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Editorial

The Church in the West is in deep turmoil on the issue of sexual integrity. The misuse of contraceptives, abortion, adultery, divorce, remarriage and homosexuality are hotly debated. Secular humanistic values and post-secular forms of spirituality are challenging the basic assumptions of historic Christianity. Modern media are their chief weapons. Practising homosexuals and their sympathizers are demanding equal rights with those engaged in heterosexual lifestyles. The eye of the storm for the Church is the ordination to the ministry of practising homosexual men and women.

On one hand the issue is the exegesis and interpretation of the few biblical texts that speak directly to the subject; on the other, it is the fundamental doctrine of humanity created in the image of God, the nature of marriage and the family and ultimately the being of God in trinitarian relationship. Some see it as a theological crisis comparable to the Christological crisis of the early Nicean era.

So far, homosexuality is not a major issue in the 'Third World' except in urban contexts impacted by secular modernity. Churches in Africa continue to struggle with their response to the complex issue of polygamy. Some African Church leaders see Western serial marriage as but another version of polygamy.

This issue of ERT is but an introduction to the Church's call for sexual integrity. Space forbids the inclusion of many other valuable articles worthy of being published in this issue.

Editor [p. 4](#)

Two Case Studies

Eliot

Reprinted with permission from *Craving for Love* by Briar Whitehead
(*Tunbridge Wells, Monarch, 1993*) pp. 180–182.

Noel and Jan

Reprinted with permission from Submission to the Justice and Law
Reform Select Committee on The Human Rights Commission
Amendment Bill 1992 (*Lower Hutt, Lion of Judah Ministries 1993*) pp.
150–153.

These stories need no introduction. They confront us with the pain and rejection of those who struggle with the reality of their human sexuality, and with defeat and victory. Let those who have no sin cost the first stone.

Editor

ELIOT

Eliot, a son of missionaries, but no longer a church-goer, says he first became aware of wanting to be ‘really close to boys’ when he was four. As a high-profile Christian teenager, and worship leader, fighting attraction to men, he spent hours on his knees, praying till he broke out in sweats, plagued with guilt. ‘I can’t tell you the number of times I was on my knees in prayer about wanting to be different and wanting to change. I can’t describe—it was agony at some stages—emotional agony.’ He begged God for help. It made no difference. After ‘a hell of a year’ at age seventeen in which he finally concluded he was gay he came home to tell his mother, and his father, who was an elder. ‘My mother cried for it seemed like six years and said, ‘How could you? How could you?’ My father just pulled back, became his usual distant, clinical self as if he wasn’t really there—and analyzed everything.’ His pastor visited and he was given an ultimatum: Go and get prayer and deliverance and stop what you’re doing, or you’ll have to resign your membership. ‘I got a lot of judgement, I was told to pray about this and pray about that, go for runs and have cold showers and get deliverance.’ His former friends in the church avoided him:

I couldn’t believe how these people who had been my close friends all of a sudden wouldn’t speak to me on the street; people walking straight past me, or ducking into shops so they wouldn’t have to talk to me. There wasn’t a shred of warmth or support. It would have been really nice if someone had just said, ‘It’s OK, you’re going through this and it’s OK.’ But no, they had a public meeting about my membership and decided that I wasn’t to be involved in the church anymore. I was only p. 5 eighteen. Even if people had said to me, ‘Look maybe we don’t understand ...’ that’s actually a lot better than people saying, ‘We understand.’ In fact for people to have said to me that they understood would have been totally patronising and too late, because I’d heard all the negative messages right from when I was a child about homosexuality. They didn’t understand at all. All I got was judgement and fear and ignorance, and I don’t know how people who supposedly have been loving and warm and open just ... click ... just like that. When I said I lost all my friends, I lost all my friends, because when my parents came back from the mission field I didn’t know a soul and I made my friends in the church because they were open and warm and friendly.

When he left home, Eliot said, ‘I got letters from my parents laying it on, “We pray for you constantly that God will deliver you from this.” ’

Not surprisingly perhaps, Eliot went into the gay scene, and is still there—after seven years. Eliot is now a convert to gay theology, and says he finds no conflict between the Bible and his lifestyle. But it’s clear as he talks that the Christianity he knew as a teenager was getting nowhere near the deep needs that underlay his homosexuality.

The joyous Christian life was very rarely joyous for me, and I can’t say how much energy I put into trying to get this thing—this joyous Christian life. There were just all these rules and you had to do them or die and go to hell. The Holy Spirit came to give you the power to do the rules—so that your whole life was going to be a struggle of trying to get the Holy Spirit so you could do the rules. And God sat up there and if you tried hard enough to be close to him, then he would sometimes reach down and give a little stroke and that would be a spiritual buzz that would happen about once every couple of years to keep you going.

Eliot had been craving male love for a long time, love from his father, love from God. His concept of God mirrored that of his father—distant, aloof, unaffirming. He remembers doing many things to try to get his father’s approval but never succeeding, just as he tried to win God’s approval but felt he never succeeded there either. When he finally concluded he was gay, and his support system crashed around him, his relationship with God—built as it was upon rules and earning God’s love—was too fragile to hold him. Thousands of other genuine Christian men and women struggling with homosexuality will talk just as Eliot has—of striving as hard as any Christian could reasonably be expected to, against something they didn’t understand and didn’t want, trying to follow Christ and live a holy life, and knowing that the church was their foe rather than their friend. Eliot’s church is just like so many churches—full of good and genuine people—who don’t know how else to respond.

NOEL

If you were to ask me, ‘What made you happy in the gay lifestyle?’ I would answer, ‘Total involvement in the gay world.’ All my waking hours were spent thinking about gays, sex and how to win changes in the law. I lived for it. **P. 6**

On March 22 this year (1993) I will have been out of the homosexual lifestyle for 10 years.

People say you’re born gay, but no-one is born gay. In my brokenness and rejection and search for a father figure I was introduced to homosexuality and opened myself up to it. It’s very threatening to gays to tell them they can become heterosexual because they have spent so long trying to accept a homosexual identity. Because I am now fully heterosexual gays try to tell me I was never homosexual, but how long do you have to serve an apprenticeship before you can call yourself homosexual?

I was raped by a Minister of Religion when I was seven-and-a-half. By the age of 12 I was a practising homosexual, and from the late sixties active in the gay community in Auckland. For ten years in the sixties and seventies I was active in the Gay Rights Coalition. I used to fabricate cases of discrimination against gays to help build the case for homosexual law reform. In the early seventies I was a founding member of New Zealand’s first gay church, the Metropolitan Community Church that used to meet in St. Matthew’s Crypt in Auckland. In the late seventies I was deeply involved in the gay scene in London and Amsterdam.

For me, as long as I was affirmed as a good gay I was relatively happy. It never dawned on me that there was more to life than what I was experiencing. There were some exciting and happy times in the scene, but more often than not I was sad and depressed. I was always looking for someone to affirm me as a man—for love and acceptance—but I never found it.

As you get older, heavier and less attractive in the gay scene you’re cast aside and the hate and rejection is hard to take. I realized that I was wanted for only one thing: sex; my body; not me as a person. I didn’t actually find the gay lifestyle to be accepting and loving. I found it very catty, very violent, very abusive and very destructive of one’s trust and self-worth.

In early March, 1983, I guess I’d come to the end of my tether, and wanted to take my life. Nothing seemed to be real anymore. Even though life had been exciting in my early teens and twenties, I knew that homosexuality was inherently wrong. It was then that I met some people in Tunis, North Africa, who were Christians and who really understood my loneliness and sense of worthlessness as a person.

The Anglican Minister was gentle and compassionate. He, his wife and a few friends reached out to me and accepted me in a way I had never experienced in over 30 years. The life and love and acceptance of this man got through to me. He told me about Jesus and how he died. I was attracted to Christianity and on March 22, 1983 I became a Christian. Now, ten years later I am a healed person, as heterosexual as the next man.

A lot had to change. My thought processes were all homosexual. My jokes were homosexual, my friends were homosexual, everything I read was homosexual. I fed myself with a diet of porn magazines and pore videos. I spent a lot of time thinking about my next sexual conquest and [p. 7](#) going to new bars, parks, toilets. A lot of my thinking and excitement revolved around my next sexual conquest. You might think, how distorted. But the truth is that the desire for sex is so strong in the homosexual community that gay men can be motivated entirely by the need for sex, and give everything to that end. That is not a distortion of the truth. There is a lot of lying and cheating in the gay lifestyle. The gays always paint a rosy, spectacular picture of the lifestyle, one designed to impress.

For the next five years I basically worked on my own to become a heterosexual. Having met my needs through sex for so long, the thought of being celibate for the rest of my life freaked me out. So I realized I have to become completely heterosexual—on the inside. I had spent many years in the lifestyle learning to be gay. My acts reinforced how good I was at being homosexual. Now I had to work through the issues. What issues?

Well, for example, let me talk about my fantasies. Whenever I wanted to masturbate my head automatically turned on the videotape or fantasy or something I had seen in a magazine, or in a toilet, or in a bed or on a video.

I've often heard people say that masturbation is OK, it doesn't hurt anybody, but let's re-examine this. Whenever I masturbated I reinforced my image of myself as a homosexual. My whole fantasy life was that of a homosexual not a heterosexual. Pornography had a dreadful grip on my life. If I passed a pore shop I couldn't resist going in and picking up the latest magazine. So I got rid of all my pornography. But you can always go and get more, and I knew that. So I made myself accountable to my pastor who would ask me straight out each day: Have you been reading porn? Have you bought any pore? Have you been masturbating. And because I had promised not to lie to him I had to be able to say 'No'.

But you can still fantasize in your head. So I got into a habit that whenever I wanted to start fantasizing I would telephone my pastor instead and we'd have a prayer meeting. It's hard to have homosexual fantasies while your're praying.

So, in this way, bit by bit, homosexual fantasies lost their grip on me. And as I worked through this issue other things began to change at the same time. Now I no longer have homosexual fantasies. I have heterosexual fantasies.

On March 26, 1988 I married a beautiful person: my wife, and I know that I am fully heterosexual, though I am not saying an ex-gay has to be married to be healed.

I was an extremely aggressive individual, but through genuine love and acceptance I found it was possible to let my defences down and learn to trust. I have healthy male friendships; I am no longer emotionally dependent on other males.

I changed by facing up to the real reasons why I was gay. I found that in being honest with myself and another person and learning to accept correction, I could change.

Nor am I the only one with this kind of story; there are thousands of others.

There have been many difficult [p. 8](#) issues to face in the last ten years, and it would take a book to describe all the changes that have taken place in me, but with sheer determination and trust in God, these last ten years have been the happiest of my life.

It has not been easy to be married to an ex-gay. Although Noel and I have a sound and fulfilling marriage we have encountered intense opposition from those who do not believe gays can ever change: seven months of vile and abusive phone calls from the gay community, twenty-four hours a day; bomb threats, death threats and attacks from gays in public, either trying to sexually entice my husband or convince me he was still having sex with them. They have told me they are going to cut me up into little pieces. Nor has the heterosexual community—sceptical of and unfamiliar with the concept that gays can change—been very understanding or supportive.

Noel has changed remarkably. He has grown up emotionally. He now relates to women as a man with women, instead—as many gays do—as a man who identifies with women rather than his male gender. He was once touchy and aggressive with gay traits of sarcasm, defensiveness and anger. He has become compassionate, more patient, caring and understanding.

Noel is an honest and courageous man. He is a healed homosexual, a whole heterosexual man. I believe he is probably a better example of what a heterosexual man should be than most heterosexual men. [p. 9](#)

The St Louis Statement on Human Sexuality

*Reprinted with permission from Resource, a publication of
Presbyterians for Renewal (March 1994)*

The St Louis Statement developed by a group of Presbyterians meeting at St Louis in April 1991 was specified by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) later in that year as a resource for the Church's continuing study on human sexuality. The subsequent General Assembly overwhelmingly voted to preclude ordination to self-affirming, practising, unrepentant homosexual persons. This extended Statement deserves careful study by other churches facing the same issues. It reaffirms the authority of Scripture in sexual matters and responds to a wide range of questions raised in the Bible and by churches today—for example, sexual abuse and family violence, teenage sex, issues confronting older single persons and the place of homosexuals in the Church.

Editor

I. A THEOLOGY RELATING TO THE HUMAN BODY

'All things are lawful for me', but not all things are beneficial. 'All things are lawful for me', but I will not be dominated by anything. 'Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food', and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, 'The two shall be one flesh.' But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but