

“Don’t Do What We’ve Done”

By Clinton Wahlen

So said Robert A. J. Gagnon of Pittsburg Theological Seminary when asked about his advice for Adventists. Gagnon is ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA), which voted in 2008 to rescind homosexual exclusion by eliminating the requirement that church officers and candidates for ministry adhere to “fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, or chastity in singleness.” Though later overturned by a majority vote of the local presbyteries in 2009, the denomination’s leadership promised that “the PCUSA will continue to seek ways and means to see God’s blessing on alternative forms of covenant between two people.”¹

In an exclusive interview after the conference, Gagnon warned that dialogue is not always worthwhile because “the dialogue is never even-handed” and tends to detract from the centrality of Scripture by focusing on experience. “Each side says what they think Scripture means, they agree to disagree, and very quickly Scripture is neutralized. Dialogue fixates on heart-wrenching stories to show why homosexuals should not be discriminated against.” Adventists, he said, should choose a different path. “Jesus described love as taking up one’s cross, denying oneself, and losing one’s life.” Similarly, Ellen White counseled long ago:

Ministers of the gospel sometimes allow their forbearance toward the erring to degenerate into toleration of sins, and even participation in them. They excuse that which God condemns, and after a time, become so blinded as to commend the ones whom God commands them to reprove. He who has blunted his spiritual perceptions by sinful leniency toward those whom God condemns, will ere long commit a greater sin by severity and harshness toward those whom God approves.²

Interestingly, the more conservative Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), affirmed in 1977 that “both the act and the desire” of homosexuality is sin and that “a practicing homosexual continuing in this sin would not be a fit candidate for ordination or membership in the PCA.” It went further in 1999, instructing its churches “to inform and warn the members of their congregations of dangers of the homosexual agenda in the schools.”³ This declaration was in response to gay and lesbian activist organizations in the United States that have successfully encouraged formation of more than 3,000 Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) clubs in middle schools (ages 12-14) and high schools (ages 15-18) and use of a video, aimed at even younger children, titled “It’s Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School.”

The Adventist Church in an official statement has affirmed the Biblical position that “sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden.” It urges members to follow the example of Jesus in recognizing the value of every person to God and reaching out in caring ministry to all who are struggling with sin and who seek healing rather than mere approval for their chosen lifestyle.⁴ This clear and balanced position should be reflected at all levels of the world church.

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¹See Jerry L. Van Marter, “Amendment B is defeated,” Presbyterian News Service, April 27, 2009; cited November 16, 2009; online: <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09339.htm>; John H. Adams, *The Layman*, “After dire warnings, GA backs off gay marriages,” June 28, 2008; cited November 16, 2009; online: <http://www.pcusa.org/pcnews/2009/09339.htm>.

²Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 504.

³The 1977 and 1999 statements are cited together in the *Minutes of the Twenty-Seventh General Assembly of the PCA*, 27-44, III, Recommendation #13, pp. 174-75; cited November 16, 2009; online: <http://www.pcahistory.org/pca/27GA-Ov22.pdf>.
⁴http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main_stat46.html.

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