

# OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Graham Ingram

Church Home Group Resources Ltd

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### British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

**ISBN 978 0 9532398 2 5**

First Published 2008 by

**Church Home Group Resources Limited**

25 Castle Street, Hertford, Herts SG14 1HH, UK

T: +44 (0) 1992 515576

F: +44 (0) 1992 509625

E: [info@CHGRL.org](mailto:info@CHGRL.org)

Printed in Great Britain for  
Church Home Group Resources Ltd

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# PREFACE

I didn't want to write this book. I was dragged kicking and screaming (not quite) by a good friend. He has been urging me to think about it for a year or two. I had every intention of standing my ground. I've tried writing books before with no success. But the subject of this book scared me. Over the last dozen years I've had enough innuendo, accusation, ridicule, rejection come my way to last me the rest of my days. For me to publish a book on homosexuality will only stir up muddy waters again, and probably lead to a fresh spate of criticism and the resultant pain. I've wanted this to be a healing period of my life, and a time for restoring some broken friendships.

But my friend challenged my prevarication with the question "Graham, if you don't write this book, who will?" He was pointing out my somewhat unusual position, in the spectrum of opinions, in the current fierce debate about homosexuality in the Christian Church. I am a convinced Evangelical; a Bible believing Christian of the more theologically conservative Calvinistic kind. I have been a pastor and Bible-teacher for more than forty years. But I am by sexual orientation gay, and for nearly two years I worked as an assistant pastor in a 'gay' church in California. I guess it does give me a somewhat different perspective on things.

Two years ago I stayed with my friend when he was visiting the farm he owns in South Africa. We'd met to discuss plans we had for building a property in Cape Town. Things were not going well; a lot of work was needed in re-designing the two residences involved. I went to bed worried and spent the night tossing and turning. My friend did the opposite. He is a very industrious, innovative guy who makes things happen. Instead of battling to sleep he stayed up for much of the night and produced a new plan, which was waiting for me on the breakfast table. Alongside was another piece of paper. He had spent part of the night drawing up an outline for the book he wanted me to write, chapter headings and all. Immediately I began thinking of excuses, the problem of finding an editor,

publisher and finance. He had answers for all my protests even before I made them. He'd got me in a corner.

It was another eight months before I did anything. He had more or less convinced me that I ought at least to try. I was even feeling guilty for my unwillingness. But I was overwhelmed with inertia every time I thought of starting. It was only when I moved house, from Port Elizabeth to Cape Town, and had a period when no opportunities for ministry were coming my way, that boredom suddenly drove me to action. I had done all the cleaning in my small flat. There was no garden to cultivate. If I went shopping it tempted me to buy things I didn't really need. So in desperation I bought a notebook and began to scribble down some thoughts. Shortly afterwards I made a trip to England. I hate long flights, mainly because of the boredom. I had time that needed filling. And so the book began to develop.

I've been plagued with doubts all the way through the writing. There are issues on which I haven't come to final conclusions. How can you go into print without being sure of what you are writing? At the same time, in spite of what some people might think, I really am a convinced Evangelical Christian. I've sometimes said, half jokingly, that if I have a tombstone one day I would like the inscription to be, "He was a Gospel man". It means everything to me to be able to come to the end of life's journey and be able to say "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

But the truth remains I am blessed or plagued with the fact that I am gay. That is part of the total package that makes me who I am. For most of my life I tried to deny it or hide it. When rumours forced me out of the closet I became ashamed that I had done nothing to try and help other people like myself. I was too concerned with hiding that part of my identity, and so preserving my reputation in the Christian community. Only when my reputation was seriously tarnished anyway, was I willing to do what God began to tell me to do, and share the message of his grace and love with gay people.

Out of that developed a new ministry, a very difficult one. It meant trying on the one hand to explain and interpret evangelical Christianity to gay people. Many of them see evangelicalism as the enemy. It's fundamentalism that's the chief culprit, but gay folk don't usually see the distinction. So their minds have become closed to a Biblical gospel. It meant on the other hand trying to explain to evangelical Christians, what it means to be gay, so that they may become more understanding, accepting and compassionate. In becoming that, they will be better able to portray the God who revealed himself in Jesus, the 'friend of publicans and sinners'.

I do not know how much change can be achieved in the Christian Church in the years immediately ahead. It's going to need a lot of courage to bring it about. But I do know that there has to be change, otherwise a large number of people who God loves will continue to be alienated from the Gospel. I feel a kinship with those people, of which I'm not ashamed. I understand the yearnings inside those wild, 'in your face', gay young people who refuse to apologise for who they are.

I understand those who are still standing in the shadows scared of being known for who they are. Some of them, from both groups, already know God but need to find him again. Most need to discover for the first time how much the gospel of Jesus is perfectly suited to them, with their longing to love and be loved. I dedicate this book to them, and to those straight Christians who are sticking their necks out to show the love of Jesus to all people. My friend is one of those.





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# Chapter One - My Story

## Life at School

For anyone who had eyes to see, it was obvious from my earliest years that I was homosexual in my orientation. In my pre-school and early school years I was playing 'house' with the little girls when I should have been kicking a ball with the boys. Hence the frequent catcalls of 'sissy Ingram' that followed me. No doubt there were other things in my mannerisms that invited the label. I certainly ran in a funny way. And neither then, nor now, could I throw a ball properly. In later years, even though I denied my homosexuality, I realised the importance of watching my body language and the pitch of my voice. I think I was fairly successful in dealing with some of those indications of my sexual orientation. I often felt that people were laughing at me, and that created its own body language. One of my colleagues once commented that he hated the way I walk around 'like a dog with its tail between its legs'.

By my early teens, when I should have started to take an interest in girls, I was in an all boys school. That I suppose helped to hide my growing attachment to boys. The fact that at that age I had become a 'fatty' helped to hide my total incompetence at sports of any kind. The title 'Sissy' had been replaced by 'Tubby' and later 'Elmer'. The latter was the one that stuck. It was pinned on me by one of the school bullies who had become my regular tormentor. He chose it because it sounded a bit like the girls name 'Alma'.

I had two budding 'love affairs' that I recall in those years. One was with a boy whose name I never discovered and to whom I never spoke. I was on holiday, with my parents, in Bournemouth and doing what I did on my holidays, train-spotting. At least it was a hobby boys did, and it is something you could do on your own. Each day I saw this 'god' on the opposite platform of Bournemouth railway station, also collecting engine numbers. He was in the centre of a circle of what appeared to be admiring friends. I can still recall him fairly clearly more than fifty years later. He was tall, with dark curly hair and wore a bright blue blazer. How much I wanted to be part of that circle and feel the glow of his presence.

There were others at school I was physically attracted to. I have a vivid mental picture of a guy called Freddy. He was at least a couple of years senior to me. He was an athlete who I often saw scantily clad. He must have worked out a great deal at a gym, because he had a beautiful sculptured torso. He was popular, macho and I think rather crude - a real jock. It all added to the attraction. I'm sure he despised me and I think hardly ever spoke to me. But I did have one genuine friend who was a bit of a hunk. It never ceased to surprise me that he wanted my friendship. I was always expecting him to reject me; so I never felt secure in the relationship. He was also fairly tall, with dark curly hair, blue eyes and a good body. He was genuinely beautiful. The friendship lasted throughout the remainder of my time at school and for some years afterwards, even though he joined the navy and spent years sailing around the world.

The last time I saw him was when he invited me to his wedding. He was thirty then, a huge fellow with a beard. The attraction had gone. But he was the only person with whom I ever had sexual intimacy, when we were at school. It was part of the horseplay that boys of that age get into. We sat next to each other in class on the back row. I would play a game of trying to grab his genitals and he would try and stop me. But I think he enjoyed it as much as I did. Sometimes he'd let me put my

hand under his pleasingly rounded bum and keep it there for a while. It's the only time in my life when I've been able to do what I so badly wanted to do, and get away with it.

## **College Years**

I don't think I really fell in love until my college years, though the physical attraction to men was an established part of my life. I didn't think of myself as homosexual. There was so much ignorance of things sexual in my small town working class background in the early fifties that I wouldn't have known what the word meant, even less what such people did. Homosexual acts were illegal and therefore something only very bad people indulged in. I interpreted my feelings as a cry for close friendship. I was a desperately lonely teenager wanting intimacy.

But there was one moment when I had the opportunity for sex with a guy, and ran away from it. It was while I was doing compulsory national service in the Royal Air Force. I was in North Wales on a course organised by the RAF Chaplaincy Department. One afternoon I was wandering around the historic town of Conwy. When I went into a cafe for a cup of tea I was picked up by a University student, without realising what was happening. He suggested we walk around the town together. At one point he needed to visit a public toilet and I joined him. He soon made his intentions clear by urging me to join him in a stall. As the truth dawned I turned and ran, not only out of the public convenience, but up the road and out of sight, running as if the devil was on my tail! I had become a Christian shortly before and I took my faith very seriously. But my desire for intimacy with men had not gone away. Yet clearly I didn't connect it with what the student wanted to do.

In my years in Teacher Training College I became friendly with two brothers who attended the same church as me. I think I was a bit attracted to both of them. During college vacations I stayed with their family on one or two occasions. My mother

had become very antagonistic to my new found faith and it was difficult going home. The brothers came from a large family. They were poor and lived in a small house, and as was common in those days in working-class households, beds had to be shared. I shared with the two boys. They worked different shifts, and so sometimes I slept with one and sometimes the other. I can still remember those delicious moments when I would wake in the night to find the younger brother's body entwined with mine. It was quite inadvertent on his part; he was a restless sleeper who thrashed around in the bed. I would lie very still, hardly daring to breathe, in case I woke him and ended the bliss.

## **Theological College**

In theological college were several guys I felt passion for at different times. One of them would frequently put his arm round me, in a brotherly hug, and keep it there for some time. It was wonderful. I desperately needed the touch of men. But I always managed to spoil those friendships. The physical love, which could find no outlet, would turn to a possessiveness that they couldn't handle. Most of these guys, of course, were straight. But for a while I became friends with two guys, who I also felt attracted to, who I now realise were gay. I think we were all too spiritual to be able to recognise it or admit it. Like so many folk in those days, especially from evangelical backgrounds, we failed to interpret our feelings and desires correctly.

One of the others did confess a physical attraction to the third guy. I sometimes wonder what might have happened if either of them had shown signs of attraction to me. Would I have been able to resist this overwhelming longing for intimacy? After college that particular guy married, had two children, only subsequently to leave his wife for a man. It had been a 'girl next door' kind of marriage; two families in the same church who were very good friends. I suspect there might well have been pressure from the families for it to happen. Many



Christians make the mistake of seeing marriage as a cure for same sex desires. It is usually a disaster and very unfair to the heterosexual partner.

Sometimes several years would go by before 'I fell in love' again. Something that straight people find very hard to accept is that gay people do fall in love in exactly the same way as they do. It's the sex part that dominates the thinking of most straight Christians when they hear the word homosexual. Some gay people are very promiscuous and give priority to sexual fulfilment. But it's just the same with straight people. Dig deep enough and you find that what most gay people want, above everything else, is romance, intimacy and a real committed relationship, just like that found in a good heterosexual marriage. I enjoy romantic movies. I often sit with tears trickling down my face as I watch lovers embracing and kissing. The tears are for me. I want the same thing. It's hard living without sex. It's even harder living without intimacy.

## **Church Pastor**

Once I got into pastoring a church I was sufficiently preoccupied, with the daily pressures of the ministry, not to be distracted too much by sexual temptation. During my college years, and those first years in the pastorate in south-east London, I was known for my zealous Christian life and my quest for holiness. I was strict and I was serious about achieving my goals. I was a great reader of the writings of the Puritans. I was an admirer of their theology and approach to life. They were hardly likely to incite me to perverted sexuality!

In theological college some of my fellow students disliked me because of my strict views on the Christian life. In the ten years between twenty and thirty years of age I didn't go to the cinema, not even once. I believed it was wrong for Christians, whatever the film. On one occasion I went to the theatre for an evening of Gilbert and Sullivan. Pretty harmless you'd think. I didn't think so. I went only because a young man in the local G & S

Company had started attending my church. He wasn't yet a Christian, so I could excuse his involvement in the theatre. I went to the show to strengthen my contact with him, and so win him for Christ. But I felt so uneasy about doing it that I crept into the theatre in the dark, five minutes after the show began. I was astonished, when the lights went up for the interval, to find myself sitting in a block of my own church folk!!

I was desperately lonely living on my own in the church manse, and so I hired a TV on a six month contract. I got rid of it within a few weeks. I told a leading member of the church, "I allowed the devil into my house through the back door but I've kicked him out through the front door". I didn't read novels in those days or any kind of magazine that could have polluted my mind. Of course I never went to pubs or clubs, or any kind of place where I might have met gay people. I doubt if I would have recognised a gay person if I'd met one; so great was my ignorance. I pursued God and my calling to preach his Word with fervour, and I had a good prayer life. I was associated with various holiness movements, including one that grew out of the teachings of the East African Revival, often called the Rwanda movement. It put a great emphasis on repentance from sin, and 'walking in the light' with one another, which led to much confession of sin.

## **The Baptism in the Holy Spirit**

Early on in my ministry I was baptised in the Holy Spirit and became involved in the newly emerging Charismatic renewal. I say all this to emphasise that I left few, if any, doors open through which I could have been tempted by homosexual thoughts or influence. But it didn't stop me being sexually attracted to men. Among folk in the church that I got closer to, was a young man of my age, who I'm going to call Rob. He was very different from me, sporty, somewhat macho, a regular South London lad. The initiatives for friendship came from him. He obviously liked my company and was keen to know more about God. Eventually I conducted his marriage to a girl from

the congregation. It was a relief for me to do it because the girl had shown clear signs of interest in me. I think she may have married him on the rebound after I made it clear I wasn't interested. Even as she walked down the aisle I got the distinct feeling she was still interested. Their marriage didn't last.

It's been one of the hazards of my ministerial life that I've been pursued by good women, who seemed to think I was the answer to their prayers. I think it was my zealous preaching rather than good looks that attracted them! To digress before coming back to Rob: during my five years of ministry in London I met several girls, while on Christian holiday tours (Yes - I even had Christian holidays!!), who became friends for a while, mainly through letters. I was lonely, and I knew ministers ought to be married, so I was hopeful that something might develop. But something just didn't click when we met. I went to visit one of the girls in Scotland. She was waiting for me when I arrived by bus, dressed up 'to the nines', and her face showed far too much eagerness. I froze. There was no way I could even hold her hand.

A year or two later I tried again with a nurse who was a really lovely girl, and a fine Christian. She would have made an ideal wife for a minister. She told friends of mine that she was strongly attracted to me. I knew there was no future in it, though at that stage of my life I didn't understand why. But I had come to realise that it was very unlikely I would ever marry and I decided to drop the idea of a serious relationship with the opposite sex. It was 'unnatural' for me. That's one of the problems interpreting passages like Romans 1, where homosexual acts are condemned as unnatural. Unnatural can depend on where you are coming from. For me it was very natural to be attracted to a man.

So back to Rob: we became good friends and as part of that friendship I used to go and watch him play football on Saturday afternoons. I went whatever the weather. I was in danger of freezing to death standing on the touchline in winter. But I can

still remember the chief reasons I was so dedicated. He had great legs!

## **Lusaka Baptist Church**

Somewhere in the middle of my five years in south-east London God began to speak to me about foreign missions, particularly Africa. I had always thanked God that I wasn't called to foreign fields. I suppose it was part of the insecurity of my growing years that I had little desire for adventure. Darkest Africa was a forbidding thought. So it was an enormous step for me to respond to God's call, and leave my homeland for the heart of a strange continent where I knew only one person. I also went without any guarantee of financial support.

The small Baptist church that called me, in Lusaka, Zambia, had only seven members left. I had no support from a missionary society, only the local congregation. All those seven members left the country in my first year. So I had a building and not much more. But the nearly eight years that followed were amongst the most fruitful and exciting of my Christian ministry. In fact they were wonderful. Hundreds of African young people came to Christ and were equipped for Christian service. Today many of them are in strategic positions in the church life, business life and political life of that nation.

There was little to tempt me sexually in Lusaka. I was busy, fulfilled and somewhat cut off from the culture of the western world. The drive-in-cinema was the only place to go for entertainment. TV was mainly local stuff and not very good. There was no obvious gay community. It would have been dealt with pretty severely if it revealed itself. But with little to do for relaxation I did start reading novels again. It was while reading an Arthur Hailey crime novel, the story built around a bank theft, that I finally realised why I was 'different'. There was a character in the book who got raped in prison. The act was described in some detail. To my horror I found myself identifying with it, and realised what my problem was.

I was in no doubt about it. It never occurred to me that there might be any remedy, apart from a determined attempt to stamp out any evidence and try and blot it out of my consciousness. I went through my journals from when I started writing in my late teens. My 'secret' was in fact very obvious in some of my comments, particularly in my college days when I was in love. It read like a school girl in a spin because the boyfriend was being cool to her. I struck out everything that could be a give away and tore out a lot of pages. But it was much harder to obliterate it from my mind.

Whenever I experienced some special touch from God in my life, I would be able to keep my thoughts under control for a while. But unfortunately life has its spiritual downs as well as ups. And then I would begin to fantasise about men again. I didn't masturbate because, astonishing as it may seem, I didn't know how! A young American came to stay with me once, on a short-term mission outreach. He was extremely good looking and with a gym-pumped physique which he bared for most of the time. I could hardly eat my food as he sat bare-chested at the table. I was so scared of the way my feelings and mind were running riot that I developed an antipathy towards him to protect myself.

Eventually I asked him to leave. He couldn't work out why. There was no legitimate way I could explain what was going on. But getting rid of him didn't solve the problem. The memories of that body remained. I fell seriously in love with someone in the church who was also very good looking and enjoyed my company. He was straight, there was no possibility of anything coming of it, and my possessiveness harmed the friendship.

## **Cape Town**

After Zambia, it was Cape Town, South Africa. That was a scary challenge in itself and required a big step of faith. It was still the dark days of apartheid and I knew that at some point I

would have to challenge the system. That was a daunting thought in itself, particularly as I was pastoring a conservative white Baptist Church. Anyone who challenged apartheid in that kind of church was usually regarded as a crypto-Communist. As a non-South African pastor I was also watched by the security police. There were some difficult times. But life and ministry was rewarding.

Over the years I saw, and was part of, some amazing changes in the church and nation. Later on I started a new church that was a direct result of a strong work of the Spirit, the nearest thing to Revival I have experienced. It grew rapidly to about fifteen hundred people; hundreds were converted and baptised. I was at the peak of my ministry and had become widely known, and generally well thought of, in the country. South Africa was now my home. There was no great vacuum in my life. I had a large circle of friends, some of them very close friends who loved me and were committed to me. I had a church full of young people, many of them very good-looking, sun-kissed South Africans. Their love, respect, and friendship did a great deal to fill that inner yearning. We were a church that did a lot of hugging, and being hugged by these gorgeous young men certainly eased the pain!

I even began to come out of the closet, somewhat unconsciously. Until the time of starting the new church I had remained reasonably conservative in my image and dress. I often wore trendy suits and ties but at least I dressed formally. The new church was radically different, part of the emergence of independent charismatic churches world-wide. We had a particular emphasis on the importance of the Biblical doctrine of Grace, as a teaching and as a life-style, free from legalism. I wanted to win the masses of young people who were fed up with religion and church formalism. Like every leader I needed to model what I was teaching. But it also gave me an excuse for dressing like I'd always wanted to dress, hipster-jeans, bright shirts or T-shirts; sometimes colourful waistcoats or braces.

Stories began to spread about the amazing transformation.

Though never very conservative in dress, for many Christians I had been the pillar of Calvinistic Evangelicalism in Cape Town. A considerable number of students from the very conservative Bible Institute, and an even more conservative Holiness college associated with the Africa Evangelistic Band, sat under my ministry in the Baptist Church. Some of them have claimed in later years that I was the one who taught them how to preach. A visitor who had known me and seen me in both churches, commented that if the Graham Ingram now revealed in the new church was the real me, then it must have been terrible having to project a very different image for all those years. The true me was beginning to emerge, but most people didn't associate it with my sexual orientation, because it was part of something happening on a wider level in the new church culture.

But in all other respects I was treading the same path as I had for years, trying to pretend I wasn't gay and serving God to the best of my ability. The Holy Spirit was moving powerfully in our church, to some extent because of what I was experiencing in my own life. I was at the height of my preaching powers and God was moving Sunday after Sunday in the services. I had liberalised some of my attitudes, like most Christians in recent years, and was probably watching some movies and TV programmes that I might have been better off not watching; and I continued to battle with my thought life. But there was nothing worse than that.

I had no connection or association with the gay community and I was not pursuing a gay lifestyle. But I continued to become emotionally involved with men in the congregation, or men with whom I worked, though they didn't know it. It was painful and usually caused stress in relationships, even though I constantly curbed my desires. But on one occasion it nearly went further than that. I was sitting in the restaurant car of an excursion train travelling from Cape Town to Franschoek, a beautiful resort in the Winelands. I noticed a good looking guy wearing a stunning shirt. He and his shirt were both very sexy, and I was sure he was gay. I positioned myself so that I could watch him, hopefully without being noticed. But he did notice and later

asked if he could join me at my table. I was both excited and scared. He told me right out that he was gay and did his best to shock me out of the closet. He pointed to an older man and told me that he was his lover. I felt very awkward but the same time every part of me was tingling with desire, because I was so close to something that inwardly I wanted. He gave me his card and invited me to dinner. He left it to me to phone him if I wanted to go. Did I want to go! I kept the card on my dressing table for several months, longing to ring him, but petrified of what it might lead to. I even persuaded a woman in the church to make me a shirt exactly like the one he had been wearing. I've still got it. I think it was only the certainty I had that I would be found out, and have to leave the ministry, that stopped me making that phone call.

I think my colleagues were starting to get suspicious. A number of openly gay people came to the church and though I didn't encourage them, nor did I deal with them in the way some of the staff might have liked. I made a mistake one day. One of the younger staff members liked to take a swim during his lunch break, in a pool which was part of our office complex. Sometimes he would work at his desk afterwards still wearing his speedos. It annoyed me. It was taking our relaxed style too far. I ought to have come down on it. It wasn't fair to people visiting the offices. But I was also annoyed because it put pressure on me in my own battle. The guy concerned had a great body. I usually tried to avoid looking directly at him. But one day, when I went into his office, I decided to embarrass him by looking directly at him and giving him a suggestive smile. He blushed and asked me what it was all about. I'm pretty sure that I gave the game away that day, and that incident became evidence in a case later built up against me. My life started to become very complicated. Career wise I was still riding on the crest of a wave.

## **Resignation and Rumour**

But then things began to change. I decided to resign and found



myself unemployed for a period of time. There was no scandal, no wrongdoing on my part, but the details are not relevant to the purpose of this book. I believe serious wrong was done against me by certain leaders from outside my church, but I have no desire to harm the people concerned. It is water long under the bridge.

I went back to England for several months but my heart was still in Cape Town, and I returned the following year. I came back with the intention of exercising an itinerant ministry; but circumstances led me into church planting again. I was involved in planting three churches over the next few years.

This was seen as a threat by the new leadership of my old church. A period of dispute began between the group of churches to which I was affiliated, and a new grouping to which my old church now belonged. The leaders of both groups were concerned about the 'bad blood', and felt we needed to deal with it. A number of us met together one morning, in the beautiful Kirstenbosch Gardens, to try and sort it out.

The chairman appealed to both sides to stop bad-mouthing each other, and made reference to a number of the accusations being made. Suddenly he said, "And people must stop saying Graham Ingram is gay". A shock went through my body. For a second I thought it was a sick joke. This was the first time I had ever heard it said publicly by people who were my friends. In spite of all I've written so far, I was still trying to convince myself that I would never have to deal with that question.

That evening I went to play Scrabble with a couple of older women friends; something I did regularly. The two were very fine women, who loved me and cared for me in so many practical ways. Sometimes I would share my heart with them, knowing they were utterly trustworthy. They noticed that night that I was looking very sad, and asked me why. When I told them they showed no surprise. I realised that they had already heard these rumours and they told me that they believed them to be widespread.

For several months I was in a period of shock. It didn't matter that the group of ministers, of which I was a part, took measures to defend my reputation. They tried to get apologies from the leaders who had played some part in the rumours spreading. What had been said couldn't be taken back. It was going to affect my life deeply and for a long time to come. One of the pastors of my former church visited me one day. Afterwards he told others that he was shocked by the pain in my eyes.

Some months after the Kirstenbosch meeting, I was sitting by a lake near my home. It was my favourite place for prayer times. But I wasn't in normal praying mood. Shock was beginning to turn to anger, and I started shouting at God that he had allowed all this happen. "God, how could you let them do this, how could you let them take away my reputation? I have done my best to serve you all these years".

A conversation followed that was as real, if not more so, as any human conversation I'd ever had. "My Son made himself of no reputation", the Lord said. He then reminded me how Jesus had been called a blasphemer, was described as demon-possessed, a glutton and drunkard, and how they crucified him as a common criminal. (As Jesus was an unmarried man over the age of 30 it is highly likely some suggested other things). He reminded me of the way Paul's converts deserted him, and how his ministry was undermined by vicious rumours from envious rivals. Then he reminded me that there were plenty of other things people could say about me if they knew all he knew. "All right, Lord. I quit complaining while I'm still winning. You know too much!!" I repented of my attitudes. And as I did the Spirit began to stir me in worship and praise to God, for allowing me to feel some very small part of what Jesus, and all his true followers, have experienced throughout the ages.

But God hadn't finished. He reminded me that even though there might be a vicious motive behind the rumours, the rumours were not themselves false. I am gay, and God had

known that all the time, and it had made no difference to his acceptance of me, and his love and care for me. A great load began to lift. Why was I lying to myself and to God?

As over the months the pain began to diminish I started to examine my life and circumstances in the light of what had happened. I sensed that life would never be the same again. Even if the rumours diminished, there would always be the fear that they would re-occur. This kind of rumour is virtually never lived down. Whether it was true or false it would have plagued me the rest of my life. In admitting the truth I was free. I had actually harmed myself a great deal by trying to suppress for so many years what I knew to be true. I had to bring it out, move out of the shadows, and take a good look at it, and come to terms with what it meant.