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The official statement from Adventist.org entitled "Seventh-day Adventist Position Statement on Homosexuality" asserts that "sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (Gen. 2:24, NIV)." Yet sex is a god-given impulse, not evil in and of itself. This verse isn't prescriptive, meaning that all men must leave their families and be married, nor does it rule out other reasons to leave one's parents' home. It tries to describe why men and women are drawn together joyfully—as helpers, interdependent companions. It doesn't say that other types of partnerships are prohibited!

However, the SDA official statement does go on to say that "Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7-21; Rom. 1:24-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-11)."

Within the cited Leviticus passage, verse 20:9 says that "All who curse father or mother shall be put to death" (NRSV). There are those who would argue that we cannot pick and choose which laws in Leviticus we obey and disobey, yet certainly we would not execute children who curse their parents. If we were to pick and choose which laws to obey/disobey, then this particular Levitical injunction, as with the wearing of mixed-fiber clothing, is no longer relevant to our society. However, the more compelling argument comes from Christ having superseded the Torah laws and ordinances. Rom. 10:6 "For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." Eph 2:15, "He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances..." Paul's letter to the Galatians also speaks to blind obedience to the ordinances, especially 5:4, "You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from Grace." Hebrews 10:1 states that "the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities..."

Romans 1:24-27 refers to those who do not honor or thank God and who make images of creatures to worship instead of worshipping the one God—and thus they do not love God or neighbor but express toward their fellow humans "acts of exploitative dominance or lust, not love" (Marston). That "God gave them up to degrading passions" (Rom. 1:26) concerns God's abandonment of idolators, and should not be read as His cursing those who love and are committed to each other and God.

1 Cor. 6:9 addresses male prostitutes and sodomites—which indicates sexual abuse of children, the forcible rape of those who were foreigners or guests, and/or sex outside of committed relationships. Sodomy was also used to indicate copulation with animals. Forcible anal or oral-genital violation of an unconsenting person (be they child, woman, man, or animal) is wrong and is thus defined as illegal, as well as immoral.

Regarding 1 Cor. 6:9-11, reflect also on 1 Cor. 2:11-16. 1 Cor. 2:11 says, "For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God." I was challenged sharply once when I stated that the nature of being gay or lesbian is "God-given." The nature of lesbian/gay/bisexual (LGB) people isn't yet truly understood by any of us; nevertheless, our spirituality is of God and I don't doubt that sexual orientation also comes from God, just as one's spiritual nature does. My orientation seems to be a basic part of who I am, just as my contemplative disposition is.

As humans who can understand only a small part of what God is, who are we to decree that certain groups of people must not live out their connection to God and each other? 1 Cor. 2:15-16: “Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny. ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’” Who would be so bold as to tell God that LGB people are not His? 1 Cor. 3:16 says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” Yes, even those of us who are not heterosexual! Read 1 Cor. 4:5 on not judging others; “God will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive commendation from God.” Each person can choose how to act based on his/her character and temperament, yet integrity requires acting in accord with one’s deepest self.

1 Cor. 3:17, “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple.” This seems to me to be an exhortation to those who disfellowship and shun lesbians and gays who have entered into relationships, and try to nullify and change the basic integrity of LGB people! 1 Cor. 4:7 “What do you have that you did not receive?” Sexual orientation is a gift of God.

1 Cor. 5:9-11 exhorts us not to associate with immoral persons—yet if we don’t allow same-sex marriages, then **we** define immorality, instead of God. **We** judge and condemn, and thus will be condemned. Romans 10:11 “The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame,’” i.e., God accepts all, and who are we to judge, shame and destroy our neighbors?

The SDA official statement also contains as justification: “Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: ‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’ So they are no longer two, but one’ (Matt. 19:4-6, NIV).” In this passage Jesus defines remarriage after divorce as being adultery—why is it taken out of context and interpreted as addressing same-sex relationships? As previously stated, it is neither prescriptive (meaning that each and every man will marry a woman) nor, since it addresses remarriage, should it be read as proscriptive regarding same-sex matrimony. More relevant is Heb 13:4, which says, “Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.” Same-sex marriages should be held to the same standards regarding adultery, letting God be the judge. Yet not only “heterosexual” marriage should be honored by all. If we limit marriage to “one man and one woman” then marriage certainly cannot be revered by all, since all do not honor those who respect and wish to enter into the covenant.

The SDA definition of same-sex relationships as sinful forces people to behave in ways that deny their own integrity. But the real question is about how and why we fall in love with another person—and the answer seems to be derived from a mixture of elements including biochemistry, environment, and God. Authentic integrity can include living a life of deep commitment to another person. Same-sex relationships do include the healthy, consensual, physical expression of ongoing care and interest (i.e., sex).

At their best, romantic relationships are founded on spiritual connection—the two people connected with each other and with God. Sin is essentially about separation from God, self, and others. Marriage is about the union of two people caring for each other in relationship to God. With this understanding, why would the marriage of gay or lesbian couples be sinful? That would be a contradiction in terms.

The way we see God is the basis for our response to others. If we understand God to be threatening, domineering, condemning, controlling, abusive, then we carry out these beliefs in our actions toward others. If we are faithful to a loving God, we will practice fidelity in caring not only for our neighbors but also in faithfully uniting with another person in a devoted, healthy relationship. Heb 13:1 "Let mutual love continue."

Redemption is through faith alone, not works (which includes acts). But as David Glenn pointed out in his sermon on July 9, 2005, faith in our salvation frees us up to do good works. We are instructed time and again to answer when called by God. When two people feel called together by God, an essential part of answering faithfully consists of defining a loving relationship. It would be sinful to ignore that calling, denying the truth of God's vision for us and the strength of His will.

Most LGBT people I know are very spiritual, very cognizant of "that of God" within their lives. It is God who calls souls into community with Him. However, it is people who decide who may and may not be part of a particular religious community or take part in specific rites. Religion is the form in which groups define the way they reach out to God. It is also a way of codifying human behavior. As humans who can understand only a small part of what God is, who are we to decree that certain groups of people must not live out their connection to God and each other, in healthy, consensual relationships? Our predecessors denied the right of marriage to African-Americans because they were considered less than human. Until recently, our laws restricted marriage between people of different races. Our predecessors also believed that left-handedness was sinful and persecuted those who insisted on using their dominant hand. Should we follow in the same direction? Again, let God judge, and let us not set ourselves above Him.

Ellen G. White wrote compassionate arguments for racial equality; many of them could easily be applied to equality for LGB people. "Caste is hateful to God. He ignores everything of this character. In His sight the souls of all men are of equal value...without distinction..." (White, *Desire of Ages*, 403). "You will always find Satan on the side of the oppressor. God does not oppress" (White, *Manuscript 5*, 47). Why not read her texts in [The Southern Work](#) on equal love, reward, salvation, destination, relations, responsibility, and priority?

The standard for Seventh-day Adventist Christian behavior is stated in the church's Fundamental Belief No. 13, "Unity in the Body of Christ:"

In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation.

Meister Eckhart said that, "When God laughs at the soul and the soul laughs at God, the persons of the trinity are begotten. When the Father laughs at the Son and the Son laughs back at the Father, that laughter gives pleasure, that pleasure gives joy, that joy gives love, and that love is the Holy Spirit." One soul laughing with God—no matter the sex, gender, or sexual orientation—or two souls laughing with each other and God—is that not also part of the Holy Spirit and Trinity?

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[For additional, extensive exegesis of the Biblical passages cited by the SDA statements, see the Seventh-Day Adventist Kinship site at <http://www.sdakinship.org/anotherpov/index.htm> and Someone to talk to...for families of gays and lesbians, at <http://someone-to-talk-to.net/>.]