dwight in with me as only two members of the thirty or forty people there even knew I was gay. But I thought, what the heck, for all they know he's just a good friend, so in we went. We met up with my parents, my grandmother and a few others to whom I introduced Dwight.

.....
*"There are very few nice
guys these days, and
you've got one of them. You
need to hold onto him."*
.....

Everyone just accepted that he was a friend. Never for a minute did anyone let on that they knew that he and I were dating (which we had decided we were and would be). After about two hours of visiting, nibbling on assorted foods and whatnot, my Uncle Frank's fiancée wheeled up in her wheelchair and started chatting. I'd only just met her two days before as she and my uncle drove up to visit. She and my uncle knew I was gay, but didn't know much else about my life. So she wheeled up and said "James, there are very few nice guys these days, and you've got one of them. You need to hold onto him." Needless to say, I was a bit shocked, for I hadn't realized that it was that obvious. She's a VERY intelligent woman! Then she hugged me, turned around, and wheeled away. I was kind of amazed, and yet happy.

I had decided to drive down to the beach, so Dwight and I said our good-byes, hopped in the

car, and zoomed off to the Oregon Coast, a pleasant 40 minute drive through western Oregon. As we drove along, Dwight reached out and took my hand, and while still holding it, fell sound asleep. It was just such a trusting thing, and was very relaxing. We arrived out on the coast and Dwight woke up as we neared the beach. We decided to listen to some music, and sorting through the assorted 100 cds I had with me he chose an Enya cd and stuck it in the cd player.

Now, as to what happened at that moment I'm not sure, but the cd player skipped as if it were dirty or something. It went RIGHT to a track that I hadn't listened to in a while. We tried to get it to start at track one, and it skipped RIGHT back again, so we just let it play.

I realized after a few seconds that it was a song that had been played at a friends memorial the previous year,

and I began to be very sad. I started crying because I had not ONCE cried since my friend passed away. I realized I missed her so much, and I just let it loose. We stopped the car on the side of the road and I just cried for an hour while I told Dwight all about her. She was a young woman that had been in a wheel chair her entire life.

This woman was very special. She ALWAYS had a smile and a hug for everyone that she met. Never once did she complain at her state of being. When she finally passed away, people said she was in a better place. I know as a Christian that people don't "transcend" and just go straight to heaven, but, in her case, maybe she did! So as we sat there, I realized I'd never cried in front of ANYone except when I was nine or ten and my grandfather committed suicide.

I felt so comfortable around Dwight, I didn't care WHAT he thought of me crying. From that point

we were closer. We spent several hours walking on the beach and chatting, just like we'd known each other forever. That night on the way home, which was a two hour drive from there, he fell asleep once again holding my hand as I drove. (This is hard to do with a stick shift I might add!) When we got home, he gave me a big hug and curled up and went to sleep on my couch, and I went and slept in my room. I slept better then I had in my entire life.

The next day was more of the same, chatting, visiting, etc. I took him out and showed him my parents house where I grew up, and where someday I'd like to settle down again. Sunday night came all to fast, the weekend was gone, and he had to leave. He gave me a big hug, cried on my shoulder, and said he'd miss me. We'd only known each other 3 days, and yet already we knew we were in love.

See "Fall" on page 12

Editor's Corner

BY WALT ELIAS

In this issue we feature a story of the house that Dolf built. As I compare the relatively plain outside with the most elegant inside I am reminded of a trip I once took to Italy. In Italy, many of the buildings go right up to the street, and look very unassuming, even drab at times. Yet behind some of those drab exteriors lie some of the most beautiful spaces that people have created. Beyond those drab walls often lies not only a beautiful building, but marvelous gardens and great works of art as well.

People are rather like these buildings that sometimes have plain exteriors, but exquisite interiors. As gay people, we are perhaps better than

most at hiding our interiors and only showing a drab, uninteresting exterior. The world says we must act "straight", and so we do so, and in the process often cover up the most glowing parts of our personalities.

Before I "came out" I was always being careful to behave in certain ways. I had to not let my voice go too high, not cross my legs, try oh so hard to keep my little finger clutched tightly to the glass when it wanted to freely float out on its own. Above all perhaps, I could not be truly silly. I couldn't really have fun. Somehow I had this idea the "men" didn't have the

kind of fun I enjoyed. Since I was never into "their" kind of fun, i.e. football, hunting, jokes against women, etc., there wasn't a lot left. If and when I acted myself, and got rather silly, people thought I wasn't acting dignified enough, at least not for my age.

But now that I am out, I can act as silly as I want to. And you know what? My friends love it, and those that think it not appropriate, well, they really don't matter anyway. My gay friends for the most part seem to have a lot of fun too. Being silly and having fun is an important part of me. Being "out" has enabled me to be silly, and, myself. ▼

Things seem to fly after that. He'd come visit me every weekend when I had my apartment. Three months later I lost my apartment due to my landlord needing the room for his son who was returning home. I had to move back with my parents for a while, which was great as they are wonderful people who are doing their best to accept me for who I am. But at that point, Dwight couldn't stay there as the situation made my parents a little uncomfortable.

I began driving 75 miles one way every weekend to see him. He introduced me to his mom and friends, and showed me where he went to college and what not. It was so much fun getting away from home and just meeting all these new people. Three months after we officially started dating he asked me to spend the rest of my life with him, and I agreed. We were giddy like school children. We were both just so happy it was a constant source of enjoyment to visit.

As I am a Seventh-day Adventist, I have had certain problems adjusting to being Gay AND a Christian. I eventually decided that I love God and everything that he teaches, yet, I AM GAY. I was BORN this way. I chose to STILL go to Church AND be with Dwight. I asked him to be with me, and ONLY me in this relationship. His idea of relationship was "I love you, but I can still play with THEM." I disagreed, but foolishly, I went ahead with the relationship because he agreed to be monogamous.

I heard rumors from friends over time that he was out at bars picking people up, but I didn't want to believe them. Seven months had passed, and he was going to fly to California for a gay convention and competition, a kind of a Gay Mr. Universe thing. He was going to compete in it. As things turned out, I wish he had never gone, but he went. He called me up late one night and told me that he had gone and

been intimate with total strangers.

I was hurt beyond belief. I told him when he got home that we were through. But I have a soft heart. He started crying, and four hours later I told him I'd give him a second chance, but that was IT. He vowed never to do it again. Two months later I got a phone call from a good friend of mine in Oregon. He had just been out with some friends at a bar and Dwight was there picking someone up. I couldn't believe it. About 20 minutes later ANOTHER friend called and told me the same thing! So I called Dwight. He said that he wasn't trying to pick anyone up, but was just looking for some comfort as I wasn't there visiting at the time.

I finally decided that it was over and called the whole thing off

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*"I was hurt beyond
belief. I told him ...
we were through."*
.....

because I knew what was really going on. Even though I spent almost a year of time, and several thousand dollars on travel, none of it was a waste. I made some very good friends and I learned a LOT from the entire ordeal. The part that hurts most though is that I still miss him from time to time because I really loved him. Now though, I've decided to put myself first. I've spent five years paying off bills, and now I plan to go back to college and start my life over again. So I've applied and been accepted at college, and now I have to see if I get enough financial aid to go! Maybe when I'm ready, I'll find someone to just share my life with, not for sex, but just for love. If not ... well ... then not. I won't die, but I would be lonely. So for now, I'll trust in God and just go with what works.



for us to eat hybrid wheat or corn. It must be a sin to wear clothes of mixed fabric such as polyester and cotton. It is a sin for a man to enter into the church the same day that he has sex with his wife. We cannot pick and choose what of the Toevah will be binding. We must enforce all of them or none of them. Nothing in the Old Testament establishes that homosexual relationships are a sin.

Turning to the New Testament we look at Romans 1. Here Paul is attempting to paint a picture of perverse rebellion. He describes in vivid detail, the most hedonist, debauched promiscuity he could imagine. Here were people who's natural need for companionship and love had become perverted. In their rebellion, they wanted to have sex with anything that moved. The more perverse and rebellious, the more thrilled they were. These people are not acting out of love, but rather rebellion. The entire chapter is about rebellion against God and his purpose for our lives, not homosexual acts. This is not a description of homosexual love. It is lust. Paul used this description as a metaphor of all obsessive debauchery. It is also quite obvious from the text that those participating in this are not homosexuals, but rather heterosexuals who are denying their true nature in rebellion against God and society. This cannot be applied to those whose nature is to connect and build a family with another of the same sex.

Finally, 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Timothy 1:9 & 10. The words which in modern versions are translated "homosexual" are the same in both texts.

The first of these is *Malakoi*. It is found only in 1 Cor 6:9. This word in Greek means simply "soft". It was quite common in the ancient world but it never referred to homosexuality. In some places in the New Testament it means "diseased" and in early Christian writing it was variously used to mean "liquid", "cowardly", "refined", "weak willed", "delicate", "gentle" and "debauched". When used in a moral

context, it usually meant "licentious", "loose" or "lacking in self-control". It was never used to indicate homosexual or homosexuality. When clearly writing about homosexuality other words were used. Nothing in this word in any way suggests homosexuality. It was thought by some to refer to masturbation, but no one knows for sure what Paul meant by the use of the term. Some have speculated that he was condemning male prostitution since this word is listed next to the verb derived from " pornos " which was the Greek name for brothels.

The second word is "Arsenokoitai". John Boswell, in his excellent book "Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality", suggests that Paul may have coined this word. His letters are certainly the earliest appearance of it in existing manuscripts. It is a compound word constructed from "Arsen" referring to male and "Koitai" which was a slang term for sex, roughly equivalent to one of our dirtiest words. The problem arises from the fact that it is so rare in ancient texts that it is impossible to know what it may have meant to Paul's readers. An example from English may help you to understand the difficulty. Take the word "Ladykiller". This too is a compound word constructed from "lady" and "killer". But, does it refer to a "lady who kills" or "a person who kills ladies"? Looking only at the word, you can not tell what the author had in mind. Only from the context of the rest of the paragraph can you know for sure. Oddly, the word Ladykiller means neither of those definitions. It is used of a man who has a certain way with women, a Don Juan if you will.

Some have speculated that Paul's use of this term refers to the clients of the prostitutes. This might seem strange to our 20th century mind, but you must remember that in the 1st Century, both pagan and Jew condemned the prostitute, but neither condemned the customer. Thus, he may have

"Malakoi ... never referred to homosexuality."

been expanding the moral perspective of his day.

While on the subject of Paul's writing, Roman's 1:26-27 is the only apparent reference to homosexual acts. However there are over 30 references to pornos and its derivatives. It appears that prostitution was much more of an evil in the mind of Paul than was homosexual acts both of which were quite common in his day.

So there is nothing in scripture which would indicate that the Bible condemns intimate, monogamous same-sex relationships.

On the other side, there are three texts in Scripture which may indicate a positive attitude toward homosexuality.

In the ancient world, eunuch was a catch term for several different types of sexual dysfunction. There were

those who had been castrated and those who were impotent or otherwise sexually dysfunctional. There were those who chose, as did Paul and Jesus, to be celibate. Celibacy was an unacceptable option to ancient people. The Jews considered it equivalent to murder. Society placed its stamp of disapproval by calling someone who voluntarily took this route a eunuch. Eunuchs were considered to be the lowest rung of the social structure. Finally, while homosexual acts were not thought to be aberrational, to never have sexual relations with a woman was considered odd. Thus, those who were exclusively homosexual were considered eunuchs.

"Jesus ... did not insist on a change in their living arrangement."

In Matthew 19:12, Jesus mentions three of these groups called eunuch. Those who choose to be celibate; those who are castrated by men; and those who are born eunuch. Now what could that mean? Born eunuch. It is doubtful that congenital defects in the groin area were even known in the ancient world. They were certainly not common. Thus it is unlikely that he referred to some birth defect. On the other hand, exclusively gay men were quite well known. The famous and legendary "Sacred Band of Thebes" which was nearly invincible in battle, was composed entirely of gay couples. It is reasonable to believe that Christ was referring to homosexuals in this Biblical reference. He clearly says they will have a place in the Kingdom of God.

The first gentile convert to Christianity (Acts 8:27) was such a eunuch. Historical records indicate that the top officials in the court of the Queen of Ethiopia were homosexual. This first convert was a treasurer in that court.

Finally, there is a story of a miracle recorded in Luke 7. It is the well known "healing of the Centurion's beloved servant". Luke says that "The Centurion was intimate with this servant". Some translations say he loved him. Now, historically, it is known that centurions, especially when on duty in highly dangerous areas such as Palestine, lived with a male servant who was their companion and sexual partner. It is probable that this servant was just such a servant, the sexual consort for this Centurion. Jesus healed the servant. He praised the faith of the Centurion and he did not insist on a change in their living arrangement.

Based on this information, There is nothing in Scripture which would indicate that homosexuality is in and of itself a sin nor that same-sex acts are intrinsically evil.

TRADITION

What about tradition? Where did we get our current

interpretation of these texts?

Nearly 400 years after Christ, a few extremist writers took positions against homosexuality. None of these early authors used the Romans 1 text, neither did they use 1st Corinthians or 1st Timothy. Most of their polemics

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*"Same-sex Unions
were very similar
to the modern
marriages."*
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were based on their own belief that homosexuals were more driven by lust than were heterosexuals. They apparently reasoned that since they chose a form of sex which did not result in children, the only possible motive for this sex was lust. We today do not assume that those who use some form of birth control are necessarily more driven by lust than others.

The first time a Christian writer used Romans 1:26-27 to apply to homosexuals was in the 12th Century. This era was characterized by a rising intolerance for anything that was unknown or non-conformist. It was in this period that the worst treatment of Jews prior to Hitler occurred. Galileo was excommunicated because he proposed that the earth might revolve around the sun. Uniformity was the only way to survive. Since homosexuality could not be made to conform, it became a heinous sin.

Until the rise of this period of extreme prejudice, homosexuality was both commonplace and was often honored among Christians. Beginning as early as the 2nd Century A.D., roughly during the time that the Gospels were being written, the Church established Union Ceremonies for same-sex couples. Like hetero-

sexual marriage, these Unions were a binding contract of fidelity and love between two adults, but they were not the same. Marriage was a contract designed to assure the superiority and ownership of the husband over the wife. Union ceremonies, on the other hand, emphasized the equality of the two partners. In marriage the Bride was "sold" as part of a business agreement between her father and the groom. In contrast, both partners chose to enter the Union. In marriage the husband could divorce the wife for something as trivial as burning his dinner. A Union could not be dissolved without agreement from both parties and there were stringent laws concerning the community property in a Union. In fact these same-sex Unions were very similar to the modern marriages. They were based

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*"Homosexuality
wasn't even men-
tioned."*
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on mutual love and romance.

These same-sex union liturgies remained a part of church ceremony during the first 1200 years of church history. Only in the last 700 years, due primarily to political pressure and not Bible study, has homosexuality come to be considered a sin.

During the 1st Century of Christianity, there was a great deal of controversy over bringing gentiles into the church. The first Jerusalem Council was called to decide what rules of the Jewish life-style should be enforced on gentiles who joined the new movement. Homosexuality was both common and accepted in the gentile community. It is probable, considering the traditional Jewish teaching on the subject, that the topic was discussed during this council. However, it was apparently not of a great concern to the 1st Century leaders. What was of concern was worship of idols, prostitution (or what

ever "porneios" means), and the eating of non-kosher meat. Homosexuality wasn't even mentioned. When James, the brother of Jesus, introduced this ruling he said something very interesting. He said: "We should not trouble those gentiles who are turning to God ..." Acts 15:19. It would be nice if the church leaders were more like that today.

Our present interpretation of these texts came directly from the Catholic Church at the height of the inquisition. It is not the result of a dispassionate search for the will of God but rather it is the work of men who wish to demonize those who do not agree with them. It is Satan, not God, who insists that everyone be the same. He is categorically unoriginal. It is the Devil who prefers everyone to look alike, speak alike, think alike. He wants everyone on the broad way that leads to Destruction.

God on the other hand wants us on the narrow way. It is just big enough for two; Jesus and each of us individually. Each on our own path to relationship with God.

REASON

What about reason? What makes rational sense about sex and homosexuality specifically?

God's purpose in creating human

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*"Why would God
deny homosexuals
all the joy ... ?"*
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sexuality was more than just procreation. There are many animal species that only mate at the time when the female is most likely to conceive. God could have created humans like that. He did not.

He could have created a system which resulted in pregnancy every time. There are animal species like that. He did not.

If then, procreation is not the sole

purpose of sex, what was God's plan? It was for sex to bring pleasure to humans. It is unquestionably the most wonderful of his many blessings to humans. It is the most potent and intimate way of expressing love between two lovers.

Because this gift is so wonderful, it is Satan's purpose to ruin it if he can. Because of its intimate nature, sex brings with it responsibility. It can be twisted and used to control or punish our partner. It can be abused and cheapened through lust and promiscuity. But these are not the fault of sex. They are the abuse of sex. God intended that we should use sex to show love, not to hurt each other.

Monogamous homosexual partners can share the same intimacy, companionship and love which is found in a good marriage. Those in such a relationship enjoy better mental and physical health, just like straight people in a marriage. Why would God deny homosexuals all the joy that

he intended for humans?

Science has known since the early 50s that homosexuality is ontological. In other words, it is part of the being of a person, not just the doing. It has

.....
*"Some people will
 say that being gay
 is a handicap ..."*

been scientifically established that it is not a choice, but rather a natural expression of the essence of the person who happens to be gay. Scientists have also known for decades that nothing changes this orientation. They have tried everything from psychotherapy to massive shock treatment to major lobotomies. These treatments have

sometimes rendered the patients mentally incapacitated but they were still gay. Only recently, and against a great deal of persecution, is this information finally becoming common knowledge.

I was raised to believe that God is actively involved in the creation of each person. How he does it I have no understanding, but it is comforting to believe that God cares enough about me to take time for the details. One of those details is that I'm gay.

Some people will say that being gay is a handicap and that being celibate is the disability. It is true that some people are born with handicaps. They are not able to function in some physical or mental capacity. God works with these people making their life as full as possible. If homosexuality were such a handicap, celibacy would bring relief and add to the

See "Fall" on page 16

Kinship Kookers

Herbed Potato and Tomato Salad

1 lb. small red potatoes, halved
 5 fresh plum tomatoes, cut into quarters
 1/2 cup chopped fresh basil or 2 tsp. dried
 1/3 cup chopped fresh sage or 1 tsp. dried
 1/3 cup chopped fresh mint or 2 tsp. dried

1 small onion, finely chopped, about 1/4 cup
 1/2 cup olive oil
 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
 Salt and pepper to taste

Boil potatoes in enough water to cover by 2 inches until tender, about 10 min. Drain and let cool.

In med. bowl, combine potatoes, tomatoes, herbs and onion. Pour oil and vinegar over potato mixture and toss. Season with salt and pepper. Let stand about 1 hour for flavors to develop.

COMMENTS: The above recipe is from Vegetarian Times, Feb. 1998, Serves 6.

Contributed by Hal Jobe

fullness of life. But it does not. It makes life more painful and less complete. Gay people have warm, affirming, loving relationships. If we believe the fundamentalists, we would have to accept that God wants our life to be less full and complete.

Others argue that there are consequences to sin in the world. Homosexuality, they argue, if it is congenital, is one of these consequences of sin. Sometimes people have made mistakes which have lifetime consequences. God helps them to work past and through these consequences to make their life rewarding in spite of their mistakes. But homosexuality is not the consequence of a mistake a person made. Are we being punished for someone else's mistake? Do we make life more miserable than it already is? If we believe the fundamentalists, God is forcing the unnatural consequence of celibacy on us. This would make life less rewarding even though we did not make any mistake.

Why would a loving God create a group of people who have the ability to have a full and rewarding life of love and companionship and then condemn them for wanting that which He built into them. This is not a god I can love and worship. This is a cruel god.

This god is like the pagan gods who put obstacles in the way of humans and then enjoyed watching them struggle and rejoiced when they lost. This is the god who was worshipped in the atrocities of the Roman

Coliseum.

This was the god that Jesus came to destroy. Satan had so convinced the world that this was a true picture of God, only the very Son could give us a true view into the character of Love that is God.

EXPERIENCE

Finally, there is personal experience. The most important lesson which I have learned in dealing with my own homosexuality has been the high cost of integrity.

I was raised by a man to whom honesty and integrity were the highest

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*"This is a God I
can both love and
respect."*
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of all values. I was taught that I should always tell the truth no matter what the consequences. When it first dawned on me that I might be gay, I refused to be honest. This truth was simply too painful to contemplate.

So I ran away from the truth and in doing so, I ran away from myself. During that time, my life was fractured into dozens of little pieces. I was one person at work, I was another in church. I was one kind of father, another kind of husband and a different kind of friend. After I left my wife, it took me nearly two years of therapy to begin to find myself again. But even then, I was still

broken into all these little pieces. I had to face the fact that I was gay.

When I accepted the fact that I was gay, all these pieces came rushing together into one glorious complete whole. Some people would call it an Epiphany. I call it a miracle.

After this life changing experience, I could not continue to live in the closet. The price for my previous lack of integrity had been too high. It had destroyed my marriage, and devastated my children. It had resulted in my total emptiness. I could not go back to a place of dishonesty.

I have never intended to flaunt my sexuality. I don't hold my husband's hand as we're walking to Sabbath School or Church. I don't cuddle with him on the pew as I have seen some heterosexual couples do. But on the other hand, I will not sit on the other side of the aisle just to keep people from guessing the truth. And if people ask? I will be honest.

Ultimately, I have to live with my own conscience. I must listen to this "Still small voice" of God. It tells me that God is on my side and not that of those who would wish to force me back into the closet or into a less fulfilling celibacy.

Scripture affirms homosexuality. The most ancient Christian traditions included ceremonies for same-sex committed unions. Reason and science show that homosexuality is a natural phenomena. It is not to be denied but rather to be celebrated as one of the great varieties which God put into His creation. And those of us who are gay need only to reflect for an honest moment and listen to our conscience to know that being is gay is our true selves.

As Adventists, most of us were raised to fear pride. The memory verse of choice was "Pride goeth before a fall," Proverbs 16:18. What then do we do with Gay Pride Festivals and the call to be proud of our gayness? This was a real crisis for me when I first came out. But there is an alternative? Gratitude.

I challenge you to be grateful for being gay. Learn to appreciate the fact that God made you gay. Count your gay blessings, whether they are many or few, then tell God thank you for each one. Start small and work up to the big ones. It will change your attitude. ▼

Kinship Events

For further information contact the appropriate regional coordinator on page 2.

May 23: Region 8. Meeting. Milpitas.

June 14-21 Kinship Kampmeeting. Minneapolis.

June 28: Region 8. Gay Pride. San Francisco.