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# Lawsuits and Scandals — Adventist Homosexuals Not So Anonymous Anymore

by Bonnie Dwyer

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Seven men have retained the services of attorney Marie Imyang to file a suit for them during March in the Berks County, Pennsylvania, Court of Common Pleas against Colin Cook and the Seventh-day Adventist church. The seven plaintiffs state that they had contracted with Cook for counseling and relief from homosexuality but instead were sexually molested and abused. The church is named because some of the men allege that they were threatened with the loss of their jobs within the Adventist system or expulsion from an Adventist school if they did not participate in Cook's program to "heal" homosexuals. This civil action case is the result of a sexual scandal that took place at the Quest Learning Center in Reading, Pennsylvania, over the past eight years. This scandal is the primary, but not the only reason American courts and the media have become increasingly aware of the tangled history of Adventists and homosexuals.

Participants and bystanders in Washington, D.C., saw Adventists carrying signs and banners in the October 1987 National March on Washington for Gay Rights. The Adventists' largest banner—requiring more than one person to hold—read: "Kinship: Gay and Lesbian Seventh-day Adventists." Other placards said "Support Ad-

ventists With AIDS/ARC," "Change 'Ministries' Are a Crime Against Nature," "Stop Supporting Sexual Abuse of Children," "Stop Supporting Colin Cook."

At the beginning of this year a California court heard attorneys employed by the General Conference file a lawsuit asking the court to grant a permanent injunction against SDA Kinship, a national 625-member organization to which many of the placard carriers belong. In addition to participating in demonstrations, Kinship for years has held a "Kamp-Meeting," to which it has always invited several Adventist ministers. It also carries out special ministries for AIDS victims. Kinship's newsletter, mailed to about 1200 people, suggests that its members regard at least stable homosexual relationships as compatible with Adventism. The suit requests that the court forbid Kinship from using "SDA," "Seventh-day Adventist," or "Seventh-day Adventists," and that Kinship be ordered to notify its members and business associates that it has no affiliation with the church.

Sunday morning, February 14, 1988, the citizens of Reading, Pennsylvania, were greeted with an extensive account in the *Reading Eagle* of the counseling for homosexuals undertaken by an Adventist, Colin Cook, in their own town. An even larger number of people—the million readers of the *Los Angeles Times*—could read, on Sunday, December 6, 1987, a long article that described how distinctive that program had been; how change ministries, designed to reorient

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homosexuals to heterosexuality, had been pioneered and financially supported by the Seventh-day Adventist church. Indeed, the article described Colin Cook, who founded not only Quest but also Homosexuals Anonymous, as

the best-known figure in the gay-to-straight movement nationwide. Cook's renown has spread through his books, cassette tapes, and speaking engagements. Dozens of change ministries, as they are called, have grown up around Cook's technique which incorporates religious and psychological insights he claims to have used to deliver himself from homosexuality.

Both the *Reading Eagle* and *Los Angeles Times* articles recounted for readers how Cook, during the six years that he headed Quest until he was forced to resign in 1986, persisted in engaging in

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homosexual acts with the young men with whom he was counseling. Although the church pulled out of the original Quest, its board, chaired by a denominational official, continued as the board of Homosexuals Anonymous. The General Conference has begun reducing the amount of its contribution, but plans to continue giving financial aid to Homosexuals Anonymous until 1990. Despite the 1986 scandal, Cook continues to be invited to speak at meetings of Homosexuals Anonymous chapters (of which there are about 50). He was the featured speaker at the Homosexuals Anonymous' 1987 training seminar in August and its annual conference in September. Cook is not only writing a book on how persons can recover from homosexuality, but continues his counseling with two men and in December 1987 announced plans to open Quest II in Reading, Pennsylvania.

The public is beginning to realize that homosexual Adventists exist and that a scandal of major

proportions is drawing the Adventist community into a fundamental debate about an appropriate response to its thousands of homosexual members. In a broad sense, the issue is how the majority of church members will relate to the minority who are homosexuals. Will church members, pastors, and denominational officials limit themselves to supporting ministries trying to change all homosexuals to heterosexuals, or will the Adventist church pursue a variety of approaches? No one knows, of course, just how many homosexual Adventists in North America will be affected by the answers to those questions. But if the standard estimate of the percentage of the general population in North America that are homosexual—five to 10 percent—is accurate, and if there is an equivalent proportion of homosexuals to general Adventist membership, 35,000 to 70,000 Adventists in the North American Division have a homosexual orientation. Even if that figure were substantially overstated, many more thousands of Adventists than most members realize will be affected by how the church as a whole decides to minister to its members with a homosexual orientation.

In a narrower sense, the question is whether church members, pastors, and denominational officials will continue, as they have so persistently in the past, to rely on Colin Cook to shape the Adventist response to homosexuality. Certainly, during the 1980s, the church's official actions toward homosexuals have been bound up with the dramatic chronicle of Quest, Homosexuals Anonymous, and Colin Cook's personal struggles.

**T**hat story really begins in Cook's childhood in England. His father, a fisherman, was away from home much of the time. By the age of nine, Cook felt a desire to be close to men, and already at 13 was acting on his erotic compulsions. At 15, he became a Seventh-day Adventist and for 10 years, he says, he kept his homosexuality in check. During that time he earned both a B.A. and an M.A. in religion. By the time Cook began his seven years as a pastor—four in Britain and three in New York City—he had resumed his homosexual activities.

In New York he pastored a midtown Manhattan church and attracted unusually large crowds to his lunch-hour preaching in Battery Park. Concurrently, he engaged in a great deal of anonymous, homosexual sex in bath houses, public bathrooms, and parks. Eventually his promiscuous behavior was discovered by church administrators and in 1974, at the age of 34, he was forced out of the ministry.

Devastated by these events, Cook called the president of the American Psychiatric Association asking for help. He wanted to find a Christian counselor who put theology ahead of psychology. He was referred to Dr. Edwin Hallsten. To support himself Cook eventually moved to Reading,

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Pennsylvania, where he worked variously as a health educator, nursing assistant for elderly patients, and gardener at the Reading Rehabilitation Center. He claims now that his homosexual behavior was diminishing and that he was developing an erotic interest in females. He does not claim that homosexual encounters ever stopped completely during this period.

In 1976, he wrote a series of articles for *Insight* that helped to launch him into a new ministry—counseling homosexuals on how to change their sexual orientation. In the three-part article, “God’s Grace to the Homosexual,” he proclaimed, without yet revealing anything of his own experience, that

There is a way out of the homosexual life. . . . You can find new emotions and enjoy the rich possibilities inherent in love for someone of the opposite sex.<sup>1</sup>

Although the article generated some hostility (since it was the first to suggest that the church contained substantial numbers of homosexual members), Cook received 150 letters from readers, many struggling with their homosexuality.

As a result, he began holding weekend counseling sessions.

Cook married in 1978. For some Adventists unfamiliar with the history of gays, Cook’s marriage became proof that he had changed his homosexual life-style. In fact, his homosexuality continued. He published another article in *Insight*, “Homosexuality: The Lie,” the year he got married.<sup>2</sup> This paper took issue with researchers and therapists who contend that “the experts cannot come up with one single case of homosexual cure, and thus, by inference, that change from homosexuality to heterosexuality is impossible.” Cook introduced contrary opinions. He also released a 10-cassette tape album, “Homosexuality and the Power to Change,” which has since had wide circulation.<sup>3</sup> His own homosexual activity had still not ended, but diminished to encounters maybe every other month.

In 1980, Cook incorporated the Quest Learning Center, a program that combined personal counseling with “Homosexuals Anonymous” mutual support meetings, “growth classes,” “host families,” and involvement in church activities. The number of applications from would-be counselees rose dramatically after the September 1981 issue of *Ministry* published a 10-page interview by Editor J. Robert Spangler with Cook entitled “Homosexual Healing.” Since this was a “Preach Edition,” it was sent free by its Adventist publishers to 300,000 clergy of all denominations. Almost 1000 clergy wrote letters to Cook, including many pastors who believed homosexuality to be sinful, but had previously not known of any solution to recommend. Shortly afterwards, the article was republished as *The H Solution* and circulated even more widely as a booklet than it had as an article.

Cook applied for and received a grant in 1981 from the General Conference to create the Quest Center. He conferred with Duncan Eva, a retired general vice-president of the General Conference and then special assistant to President Neal Wilson; Monte Sahlin, then pastor of the Allentown, Pennsylvania, church and now in the General Conference, and Dr. Paul Smith, an Adventist dentist in the Reading, Pennsylvania, area and health director of the Pennsylvania Conference,

about how to constitute the board. Eva became the chairman. The other members of the board included representatives of the union and local conferences, a local Adventist pastor, and three of Quest's staff members. All the original board members were Adventists.

The General Conference and the Columbia Union provided \$47,500 annually, which in 1985, constituted 39 percent of Quest's budget. While Quest's bylaws carefully omitted any reference to Adventists, the Adventist church had become the first denomination to commit itself financially to an "ex-gay" ministry.<sup>4</sup>

The board received reports of dramatic successes such as that of the minister who was referred to Quest after serving time in jail for having sex with a minor. The man came to Quest broken over the experience of losing his ministry and family when his sexuality became front-page news in his home town. He had been blackmailed and attempted suicide. He reports that at Quest he found that the gospel works if we let it. He says he has now let go of his compulsive behavior, and worked through the depression. Recently he was selected to be the Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Service Coordinator.

Cook's theological approach to homosexual change appealed to ministers of several denominations. Most vocal supporters are people with ministerial training who say they were helped to overcome homosexual behavior. One Baptist minister came to Quest after reading about it in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. After a year of counseling, his obsessive compulsive behavior was gone. Four years after first coming to Quest, he states that he is absolutely heterosexual. He serves on the Board of Homosexuals Anonymous.

To be understanding of the sensitive condition of Quest's counselees, Duncan Eva, then Quest's Board Chairman, says that the board did not require detailed knowledge about the center's clientele. It trusted Cook and knew that the healing process could be lengthy.

**T**he first of Cook's two children was born in 1982, the second in 1985. Their father was quickly becoming one of the most prominent figures and a dominating in-

tellectual force within the "ex-gay" movement. Cook expanded his influence by founding Homosexuals Anonymous, a network of mutual support groups in the United States and Canada. By 1986 an estimated 700 to 800 people were attending weekly meetings in 60 chapters. Cook visited most of the chapters and produced two sets of tapes elucidating Homosexuals Anonymous theory and practice. He also was prominent within Exodus International, a coalition of ex-gay ministries, and he did much to reshape both their theoretical and practical approaches to ministry—indeed, many of their member groups also formed

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Homosexuals Anonymous chapters to work beside their counseling programs. Cook was featured in newspaper and magazine stories and appeared many times on radio and television. His visit to the Phil Donohue Show generated 1500 calls to the Adventist Information Ministries 800 line. His booklet, *Homosexuality: An Open Door?* published by Pacific Press in April 1985, sold quickly most of the 25,000 copies printed. In a word he had become a star, not just because of his claim to be a healed homosexual, but because he was able to offer hope. "He integrates religion and psychology very well," says one colleague at Homosexuals Anonymous. And his preaching skills made him a very effective seminar speaker. "We all walked in his shadow," said another of his Homosexuals Anonymous colleagues.

Board members now say they realized he was taking on too much, stretching himself too thin. They did not realize that he had not given up his homosexual activity. He was having homosexual encounters with members of Homosexual Anonymous chapters he visited, and most serious for Quest, he was seducing counselees. What started as hugs and head rubs to relax counselees sometimes turned into erotic hugs and full-body naked massages.

Former counselees talked to Ron Lawson, a sociologist of the City University of New York, who was investigating Quest as part of his research for a book on Seventh-day Adventists. Lawson is also a member of Kinship, and until recently a member its national board. One counselee reported:

[Colin] massaged me three or four times, and he told me he thought it was important. The main idea was that it was all right for men to touch each other. . . . It was usually he who would offer to massage me, although in

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my apartment once, he came over one morning and said he had a headache and he was wondering if I would give him a massage. At the time I thought it was very strange. . . . but obviously I was there to be open-minded, and I thought I should try it to see what it was like—but I had my doubts. The idea to give him a massage was very unpleasant to me. . . . I was nervous. . . . He told me I shouldn’t pay any attention if I realized he got excited—that was a normal thing. I noticed that he had an erection. I kept thinking, “Oh, gosh, I don’t think this is normal.”

When I moved to Reading I moved initially into the YMCA. One time I called [Quest] because I had a counseling appointment. . . . I had the flu and I was really sick. . . . I could not make it. I went back to bed. An hour later there was a knock on my door—it was Colin. He said he thought it was important that I had my appointment and that we counseled, though it was obvious to him that I was ill. All of a sudden a massage just happened there in my room at the ‘Y’, and I didn’t want it to happen. I told him I was ill and that I wasn’t up to it, but he did it anyway. . . . I was so ill I didn’t argue with him, I just let him do it. The counseling part didn’t happen that day—it was a massage and that was it. . . . I had my underwear on. . . . Another time he asked me how I would react and would it be all right if I got a massage in the nude. I said I didn’t understand why you would want to do it, and he explained to me again the idea he wanted me to know that it was all right for men to touch each other, and he wanted me to trust him. . . . I thought it was very unusual, but I was there for improvement and I wanted to be open-minded and, as weird as I thought it was, I thought it was not going to kill me so I should just let him do it, although I was not very comfortable.<sup>5</sup>

Cook now says such behavior with counselees

in his charge was the biggest folly of his life. He knows it was wrong and hopes to learn from the experience. He calls his actions sinfully dishonest, because he was desiring the contact more than the counselees. According to him, in about one-third of the massage cases there was genital touching, and he always immediately confessed it was wrong. When he saw the counselees again he would ask for their forgiveness. But it became a way, he told himself, of relaxing. He says that while denying anything was wrong he became a sexual addict. He wanted homosexual contact so he claimed it was something it was not.

“It was everything it appeared to be,” he says now, “it was erotic. I rationalized that if it was not genital it was not sexual. I never thought of myself as seductive, because I told them they could refuse. But people couldn’t say no.”

When one counselee reported an incident of a nude massage to the coordinator of Homosexuals Anonymous, the coordinator asked Cook about it. Cook brushed it off as a single incident that was not as serious as the counselee suggested. Nothing further was said until officials from Exodus International showed up one day early in 1985 at Quest headquarters. It had been reported to them that Cook had engaged in nude massage and prayer with an Homosexuals Anonymous member at an Exodus conference in British Columbia where he had been the speaker. They demanded that Cook tell his wife, the coordinator of Homosexuals Anonymous, and the chairman of the Quest board. Finally, Cook did, admitting to only the two incidents known to Exodus International. Homosexuals Anonymous’ coordinator was furious and demanded Cook’s resignation. A compromise was worked out in which Cook agreed to receive private phone counseling from his original therapist. Duncan Eva informed General Conference President Neal C. Wilson. Exodus International did not invite Cook to speak at its 1985 conference.

However, Cook still did not end his homosexual activity. For Cook to constantly counsel gay men was like putting a reformed drunk in charge of a bar. The psychologi-

cal stress that evolved at Quest from having all these gay men together was felt by the counselees, too. One described it to Lawson:

I was inexperienced when I had gone there, but I became extremely promiscuous during my time there. . . . There were all these men wanting to change, and yet they were very tempted by one another. . . . It was hard to have any relationship with anyone in the group without involving sex. To be invited over to someone's apartment usually ended up with sex. It [Quest] became a meeting place. . . . I became involved with two people who went through the group, and I think that they were really bad experiences for me because they were so confused—they had no idea where they were going in life. They were very hypocritical; they would be in a [gay] bar every other night. . . . and yet they would still faithfully go to the Monday night Quest meeting. It's like getting drunk every night and yet making my AA meeting. . . . Being in a group with men who were attracted to other men. . . . was to me like being in an AA group with, in the center of the group, alcoholic beverages on the table. . . . It was like torturing yourself.<sup>6</sup>

It was not until 1986 that the full extent of Cook's problem was revealed. On October 23, 1986, Lawson mailed a 13-page summary of his findings to Neal Wilson and 29 other people, including some members of the Quest Board. He reported interviewing 14 Quest participants, including four considered to be "successes" and another who now leads an Homosexuals Anonymous chapter. The average period of counseling at Quest was 22 months, and involvement spanned Quest's history from 1979 to 1986. Lawson gave a full report of his findings and did not confine them to just the abuses discovered.

"The interviewees reported two main positive results of their Quest experience," Lawson said:

First, just over half (8/14) felt that broadly focused counselling and its considerable emphasis on developing strong same sex relationships had helped their self-esteem and social relationships. Colin Cook places considerable stress on these goals, so their accomplishment is an intended consequence of the program. However, the evidence denies his claim that these goals are on the same trajectory as becoming 'free from homosexuality' as illustrated by the following:

Second, 11 of the 14 counselees said the Quest program led them to accept and feel good about their homosexuality. Before they came to Reading they had no meaningful gay friendships—their guilt was typically so great that any sexual activity was anonymous (that is,

almost never with the same person more than once). But at Quest they discussed their homosexuality openly, mixed regularly with others like themselves, felt less guilt and shame, formed friendships, were active sexually with these friends and sometimes for the first time fell in love. These new experiences significantly fostered affirmation and self-acceptance.<sup>7</sup>

But there were also negative connotations to the counselees' increased self-acceptance as homosexuals. All had come to Quest looking for a cure, uprooting themselves and moving to Reading. But none of the people to whom Lawson talked had changed his sexual orientation and none of them said he knew anyone who had. Their experience at Quest taught them to be cynical toward public testimonies that seemed to indicate progress toward "freedom from homosexuality." They told Lawson that such testimonials were recognized as statements of "faith and hope for the future, not statements of genuine success already realized."

[One] interviewee told of vacationing in a well-known gay resort with an ex-boyfriend from Quest days who now leads an HA chapter. The two experienced a great deal of sex together, and the interviewee turned aside hints from the ex-boyfriend that the two should settle down as lovers. He was questioning whether he's changed. . . . I felt really badly for him, for this was a man who had gone public (as having changed from homosexuality) on TV and had edited a newsletter telling people you can change! . . . The first day I got back from Florida I received their first newsletter, and it had him featured throughout. . . . telling about freedom from homosexual sin; he was on this TV program; he described himself as a Midwest missionary answering a call to go to some church. . . . where they needed to deal with the homosexual problem—he was there telling them his experience. . . . [Yet] just 24 hours earlier he had been amorous to me and was expressing an opposite viewpoint.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding their experience with Colin Cook, the counselees expressed anger and confusion and a sense that they had been sexually abused and manipulated for Cook's gratification. "Eleven of the 14 reported considerable discomfort from long, erotic hugs with which Colin typically began counseling sessions. During these hugs they often became acutely aware that Colin had an erection," Lawson wrote. One of the counselees told Lawson:

Very often I would feel an erection on the part of Colin [when he hugged me], I was not aroused by this. . . . When I would go to release, he would continue the hug. . . it seemed like for an eternity. . . . Afterwards he wanted to talk about the hug, the erection. He was trying to get across the point it was all right for men to do this, to have erections, be aroused by this. . . that this was all right between heterosexual men. . . . He would watch your reaction during hugs, and I learned to act as if enjoying them, for if I showed that I loathed them he would put more of an emphasis on them.<sup>9</sup>

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Nine of the 14 counselees complained to Lawson that Colin insisted on repeatedly going over the details of their sexual fantasies and experiences. Twelve of the 14 said that Cook had them undergo nude massages with him. Some counselees, including one 16 years old at the time, also reported that Cook had handled their genitals. One counselee, a 21-year-old on the West Coast, with whom Cook counseled twice a week by phone, reported that:

I was a little uncomfortable when we would talk over the phone. He would get very explicit about things, and I was not really comfortable listening to the details—in fact in a lot of ways it was more arousing than . . . necessary to talk about it. One time it sounded as if he was out of breath. I didn't understand what was going on because I'd never experienced this before, but what he was doing was masturbating over the phone to the sound of my voice.<sup>10</sup>

The counselee didn't know what to do but went on talking. "After he was satisfied he apologized for putting me through that. It was a very humiliating experience." In all, 13 of the 14 counselees interviewed by Lawson had been the objects of Cook's sexual attentions. The only exception was a man in his fifties, far older than the others.

Concluding his letter, Lawson acknowledged that Cook did much to lead the church into an awareness of its thousands of gay and lesbian members.

We believe his efforts with Quest Learning Center

and Homosexuals Anonymous have been well intended. Our concern is not with his private life; we sympathize with his personal struggles. However, it is our view that his professional behavior in counseling settings constitutes a major betrayal of trust and an abuse of his position in counseling relationships."

He called for the church to right its error of publicizing Cook's success by also making known his downfall, and making restitution to the counselees who were harmed.<sup>11</sup>

**F**our days after Lawson's letter was sent, Cook was suspended by his board chairman. A week later Cook wrote to Wilson acknowledging that the accusations were correct. Within the month the board accepted his resignation and voted to close Quest. However, the board, at the same time, reaffirmed that it had "no reservations about the basic counseling philosophy of Quest." Its vote to close was triggered by the financial crisis that followed in the wake of the scandal when donation income stopped. Money was not available to continue funding both Quest and Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services. According to the Homosexuals Anonymous coordinator, the board felt it could have more of an impact with Homosexuals Anonymous, which had more than 50 chapters scattered across the country, as well as in New Zealand, Switzerland, and Canada. It voted to keep Homosexuals Anonymous. The board of Quest, minus Colin Cook, continued as the board of Homosexuals Anonymous. By this time two non-Adventists had been added. Duncan Eva continues as chairman of the board. General Conference funding for Homosexuals Anonymous continues, although it is diminishing each year and scheduled to be completely withdrawn by 1990.

Cook, in a circular letter addressed to Homosexuals Anonymous members, acknowledged his sins. He wrote to wronged counselees asking for forgiveness. The board offered to provide a neutral counselor to help these people work through the psychological trauma. At Cook's local Adventist church, he was put under church censorship and assigned three elders to whom he reported until recently. He does continue to counsel people privately, but an oversight system has been

worked out with a local psychiatrist. He claims that he has been free of any homosexual activity since September 1986 (approximately the same time as the Lawson letter). His family has stayed with him through the crisis. Cook says the manuscript on which he is working will detail his long journey to recovery from homosexuality, and will be the most important work on homosexuality since Freud. It is clear that Cook has every intention of continuing his career as an expert on homosexuality and how to overcome it. He is ready to open Quest II, which he says will not place as much emphasis on counseling as on lecturing and writing.

Although numerous Adventist publications had published stories about Colin Cook and his Quest ministry through the years, it was not until eight months after Quest closed that the *Adventist Review* printed a paragraph reporting the closing—with no explanation.

A year after the Lawson letter and Cook's departure from Quest, *Ministry* in its September 1987 issue, carried another interview with Cook entitled "Homosexual Recovery—Six Years Later." This was another PREACH edition, so the editor was updating his 300,000 audience of interdenominational ministers on Cook's activities.

While acknowledging he had sinned, Cook showed how he rationalized his homosexuality while claiming to be "cured." To Editor Spangler's question, "Would you share with us how you seemingly reverted back to the old pattern?" Cook replied, "It was not back to the old pattern, as wrong as these events were. Not the full homosexuality of years ago."<sup>12</sup>

Later in the interview, he admitted that he had been involved in some homosexual activity even at the time of his first, 1981 *Ministry* interview and the establishment of Quest.

But, you know, Bob, there is something important to notice about that interview. I was not willing to state then that I still fell into homosexual sin from time to time. I was, of course, trying to make clear that I was accounting myself heterosexual in Christ and that the faith response to this was breaking the addictive force of the homosexual urges. . . .

I think I genuinely wondered whether my church could ever accept a Christian in the process of struggling

to overcome homosexuality. We love the victory stories. And I had had a sufficiently massive deliverance that I could, without dishonesty, tell a victory story. But what about the "becoming" part of my life? I have never felt comfortable with that.<sup>13</sup>

He also reaffirmed the possibility of homosexual recovery. "I believe it is also the call of God to men and women everywhere to renounce homosexuality in their lives, and my own experience increasingly witnesses to the reality of God's call in spite of my having botched things up."

Reaction to the *Ministry* article was immediate and very critical in the SDA Kinship newsletter, *Connection*. A Quest graduate reported on the piece and said:

The interview sinks to complete absurdity when Cook tells Spangler it was not "the full homosexuality of years ago," and then states that the "major bondage of homosexuality was over well before my marriage." What kind of homosexuality did he practice years ago? Was it something worse than the multiple client partners

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of the Quest era which Cook himself refers to as a "sexually addictive pattern"? Doesn't *Ministry* realize that the new sexual addiction is much more grievous than the old? Taking advantage of counselees has criminal implications superseding those of anonymous sex in bathhouses.<sup>14</sup>

The same issue of Kinship *Connection* carried an open letter to *Ministry* from the Rev. Marsha B. Langford, a homosexual non-Adventist minister, who is the director of an outpatient treatment center specializing in addictive disorders. She calls Cook a very sick man and asks,

If the Seventh-day Adventist Church really believes that homosexuality is a condition that individuals can recover from, why don't they seek credible individuals to conduct responsible research and provide services presided over by trained professionals?<sup>15</sup>

It is this issue of how likely it is that a homosexual can change orientation that divides the Adventist gay community. Kinship cites the Lawson findings and studies by the American Psychologi-

cal Association to support its belief that homosexual orientation can be changed in only a few cases.

Cook told Spangler that his accusers were right to be indignant about what he had done, but wrong to couch the issue in the broader terms of homosexual orientation.

They said, in effect, that since neither I nor any of my counselees had changed orientation, that orientation change is impossible. They simply ignored the growth, the "becoming," that had taken place in me and others.

Cook also told Spangler:

It may surprise many people to know that change of orientation was never a major issue at Quest, but rather a releasing from life dominance. It was the pro-gays who introduced the controversy of orientation change. This fact was often misunderstood because of the human tendency to constantly subjectivize the gospel, shifting confidence from Christ to conversion.<sup>16</sup>

Adventist members are left to contemplate the implications of this chronicle of events. The narrower issue of whether members, pastors, and denominational officials ought to rely on Colin Cook to lead the response of Adventists to homosexuality is probably not difficult to answer. Colin Cook may find fewer relatives and pastors still recommending that young homosexual Adventists go to Reading

to receive his therapy. Indeed, if he continues his association with Homosexuals Anonymous that organization's work may shrink.<sup>7</sup>

On the broader issue of how the Adventist majority should relate to the homosexual minority, some Adventists steadfastly refuse to believe that Cook's experience discredits all ministries dedicated to changing homosexual to heterosexual behavior. A theological approach that promises that Christ can overcome the sin of homosexuality will continue to have a strong appeal. These members probably support the church's going into court to disassociate itself from an organization like Kinship.

Other Adventists recoil from the story of Quest and Colin Cook by concluding that all change ministries are frauds; worse, that they promise false hope to people when they suggest that all are able to change their homosexual orientation.

Perhaps a lesson to be learned from this chronicle is that both those who say that they benefit from change ministry and those who consider it a fraud are part of the Adventist community. Perhaps the majority should dedicate themselves to exploring more creatively a variety of ways to relate to the homosexual minority as brothers and sisters within the family of Adventism.

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