



Mission Sparks

Academic Journal of Asia Region

Fifth Edition - November 2018

**"Discourse on Sexual Orientation and
Gender Identity"**

MISSION SPARKS: Academic Journal of Asia Region

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UEM Mission Sparks: Academic Journal of Asia Region is published twice a year in January - May and June - December.

Cost (per copy): In Indonesia - Rp. 50,000.00

For subscription, please sent email to: AsiaRegion@vemission.org
Attn: Yuli Gulo or Homar Rubert Distajo

Payments should be made through fund transfer: BNI (Bank Negara Indonesia)
Account name : UEM ASIA
Account Number : 0128002447
Note: Payment for Mission Sparks Journal

ISSN 2527-9890



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An Editorial Note

Dear readers,

“I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth” (Genesis 9:13).

Rainbow is the sign of the peace covenant between God and the earth. The earth and human being are very meaningful for God. Human being are created in the image of God and have dignity and rights.

Also, rainbow is a symbol of diversity in God’s creation. In order to promote the spirit of peace and have better understanding of diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity, the Mission Spark 5th Edition has published under theme “Discourse on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.” However, articles in this edition does not reflect the official stance of the UEM. It is an effort to give space for academic discourses on the said theme.

Yonky Karma, as a Christian theologian, guides us to the first destiny on biblical reflection on sexual disorientation. Humane or inhumane is not measured by the release of sexual desire. Any sexual orientation is only a small part of the human life, it is not appropriate to be highlighted with a magnifying glass as if it is all day's activities or that is his/her dignity as a human.

Musdah Mulia, a female Muslim scholar will extend our perspective on understanding sexuality on Islam. She is a promoter of Islamic humanism. Therefore she encourage to strengthen humanist interpretation on our understanding to any holy bible.

Darwita Purba shares part for her research on Ecclesiology for Lutheran Churches in Indonesia as an Open Space for variety of Gender and Sexuality. She proposes to develop new theology paradigm that “the church as a house of together movement is a church that becomes a home to everyone, without divisions and boundaries.

Dédé Oetomo as a long-time activist advocating for equality for all persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Trelly A. Mariqza a female activist on advocacy bring us to the basic question. What Am I?: A Discourse on Sexual Orientation. She encourage us to be more aware on humanity advocacy and education.

The various statements from various churches such as The Communion of Churches Indonesia, Methodist Church of Sri Lanka, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and The Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Tanzania are to enrich discourse on sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore to enlarge our references to be more wise person in order not to easily judge to those who has difference sexuality than ours.

Rev. Petrus Sugito, M.M.
Deputy Editor in Chief



Sexual Orientation: A Biblical Perspective¹

Rev. Dr. Yonky Karman

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) distributed funds of approximately Rp 108 billion during the period of 2014-2017 for LGBT (*lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender*) group reinforcement program in four countries (Indonesia, China, Philippines, Thailand). The program is based on scientific view that LGBT phenomenon is not deviation (abnormality), but as normal as heterosexuality. The LGBT group does not need a therapeutic process or rehabilitation program, but needs to be facilitated, to be aware of human rights and reports to the UN, if their human rights are violated. The need for dialogue with various parties are encouraged to promote public awareness and policy that guarantees the rights of LGBT groups as citizens. In the long-term, the UN intends to end the stigma and discrimination suffered by LGBT groups. The UN initiated program was rejected by the Indonesian government in line with strong public opposition/rejection in the country.

This paper will discuss the problem of sexual (dis)orientation in the traditional Indonesian context, which views sexual conduct outside of marriage as free and disgraceful sex. Therefore, this paper limits itself to the matter of same sex marriage and negative stigma that has been already attached to those who are sexually same sex oriented (homophile) that expresses their sexual desires with same sex. Gender here is interpreted as simple as gender like the definition of a language dictionary². Men and women differ genetically, hormonally, biologically, and anatomically. Sexual orientation (the effect of genetic, hormonal, or personal life-view) is sexual attraction to a particular sex,

¹ A rewrite of the article "Church Responding to LGBT: A Biblical Perspective", presented at the Panel Discussion of the Complete Operative Assembly of the PGI (the Communion of Churches in Indonesia) in Salatiga, January 28, 2017.

² There is also gender as a social construction of androcentric cultural results that shows the authoritarian side of male power over women, insensitive to the interests and needs of women. The ideological meaning of gender is right to criticize the gender roles and texts of gender bias for the sensitive meaning of gender in the perspective of gender equality.

simply distinguished between heterosexual, homosexual, lesbian, and bisexual³. Sexuality includes characteristic, traits, roles, encouragement, and sexual life.

This paper is a biblical reflection (there is another biblical perspective), as far as what is explicit in the Bible. Scriptures are biblical authority over believers (the church) and guide to affirm the things about people (prescriptive, morally binding)⁴. Allah has spoken through the holy book to the people of the past, saying to the people of today and still say to the people of the future. Therefore, what is explicit in the Bible should not be considered absent, although it needs to be reinterpreted for its present validity. What is not explicit does not mean nothing, such as the possibility of life forms on other planets than Earth. Although the Bible is not a book of gender and sexuality (as it is not a botany book, a political book, a book of counselling, etc.), since both are called explicit, within certain limits there is also the authority of the Bible to talk about it.

I. Created in the image of God

In Christian theology, the point that humans are created in the image of God have five theological implications.

First, it does not mean that humans possess divine abilities or qualities, but affirm the way God creates humans who are essentially different from other creations so that their ways extend beyond that of other creations⁵. Human nature is connected with God. The essence of reference is neither self nor animal (despite its resemblance to the animal), but God, a non-physical being outside of itself.

³ Bisexuals can establish heterosexual or same sex relationships. In the Epistle to Romans, Paul alluded to their bisexual practice that actually already married as "a shameful lust", when "their women (wives)... exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones ... the men (husbands) also abandoned natural relations with women (their wives) and were inflamed with lust for one another ... men with men" (Romans 1: 26-27).

⁴ There is another perspective that considers the Bible is only prescriptive for the past, but for the present people it is only descriptive (not morally binding). In the Christian tradition, many of the Old Testament laws are not considered as morally binding. However, no agreement is reached which is still binding and not, nor there is any agreement on the criteria for determinant.

⁵ Samuel Terrien, *Till the Heart Sings: A Biblical Theology of Manhood and Womanhood* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 7, 26.

Second, the image of God is not in human gender, but in humans themselves. Human likeness with God is not about gender. Gender ambiguity does not diminish the nature of human. Like, whatever the person is, as long as he/she is still human, he/she is the same image of his/her God with others. Human's sinfulness is not because of gender but in their actions (cf. Rom 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"). Human nobility is not because of gender but is created in the image of God.

Third, as high as a humankind, he/she is only the image of God, not God and also cannot be God; as low as humankind, he/she is still the image of God. The theological status was not lost after humans were driven out of the Garden of Eden. Adam was still called "in the likeness of God" (Gen 5: 1). Seth, the son of Adam, was born "in the image and likeness" of Adam (Gen. 5: 3), meaning that it was also created in the image of God⁶. The human theological status is reasserted in order to protect his/her life from being arbitrarily killed (Gen. 9: 5-6), while animals may be killed for human food⁷. In fact, humankind should not be cursed for being "in the likeness of God" (James 3: 9). If humans in the Sumerian and Babylonian myths were positioned as servants of the god who created them, humans according to the Bible are the only creatures on earth who can communicate with the Creator⁸. A transcendent God is immanent in His relationship with humans⁹.

Fourth, gender differentiation in the context of creation aims for humankind to rule on earth (Genesis 1: 26-28).

Let us make humankind (*'adam*) in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over ... the earth ... God created humankind (*ha'adam*) ... male and female ... God blessed them ... be fruitful ... have dominion over ... the earth." (NRSV)

⁶ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary 1; Waco: Word, 1987) 127.

⁷ Wenham, 193f.

⁸ Fritz Maass, *'adam*, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, I.85; F. J. Stendebach, *selem*, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, XII.394f; Christoph Barth and Marie Claire Barth-Frommel, *Old Testament Theology 1* (rev.; Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008) 34f.

⁹ Nahum M. Sama, *Genesis* (The Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 13.

The destiny of humankind is not to be fruitful, but to have dominion over the earth and the way in the context of creation is procreation (not by making many humankind at once). The Hebrew noun of 'adam (without plural form) can refer to human as individual or collective (species), depending on the context of a verse, but in the context of creation is the species (NRSV "humankind"). As a consequence of is created in the image of God (*selem 'elohim*; LXX *eikon Theou*; cf. 2Kor. 4:4 *eikon tou Theou* "image of God"), humans are able to rule on the earth.¹⁰

The image of God is not ontological but functional in the capacity to represent God, "the possessors of the heavens and the earth" (Gen 24: 3, cf. v. 7, Exodus 19: 5, Deuteronomy 10:14; Jonah 1: 9), the real Ruler. This description of human contrasts with the ancient traditions of the Middle East which only looked upon the king as a representation of the god as ruler of the earth.¹¹ The psalmist in the theological reflection admitted the features of human's position as the ruler of the earth.

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! (Indonesian Bible Psalm 8:6-10-NRSV Psalm 8: 5-9)

Instead of glorifying humans, the psalmist actually glorified the real Lord of the earth.

Prescriptive creation texts for human power in the earth, is not necessarily prescriptive for gender stereotypes. The human destiny that is created in the image of God (Lat. *imago Dei*) is the life that imitates

¹⁰ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (rev.; Old Testament Library; tr. John H. Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 59f. In the ancient Middle East, the power of the king outside the realm of the kingdom was marked by the banner of his kingdom which was erect in the region or by "the king's *selem*" (Ezek. 23:14 "images"; Num. 33:52 "cast images") as a representation of the king.

¹¹ Tamara C. Eskenazi and Andrea L. Weiss (ed.), *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (New York: URJ Press and Women of Reform Judaism, 2008) 8.

God (Lat. *imitatio Dei*), "live according to all the ways He shows" (Deut 11:22).¹² Human identity and dignity are not in their gender, but as far as their lives imitate God, they live as people. The people of Israel must live holy (Lev. 19: 2 "be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." cf 1 Pet 1: 14-16). Not all the "habits" of the nations were allowed to be done by Israel (Lev. 18: 3; 20:23). As "people who are holy to the Lord" (Deut. 7: 6; 14: 2), they allowed themselves to be governed by God. Aspects of life governed by the laws of the Lord became sacred (not autonomous). Eating, for example, something that was ordinary, but sacred to the people of Israel, because the Lord regulated what (may not) be eaten.

If the involvement of the digestive organs is regulated, moreover the behavior that involves the intimate organs. Although human sexual desire is natural and sexuality is not taboo, sexual behavior is not merely a fulfillment of biological desires, so it is not to be exposed. The Bible views sacred sexuality by limiting what is sexual behaviors that are permissible (can be approved in the context of marriage in biblical times). The Corpus of the Holiness Law contains a list of prohibited sexual practices (Lev. 18: 6-23; 20: 8-21), including homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13). All the sexual practices commonly practiced by Egyptians and Canaanites (Lev. 18: 3), for the Israelites were "abominations" (Lev. 18:26, 27, 29), even the sanctions were sentenced to death (Lev. 20: 9-18).¹³

Fifth, God does not resemble a human (have gender masculine or feminine or hermaphrodite/both of them).¹⁴ According to the Old Testament (as part of ancient monotheism in the Middle East), gender and sexuality included the nature of creation (human nature), not the divine nature.¹⁵ Because God is without gender and sexuality, God's

¹² Cf. Erich Fromm, *You Shall Be As Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and Its Tradition* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966) 63-70.

¹³ Men who were caught having sex with women who were not engaged or married only had to marry them by paying dowry (Ex. 22: 16-17 // Deut. 5: 28-29). Homosexual relationship was prohibited may be because of the offspring that came out of a man. See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17-22* (Anchor Bible 3A; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 1567f.

¹⁴ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture, and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth* (New York: Free Press, 1992) 187-98.

¹⁵ Cf "At the time of resurrection, people will not marry and will not be married but live like angels in heaven" (Matt. 22:30 // Mark 12:25 // Luke 20:35). For the three ways of anthropomorphism of God's body in the OT (human body, liturgical body, and cosmic body), see Mark S. Smith, "The Three Bodies of God in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 134/3 (2015) 471-88.

relationship with humans is also without gender preference. The door of grace and blessing is open to anyone who comes into the presence of God in holiness and truth.

In polytheism, gender and sexuality are included in the divine realm. Venus in Roman mythology was the goddess of love, sex, sexual charm, and fertility, like Aphrodite in Greek mythology. Istar was the goddess of fertility, war, love and sex in the mythology of Eastern Semitic Akadia, Assyrian and Babylonian. In the Syro-Palestinian language, Istar became *Astarte* as the goddess of sex and fertility in Canaanite mythology. *Astarte's pronunciation was adopted by the LXX* (1 Kgs 11:5; 11:33; 2 Kgs 23:13 *'aštoret* "Asytoret"; NAB, NJB "Astarte"), besides *Astarteion* (1 Sam 31:10 *'aštarot*; NAB, NJB "Astarte"), *Astaroth* (Jgd. 10:6 *ha'aštarot*; NJB "Astarte"), or *Astartais* (Jgd. 2:13 *ha'aštarot* "the Asytoret"; NJB "Astartes"), the plural form of Astarte, probably referring to more than one cult of Astarte. Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:18; 44: 17-19), directly or indirectly, was associated with Istar, also known as the goddess which had to do with stars, identified as the letters T and Planet Venus.¹⁶

Although the masculine image for God is very strong, the Old Testament does not recognize God's physical form. Worshiping a statue was a way of mistakenly worshiping God who was likened to a physical form, even though He expressed himself by saying, invisible but heard (Deut. 4:15). He created the universe by word (Gen. 1), also told Abraham to go to a land that he did not know (Gen. 12: 1). Metaphorical language for God was used carefully, only with descriptions that were classified as the upper part of the human body, not the waist down (Isa. 59: 1-2 "hands ... hearing ... self [*panim* 'face']"; Exodus 33:23 "back"; 1 Kings 19:12 BIS "a sound of sheer silence."). When the glory of God in Ezekiel's vision was represented by the lower part of the waist, the description was only "like a fire and there was a splendor all around." (Ezek. 1:27). Even in theophany (divine appearances), though invisible, God remains hidden. When Moses "looked at the image of the LORD" (Num. 12: 8; compare Isa. 6: 1) or the elders of Israel "saw ... beheld" God (Ex. 24: 10-11), there was no description of God's face/appearance. In fact, divine beings were portrayed without gender as seraphs in Isaiah's vision with two wings covering the feet (Isa. 6: 2). The metaphor of conjugal relations for the God-Israel relationship only describes the power of love and loyalty.

¹⁶ Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20* (Anchor Bible 21A; New York: Doubleday, 1999) 476f.

The rituals of polytheistic religion can involve sexual behavior that is considered to be part of religious experience (there are contemporary sects involving sexual behavior in worship). However, the Old Testament considers that sexual experience can keep away people from the divine realm (making it temporarily unacceptable to participate in worship). The Torah Law forbade the involvement of sexual behavior in the Temple area (prostitution of devotion). If the woman who provided herself for this is called *qēdeša* (Deut. 23: 17/18 "temple prostitute"; LXX *telesphoros*; NJB "sacred prostitute among the women of Israel") and if the male name is *qadeš* (LXX *teliskomai*; NJB "sacred prostitute among the men of Israel"), the same root with *qadoš* (holy).¹⁷ There was a king of Judah who included this foreign element in Israel's worship (1Kings 14:24), it was indeed removed by Asa but did not complete (1 Kings 15:12), completed by Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22:47), then entered again, finally it was removed by Josiah in his radical reform (2Kings 23: 7). The Temple did not receive money from the temple prostitution of women ('*etnan zona* "prostitution wages") or the male prostitute (Deut. 23: 18/19 *mēḥir keleb*; NRSV "the wages of a male prostitute").

II. Exclusive and inclusive gender interpretation

Because it only mentions masculine and feminine gender (Gen. 1:27), the creation text can be read as gender stereotypes and beyond that must be deviations (gender exclusivism), which need to be corrected (by medical or religious ways). Gender outside that is considered a lower image of God. Usually the following two reasons are supportive.

First, the words of Jesus.

Have you not read that the One who made them at the beginning (*ap arches*) 'made them male and female,' (Matt. 19:4)

The parallel verse in the Gospel of Mark uses the phrase *apo ... arches* for "from the beginning" (Mark 10: 6 "at the beginning of the world"; BIS "in the beginning"; NIV "at the beginning"). If so, *ap arches* may be read "in the beginning" (BIS; compare KJV, NIV, NRSV "at the beginning"), initially humans were differentiated according to gender

¹⁷ The most frequent term for saints is *qadoš* (Mzm. 106:16 *qēdoš 'adonay* "the holy one of the Lord"; Za. 14:5 *qol-qēdošim* "all the holy ones"; cf. Deu. 33:2 *ribēbot qodeš* "myriads of holy ones"). Word games like in Hebrew are not found in Greek, the term for saints is *hagios* (Phil. 4:21; Matt. 27:52; Acts 26:10 *hoi hagioi*).

of man and woman for the purpose of pro-creative (childbirth), with the earth was imagined by the author of the Book of Genesis was still empty (now inhabited by more than seven billion people). At first humans were imagined from a husband and wife and the view of monogenesis continued until the New Testament which the writers were in fact Jews (1 Tim 2:13; compare Luke 3:38; Rom 5: 14-15; 1 Cor 15: 21- 22 Adam, Acts 17:26 "from one person only").

Secondly, the practice of homosexuality was criticized by Paul when he reminded the Corinthians that some of them had once included as "lewd people, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate (Yun. *Malakoi*), *pemburit*-people who have intercourse through anus (Yun. *Arsenokoitai*), thieves, miser, drunkards, slanderers, and fraudsters "and such people" will not inherit the part in the Kingdom of God "(1 Cor 6: 9-10). This is the only word "sissy" in our Bible (KJV, NASB "effeminate"). All in this list are people who used to do something disgraceful but effeminate (not male and not female) not actions, only gender ambiguity. *Pemburit* (tg. *arsenokoites*) are people who have intercourse from the back (*burit*: the back, rectum/anus) with fellow men (1 Cor 6: 9; NKJV, NJB, NRSV "sodomites"). Effeminate (tg. *malakos*) refers to something "subtle" (Matt. 11: 8 // Luke 7:25), this is for men who are women like and take the role of women as passive partners in homosexual relation (NET "passive homosexual partners"). Because effeminate is not always homosexual (cf. 1 Tim 1: 10 *arsenokoites*; NAB "practicing homosexuals"), the revision of the Indonesian Bible Society for the New Translation of "effeminate, *pemburit*" is "men who have sex with their same sex, people's partners who do that".

Gender exclusive interpretation does not take into account genetics (the science that addresses the hereditary nature of organisms and their genetic construction). Genetic mutation is a natural way of species to add new variations to changes in genetic material (DNA and RNA), on chromosome numbers or sequences of genes in chromosomes. In genetic mutations, adverse disorders (genetic defects) will not be inherited, but beneficial ones can be inherited (beautiful genetic mutations). Further about the relationship of genetic mutations with gender orientation, let the science speaks. What is clear, the creation text in the perspective of monogenesis does not cover itself for gender other than men and women after humans have grandchildren generation after generation, if genetics prove it that way (gender inclusive interpretation). If this is proven, the degree of humanity outside of gender stereotypes is not inferior, equally human is the image of God and has a place in God's work

III. Indonesian Context

In Indonesia, LGBT is a controversial issue that reaps the pros and cons in the public space. The pro defends desperately. The cons and the majority oppose desperately, sometimes accompanied by hatred (homophobia). Usually the pros and cons often indicate that the case is not black and white.

The Bugis tribe accepts sexual orientation beyond gender stereotypes (male/man, female/woman) in their respective terms: *oroane* (male/man), *makunrai* (female/woman), *calalai* (a woman behave like a man), *calabai* (physically fully man but behave like a woman), and *bis-su* (outside of gender boundaries, can be from *makunrai* or *calabai*, some physical characteristics strengthen gender ambiguity). The last one includes the ancient Bugis clergy (not married), one of the Bugis traditional heritages that still survives today. In the epic of La Galigo that is known worldwide, bisu plays a role in preserving the religious life of the Bugis people. Even though it is open to five genders, the Bugis indigenous community does not approve same sex marriages. Balinese who are based on gender stereotypes and are open to sexuality also strongly reject same sex marriage done on the land of Bali. In other words, the Indonesian people reject same sex marriage, first because of culture, even if religion, religion is part of culture (tradition).

Indeed, the controversy over the LGBT issue is part of the struggle between modernism and traditionalism (traditional ways of thinking), not religious conflict with science. Once the conflict between geocentrism and heliocentrism in the middle Ages in Europe was finished, there was no further polemic. The LGBT controversy is far more complicated, especially for Indonesia, it will not finish even with scientific arguments. The LGBT propaganda campaign in Indonesia immediately diametrically opposed. For Indonesian people who are basically religious and increasingly religious, religion is an identity. What is said in religion and scripture, it is believed and becomes a social identity.

In the West, the society is secular. Although there is a phenomenon of LGBT issues as a genetic case or wrong foster care, advocacy of the issue can transform into an ideological movement in civilization rooted in individualism and freedom, has also undergone a sexual revolution. Sex is seen only as part of the individual body. Sexual activity is up to person as long as it does not limit the freedom of others. Sexual orientation is neutral, individual choice or way of life, even though

it is unconventional. Thus, a bisexual lifestyle or same sex orientation is an expression of freedom and Madonna is one of its icons.¹⁸ The LGBT movement is part of the sexual revolution of secular morality against religious morality. After winning the battle in the public space, secular morality entered the church so that many Protestant churches supported the ideological movement, from time to time increasingly organized until finally getting recognition from the state. In the West, the church is divided between those that approve and do not approve such marriages, without state intervention despite its legality.

Indonesia is not Western. What is right in the West is not necessarily true in Indonesia. Indonesia does not necessarily violate human rights just because it does not legalize same sex marriages, something that does not involve one's life and death and the continuity of generation. If people are only because of effeminate, then they are punished by 30 times whipped or lose the rights to work, then it is the violation of human rights and the state/country should not allow it. Humane or inhumane is not measured by the release of sexual desire. The uniqueness and dignity of humans compared to animals is precisely the way that it goes beyond the urge of sexual desire. Many heterosexual people live in purity and normality and contribute positively to society, something that can also happen to anyone with any sexual orientation.

Although exposed to globalization, Indonesia has never experienced a sexual revolution. Facing the strong current of rejection in society, it is far more common to find same sex sexually oriented people due to psychological factors (sexual trauma, wrong foster care) or spontaneous internal (genetic?) impulses. If in the West, marriage is an individual event, in Indonesia, it is social events involve large families, even countries. And, Indonesia is not a secular country. In order to be contextual, the church that "conquers itself" to the government's regulation which is in fact "the servant of God" (Rom. 13: 4-5), the attitude of the church in Indonesia that does not approve same sex marriage is not theologically wrong.

Normalization of sexual orientation can be a way if it is carried out in the awareness of the related person and without pressure, but living in purity without marriage is also a way (cf. 2 Cor 12: 9 "for My grace is sufficient for you"). Any sexual orientation is only a small part of

¹⁸ In her concert in Singapore, an audience wearing a shirt that read "I was straight until Madonna saved me".

the human life, it is not appropriate to be highlighted with a magnifying glass as if it is all day's activities or that is his/her dignity as a human. The discourse on LGBT in a society that is very strong in its resistance must be done wisely, rationally, proportionally and not emotionally. Do not let groups that have long been discriminated and can survive by all means increasingly discriminated only because of excessive advocacy or rejection?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:



Yonky Karman is a professor in Old Testament at the Jakarta Theological College of Philosophy (STT). He is an alumnus of Southeast Asian Bible Seminary in Malang, where he earned his Bachelor of Theology (ThB); College of Philosophy Driyarkara, Jakarta (Drs); Master of Theology in Old Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids-USA (ThM in OT); Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven-Belgium (PhD in OT). He has written several books, including, *Bunga Rampai Teologi Perjanjian Lama: Dari Kanon Hingga Doa* (BPK GM, 2004), *Kitab Rut* (BPK GM, 2009).

UNDERSTANDING SEXUALITY IN ISLAM

Dr. Siti Musdah Mulia

The importance of human being in Islamic teaching

The essence of Islamic teaching is *tauhid* (belief in one god). It describes that there is only one God, namely Allah the Almighty. All creatures, including human being, originate from Allah and shall return to him. Human beings occupy a very central place in the Islamic teaching, namely as *khalifah fil al-ardh* (minister on earth).

Islam is very vocal in laying emphasis on the importance of respecting human beings and it can be seen from its teaching which is accommodative to the values of humanity. Islam also views human beings in an optimistic and positive ways, namely as the most honorable and dignified creatures.¹ There are no distinguishing factors among humans except for their achievement of pious deeds. As regards piety, it is only Allah, who reserves the rights to judge, not human beings.¹

All distinctive characteristics imbedded in humans, such as color, race, language, biological sex or social gender, sexual orientation and even religion are intended in order that human beings know and interact with one another to build a civilized society "*baladun thayyibatun wa Rabbun Ghafur*". Islam does not allow acts of violence, discrimination, and exploitation of other human beings in any form and for whatever purposes. Human beings with all of their experience constitute the main key to understanding Islamic teaching.

¹ See *al-Baqarah*, 2:30 and *al-Isra*, 17:70.

What does sexuality mean?

Sexuality is a social process which directs human sexual aspiration and desire. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, religious and spiritual factors. Sexuality is a positive thing related to her or his identity and honesty to her or himself. Regretfully, society still generally perceives sexuality as negative and even taboo to discuss.

Sexuality includes broad aspects, namely the discussion on biological sexuality, gender identity (social), sexual orientation and behavior. Human biological sexuality is patterned into two kinds: male and female, while gender identity falls into three variants: woman with her femininity; man with his masculinity; and transgender which possesses those two types. Then, transgender has two variants: effeminate (womanly) man, and manly woman.

Then, what is meant by sexual orientation? Sexual orientation is the capacity possessed by every human being related to the emotional attraction, compassion, and sexual intercourse. Sexual orientation is irreversible, predestined character. No one can even choose to be born with certain sexual orientation.

Study about sexual orientation concludes that there are several variants, among others: heterosexual (hetero), homosexual (homo), bisexual (bi-sex), asexual (a-sex). Referred to as hetero if a person takes an interest in another person of different type of sexuality. For example, a woman takes an interest in man or on the contrary. One is called homo if she or he is sexually attracted to others of same sexuality. If a man takes an interest in others of the same biological sex he is referred to as gay, while a woman with this inclination is known as lesbian. A person called bisexual, if her or his sexual orientation is of two types: being sexually attracted to a person of the same sex while at the same time taking an interest in a person of the opposite sex. On the contrary, asexual takes an interest in neither.

Becoming hetero or homo or bi-sex, or other sexual orientations is not a choice nor is the result of social construction. However, there is open possibility that potential tendency of a person's sexual orientation will become actual due to the environmental influence. For example, homo potential in a person's inner self will be dominant because of the certain environmental pressure, such as *pesantren* (Islamic

boarding school). It is interesting to note here that in the environment of pesantren several terms related to homo, both gay and lesbian, are widely known among santri, like *mairil*, *sihaq*, or *sempet*.

One critical question has come up, why can society accept hetero, yet refusing homo, bi-sex or other sexual orientation? It's quite easy to answer. It is for centuries the society has been under the influence of hegemony by the view that only hetero is natural and normal. On the other hand, all types of sexual orientation apart from hetero, especially homo is viewed as abnormal, mentally disordered (mental deviation) or mental illness (*schizophrenia*). As a result, during for century's permanent society [of] values and attitude of homophobia attitude or anti is homo.

In addition, social construction concerning sexuality is very much influenced by imbalanced gender relationship. Why? Gender relationship is still largely predominated by patriarchal –paternalistic system and ideology which justify men to be the master of, to exercise control over and shackle the life of woman in all aspects of life: social, legal, political, theological and moral. In the long run, this system will give birth to gender discriminatory role distribution between women and men.

Due to the patriarchal influence, sexuality is always understood in context of masculinity. Men must always occupy the position of subject, while woman only object, including sexual object. It is this very idea which has made the society form men of predominant, active and aggressive disposition while, in contrast, mold women to be submissive, passive and non-aggressive. In turn, this stereotyped view will legitimate men to exercise domination, and commit sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape and other sex-related acts of violence. Much more disheartening is that sexuality is not merely seen on the basis of the paradigm of masculinity as previously elaborated, but it is also built on the paradigm of heterogeneous sexual orientation, giving no room to homosexual or other paradigms. As a result, there occurred hegemony of *hetero-normatively* in the construction of sexuality.

Social construction of the society has, for centuries, imposed *hetero-normatively* or hetero-sexual orientation as a single truth. It is not surprising that homosexual orientations or other similar inclinations are regarded as deviating, abnormal, and unnatural. Even, many stigmatize people of hetero-sexual orientation as sin-perpetrators, condemned creatures, sufferers of sexual deviation and handed-down

communicable diseases. However, it is also found that a small number of members of society consider homo normal and natural, even regard homo as "sacred", as in the case of group of monks in South Sulawesi; group of *waroks* (ascetic expert of martial arts, often homo-sexual) in the tradition of *reog* (masked dance) performance in Ponorogo.

The change in the society's attitude has begun since 1970, when APA (American Psychiatric Association) revealed the research findings that homo and other sexual orientations are not abnormal, not psychological deviation, not a disease. Hereinafter, in 1974 APA removed homo from the list of mental illness. This decision is adopted by international body of WHO and was adhered to by the Department Health of R.I in 1983.

Since then, homo has been recognized as a form of sexual orientation and basic human rights of homosexual people are stipulated in various human rights documents: internationally, nationally and regionally. The Document of Human Rights stipulates, among others, that: "All human beings are born free and equal in terms of dignity and rights. All human beings are of universal disposition, interdependent, indivisible and interrelated. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integrated with human dignity and humanity so that they may not become the base for any acts of discrimination and violence".

Hence, what is construed as sexual behavior? It is the way by which someone channels her or his sexual desire. It is very much influenced by social construction, not predestined, and, of course, a learned behavior. There are many ways through which people satisfy their sexual need, among others, oral sex and anal sex (also called sodomy or *liwath* in Arabic). Sodomy or *liwath* is to insert male genital organ into anus, either a man's or a woman's anus.

Islamic law does not speak about the issue of sexual orientation, but speaks about sexual behavior. Why? Because law can only touch things which can be freely selected by human beings. Sexual orientation is predestined, whereas sexual behavior is a matter of choice. Islamic law is always directed to the deeds done by human beings offering free choices, not to something that is predestined in nature for which human beings are offered no choices.

As regards sexual behavior, Islam underscores the importance of safe, sound and responsible sexual intercourse. Islam condemns all sexual behaviors which are accompanied with coercive, violent, cruel, inconvenient, and inhuman elements, such as fornication or adultery, prostitution, incest, pedophilia (sexual intercourse with under aged children); sex with animal; all forms of sex-related violent behaviors, all forms of sexual intercourse are not in line with principles of the rights of reproductive health ; all forms of pain-causing sodomy, and all forms of sexual behavioral which are highly potential to communicate HIV/Aids and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Therefore, although a person is hetero-oriented, her or his sexual behavior is marked with acts of violence and cruelty, the person concerned is considered as violating Islamic law. Islam's severe condemnation to inhuman and despicable sexual behavior can be found in the account of Prophet Luth. God severely reprimanded the sexual behavior of the people of Luth, which was saturated with violence and cruelty.

The view of Islam on the issues of sexuality

Qur'an mentions only two types of gender identity: woman and man. Whereas, literatures on *fiqh* point out four variants, that is: woman, man, *khunsa*² (effeminate homosexual), and *mukhannits* or *mukhannats*. The study of *Fiqh* do not recognize the terms for homo sexual orientation: gay and lesbian and others. Because the terms gay and lesbian are not available in *fiqh* literatures, it is no wonder that each discussion on homosexual issues always uses the term of *khunsa* (effeminate homosexual). *Fukahas* (*fiqh* scholars) differ in opinions on homo's legal aspects. Imam Syafi'i underlined that homosexual behaviors which are subject to punishment are only those which are committed in public places. Hereinafter, Abu Yusuf and al-Auza'i of Yusuf equalized the sentence imposed on homosexual behavior with the punishment charged on adultery. Historical fact did not reveal the occurrence of execution in the case of homosexual practices during the prophethood of Muhammad. First execution to homo exactly happened after his prophethood, at the period of Abu Bakar when death sentence was passed to a homo couple. Later, at the time of Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab, he ordered that a homo be burned alive, but because there was objection, the punishment was then changed to stoning.

² A person who has two genital organs; generally he likes to have womanly appearance and to adorn as

The discussion on homosexual issues in Islamic theology is always associated with story of Luth and his people. There emerges a critical question emerge: were followers of Luth cursed just because they had homo sexual orientation or because at the same time committed forbidden sexual behavior in the form of sodomy? Are homo people not perpetrating forbidden sexual behavior, namely sexual behavior accompanied with the elements of violence, force and health endangering acts, like sodomy, rape, pedophilia, fornication, prostitution, and repeated changes of partners will still be damned? Was the reprimanding of Allah to the homosexual people of Luth more severe than that befell the people of Prophet of Nuh who were not homo? Qur'an relates the condemnation of Allah to the people of Nuh – who were not homo- (no information that they were homos) was the most severe so that it is often referred to as by first doom day as it annihilated all creatures, except a few followers of Nuh.

Islamic interpretation on this issue is heavily hegemonized by *heteronormativity*, an ideology which obliges human beings to have partners of opposite sex; and must abide by the rule of heterosexuality which establishes the condition that the objective of marriage is for the purpose of procreation, to give birth to descendants. Heteronormativity conceives that a normal, proper, natural, and ideal sexuality is heterosexual, marital, and reproductive and non-commercial. On the contrary, homosexual: gay or lesbian is deemed as immoral, not religious, illegitimate, social disease, against nature, [is] and is even alleged as the allies of Satan. In Muslim mainstream community, refusal to homo is regarded as absolute, unquestionable, hence every criticism on Islamic view regarding this issue, moreover altering it is deemed as against Islamic law, opposing *syari'ah*.

In essence, all conclusions made by fiqh scholars (*fukaha*) of the past concerning homo as contained the books of in fiqh are final and absolute. The reason is that they are already established as *ijma* (the consensus of Islamic scholars) that homo is unlawful and its perpetrators are subject to severe punishment: killed, stoned to death or burned alive. Full stop!!!

A number of important questions emerge: Are Muslim people now not allowed reviewing former *fukaha's* (Islamic scholars) point of view which is so rigid and inflexible concerning homosexual issues? Is it not possible to reformulate the Islamic view which is more accommo-

dative and more *humanist* in view of the fact that many things have changed in sociological reality related to homo? Is it impossible for Muslim people now to give protection and to fulfill basic rights to the oppressed homo group due to their sexual orientation and gender identity? Isn't it true that Islam claims itself as a religion which brings divine blessing and promise of liberation to all groups of *mustadh'af-in* (the oppressed groups)) as proved by the Prophet during the early days of his struggle? Isn't it true that Islam claims itself as a religion which is against injustice and all forms of violence, harassment, discrimination, alienation and stigmatization towards anyone? Isn't it Islam, a religion that teaches its followers to love and care for fellow human beings, even also share compassion to all creatures?

Theologically, refusal to homosexual is attributed to Qur'anic verses and a number of *hadiths* which account the story of the Prophet Luth.³ Information and direction that can be deduced from those verses and hadiths⁴ are as follows:

First, Luth was a Prophet and a Messenger of Allah the Almighty, carrying his message as a prophet and those of other apostles. Secondly, Prophet Luth was sent to earth to teach human beings the true ways of God-believing and of correct human conduct. Thirdly, the people of Luth committed acts of defiance and non-compliance causing the great anger of Allah and causing him to pass on them terrible disaster, misery, and calamity. Fourth, one of the specific abuses committed by the people of Luth was to express forbidden sexual behavior; saturated with elements of violence, force, and physical maltreatment, among others, in the form of despicable sodomy. However, Qur'an and hadiths do not adopt specific words which can be directly interpreted as *liwath* or sodomy. Both mention some terminologies, such as *al-fahisyah* (al-A'raf, 7:80), *al-Sayyiat* (Hud, 11:78); *al-Khabaits* (*al-Anbiyaa*, 21: 74) and *al-Munkar* (*al-Ankabuut*, 29:21). Fifth, there was an impression that followers of Luth had bisexual orientation. Because, it was told that the men looked away from and abandoned their wives and went to visit people of the same sex in a culpable and despicable way. There was strong indication that there had occurred acts of violence and sexual exploitation among people of the same biological sex. Sixth, Allah also cast a painful *torment* to Luth's wife, though there was no information in Qur'an that she was a lesbian or

³ See Q.S. al-Naml, 27: 54-58, Hud, 11:77-83; al-A'raf, 7: 80-81; al-Syu'ara, 26:160-175.

⁴ See several hadiths related by Tabrani and al-Baihaqi; Ibnu Abbas; Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Muslim and Tirmizi.

committed sodomy. Seventh, the bitter torment in the story of Luth also befell the people of other prophets, like the people of prophets Nuh, Hud, Syuaib, Saleh, and Mozes. Even, the torment befell the people of Nuh was much more severe so that the happening was referred to as first doomsday. It means that Allah is always angry with every people who commit acts of cruelty and atrocity and excessive regardless of their sexual orientation of gender identity with sexual orientation and identity of their gender. The ordeals are not necessarily associated with the issue of sexuality. The torments may befall whoever, regardless they are homo or not. Eight, Qur'an does not stipulate any order to discriminate homosexual people, let alone killing or extinguishing them. And last but not least, only Allah, the Most Knowledgeable, knows who among humankind will accept His violent torment and who amongst them will receive His Blessing and Benevolence.⁵

Therefore, human beings of whatever sexual orientation they are can only engage in performing good deeds (*fastabiqul khairat*), *competing with one another to exercise good deeds* and *benefaction as optimally as possible*. One of those benefactions is to put in the most frontier sexual behaviors which do not contain elements which will make other people feel uncomfortable or even tortured.

Promoting Islamic humanism

As Muslim woman I do believe that the Holy Qur'an has a universal meaning or spirit that should be in continuous dialogue with Muslims according to different times and temporal settings. The universal values and truths of the Holy Qur'an are absolute. While the many truths obtained historically via the interpretations of the text of the Qur'an are relative. And also I do believe that one of the praiseworthy characters of God is *al-salâm* (the Most Peaceful). It is referred to as such because He is the Most Perfect, precluded from all defects, shortcomings and destructions. Thus, Islamic religion sent down to humans has to reflect this praiseworthy character. Both the words *Islâm* and *al-salâm* originate from the same root, *salima*, which means peace and preclusion from all that is condemned and disgraceful.

Theologically, Islam is a blessing for all of human beings. Islam through the principle of *tauhid* maintains the importance of equality

⁵ See Q.S. *al-Ankabuut*, 29:21.

among human beings. All the teachings of Islam bring to the fore the equality of standing and stature among nations regardless of their religion, race, gender identity, extraction, geographical location, and social status, as provided in the Qur'an⁶: O mankind, actually We have created you from a man and a woman and have made you nations and tribes so that you know each other. Verily the noblest person among you on Allah's side is the person who is the most religiously devout to Allah among you. Verily, Allah is the Omniscient.

Even if there is a big difference among them, such a difference is not intended to oppress one another or to discriminate one another, and to be hostile towards one another but for a noble objective, that is, to understand one another and at the same time, to put them to the test in order to find out who is religiously more devout to Him. A human is only distinguished from another human on the basis of his/ her *taqwa* (achievements and quality of his/ her religious devotion). Such is the teaching that is enshrined in the Qur'an. However, distortions abound here and there when the noble teachings were sent down to earth and implemented in the life of human beings.

Actually, in my view all human beings are intended to follow their primordial agreement with God and place Him in the centre of their lives (Q.S. *al-A'raf*, 7:12). Because of this agreement every human being is born in a state of natural purity (*fitrah*) and strives towards that which is good and true (Q.S. *al-Ahzab*, 33:4 and *Rum*, 30:30). At the same time, human beings are weak and can be tempted to fail (Q.S. *al-Nisa*, 4:28). Thus humanity was given the ability to think and reason, and later provided with religion and the obligation to search for the true and good way of life.

Every human being has the rights to choose his or her own morals and ethics. Moreover, all human beings are of equal value. So, to harm one individual means to harm the hole of humanity, and conversely to better one individual is to better the hole of humanity. Islam declares that human being shall treat their fellows well by executing their various private duties, paying open society based on mutual understanding and also mutual cooperation.

There is no denying the fact, particularly in Indonesia, that Islamic interpretation relating to LGBT is heavily dominated by not only gender bias and patriarchal values, but also homophobia ideology. One which obliges human beings to lead a life with partners of different

⁶ Q.S. *Al-Hujurat* 49: 13:

genders; and to abide by heterosexually -inspired rules which underline that the aim of marriage is merely for the purpose procreation, not for recreation. As a consequence of this hegemonic heterosexual bias in *fiqh*, Majority Muslim always consider that normal, natural, and ideal relating to sexuality is heterosexual, marital, reproductive, and non-commercial. On the contrary, homosexual and other sexual orientations are deemed as immoral, blasphemous, *haram* (illegal) deeds, and accused of being social-disease, and a deviation from *kodrat* (destiny), and even blamed as the allies and cronies of Satan.

Majority of Muslim people believed that the objection to homosexuality is absolute, leaving no room for further discussion or question. So, any efforts to level criticism against Islamic view regarding this matter is regarded as opposing Islamic law, running counter to *Sharia*. So, in their mind LGBT people must be killed, or must be stoned with a hailstorm of rocks, or being burned to death. I can summarize that Muslim majority view concerning LGBT issue contradicts with Islamic humanism.

Some Important questions come up: Is Muslim community today forbidden from reviewing the rigid, inflexible opinions of *fuqaha* (*fiqh* experts) of the past concerning homosexual activities? Isn't it possible to reinterpret Islamic teachings to become more accommodative and more humanistic to LGBT people? Is it unthinkable for the present Muslim community to provide protection to and satisfy LGBT rights due to their sexual orientation and gender identity?

Doesn't Islam claim itself as mercy and freedom carrying religion for the *mustadh'afin* (oppressed) groups as proven by the prophet Muhammad in the early period of his struggle? Doesn't Islam proclaim itself as a vocal religion which loudly voices against injustice, viciousness, and all manifestations of violence, harassment, discrimination, and alienation as well as stigmatization to anyone? Doesn't Islam teach its believers love and affection to all human beings, even to all creatures?

Recommendation and solution

Finally, we can conclude that the big obstruction of LGBT People is the religious interpretation, not the religion itself. That is religious interpretation, which are more influenced by hetero, gender and patriarchal biased. That is the main problem!!

Bias interpretation is intentionally preserved and descended by generation to generation in the name of God for the interest of reaching political objectives. It is indeed ironic. The most ironic is that in the real life of Muslim community in various countries, those the relative and profane human interpretation of The Qur'an are often considered sacral, more sacral than The Qur'an itself.

For the conclusion, the struggle of LGBT People still requires prolonged time. So what must we do? Here I propose three solutions. **First**, establishing networking between various groups of LGBT from many nations. Struggle for success always requires smart strategy and strong solidarity. This networking is very necessary to eliminate all forms of rule and regulations as well as political policies, which discriminating against LGBT people.

Secondly, there must be implementation of cultural reconstruction relating to attitude against LGBT through education in its wide sense, from education in family to formal education in school then non formal education in society. These efforts are needed to be implemented because culture of tolerant and inclusive cannot emerge naturally and spontaneously in family and society. Instead it must be sewed and arranged in such way through education system. **Third**, internally LGBT People have to always promote their capacity and quality through a wide range of education. LGBT People should appreciate their own work, creation and dare to terminate wordless cultural.

And, the last but not least, we should be brave to propose the humanist interpretation of religious teaching which is more compatible with the principles of human rights. Since, inequality and discrimination derive not from the texts of the Qur'an itself, but from the interpretation of the Qur'an. So, we have to develop new religious interpretation which is more humanism, more conducive for promoting peace, piety, justice, and upholding human rights. Those are the real religious teachings which are free human being from tyrannical, hatred and injustice.

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The Church as a House of Together Movement: *Ecclesiology* for Lutheran Churches in Indonesia as an Open Space for variety of Gender and Sexuality

Dr. Darwita Hasiana Purba

I. Preface

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) is a controversial issue in the whole world, especially in Indonesia. Many people looked down to LGBT people because they are said to be immoral, sick, evil, and sinful. In many communities, LGBT people do not have many space and access in their lives, because society refuses to consider them as human. In Indonesia, they usually became victims of criminalization because of the law, such as: Law No. 44 of 2008 on Pornography¹, Provincial Regulation of South Sumatera No. 13 of 2002 on the eradication of immorality in which the LGBT people is categorized as into prostitution; Regulation of Palembang City no. 2 of 2004 on eradication of prostitution also mentions LGBT people as a part of prostitution; Law no. 1 year 1974 about marriage mentions that marriage is only for two heterosexual people; Law no. 23 of 2006 on Population Administration and Government Regulation no. 37 of 2007 on the implementation of Law no. 23 year 2006 which only recognizes transsexual identity.²

¹ <http://www.kemenag.go.id/file/document/442008.pdf>, accessed on 10 February 2014

² Ariyanto and Rido Triawan, *Jadi Kamu merasa tidak Bersalah?* (Jakarta: Arus Pelangi-Yayasan Tifa), 2005, p. 19-20

Without much difference from society, the churches also do the same thing. The churches claim that LGBT people are sinful. The bases of the churches to punish the LGBT people can be found on the texts of the Bible, such as in: Genesis 19:1-29, Leviticus 18:22, 20:13, Judges 19, I Corinthians 6:9, Rom 1:26-27, and I Timothy 1:10. LGBT people considered them as “the texts of terror.”³ Besides that, the churches have a regulation to punish them, like the Government’s regulation above.⁴ One of the reason of rejection is the text of the Bible that say like that.

According to Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, the process of interpreting the Bible depends on the biblical paradigm of the reader. The meaning of biblical paradigm is the point of view that becomes a reference in reading, interpreting and understanding of the Scripture.⁵ There are three paradigms which have been known for a long time, they are: **doctrinal, scientific positivist, and hermeneutic cultural**. The doctrinal paradigm sees the scripture as the revelation of God’s words.⁶ While, Positivist scientific paradigm demands objectively, disinterestedness, and value-neutrality in order to control what constitutes, the legitimate, scientifically established, and true meaning of the texts.⁷ On the other hand, Hermeneutic cultural paradigm’s concern is cultural context at the time, then doing exegesis, and applying it to the current cultural context.⁸ Then, Fiorenza introduced a new paradigm, **rhetorical emancipatory paradigm**, namely to investigate how the texts in the bible influence and dominate social and religious life.⁹ The paradigm also sees the texts as reaction from the context. The paradigm is a model of ecclesia, a radical democratic meeting that can argue and decide about the meaning of the text.¹⁰

³ Patrick S. Cheng, *Radical Love* (New York: Seabury Books, 2011), p. 12

⁴ Some of Lutheran Churches such as HKBP, GKPS, GKPI, and HKI, have Church’s discipline (church’s rule) which refuses LGBT people

⁵ Anna Marsiana (editor), *Membaca Alkitab dengan Mata Baru* (Yogyakarta: Asian Women Research Center dan BPP Peruati, 2013), p. 5

⁶ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways* (Marryknol, New york: Orbis Books, 2001), p. 38

⁷ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, p. 42

⁸ Anna Marsiana (editor), *Membaca Alkitab*, p. 9

⁹ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, p. 44

¹⁰ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, p. 13

Furthermore, Fiorenza introduced her hermeneutic as critical feminist hermeneutic which uses the rhetorical emancipatory paradigm to read and interpret the Scripture. The hermeneutic has seven steps, but the steps' motion are not linear rather it's like a cha-cha dance: move forward, back, left and right side. The steps of hermeneutic are hermeneutic of experiences, hermeneutic of domination and social location, hermeneutic of suspicion, hermeneutic of critical evaluation, hermeneutic of creative imagination, hermeneutic of remembering and reconstruction and hermeneutic of transformative action for change. However, the starting point is hermeneutic of experiences.

This research used Fiorenza's hermeneutic in reading **Genesis 19: 1-29**, the Sodom and Gommorah story. As we know, the story of Sodom and Gommorah is a famous story to punish the LGBT people: God's wrath to LGBT people! The text readers are members of Lutheran Churches in Indonesia, they are consists of **heterosexual and homosexual people (LGBT people)**. The rhetorical emancipatory paradigm gives a space for radical democratic action to debate, give arguments, creative imagination and substantive conversation.¹¹ The goal of such debates is not to ascertain the true, single meaning of a text as given "fact" but to know the values and mindset of domination or mentalities and visions of liberation.¹² The goal of the hermeneutic is transformation action for change.

In this paper, as part of my research. I only take some of the steps of the critical feminist hermeneutic, I focus especially with hermeneutic of transformative action for change. After the text's readers read the text (Genesis 19) and proceed in the dance of hermeneutic, the goal of the hermeneutic is transformation action for change. I invite the text's readers to tell their dreams of the church which they expected. After that, I compile a construction of the *ecclesialogy* for the Lutheran churches in Indonesia. I use the word *ecclesialogy* instead of ecclesiology. Ecclesialogy is Fiorenza's term that comes from the word *ekklesia*, which means a gathering of free citizens, who gather to determine their own spiritual political affairs.¹³ The spirit of *ekklesia* is in the process of texts readers when they told their dreams of the church. It means they themselves built *ecclesialogy*.

¹¹ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, p. 13

¹² Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, p. 13

¹³ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Untuk Mengenang Perempuan Itu or In Memoriam of Her* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia), 1995, p.437

II. The Life of *Batak* People

The text's readers of Genesis 19:1-29 are *Batak's* people. The context of the text's readers are as follows;

Most *Batak's* people live in North Sumatra province of Indonesia. There are five classification of *Batak* tribe: *Toba*, *Simalungun*, *Karo*, *Angkola* and *Pak-Pak*. They differ in languages and customs but are the same in culture. Most of them spread surrounding Lake Toba area.

Batak's people practiced strong patriarchal culture. The lineage came from the male children because they bring the family name. The *Batak* people has a social system, namely *Dalihan na Tolu* (DNT), literally means three stoves for cooking. The DNT consists of *Hulahula* (family of the wife), *Dongan sabutuha* (family of the same womb), and *Boru* (family of the son-in-law). *Hulahula* is an important status in *Batak* people, they are like visible Gods in the earth.¹⁴ The *Boru* must obey the *Hulahula*. The social system DNT will continue if there is still a marriage in *Batak* society. It is the reason why marriage is very important in *Batak* society.

Besides DNT, *Batak* people has 3H philosophy: *Hamoraon*, *Hagabeon*, *Hasangapon*, it means wealth, descendants and honor. *Hamoraon* literally means wealth, but wealth is not only material things but also sons (children), because *Batak* people has a term *anakhonhi do hamoraon*, meaning "my son is my wealth." *Hagabeon*, means offspring (*maranak*, *marboru*). For *Batak* community, the descendants are very important to connect the family's lineage. *Hasangapon* means glory and honor, because everyone needs it for life.¹⁵ However, according to T.M. Sihombing, *hagabeon* (descendants) are preferred by the *Batak* community.¹⁶ The offspring in question are certainly boys (male children) as the successors of a family name.

¹⁴ T.M. Sihombing, *Filsafat Batak or Batak Philosophy* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2000), p. 76

¹⁵ Richard Sinaga, "Adat Budaya Dalihan Na Tolu di Mata Alkitab dan Teologi Dalihan na Tolu" dalam *Beberapa Pemikiran Menuju Teologi Dalihan Na Tolu* (Jakarta: Dian Utama, 2006), p. 37-39

¹⁶ T.M. Sihombing, *Filsafat Batak*, p. 25

Moreover, Batak people also has a philosophy about *sahala*. *Sahala* means dignity, luxury, glory and power.¹⁷ *Batak* people believed that *Hulahula* is considered to have a *sahala*. The giving of *Hulahula*, such as houses, fields, working capital, etc., is considered to have more influenced. The *sahala* of the *hulahula* is also a mainstay of life *boru* to get the blessing of pregnancy for the barren, and protect children from *boru* of its evil influence.¹⁸ The many offspring will bring a great deal of legitimacy. In other words, reproduction becomes something important for *Batak* society. The reproduction in question is to get sons, that is, to be regarded as having a *sahala*.

In addition, the *Batak* people are communal society. The communal society can be seen through the house of *Batak* people. *Batak's* house is big and without an isolation room. The form of the house shows that *Batak* people strongly emphasize openness, togetherness and kinship. Inside the house, all issues or problems are openly discussed and resolved together. The communal nature of *Batak* people causes *Batak* society to obey the rules that are together agreed upon, including in terms of customs.

From the explanation above, we can see that *Batak* people strongly emphasize marriage or procreation to continue the DNT system and the philosophy values which they believed in. The communal nature becomes a fertile land for patriarchal system to keep the values of *Batak* tradition. For the reasons above, the LGBT people who cannot have offspring are difficult to be accepted in *Batak's* society. However, J.C. Vergowen, the author of *Masyarakat dan Hukum Adat Batak Toba* (Society and Customary Law of Toba Batak) mentions about the rule of adopting children in *Batak's* society. A buffalo is slaughtered and it is announced, from the moment that the adopted child will be regarded as an adoptive child, especially in matters relating to the rights of change and inheritance.¹⁹ That is, *Batak* community recognizes the adoption of children as something legal. It means, LGBT people can have offspring by adopting children.

¹⁷ Dr. A. Lumbantobing, *Makna dan Wibawa Jabatan dalam Gereja Batak* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1992), p. 21

¹⁸ Dr. A. Lumbantobing, *Makna dan Wibawa....*, p. 22-24

¹⁹ J.C. Vergowen, *Masyarakat dan Hukum Adat Batak Toba*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2004), p.302

III. Lutheran Churches in Indonesia and LGBT People

Most *Batak* people are Lutheran churches' members and most of the churches spread in North Sumatra province of Indonesia. The history of evangelism to *Batak* people came from RMG (*Rheinische Missions Gessellschaft*). On October 7, 1861, *Batak* Mission worked in *Batak* land.²⁰ The missionaries came from Holland and Germany united in RMG. One of RMG missionaries who worked in *Batak* land was I.L. Nommensen. He baptized King Pontas from *Silindung*.²¹ Finally, many *Batak* people wanted to be baptized by Nommensen. In 1931, *Batak* church had gained legal entity as HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*). Then, in 1952, HKBP was accepted as a member of Lutheran World Federation (LWF).²²

HKBP as a *Batak* church in *Batak* land had faced many problems, those are cultures, languages, and variety of doctrines came from many missionaries. *Batak* is not only *Toba*, but *Simalungun*, *Pak-Pak*, *Mandailing* and *Karo* and they have different cultures and languages. Finally, HKBP was subdivided into many churches, they are GKPS (Simalungun Protestan Christian Church), GKPI (Christian Protestan Church in Indonesia), and HKI (Indonesian Christian Church). The other churches emerged from the development of situation and context needed. Most of *Batak* churches in North Sumatra became members of LWF.

From the history of Lutheran churches in Indonesia we can see that the churches are still strongly influenced by the missionaries thinking who came to *Batak* land. We can see from the confession and the Church's regulation made by Warneck in 1930. It is not surprising that Lutheran churches in Indonesia still copied the churches in Germany, where missionaries came from, such as: liturgy, singing, Confession, and so on. On the other hand, history also mentions that Christians in *Batak's* land became Christians not because of the call of faith, but the importance of prestige. Therefore, for *Batak* people they still hold a strong understanding of "It is better to be called non-religion rather than not to have culture." In other words, culture remains as a very important part in *Batak's* society life.²³

²⁰ A. Lumbantobing, *Makna dan Wibawa*..., p.69

²¹ A. Lumbantobing, *Makna dan Wibawa* ..., p.79

²² A. Lumbantobing, *Makna dan Wibawa* ..., p.83

²³ A.B. Sinaga, "Pengertian Adat dan Implikasinya terhadap Agama" dalam *Pemikiran tentang Batak*, (Jakarta: YOI, 2011), h.102

The explanations above mention that the Lutheran churches in Indonesia is influenced by Western missionaries and *Batak* culture, as well as its theological views. This is seen clearly in the response to the Queer's sexuality issues, as stated in an article presented by Rev. Mangisi Simorangkir entitled "Indonesian Perspective: Family, Marriage, and Human Sexuality" and the rules of the Church. The reason for the rejection of LGBT people is influenced by strong cultural reason, the descendants and the *Dalihan na Tolu* (DNT) system in *Batak* community. This question emerged: Who will accept the dowry when it's the same-sex marriage?²⁴ As mentioned above, for the *Batak* community, the descendants are very important, as the successor of the clan and the way to get *sahala*. The DNT system is also important, to determine the social function in the society, which leads to obtaining legitimacy as well (*Hulahula* position as a position of having *sahala*). Meanwhile, the *Batak* society's view is reinforced by the regulation of the church which are the legacy of the missionaries. This missionary heritage itself is influenced by Victoria's puritanical spirit that rejects LGBT people.²⁵

The regulation of Lutheran churches related to LGBT people are;

GKPS: Part Five, Regarding Adultery, Article 19, paragraph 4:
A member who has a homosexual relationship (gay, bisexual, lesbian) is subjected to a "Being Called Church."²⁶

HKBP: Part III, 6c:

The types of offenses that are contrary to the law of God:

The carrying, the picked up, the pimps and the prostitute women, who cheated, separate from their wives and people who helped carry out these evil deeds. So it is also the homosexual (women with women), likes to do shameful deeds (Romans 1: 24-27)²⁷

HKI: Article 6. e. On Breach of Marriage Guideline, point 6:

Anyone who marries a stepfather or stepmother, Inbreeding (incest), homosexual, lesbian, contract marriage. (Bands Leviticus 18: 6-18; 1 Corinthians 5: 1-2; Matthew 19: 3-13; Genesis 2:24; Matthew 5:31).²⁸

²⁴ Mangisi Simorangkir, in his article "Indonesian Perspective: Family, Marriage, and Human Sexuality," is delivered at Lutheran Council in Asia meeting in Seoul, Korea, 2012

²⁵ Onghokham, "Kekuasaan dan Seksualitas," dalam Majalah Prisma no. 7 Tahun XX, Juli 1991, p. 16

²⁶ Discipline's church of GKPS, Kolportase GKPS, 1995, p. 7

²⁷ Articles of association of Huria Kristen Batak Protestan, 2015, p. 19

²⁸ Articles of association of Huria Kristen Indonesia 2015, p. 76

GKPI: Pastoral System, Section 3.4 on Forbidden Marriage:

3.4.6. Similar marriage (homosexual, gay or lesbian, or transgender)²⁹

On the other hand, Lutheran churches in Indonesia continue to struggle with their duties and vocations in this world. Christian de Jonge and Jan Arintonang in their book, *What and How is the Church?* mentions that in systematic theology it differentiated several aspects of the church. First, the objective aspect, the church as an institution or institution that carries salvation in humans. Second, the subjective aspect, the church as a community of believers who want to worship God. The church is not only the place where people hear and accept but also human beings answer and give. Third, the apostolic or extravertal facet, the church is not only a bridge between God and the believer, but also the bridge between God and the world.³⁰ Lutheran churches in Indonesia, through their vision and mission, are not only in their objective and subjective role, but are also trying to realize the apostolate or extraverty aspect. In carrying out His role as a church, Jesus Christ as a model is followed. The Church follows Jesus' mission as the savior of the world, by performing its apostolic or extravertous role in the world, the church being the bridge between God and the world. Therefore, the vision and mission of the Lutheran churches in Indonesia (represented by the four churches), which are all trying to be missionaries, inclusive, caring and fair churches towards marginalized groups and all creation, progressive and up-to-date. To realize these things, these Lutheran churches developed dialogical attitude and appreciation of human values. In other words, these Lutheran churches are very dynamic churches in the midst of times. This is a picture of the ecclesiology of the Lutheran churches in Indonesia.³¹

Unfortunately, the ecclesiology of the Lutheran churches is inconsistent with the understanding and regulation of the church. They mention that the church so-called inclusive and caring, fair to marginalized group and the whole creation, is in fact, the church which do not accept the group of LGBT people as marginalized creation of God on the earth. So the inclusive and caring and fair attitude towards the marginalized groups referred to by the church, is still exclusive, in this case the LGBT people's group. In other words, the church is open

²⁹ Discipline's Church of GKPI (Pematangsiantar: Kolportase GKPI), 2013, p. 22

³⁰ Chr. De Jonge dan Jan. S. Arintonang, *Apa dan Bagaimana Gereja?* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1989), p.5

³¹ The Lutheran churches in Indonesia do not have concept of ecclesiology clearly. Their ecclesiology appeared in the vision and mission of the church

and caring for all creation and marginalized people, except for the group of LGBT people. So the church is inclusive, but at the same time exclusive. It can be expected, of course, that this attitude of not accepting is inseparable from the two factors above, the cultural and missionaries inheritance affirmed by the texts of the Scripture. Finally, the theological understanding of Lutheran churches in Indonesia is still in the interest of the two.

The ecclesiology of the Lutheran churches in Indonesia above, cannot be separated with their understanding to read the Bible. The Bible as the source of their rejection to LGBT people. For the reason, reading the Bible with new perspective is important. Fiorenza's hermeneutic paradigms offer to read the Bible in different ways (methods). The LGBT people and the church's people read the text together. Fiorenza's hermeneutic is praxis, participative and active.

IV. The Summary of The Result of The Reading of Genesis 19:1-29

In here are the part of Fiorenza hermeneutics' steps. The text's readers (LGBT people and church people) read the text with hermeneutic of suspicion, hermeneutic of critical evaluation and hermeneutic of creative imagination. The summary of the reading of the texts can be seen below;

The story of Sodom and Gommorah is inseparable from the story of the social politics in Sodom and Gommorah. As we know, Sodom and Gommorah were colonized by King Kedorlaomer, the king from Elam, for fourteen years (Genesis 14: 5). Then, Lot was one of the captives of Kedorlaomer. When Abram heard the news that Lot was a captive, as Lot's uncle he made an action. He struggled against Kedorlaomer and won the war. Abram became a hero in Sodom and Lot as his nephew, who stayed in Sodom (Genesis 13), got, "Sitting in the gate of Sodom" means Lot had a position in Sodom.³² The position of Lot was influenced by Abram as a hero of Sodom, although Lot was a stranger in Sodom (Genesis 13).

³² Scott Morschauser mentions that in the eastern region near ancient, as in the literature of Ugratik and Hebrew, 'gate' is a juridical location. The gate is the place of punishment, that is, the area where the official dispute takes place. In such situations there are often 'decision-making' actions, i.e. acts such as 'judgment' of the community. Lot sitting at the gate is not a coincidence, he is empowered to judge the people in general. Scott Morschauser, "Hospitality, Hostile and Hostage: On The Legal Background to Genesis 19:1-9" dalam *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* vol. 27, 2003, p. 464

When the two angels came to Sodom (Genesis 19:1-2), Lot met them and bowed himself with his face to the earth. It meant Lot gave honor to the angels as strangers, related to the tradition of hospitality. Then, Lot asked the angels to stay overnight in his house, but the angels will spend the night in the street. Lot urged them strongly, finally the angels follow Lot. In the house, Lot gave them unleavened bread to eat. It means, Lot had a hospitality tradition values for the strangers, because he was a stranger in Sodom, too. In the ancient Near East, showing the attitude of hospitality to strangers is a habit and practice that is expected to be obeyed, because natural conditions and climates are not possible for foreigners to survive without protection from others. Therefore, the culture of hospitality towards foreigners had been considered as a social responsibility to provide a place for them.³³

When the night came, the men of Sodom, both young and old, surrounded Lot's house (Genesis 4). They asked Lot to bring his guests to them because they want to know them. The reaction of Sodom people to the strangers came to Lot's house, related to their past experiences: they were colonized by Kedorlaomer, and Abram as an uncle of Lot won the war, it meant Abram was a powerful man. On the other side, Lot was a stranger in Sodom and Lot welcomed the strangers who came to his house.³⁴ Sodom people could prejudiced that Lot was a threat for Sodom. They thought that Lot's guests as strangers were their enemies and Lot allied with them.

In that tensed situation, Lot offered his two daughters to the crowd instead of the guests, but they did not accept Lot's proposal. Instead, Sodom people were angry and blamed Lot as a sojourn who played as the judge for them. The rejection of Sodom people showed us that they still considered Lot as a stranger in Sodom. Although Lot stayed with them, but they still saw Lot as a threat for Sodom. In other side, Lot made his daughters as a political transaction to protect his guests. It meant that women were second class or low level at the time.³⁵

³³ Weston W. Fields, *Sodom and Gommorah*, (England: Sheffield academic Press), 1997, p.55

³⁴ Lot is a foreign resident (ger), therefore, he did not represent the townspeople to do hospitality to guests. This was the obligation of the townspeople to provide hospitality, but this obligation has been seized by Lot. Victor H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19" dalam *Biblical Theology Bulletin* vol. 22, February 1992, p.4

³⁵ Michael Carden, *Sodomy: a History of Christian Biblical Myth* (London: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2004), p. 20

Sodom people still forced Lot to bring his guests for them because they wanted to know them. The word “know” in Hebrew is *yada*, it refers to marital relationship.³⁶ The word *yada* is never used to a rape, it is an equal relationship. It means *yada* is a positive word. However, *yada* became a negative word in the siege of Lot’s house. *Yada* had sexual connotation referred to power relation. The sexual crime used to conquer the enemies at the time.³⁷ Sodom people saw that Lot’s guests were enemies that’s why they wanted to conquest them by sexual crime. That’s the reason why Sodom people refused Lot’s daughters because they wanted to show their power to Lot’s guests. In Ezekiel 16:49 it is said that the sin of Sodom was arrogant, greedy, and did not help the poor. It meant, the sin of Sodom people was that they did not have hospitality for strangers.

Finally, the angels showed their power, they made Sodom people blind and told Lot to leave Sodom. Lot chose to go to Zoar rather than the hills, because Zoar was near from Sodom and Lot did not have energy to go to the hills.

The conclusions through the reading of the text are: first, sexuality as a means of conquest in the political context. Sexuality and gender are used for political, economic, territorial, and so on. Therefore, it is necessary to read the Bible with new eyes and new perspectives, especially with regards to sexuality. Second, an author will be greatly influenced by his perspectives, when writing. That is, a text is influenced by who wrote and his perspectives. Third, Sodom’s word is often drawn into a word called sodomy, which is the penetration of the penis’ sexual activity into the rectum. When talking on penis penetration into the rectum it is said to be a sexual behavior, meaning that everyone has the potential to do it. Thus, sexual behavior can be done by anyone, not just homosexual or in this context is gay. When Sodom’s story is made into a sodomy word, linked to homosexuality, it will create a stigma against LGBT people: it is called magic, in hell, and sodomy. Therefore, talking about homosexual refers to sexual identity, not sexual behavior. Sexual identity and sexual behavior have nothing to do. Fourth, based on the reading of this text, one side of LGBT people cannot blame the church, because the concept of SOGI

³⁶ Innocent Himbaza, Adrien Schenken, Jean Baptiste Edart, *The Bible on the Question of Homosexuality*, (Washington:Library of Congress Catalog, 2011), p.10

³⁷ Michael Carden, “Homophobia and Rape in Sodom and Gomora: A Respon to Ken Stone” dalam *Jurnal for The Study of The Old Testament*, Issue 82, March 1999, p. 90

sexuality (Sexual Orientation Gender Identity) is a new experience. Therefore, the church does not understand that sexual behavior is different from sexual identity. The SOGI concept is very helpful to be used as an interpretation tool for reading the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Finally, the Story of Sodom and Gomorrah is not talking about homosexuality, but about sexuality as a tool for the conquest of the enemy!

V. The Expected Church

Based on the experience of the text's readers who read the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, finally they knew that the text did not punish the LGBT people. Then, the text's readers arrive at hermeneutic of transformation of action for change. Here, the text's readers expressed their dreams about the church that they expected for. There are various images of the church that emerged. Their expectation for the church is an open space to LGBT people, so that they can become a part of the church, just like the people in general. In addition, the church which they are expected to present an appreciation of the values of humanity, justice and the integrity of creation. The expectations from the church are;

1. The Church as a Humanitarian Offering

The human beings are God's creation on earth. Humans are given the same mandate by God to nourish and care for the earth (Genesis 1:28). That is, all human beings are equal before God, given the same responsibility, regardless of social status, age, occupation, race, gender, and so on. Human beings are entrusted with the life God has given them.

The fact shows that not all humans have the same life. We can find many gaps everywhere, whether from social status, education, work, color, sex, gender, and so on. These gaps often lead to a gap between one and the other, that's why sometimes there are people who dominate and some are dominated, some are strong and weak, and some became winners and losers. People who are dominated are weak and defeated, often they do not get good access to life, so they become increasingly powerless. Finally, they often experience discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, and impoverishment. Their humanity is often ignored, even considered non-existent.

LGBT people is one of the often neglected parts of humanity. They often experience discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, even violence, because they are considered different from the heteronormative, which is considered normal. They have difficulty to get access to education, law, employment, and so on, so they end up impoverished holistically. Therefore, their humanity is often ignored by many people, even considered as a waste of society, evil, useless, bring disease, sometimes even referred to as destroyer of the next generation of the nation. Such community treatments, making the LGBT people to have a hard time getting a safe place. They live in the streets, in closed communities, and live in poverty.

The Church as a manifestation continues the mission of God's work in the world, appreciating the same humanity before God. God comes for all human beings, with various classes, as Jesus did, coming to the helpless, the poor and the sick (Matthew 8: 1-4, Luke 8: 43-48). However, He also came to the rich and powerful (Luke 19: 1-10, Matthew 8: 5-13). Jesus came for all human beings. Therefore, the task of the church is to uphold humanity by humanizing humans, as Jesus did. Humans are rewarded as God's creations of noble dignity, without recognizing distinctions. God created man without discrimination and LGBT people is one of God's creations. Thus, their humanity must also be respected, regardless of who they are: sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression are different from heteronormative. All are God's creations worthy of respect.

2. The Church as Bearer of Justice

The church is expected to be present in this world as a bearer of justice for all of God's creations. In the testimony of the Bible it is mentioned, that God came as a bearer of justice (Deuteronomy 32:36, Psalm 140: 13, 146: 7) to the poor, oppressed, and weak. Justice provides a more prosperous human life, therefore justice becomes a topic of the humanitarian struggle movement on earth.

Justice does not mean to share equally rather it means giving something to the right person, according to the rules. Therefore, equality is not equal to equity. Equality must be followed by justice. Justice for the poor is helping them, getting out of their poverty by providing them necessary jobs. Justice for those who blackmailed are to restore the rights that must be obtained. Justice for the weak is giving them access to be strong. Justice is giving proportionally to the needy. Therefore, justice cannot be generalized to everyone.

Reality shows that there are many injustice cases everywhere. Injustice can occur in domestic as well as in public. Even injustice can also occur in the church, the place where the voice of justice is preached through biblical witnesses. Injustice in the church can be observed if there is discrimination of the people of His church or not providing the same portion as the needs of His church's people. This is experienced by LGBT people, when they expect an open space for their presence. Based on the testimony from a number of LGBT people, some of their friends who were once active in the church as ministers of the church were eventually excommunicated and even ignored when the church's people knew that they were LGBT people. On the other hand, LGBT people come to church because they expect justice, because they do not get justice everywhere. Finally, they hope that justice is found in the church, which is considered a place and source of justice.

Therefore, the church is expected to be the bearer of justice, because the source of justice is from God, and the church as the bearer of the voice of God on this earth. The church as a preacher of God's justice, also embodies that justice is within itself, through opening a space for anyone who is poor, oppressed and weak to get justice, including LGBT people.

3. The Church as a Liberator

Liberation is often interpreted as a break from the oppression experienced in life. Oppression can be in various forms: economic, structural, cultural, social, and so forth. Oppression requires liberation. Through liberation everything can change in the reality of life, the paradigm of thinking and acting, so that it can transform the life for the better.

In the testimony of the Bible it is mentioned, that God is a liberator (Isaiah 61: 1, Luke 4:19) of those who are miserable, captured, broken-hearted and captured in prison. The liberation of God, according to Leonardo Boff, is a concrete liberation through the works of Jesus. Jesus' deeds changed the oppressed community structure to an independent society. Through the acts of Jesus, such as healing the sick (Matthew 8: 1-17, 9: 1-10, Luke 7: 1-10), helping people across nations (Mark 7: 24-30), and changing religious rules that bind and not humanizing (Mark 3: 1-6, Luke 14: 1-6). Even Jesus rejected political power and chose the power to serve (Mark 10: 35-45). Thus, the pur-

pose of Jesus was to transform lives, namely to free people from their helplessness. Jesus also transformed the structure of society and religion, which oppressed society at that time.

The church proclaims Jesus Christ as a liberator, certainly He has the value of liberation in His ministries. The task of the church is not to proclaim it, but to act as Jesus did, breaking the chains of oppression in various aspects of life in the community, bringing about a deliverance. The duty of the church is to bring the good news of salvation to those who are weak, helpless, oppressed and impoverished in life, through liberation. Thus, the congregation (society) feels the presence of God in their lives as a liberator.

The LGBT people are the oppressed, the weak, the helpless and impoverished by the rules of the church, society and country. They are in the structured chains of oppression, legitimized by the power of religion through the texts of the Scripture. Eventually, they are perceived as sinful, evil and immoral people in the midst of society, which caused an impact for them to have limited spaces in the community to live in.

The Church has the manifestation of the love of God's liberation, performing ministry of liberation to the weak, the helpless, the poor and the oppressed. Therefore, the church needs to examine the theological values of life that liberate and save all life, including the group of LGBT people. The biblical texts, the text of terror, which have been imprisoning LGBT people, need to be re-examined in order to liberate the oppressed. Thus, the legitimacy of biblical texts packed in the rules, used as the basis of oppression for LGBT people, will be seen in the liberation perspective. The church is present as liberator, to bring change for the better and brings peace.

4. The Church as the Nurse of Life

The reality of life shows that life is complex and not as simple as imagined. There are so many issues that the congregation (community) needs to address, which requires not only theological answers, but real actions that provide answers to their problems. In other words, the church should not only talk about theological issues within the walls of the church, but also to perform the theological actions embodied in reality (praxis) outside the walls of the church.

The congregation (community) is faced with poverty, public and do-

mestic violence, radicalism, intolerance, environmental damage, criminal acts, social inequality, discrimination, and so on. All these issues are part of the life of the community. Therefore, it is not enough for the church to just perform prayers or rituals of worship as a solution to the problems of the church (community). In other words, the church should not neglect the issues. The neglect by the church will cause the church to be eliminated in the life of the community, or it will be "an echo in a vacuum." The church is expected to engage in all aspects of community life: empowering the economy, preventing environmental destruction, providing integrated services to the victims of violence, maintaining unity, preventing criminalization and discrimination, and so on. The church must destroy the exclusive church walls, and make this world a common home for life in expressing God's love. For that, the church must plunge into the existing reality, find out the problems faced by the congregation (community) and hear the voice of the oppressed people. Without doing so, the church will not be able to answer the concrete problems faced by the congregation (community). This is what Jesus did in the past, he went to the streets, lived with the little community and became a part of them, then Jesus made a change through real action (Matthew 4: 23-25).

The duty of the church is to care for the life of the congregation (community), to bring peace to all its people and the general public. The presence of the church is a sign of God's presence on earth. The presence of God is manifested through love, joy, and peace (Galatians 5: 22-23). In caring for that life, the church must also address the problem of oppression experienced by LGBT people in the midst of life. The church must also hear their voices, know them and be with them. Thus, the church knows to answer the problems they faced. Based on this, conflicts found in the community, which lead to violence, can be overcome. One of the duties of the church also is to take care of the life of all God's creation, by "being present" in the midst of real life.

5. The Church as the Salt and Light

The salt and light are well-known Christian terminology. In the Gospel of Matthew 6: 13-16 mentions the salt and light. Moreover, in John 8:12, Jesus himself mentioned that He is the light of the world. Salt and light have a clear function in life. Salt serves as a flavoring of food and slows down the process of decay or preservation. As for light, it serves as a light to darkness. Salt and light are two very important things in human life.

These two terminologies, salt and light, illustrate the role of the model of Christianity. Christians are often called to be the "salt" and "light" in this world. The salt and light are portrayed as models of Christianity that can serve to provide a good life in the midst of the world: the Christian life has a role to do good things so that the "taste" of Christianity can be felt and seen. Similarly, the role of the Christians as God's model in the midst of this world is to declare goodness, so that they can be the light for the world, leading people to do good deeds. The Church as a fellowship of believers and a manifestation of God's presence, is expected to be the salt and light. That is, the church is also a model in the middle of life. The role of the church is to give the "taste" of God's goodness on the earth and to give light to the dark world. The church plays a model that can be seen and followed by many, so that many can follow Christ. The Church exemplifies the goodness of God in this world.

The Church as the model of Christ, meaning the church does what Christ did. The church is not the same as this world, even though the church is in the world. The church presents something different from the world. Therefore, even though the world is full of darkness; violence, discrimination, marginalization, stigmatization, etc., the church as a model of the salt and light, acts to set a true example for the world. The Church illuminates the misconceptions of the world, rewards the values of humanity, and protects those who suffer. The church gives a true "sense" of humanity, so the world may imitate it.

Likewise the role of the church, being the salt and light for LGBT people who underwent many oppression, discrimination, marginalization, and violence in the midst of the world. When the world hates them, the role of the church becomes the salt and light, setting the example of the good to love them. The Church is a model to illuminate humanizing human beings' sense of community to humanize LGBT people. The church becomes a model for society, where the church comes by serving.

6. The Church as a Diversity Holder

Undoubtedly, diversity is a reality that must be accepted by the world. God created diversity for the world. It can be seen from the creation story (Genesis 1-2), God created the diversity of his creation. The story of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11), showing the diversity of languages. In other words, diversity is part of creation, so diversity is

something that cannot be denied in life.

Diversity is richness and beauty for life in this world. There are diversity that the world cannot ignore: religion, ethnicity, nation, language, color, sex, gender, and so on. In reality, diversity is a threat for division and leads to violence found in different parts of the world. Diversity is regarded as a difference that can disrupt uniformity or homogeneity. Uniforms are considered better, so efforts are made by certain people to uniform with what is shared or understood. Unifying effort that creates conflicts in the world.

Likewise LGBT people, who exhibits diverse gender and sexuality, are considered a threat to heteronormative sexuality that is considered to be a single truth in its own right. Second century, Galen, the philosopher as well as the doctor who argued, that the sex of humans are only two: men marked with penis and women marked with vagina, is considered a single truth to this day. Heteronormative sexuality is considered normal, correct and normative. This heteronormative sexuality that is regarded as a single truth, removes the diversity of gender and sexuality that exists, and is considered an aberration.

The Church is inseparable from diversity. The diverse presence of church denominations on earth, is a reality of diversity that cannot be denied. And also with the various teachings, commentaries, and dogmas, found in various denominations of the church. Thus, diversity is an inseparable part of the life of the church, so the church deserves and is open to diversity itself.

Therefore, the presence of sexuality is part of diversity of gender and sexuality and a part of diversity in the midst of life. The Church as an institution that is open to diversity, should be open to the presence of LGBT people as a part of diversity. Gender and sexuality are part of God's creation in the human body, so that diversity of gender and sexuality is also a part of God's creation. The church that recognizes God's diverse works on earth, certainly upholds diversity as part of God's giving. Therefore, the church that is open to diversity is a church that recognizes the omnipotence of God as a creator of the masterpiece of a diverse universe.

7. The Church as an Inclusive, Dialogic and Open Space

An inclusive, dialogical and open attitude is one of HKBP church's principles to realize its vision of being a blessing to the world. The inclusive, dialogical and open attitude rewards humanity, justice and equality for humanity and all of God's creations. Man and all creations are equal before God, and all have a precious place.

An inclusive, dialogical and open attitude is a picture of a church that makes no distinction between one another, provides diversity, is willing to accept renewal and is not rigid to change. The world is constantly changing according to the times, and the church is in the midst of an ever-changing world, inevitably involved in the change. The existence of the church is open to change, but does not lose its identity as a church to manifest God's presence on this earth. Thus, the church remains a church in the midst of the changing times, without being obsolete or eliminated by the times.

To realize the full identity of the church in the midst of the changing times, the church needs to be open by opening dialogue spaces in all fields of scholarship. The church is willing to change with the changes needed by the times, and the church must be bold enough to react against the actions which are not humanizing. Open dialogue will provide a new understanding of the church. So, the church does not live in a religious walls untouched by the times, so it is finally abandoned by its followers, but the church can respond to the situation of the times.

Admittedly, Science continues to grow, including knowledge of gender and sexuality. Gender and sexuality are not as simple as the invention of Galen in the 2nd century BC. Knowledge of gender and sexuality develops in line with the discovery of many diverse body facts. Thus, the church needs to engage in dialogue with science, with existing facts of body and scriptural texts believed by the church. Through dialogue, the church will find a new understanding, so that it can answer the needs that exist in the midst of this world. The church can provide enlightenment and understanding to the congregation and society in need of theological ethical answers in the midst of life in this world.

Dialogic attitude built by the church shows that the church is not static and stagnant, but the church is an active and dynamic community. The Church does not only live in the past, in accordance with the rules set forth in the Scripture, but lives on this day and in the future. Thus, the church can continually convey its prophetic voice in the midst of the world, playing God's voice throughout the ages. For that, a dialogical, open and inclusive attitude is needed by the church at all times.

VI. The Church as A House of Together Movement: The Ecclesiology of The Lutheran Churches in Indonesia

From their expected church above, I made a construction of *ecclesialogy*. I preferred the term *ecclesialogy* than ecclesiology. The word *ecclesialogy* comes from ekklesia, it means the people struggle on their vision together. The text's readers express their expected church for the future. I constructed *ecclesialogy* with metaphor "the church as a house of together movement."

The term "house" refers to *Batak's* house. As what I stated above, *Batak* house is big and without an isolating room. Everybody can gather together there, with full of openness and full of kinship. *Batak's* house show communal life. Then, the term "movement" refers to active, dynamic and continuous. The term movement describes God's movement for transformation, since the story of creation until now. God moved to create the universe (Genesis), God moved to liberate Israel from Egyptians' bondage (Exodus), God moved to liberate Israel from Babel's exile (the Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.) God moved to save mankind from sin through His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, and God still moves until now in saving the world (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Apostles, etc.). The term "togetherness" points to unity and kinship to do something as a goal.

The church as a house of together movement is a church that becomes a home to everyone, without divisions and boundaries. Like a family, everyone can take part in the works, participations, conversations, etc. The church becomes a space to meet and to have dialogue with one another. The members of the church can discuss everything related to their lives, resolve all conflicts and celebrate life with joy in peace. For the reason, the church can be called the place for everyone to "go home." The church becomes a safe and comfortable space for everyone, including LGBT people, so they do not feel alienated in the

midst of believer's fellowship. In the church as a home of communal movements, the body and sexuality of LGBT people is also dialogued, so as to foster understanding and awareness, thus opening the spaces of openness and acceptance.

The church as a house of together movement is a church that is not stagnant, but is able to answer the needs of the times, willing to dialogue theologically and open to various developments of science. It means that the church is a dynamic church. A church that moves according to the context of the times, and strives for justice and humanity. The church as a house of together movement is a church that is willing to fight for justice and equality in human values, voicing continually and endlessly, as a prophetic voice. The Church is present to defend those who are oppressed, marginalized, discriminated, stigmatized and experienced violence in their lives. Therefore, the church as a house of together movement is a church that is willing to hear the oppressed voices, one of which is the voice of LGBT people. The Church not only hears, but also learns to understand them and voiced the humanity of those who are oppressed, marginalized, discriminated, stigmatized and even experienced violence in their lives. The Church interprets the biblical texts with the body of the non-normative sexuality. The Church together with LGBT people fight for humanitarian values of LGBT people whose rights they had been deprived of; freedom, justice, equality, and love.

The church as a house of together movement, is a church that frees and transforms life. The church liberates the heterosexual group from phobia against LGBT people and frees the LGBT people from the phobia of the church (*eklesiaphobia*). The Church also transforms the values of life that are considered standard by society so far, into values that bring humanity and love.

Fiorenza mentions about "*ekklesia*" as a group of free people, collectively determining their shared vision for the future of the church.³⁸ The church as a house of together movement, is a church that has spirit of "*ekklesia*." The spirit of *ekklesia* is found through encounter and dialogues. The encounter and dialogs are the ways to understand people, feel empathy and have solidarity. The church as together movement is a church with a movement that strives for human values, voicing unconditional love for all created beings of God. The church as a house of together movement is the *ekklesia* that liberates and

³⁸ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Untuk Mengenang..., p.437

transforms oppressive and injustice lives, into an independent and justice life. The wise sentence says *"If someone dreams alone, then it remains only a dream. If many dream together, then it will be the beginning of a new reality. Dream our dream."*³⁹ The Church as a home of together movement, is a house that embodies to dream together into a reality. The church as a together movement is a church that becomes a common home.

³⁹ Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, (New York: Crossroad, 1994), p.12

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Towards Equality of Diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics: A Rights-Based Vision

Dr. Dédé Oetomo

Introduction

In this article, I will write as a long-time activist advocating for equality for all persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). I will start by explaining these dimensions of our sexuality as the various sciences define and understand them, and proceed to argue for the equality position. I am aware that I am writing for a Christian audience, but assuming there will be pieces written by theologians and other students of Christianity and sexuality, I will refrain from delving into questions of religion.

The Building Blocks of Our Sexuality

A common definition of our sexuality is the following:

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors. (WHO 2006: 5)

One component mentioned in the definition is sexual orientation. It can be fairly simply defined as follows:

Sexual orientation is understood to refer to each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender. ([The Yogyakarta Principles] 2007: 6)

Note that this definition mentions both attraction, which is psychological, and relations, which involves behavior. Thus sexual orientation is understood as a capacity, which may not be acted upon, as well as intimate and sexual behavior.

So when we are attracted to or have relations with people of a different gender, our sexual orientation is heterosexual. When it is with people of the same gender, our sexual orientation is homosexual.¹ At this point we need to invoke Alfred C. Kinsey, one of the pioneers of sexuality research, who is well known for the Kinsey scale.

He interviewed more than 5,000 men and 6,000 women about their sexual behavior, and found that not all of them were purely homosexual nor purely heterosexual in their behavior. Hence he came up with the following scale:

| Rating | Description |
|--------|---|
| 0 | Exclusively heterosexual |
| 1 | Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual |
| 2 | Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual |
| 3 | Equally heterosexual and homosexual |
| 4 | Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual |
| 5 | Predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual |
| 6 | Exclusively homosexual |
| X | No socio-sexual contacts or reactions |

¹ I deliberately do not mention "bisexual," since, as we see later, it is problematic given the current understanding that gender (identity) is not binary.

While we should note that the scale is based on sexual behavior, our sexual orientations are equally diverse.

Just to be complete, some experts and activists now include asexuality, the absence of sexual attraction towards or intimate and sexual behavior with a particular gender (X on the Kinsey scale), as a sexual orientation.

While the scale is useful in showing diversity in our sexual orientations, it was conceptualized with only two genders, women and men, in mind. Kinsey himself was not comfortable with terms such as “homosexual” and “heterosexual,” since he saw our sexual orientation as a continuum, on which we could find ourselves, and on which we could slide here and there. As we shall see in the next section on gender identities, many experts and activists are aware that genders are not binary. In different cultures, some of us construct our gender as neither feminine nor masculine, as both and so forth. That is why I have not touched upon a “bisexual” orientation, though of course it is possible for some of us to have it. Others may be attracted to more than two genders, or all genders in our culture. The term “pansexual” is used by some people to take account of such an orientation.

And this touches on the issue of identity. Modernity demands that we have identities. So the coining of the terms “homosexual” and “heterosexual” by Karl-Maria Kertbeny in 1869 offered a non-opprobrious, though clinical, view of diverse sexual orientations, replacing the stigmatizing “sodomite” and “catamite,” for instance. But in Asia, on the other hand, there were words only for the sexual acts, and such sexual identities were not known. Of course now many of us in Asia adopt terms such as “gay” and “lesbian,” with local constructions in form as well as meaning. But in reality, many people still have the orientations and carry out the acts without identifying as sexuality-related or -defined beings.

It is now common to recognize that some people do identify according to our sexual orientation. Thus we have the identity terms “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” and “pansexual” (the latter for people who are attracted to all genders, with the understanding that gender is non-binary). These are mostly used in a political sense, the reasoning being that if we want to advocate for our rights, we need to be clear who we are. Note the term “bisexual,” which is claimed by people who truly identify as having a bisexual orientation. In some circles the term “queer” is used, since people are not comfortable being boxed

into an identity-related category. This is the basis of the acronym “LGB” and “Q.”

To add one more aspect of our sexuality, our sexual behavior, sexual orientation and, if any, sexual identity, may not align with one another. In other words, to use just one example, we may be a woman who has sex with other women, but with no clear homosexual orientation, and do not identify as lesbian.

In HIV work, the term “men who have sex with men,” for example, was coined to capture the fact that some men do have sex with other men but do not identify as “homosexual” or “gay.” Later the term “women who have sex with women” also came into use.

Another component of sexuality mentioned in the aforementioned definition is gender identities. Let us refer to the definition:

Gender identity is understood to refer to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms. ([The Yogyakarta Principles] 2007: 6)

Most of us, based on our genitals, are assigned at birth as either female or male, and thenceforth gendered as feminine (girls, women) or masculine (boys, men). While many of us do question what it means to be women or men in our cultures (which we shall discuss next when we discuss gender expression), we stick to identifying as women or men. These days, we are called cisgender women or men.

Others among us, though, are not happy with the gender identity assigned to us based on our genital anatomy, and feel we should identify otherwise. This condition is now classified as gender dysphoria (American Psychiatric Association 2016). We are transgender or simply trans.² Thus we can be trans (gender) women or trans (gender)

² There were previously used terms such as “transvestite” and “transsexual.” A transvestite is someone who obtains pleasure in wearing the clothes commonly worn by another gender or wears such clothes for performances. A transsexual is someone who is disturbed by their body’s sexual and reproductive anatomy to the point of desiring gender reassignment surgery. Both terms are now considered covered by the dynamic and diverse complexity represented in the term “transgender” or “trans.”

men, as the case may be. The process of changing our gender identities is called transition(ing). It involves bodily modifications through surgery, hormonal therapy and the adoption of gender-specific clothes and mannerisms.

Many of our cultures in Asia have had terms for trans women: *hijra* (South Asia), *bakla* (the Philippines), *kathoey* (Thailand, Lao and Cambodia) and *waria* (Indonesia), to mention but a few. In some indigenous cultures, like the *Bugis* of South Sulawesi, and the *Bima* of Sumbawa, both in Indonesia, in addition to *calabai* (*Bugis*) and *sara siwe* (*Bima*) to refer to trans women, there are also terms for trans men: *calalai* in *Bugis* and *sara mone* in *Bima*. There may of course be other terms in other cultures.

Still others refuse to identify ourselves as a fixed category, whether cis or trans, so some of us prefer to call ourselves genderqueer. Currently trans activists use the terms “transfeminine” and “transmasculine” to capture the diverse ways trans people construct our gender without necessarily belonging to a certain gender identity.

Closely related but different to gender identity is gender expression, which is mentioned in the above definition of gender identity. In there we see the phrase “other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.” Generally speaking, not everyone who expresses their gender in a different way than what is proscribed or sanctioned by their society and culture identifies themselves as trans. Thus there are cisgender women, for example, who wear men’s clothes (entirely or partially), speak with a deeper voice like men’s and behave more or less like men, who still insist they are women.

Gender expression is now commonly used by activists based on the argument that state and society often persecutes or discriminates because a person’s gender expression appears non-normative or does not conform to the accepted norms. This tends to be the basis of presuming that a person is of trans identity or even of homosexual orientation. Thus this component of our sexuality must also be recognized.

The final component of our sexuality is our sex characteristics, sometimes also termed “biological sex” or simply “bodily issues.” Sex characteristics are defined as:

A person’s physical characteristics relating to sex, including genitalia, chromosomes or hormones and also secondary sex characteristics that emerge at puberty. (Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions & United Nations Development Programme 2016: viii)

Here again we are diverse. Most of us are either female or male. Females have XX chromosomes, dominance in the estrogen hormone and have female genitals (vagina and clitoris) and other reproductive organs. Males have XY chromosomes, dominance in the testosterone hormone and have male genitals (penis and testes) and other reproductive organs. However, a few of us are intersex, defined thus:

“Intersex” is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn’t seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

Though we speak of intersex as an inborn condition, intersex anatomy doesn’t always show up at birth. Sometimes a person isn’t found to have intersex anatomy until she or he reaches the age of puberty, or finds himself an infertile adult, or dies of old age and is autopsied. Some people live and die with intersex anatomy without anyone (including themselves) ever knowing. (Intersex Society of North America 2018)

In the past two decades or so, intersexuality has increasingly been accepted as a given condition that puts some of us on the continuum between female and male. Many intersex people have joined hands with LGBTQ activists, adding “I” to the acronym, so that in some

movements it is “LGBTIQ.” While some intersex people are happy to be “rectified” as close as possible to being normative females and males, others are not, and activists strongly criticize the assignment of a normative gender to intersex babies or infants before they understand the consequences. They demand that doctors and state administrators wait until an intersex person reaches adulthood so they can give informed consent.

Contestations Around Non-normative SOGIESC

So we humans have diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

Most contemporary Asian societies only accept heterosexuality (often only within marriage) and binary genders (which are conflated with biological sexes), and understand intersexuality very little, if at all. The rejection can be broadly categorized as based on “natural order,” “Western influence,” “religious doctrine” and “(mental) illness.”

Let us discuss them one at a time:

Some Asians are bothered by homosexuality and other non-normative sexual orientations and behaviors, often conflating them with non-normative gender identities and expressions, because they are “unnatural.” One wonders if for those who are citizens of former British colonies, this attitude has come about because of the wording of the article penalizing same-sex behavior in the Penal Codes inherited from the British, which is still in place in all former Asian colonies except for Hong Kong. In the article, same-sex behavior is called “carnal intercourse against the order of nature.” These people, if they know about intersexuality, seem to be more accepting of it, although they tend to want early intervention based on just two genders.

In popular discourse, they would say, “Even animals do not have sex with those of the same sex. How can humans be lower than animals?”

Scholars and activists have argued that diversity in SOGIESC is also found in the animal world. Mammals that engage in homosexual behavior, fish and reptiles that change sex, are not uncommon (see Bagemihl 2000 and Roughgarden 2004). Thus, to call diversity in SOGIESC unnatural is plain wrong.

Other Asians call homosexuality a “Western influence.” Again, they usually conflate sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

Again, scholars and activists have shown that diversity in SOGIESC has been known in Asian cultures since pre-colonial times (see Hinsch 1990, McLelland & Dasgupta 2005 and Peletz 2009, to cite only a few). If anything, it is the rejection of the diversity that has been influenced by conservative, Victorian-era Western morality.

Yet others condemn non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions in the name of (conservative interpretations of) (Abrahamic) religions, Christianity and Islam to be exact. I will not say much here, since I presume there will other pieces that will discuss this particular aspect in this volume. In brief, scholars, clerics and activists have reinterpreted religious texts to show that the conservative interpretation has been erroneous, basically reflecting past attitudes towards non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions (for publications by an activist organization, see among others APCOM 2013 and 2016).

Asian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism are not so extreme in condemning diversity in SOGIESC, although the resistance could come from a cultural source. If anything, many Asian religions, including indigenous religions, incorporate diversity in SOGIESC in their narratives. To mention just two examples, we know that one of Shiva’s powerful avatars is Ardhanarishvara, who is half female (on the left side) and half male (on the right side).³ In the indigenous, syncretic religion of the Bugis of South Sulawesi, Indonesia, adopting some aspects of Islam, shamanism and medium priesthood is entrusted to a meta-gender practitioner called *bissu*. Since one does not know the gender(s) of the deities or Allah, the medium must apply all markers of the four genders known in Bugis culture (q.v. above) (see Graham Davies 2010 for a comprehensive treatment of the subject).

The last attitude to be mentioned is that non-normative SOGIE is a mental illness and can be contagious. The WHO’s 10th International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10, 1990) revokes the diagnosis of homosexuality as a mental disorder. The draft of the upcoming edition (ICD-11, scheduled to be released in 2018) has also depathologized

³ Many more such narratives have been popularized by Devdutt Pattanaik in the two dozen or so books he has written..

gender identity and expression by removing trans and gender variant issues from the category “mental and behavioral disorders” and placing it in a category called “conditions related to sexual health.”⁴

There are, however, conservative psychologists and psychiatrists, and medical experts and practitioners who refuse to accept the above de-pathologization, usually based on conservative interpretations of religion and/or culture. Many of them prescribe conversion therapy, i.e. therapy to convert homosexuals and trans or gender variant people to heterosexuals and cisgender people. This is often mixed with religious rituals. This practice has been banned in some countries because it is deemed harmful to the subjects involved.

A Rights-Based Vision

In addition to the aforementioned arguments, activists have increasingly agreed that a strong basis for arguing for equality in SOGIESC is human rights. Human rights instruments are democratically negotiated documents that should acknowledge, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Human rights are universal, interdependent, indivisible and interrelated.

In other words, when we are against discrimination and violence, we should be consistent and reject them on the basis of SOGIESC. In April 2013, addressing the Oslo Conference on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, a global gathering of activists, government representatives and UN officials, then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated:

Some will oppose change. They may invoke culture, tradition or religion to defend the status quo.

Such arguments have been used to try to justify slavery, child marriage, rape in marriage and female genital mutilation.

I respect culture, tradition and religion – but they can never justify the denial of basic rights. (United Nations Secretary General 2013)

⁴ For a thorough review of the science from a non-Western perspective, see Academy of Science of South Africa 2015.

We are not demanding special rights based on our diverse SOGIESC. We are just demanding that our basic rights as human beings are respected, fulfilled and protected. Everyone must listen to people of non-normative SOGIESC and thereby understand our conditions, which others may not understand or may at least misunderstand.

To give a summary of the SOGIESC-based rights, we can take a look at the definition of sexual rights presented by WHO (2006: 5):

Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus statements. They include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to:

- the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services;

It should be noted that in the same document, WHO defines sexual health as not only physical, but also emotional, mental and social. For persons with non-normative SOGIESC, our mere condition, in the face of discrimination and violence from family, community and the state, could be a source of emotional, mental and social anxiety. Hence activists and allies work towards such a state of sexual health. Especially for trans and gender variant persons, physical health is also involved as we transition towards the gender identity we wish to attain.

The misguided practice of conversion therapy, whether secular or religious, is a violation of this right because it puts persons with non-normative SOGIE under dubious, even hazardous, treatment.

- seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality;
- sexuality education;

These two rights are closely interrelated. The taboo in discussing and teaching about sexuality in many Asian societies violates the sexual rights of everyone, but more so those of non-normative SOGIESC. Even when sexuality information and education is available, not the whole gamut of SOGIESC diversity is always discussed. The ban on discussing diverse SOGIE in a positive light is a violation of this right to information and education. Parents and relatives of persons with

non-normative SOGIESC also need the information and education. The fact that the pressure to form a heterosexual family is quite strong in Asian societies means that such information and education are needed by spouses as well.

- respect for bodily integrity;

This is particularly important for intersex people. The demand from activists is that medical practitioners refrain from performing unnecessary surgery merely to follow binary gender constructions and they and parents wait until the intersex person reaches age of consent to decide on what gender identity they prefer, with consequences on the various gender markers. Germany is one country where it is possible not to assign gender to a baby until they reach age of consent.

Bodily integrity is also important for trans people when changing their gender identity through gender reassignment surgery and/or hormonal treatment. In the case of females who transition to become trans men, the demand of activists is that the female reproductive organs can be retained if the person chooses so. An increasing number of European countries have listened to this demand and stop sterilizing trans men.

- choose their partner;
- decide to be sexually active or not;
- consensual sexual relations;

These three rights imply that it is our right to have consensual sex with person(s) of our choice. What is not explicitly stated is that sexual relations do not necessarily lead to long-term, committed relations, which will be dealt with when we discuss marriage. In other words, within this rights-based framework, casual sex is fine, and any variations of sexual relations, as long as they are consensual, are also fine.

- consensual marriage;

In the sexual rights framework, consensual marriage is a right. The issue for persons with non-normative SOGIE is the pressure from family and society to marry conventionally, i.e. heterosexually and where trans and gender variant people are reduced to cisgender women or men.

An increasing number of states have allowed marriage for all,⁵ i.e. regardless of the genders of the involved parties. In Asia, Taiwan is leading the way, with some Japanese municipalities providing limited rights for non-normative couples and discourse about possibly allowing marriage for all in Nepal, China, Thailand and Vietnam.

A few provisos need to be mentioned:

1. Not all activists agree with or demand marriage. However, as an option it is considered a right. Other legal recognition of relationships is also on the advocacy agenda. Still others reject any state intervention in personal relationships.
2. While most activists are shy about non-monogamous marriage, in Latin America there have been a few examples of polygamous marriages, and in Nepal a heterosexually married man was able to register his marriage to someone categorized as “other” in the legal gender scheme there.
 - decide whether or not, and when, to have children;

Many persons with non-normative SOGIESC have children. They can do so through different ways. They can be engaged in conventional marriage (due to family pressure, marriage of convenience), or they can have procreative sex with a friend, make use of artificial insemination (using donors), including making use of surrogate mothers. Such methods are increasingly used in Asia. Still others adopt children, either legally or culturally (in countries where it is spelled out that single persons or those non-normative SOGIE are not legally allowed to adopt children).

⁵ The term “same-sex marriage” or “gay marriage” in popular discourse is really inaccurate when we consider the diversity of SOGIESC in people and the fact that genders are not binary.

And finally, generally speaking, we all have the right to

- pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.

This right is violated when there is discrimination and violence against persons of non-normative SOGIESC, including through punitive laws, which are still in the books in many Asian countries, mostly former British colonies (Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka).

In addition to sexual rights, persons with non-normative SOGIESC, like all humans, also have civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights guaranteed in the so-called International Bill of Rights of the United Nations, i.e. the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

While not all governments acknowledge that these rights apply to persons of non-normative SOGIESC, an increasing number of governments, including Asian governments, have started to do so. This comes about as the result of militant, persistent advocacy by activists and allies, including those in governments.

Thus in November 2006, activists and United Nations experts gathered in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and came up with an important document that attempts to apply international human rights law to SOGIESC issues ([The Yogyakarta Principles] 2007).

The Principles have been endorsed by an increasing number of national parliaments and have been used in legal reform in Nepal and India.

The Principles are seen as a living document that develops with the evolving understanding of various aspects of SOGIESC. So after ten years of use, the Principles have been augmented, incorporating issues of intersex people and a few others ([The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10] 2017).

A perusal of those documents should give us a deeper and fuller understanding of how we treat every person, no matter what our SOGIESC (and other aspects) is, with dignity and equal rights.

Surabaya, 30 April 2018

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What Am I?: A Discourse on Sexual Orientation

Trelly A. Marigza

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has." – Margaret Mead

Every person has sexual feelings, attitudes, and beliefs, but everyone's experience of sexuality is unique because it is processed through an intensely personal perspective. It is impossible to understand human sexuality without recognizing its multidimensional nature. Those concerned in shaping human behavior like religions, philosophies, and legal systems, have shaped sexual values and sexual taboos. Understanding our sexual heritage includes studying sexuality from biological, psychosocial, behavioral, clinical, and cultural perspectives. Let us not also forget that learning about human sexuality is really learning about people and the complexities of human nature. Learning about sexuality is an invaluable preparation for living whether you are female, male, or intersex; heterosexual or homosexual; single or married; young or old; or anywhere in between.

Sexual references are pervasive but it does not mean sexuality is widely discussed and well understood. Effective communication about sexuality at a personal, familial, institutional, and societal level is rare. This leads to the mystification and misunderstanding of sexuality and hinders individuals from achieving the close relationships they desire. The lack of communication skills in discussing sexual anatomy and physiology increases the barriers to understanding one's sexuality and human sexual systems.

SEXUALITY AND SPIRITUALITY

Society exhibits an odd mix of attitude about sexuality. Some regard even sexual thoughts as “dirty” and sinful. But others find a transcendent aspect in sexuality. They believe that sexual activity has the potential for profound interpersonal and spiritual connection. Sexuality and spirituality are richly evocative terms, subject to wide varieties of definitions and interpretations. I invite you to consider your own definitions and ideas of spirituality and sexuality and share those ideas with family and friends and other learning groups, to enrich and be enriched by each other’s ideas and perspectives.

Some may view spirituality in terms of religion, since religious institutions have played a major role in forming societal attitudes about sexual values and behavior. You can find this in the sexual philosophies of various religious groups. Some mandates the subordination of women and some condemn all same-sex acts regardless of their relational quality. Some would say that the specific sexual laws in scripture are not only culturally relative but also ethically invalid for today’s Christians. Some attempt to be guided by the timeless revelation of God’s will expressed in the central affirmations of biblical faith such as the created goodness of human sexuality, the importance of sexuality to personhood, and the obligation to use one’s sexuality in relationships characterized by justice, equality, mutual respect, fidelity, honesty, and concern for the community. It is always my goal in every discussion on sexuality that each one would continue to grow more comfortable with open, free, and informing communication about human sexuality and to move toward greater understanding and appreciation of sexuality as a positive force.

Jane Austen in *Emma* wrote, “One-half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other.” Indeed much of the world still cannot understand sexual pleasures and its practices. Maybe a majority do not even try. For all those who work to understand, accept, and even applaud diversity, there appear to be more who fear and condemn what they do not themselves feel or do. We need to change the balance, to build not just tolerance for, but also acceptance and celebration of diversity. Reality shows us that many people are less tolerant of sexual diversity than they like to think and say. Tolerance, acceptance, and understanding must be developed in all instances of learning because they are difficult goals to achieve.

For many of us, our first concept of sexual orientation was simply that everyone was either heterosexual or homosexual. Period. A first reconceptualization of sexual orientation is provided using the Kinsey Heterosexual-Homosexual Scale. On the Kinsey Scale, sexual behavior is represented as a continuum from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. To make it easier to quantify behavior for research purposes, the scale has seven equal, numbered intervals, but it is a continuum and in-between points may be used. The seven points are exclusively heterosexual, predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual, predominantly heterosexual, more than incidentally homosexual, equally heterosexual and homosexual, predominantly homosexual, more than incidentally heterosexual, predominantly homosexual, only incidentally heterosexual, and exclusively homosexual.

To use the Kinsey Scale, choose a point on the continuum which corresponds to your relative amounts of sexual experiences with the same sex and with another sex in your life up to now.

Fritz Klein et al. extended the conceptualization of sexual orientation by examining the element of time in more detail than Kinsey. Klein asks about sexual behavior during the present (the most recent 12 months), the past (up to 12 months ago), and the ideal (which is as close as one can get to intention and prediction of future behavior). Klein also included many aspects of sexual orientation in addition to sexual behavior like sexual attraction, sexual fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, lifestyle preference, and sexual identity.

From Klein's improvement of the Kinsey Scale came the Sexual and Affectional Orientation and Identity Scale (SAOIS)¹ where the aspects of sexual orientation are represented as a stack of cards where each card also has the three time scales (past, present, ideal). The aspects of sexual orientation that are measured are sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, sexual attraction, emotional preference, physical affection preference, social preference, community affiliation, self-identity, and political identity.

¹SAOIS is adapted and further developed from the Kinsey Scale and the Klein Grid by Bobbi Keppel, Alan Hamilton, and Al Gentle. The *Our Whole Lives Sexuality Education for Adults* by Richard S. Kimball was used as reference for this.

Sexual behavior is not always synchronized with one's sexual identity (how people think of themselves). Three different people may have the same distribution of sexual behavior but have three different sexual identities: homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual. The experience of many people indicates that sexual identity can be fluid (at least for some people), and can change from one period of a person's life to another. Despite the fact that someone may have had different self-identities at different times, each self-identity was appropriate and valid for that person in its time.

SEXUALITY AND THE BIBLE

"The classical Christian tradition ... concerning sexual morality is a product of the patristic, not the biblical age" according to Joseph Monti. The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), with a small part penned in Aramaic, was assembled into a single volume more than 2000 years ago and the Greek (New) Testament about 1800 years ago.

Karl-Maria Benkert, a Hungarian journalist living in Germany,² first used the word "homosexual" in 1869. This was adopted by sexologists in the twentieth century and became one of the three major sexual orientations: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual. Dr. K. Renato Lings, in his book *Love Lost in Translation* states that there is not a single term that translates as "homosexual" in the entire Bible. He further warns that for all such reasons, whenever ancient cultures are studied, including those mentioned in the books of the Bible, it is wise to use flexible terminology with little or no traditional bias. He thus agrees with Bernadette J. Brooten,³ Martti Nissinen,⁴ and Anthony Heacock,⁵ to opt for the term "homoerotic" given the risk of historical and conceptual confusion with such a modern word put in a biblical context. Homoerotic describes erotic bonding of men with men and women with women. It may or may not manifest itself in sexual acts. Lings' biblical exegesis explores the materials offered by the Bible through a detailed scrutiny of the nuances of the original languages and compares his findings with 12 contemporary English versions of the Bible. People's perspectives on sexuality are shaped by the Bible versions that they usually read.

² In Hungarian, the name is Karoly Maria Kertbeny.

³ *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*.

⁴ *Homosexuality in the Biblical World: A Historical Perspective*

⁵ *Jonathan Loved David: Manly Love in the Bible and the Hermeneutics of Sex*

Despite disagreements among historians, it is generally thought that sacred Hebrew writings date back to sixth century BCE. With the rise of the empire of Alexander the Great, Hellenistic culture spread and Greek became the lingua franca in all the occupied territories. Early versions of the Septuagint appeared in Alexandria around the year 200 BCE. The Mediterranean basin had an impressive linguistic diversity that at the time Jesus' ministry began; at least five languages co-existed in Palestine: Biblical Hebrew, Late Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. Christian writers neglected the Hebrew language and used the Roman imperial language that basically influenced the church. The fourth century brought about Latin translations of scriptural works. Eusebius Hieronymus Sophronius, known as Jerome, produced the *Vulgate* towards the year 400 BCE. The Vulgate was identified as the official Catholic Bible until the 1960s and provided the exclusive framework for biblical interpretation, with significant repercussions in Christian theology.

The prevalent repressive climate in church circles on human sexuality then produced two schools of thought. One approach thought that an active sex life was acceptable within marriage in order to ensure reproduction and the other was to abstain in the form of asceticism and celibacy. Thus an entire caste of priests, monks, and nuns fighting against their erotic instincts and renouncing all bodily pleasures ensued. Such a movement was hastened by the teaching of the early church fathers like Augustine of Hippo (doctrine of original sin vis-a-vis rabbinic tradition of expressing the process of development of human consciousness from childhood and puberty to mature adulthood) and the Italian monk Peter Damian (sodomy vis-a-vis middat Sedom). Steven Greenberg in *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* explains that middat Sedom, "the yardstick of Sodom," denotes cruelty and indifference to the needs of fellow citizens. Jewish theologians would say these are lessons on inhospitality and hardheartedness rather than sexual behavior. When Renaissance scholars obtained access to the biblical texts in the original languages, they observed a series of mistakes in the Latin text (Vulgate) despite its canonical status. The reformation proposed to return to the written sources in the original languages so that Christian theology should not be founded on translation errors. However, even the Renaissance linguists were not freed from several repressive aspects of traditional hermeneutics in sexual matters, especially ho-

⁶ REPUBLIKA.CO.ID, JAKARTA, 17 Oktober 2016.

moerotic relationships. According to Brooten and Stuart⁶, the rejection of homoerotic relationships in some churches today ranks as fundamental doctrine, having virtually become the touchstone of Christian orthodoxy.

David Jasper⁷ states that the huge gap between our culture and the worlds in which the biblical writings were born is “perhaps unbridgeable.” How then do we read or translate biblical texts amidst its complexity? Are we reading more into the scripture than what we get out of it? Do we betray the ancient texts by translating them into our own conceptual frameworks? Robert L. Thomas⁸ discussed two different trends in the field of Bible translation. The literal translation method is sometimes called formal equivalence while the other is known as dynamic equivalence. The formal school sets out to achieve a high level of accuracy or fidelity vis-a-vis the original text, whereas the dynamic approach aims to produce a readable, accessible text. The dynamic equivalence approach has been adopted by most recent Bible versions. There are, however, risks involved in this approach like underestimating the importance of the cultural, historical, and religious issues of the biblical era; and it may be excessively prone to reflecting contemporary concerns that were never present in the minds of the Hebrew Bible and Second Testament narrators; modifications capable of distorting the basic meaning of a text. To produce an honest and faithful rendering of the Bible is to create an essential reflection of the original in every way, and involves sharing with future readers all the difficulties and enigmatic aspects that are present in the text. Thus, whenever we read the Bible, let us not forget that a number of cultural, historical, literary and theological factors have influenced our way of reading the texts. A considerable proportion of biblical interpretation carried out today with regard to human sexuality is strongly indebted to the main theological currents of the Patristic era and the Middle Ages.

Questions of sexuality and gender are important for discussions on homoeroticism. Michael Vasey⁹ says that the homophobic tradition in the Christian church is built on two weak foundations: an inadequate analysis of human sexuality and an idyllic vision of a modern family life imposed on scripture. The modern domestic ideal is not confirmed by the events described in Genesis or by any other portion of scripture.

⁶ Elizabeth Stuart, *Gay and Lesbian Theologies: Repetitions with Critical Difference*

⁷ Literary Readings of the Bible

⁸ How to Choose a Bible Version: An Introductory Guide to English Translations

⁹ Strangers and Friends: A new exploration of homosexuality and the Bible

Ronald Simkins¹⁰ argues that in the light of the multiple cultural differences found around the world, any discussion of gender and sex should start by analyzing and clearly defining the cultural space in which they are being played out including the culture of ancient Israel according to the biblical writings.

HOMOPHOBIA

Homosexuality is not a disease or disorder but another expression or an orientation of human sexuality and therefore cannot be categorized as criminal, sinful, and a mental disorder. Most human sexuality researchers, therapists, and physiologists agree that a person's sexual orientation is determined before reaching the school age or even before birth. Homosexuality seems to arise as a result of various perturbations in the flow from genes to hormones to brains to behavior—as a common end point of multiple biological paths, all of which seem to survive as side effects of various traits that help heterosexuals pass along their genes. Thus, there is no all-inclusive solution to why homosexuality survives, and no grand unified theory of how it arises in a given individual.

Society is sick of homophobia that has become like a disease which has discriminated, ostracized, and excluded many people from communities. Such discrimination, exclusion, and ostracization are justice issues. Different sexual orientation is a reality and it is God given. How then do we address this issue? What is the role of the church and theological education?

The LGBTIQ¹¹ community has been called all things and considered a deviance and aberration in creation because we have been bound by the Patristic concept of a binary nature of just male and female. They face disappointments, exclusion, and rejection from their family, society, and friends. They are subjected to many forms of violence (physical, verbal, psychological, emotional, or sexual) and perpetrators of this violence could be anyone on the street, teachers, office-mates, classmates, neighbors, families, etc. The issue of LGBTIQ is a structural problem. The present social, cultural, religious, economic, and political structures and ideologies are created by the majority people. Anything that does not conform to their norms is considered

¹⁰ Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth

¹¹ Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders, Intersex, Queer

evil and to be discarded. The LGBTIQ community comes from all sectors of society, even the marginalized sectors of society who must put their survival primary to their gender issues. Society is structured in terms of normal-abnormal, natural-unnatural, superior-inferior, and clean-unclean. Wati Longchar¹² explains that dominion and unjust social relationships are often legalized and supported by the constitution of the countries or customary laws and practices, traditions, and social arrangement and further sanctioned by religion as in the case of LGBTIQ and patriarchy. They are seen as psychologically imbalanced in their character, abnormal and indulging in sinful same-sex relations and acts.

In a patriarchal society where female inferiority is affirmed, discussion about sex is taboo—silence and shame—even between spouses. In this kind of society, the LGBTIQ community suffers more because parents and elders are not in a position to openly discuss and give guidance on their sexuality. The presence of LGBTIQ is a reality. They are in our family, church, and society and they are our brothers and sisters. We need to accept them with an open mind, like our Lord Jesus.

Before I go further, let me share a story I wrote several years back which I entitled “I Am Not An Accident” to give us a glimpse of what an LGBTIQ experience.

*How beautiful the world outside my window looks ...
with the mist of receding rain ... a whole parade of wa-
ter droplets clinging to the clothesline are having a con-
test as to who will let go first. The green is a brighter
green, the blue a gentler blue ... the sun slowly but
firmly and boldly declares its presence ... again, a cho-
rus of neighborhood creatures are saying good morning
to each other and to me ... how can all this marvel and
miracle exist and the verdict is that it all is an accident?
I am an accident ...*

No way!

¹² Church, Homophobia and Heterosexuality in A Theological Reader on Human Sexuality and Gender Diversities: Envisioning Inclusivity

I feel special in God's created universe and I am enjoying that little part of his universe this morning. I go where I want without pretense and therefore I am prepared to be myself and only myself.

"Ana, darling, where is that water-based aerosol for insects?" Marilyn called out. Lovely Marilyn is my partner who is also a psychologist and a sexual health educator.

They are on the left side of the Cabinet under the sink, honey.

... hmmm pesky little ants ... I am having serious misgivings about these creatures ... slap, squish and blam But I wish they would all just once and for all transfer to my neighbor's homes ... sorry ants ... yes, you guys are a miracle too ...

The gazebo looks inviting as the red and white roses look more intense after the rain. This must be a colorful day in our life's canvas. The rain always makes me nostalgic.

Reminiscing my childhood I noted that most of my friends tended to be boys. But I did both boy and girl activities fairly equally. I played video games and I played with Barbies. I played dress-up and I played with toy cars and trains. I did not see any conflict of interest in these activities and I did not feel either a girly-girl or a tomboy. I have had crushes on only males as young as I can remember on both actors and boys I was friends with. I don't remember anything revealing about finding out the difference between heterosexual and homosexual, particularly as my parents had friends of both orientation. But I think it is safe to say that I have long felt a sort of connectivity to gay males.

In my later childhood and early pre-teen years, I identified myself with boys and girls in terms of behavior and appearance when I would ponder the appearance and expression of others around me. I remember dreaming of myself as a boy around this period as well. I also had

notions like “I am not really like girls are supposed to be or much like boys are supposed to be either”.

I was 12 when I started experiencing changes in my body which really messed up my mental perception of me and my physical form. I felt that I was not able to blend in, or be set apart anymore. Even though I knew that these changes were supposed to happen to someone who has a female physical sex, there was something shocking about it, like it was not supposed to happen to me. I never stopped being uncomfortable about what happened to my body even after so many years. I started self-harming around the same time, although I am not entirely sure why I started. I didn't realize that what I was doing wasn't as simple as getting out of boredom or frustration.

I was grappling with becoming a ‘woman’—it still sounds wrong! I liked the idea of male/male romances, there was something in the relationships that reminded me of the way that I was attracted to boys. There was nothing better than two really cute guys together. I found myself thinking of myself as a boy with the guys I had crushes on, getting far more enthused by that sort of fantasizing over thinking of being my girl-self with them. I even told my parents that I thought I would make a better-looking boy than a girl. They didn't put much thought into it and neither did I at the time. I was unsure if I desired to be male because of my psychology or because of the aesthetic appeal and frequent companionship I found in boys. I think both were crucial in shaping my identity.

In high school, I became progressively more “boyish” in my fashion—skinny ties, jackets, denim everywhere. I had difficulty netting crushes and getting anywhere in my relationships. I was being dishonest somehow because I would think of myself as being a guy with them but they would see me as female and they would never know how I thought of myself which I never dared to say.

As I got older, I felt that my soul was being compacted by some unseen force. Something was not right. I started to read on gender identity disorders but the more I read the more I became apprehensive and confused about how I felt. Is it not enough to just be okay with being female and a girl and attracted to male? I had experienced significant discomfort with my physical form. As much as I enjoyed boyish styles, I begun wearing make-up in my later teenage years—all because of observing how pretty male musicians looked in eyeliner. Would allowing myself to be “feminine” contradict my male identity somehow? But I felt like I was somehow part boy and girl or neither. Was that possible?

I wanted to have been born in a male body from the start. This was a private struggle. I never felt I had been purely socialized as a girl particularly. Luckily, my parents had always been encouraging in my pursuits of talents and hobbies as well as whatever style of dress I had taken to. They have always shown acceptance, love, and support until this day. On the inside, however, I felt a maleness in there somewhere. I couldn't figure out what it really meant or what to do.

As I grew older, I distracted myself from my gender identity struggles by pursuing my love for music. I taught piano workshops and made a variety of contacts in the music industry. I felt relatively happy though unsatisfied with my love life.

At one point I became interested about a band featuring songs about male/male relationships. I found myself remembering the thought of myself as a male when being attracted to a guy. It was a member of the band's tendency to dress in skirts, dresses, thigh-highs, wear make-up, and indulge in other “girly” fashion elements that made me more greatly aware that one's essential maleness is not negated from incorporating feminine aesthetics at all. Now I know that what one wears doesn't always have to do with gender and sex identities: presentation is what one makes of it.

With the passage of time, I discovered identities similar to my own and it allowed me to evaluate how I felt about my gender, orientation, and physical form. From my readings, I realized that there is not necessarily going to be a single, clear-cut identification in any of those areas. It is a highly personal process. I sought common threads in the stories of others and in the information of known identities as I searched for a definition of myself.

I found a lot of stories which were similar to mine, in terms of self-identification and attraction. I was finding terms and communities that were similar with what I had already hypothesized about myself—I was not alone.

I no longer mind how people refer to me and I don't wish to pass in social settings as male. I am not merely one identity in any area of my life—there are many factors of what feels right to me. Understanding oneself isn't a process that really ends and requires searching within oneself and linking to others and other ideas. My personal work in trying to figure out how to describe myself has also led me to pursue queer studies academically.

You have your own unique combination of factors shaping your own identity. You may feel that you're all sorted out, or you may still have some explaining to do, both are okay.

I am now happy with Marilyn as my partner. It has not affected my productivity as a person and I believe that I have not harmed anybody.

It is indeed a new day and I praise God for his wonderful creation including the tall uncut grass in my neighbor's backyard. I have embraced the past ... welcoming the future ... not giving up ... not giving in ... praying ... listening ... not losing hope. I submit to God's will for his way is much wiser, more gracious, grander, and more victorious over everything that I could have ever imag-

ined in my mind. The scope of my knowledge and experience is but a blur in the majesty of our Lord's purposes and his kingdom.

This experience is not an isolated one but is experienced by many others too and oftentimes they are deprived of their becoming the imago dei just because of society's biases based on one's gender. There is a need to educate and advocate for the upliftment of every human being and eradicate all discrimination and violence that ensues from gender biases.

EDUCATION

The faith tradition of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines is rooted primarily and solely on a theology of grace, not a theology of law or pure legalism. It stands on a tradition of faith that has always been regarded as an affirming, welcoming, accepting, and caring community of the followers of Christ.

As we engage in educational activities for different sectors, it is our hope that our understanding on the struggle for justice and equality of treatment; and against prejudice, discrimination, and rejection due to gender differences and our views on human sexuality be enhanced and empowers us to be better Christians, better human beings.

There are several underlying principles which we follow. First is respect. In John 17, Jesus' prayer wish is for the unity of the church to be sealed by the love of God for his people as perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself expressed the wish that the love of God, that expressed full acceptance of and solidarity with the beloved, that is even willing to sacrifice for the beloved, is the very same love that should characterize the life of his followers.

The second is self-worth. Every person is entitled to dignity and self-worth and to his/her own attitudes and beliefs about sexuality. We emphasize openness and confidentiality of information shared in the sessions. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond or free, there is neither male nor female: For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 4:28).

The third is sexual health. Knowledge about sexual health is very helpful, not harmful. Every individual has the right to accurate information about sexuality and have her/his questions answered. Healthy

sexual relationships are consensual, non-exploitative, mutually pleasurable, safe, developmentally appropriate, based on mutual expectations and caring, and respectful. Sexual intercourse is only one of the many valid ways of expressing sexual feelings with a partner. It is healthier for young adolescents to postpone sexual intercourse.

We also value responsibility and accountability. We are called to enrich our lives by expressing sexuality in ways that enhance human wholeness and fulfillment and express love, commitment, delight, and pleasure. All persons have the right and obligation to make responsible sexual choices.

The last is justice and inclusivity. We need to avoid double standards. Women and men of all ages, people of different races, backgrounds, income levels, physical and mental abilities, and sexual orientations must have equal value and rights. Sexual relationships should never be coercive or exploitative. Being romantically and sexually attracted to both genders (bisexual), the same gender (homosexual), or the other gender (heterosexual) are all natural in the range of human sexual experience.

A huge part of having LGBTIQ issues is the lack of understanding of what or who they are apart from the hetero-normative equation of society. So let me try to enlighten you a bit on the different terminologies related to our discourse.

Gender is a complex set of characteristics and behaviors prescribed for men and women by society and learned through the process of socialization. It is socially constructed; exists on a continuum; learned, symbolic, dynamic; and expressed through language. Our values, belief systems, and behaviors, as part of our culture, influence the interpretation, understanding, or judgment of the gender displays of others. Thus, our biological, cultural, and social make-up shapes our personality.

When we say sexual orientation, it is about whom you are attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually. It is a person's feelings of attraction (emotional, psychological, physical, and/or sexual) towards other people. A person may be attracted to people of the same sex (homosexual), to those of the opposite sex (heterosexual), to those of both sexes (bisexuals), or without reference to sex or gender. And some people do not experience primary sexual attraction and may identify as asexual. Sexual orientation is

about attraction to other people (external), while gender identity is a deep-seated sense of self (internal). A person's sexual orientation is not a black or white matter; sexual orientation exists along a continuum, with exclusive attraction to the opposite sex on one end of the continuum and exclusive attraction to the same sex on the other.

Few issues are as hotly contested as what determines a person's sexual orientation. While most scientists agree that nature and nurture both play complex roles, the determinants of sexual orientation are still poorly understood. Current research into its underpinnings frequently focuses on the role of genes, environment, brain structure, and hormones.

Gender identity is about who you are, your personal experience of your own gender. It can correlate with assigned sex at birth or can differ from it. It represents an acceptance of the cultural definition of a man or a woman and an attempt to structure our lives by it.

Gender violence is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Primary level of violence is experienced by the direct beneficiary of aggression while a witness experiences secondary level of violence. Violence that is heard or shared is a tertiary-level violence.

ADVOCACY

The LGBTIQ communities face challenges by being part of a society, which by and large follows a binary understanding of gender as we have seen in the earlier part of our discourse. Many members of these communities do not experience gender support from an understanding of everyone as equal creations of God and equal members of society. They face undue hardships and threats by the existing legal framework and lack of support by their families, teachers, and peers, resulting in dropping out of school, which in turn leads to disadvantages in the job market, apart from the existing discrimination at the workplace. Advocacy efforts can impact a change of perception in society by an open discourse on sexuality allowing a transformation of the overall view of patriarchal heterosexism.

Responding to gender-based violence needs a conglomeration of support like medical, legal, psychological, emotional, and economic support. These can only be delivered with the appropriate attitude for an effective response. One needs a specific set of skills to be able to re-

spond effectively and humanely. Knowledge on gender issues, ideologies, and status plus counselling and strategies (forms/formats, techniques, tools, and approaches) combined will provide us with skills to mediate and address gender-based violence.

Many times the church fail us in terms of emphasizing and empowering us to respond to real issues of sexual violence, rape, and gender discrimination. We have a moral obligation to be educated in social justice issues and to respond to these issues from a faith and spiritual perspective. Because of the gender dichotomy that has influenced us in reading the Bible, it is important to investigate the patriarchal and heteronormative biases of the original authors of the biblical texts and their interpreters. Feminist Bible scholar Phyllis Trible clarifies that it is not until after the “fall” that hierarchical distinctions between man and woman come about. She notes that God first made the human (Adam) without gender, since, although a masculine pronoun is used for the new creature, it is not until the woman is made from this creature that the sexes are differentiated.¹³

It is clear that gender is not fixed at birth, nor is it limited to just two categories only, and it cannot be defined as biological, one’s genitalia, appearance, natural, only male or female, fixed, or non-changing because gender is a cultural construct, not a physical reality. There can be as many variations of gender as possible due to our desire to be who we are which is very much shaped or influenced by the larger society. It is the basic right of each individual, irrespective of gender, sexuality, race, and caste to be who they are, and enjoy their rights and privileges as God’s creation. It is the basic right of every person to live with self-esteem and right to live with dignity.

There are realities that the LGBTIQs live with on a different level. Gender nonconforming children, once they disclose their discomfort in their assigned gender experience rejection, discrimination, and even threats, and are not safe even in their own families. These children are teased, bullied, and are met with silence and physical assaults for the very reason that they are not able to cope with societal expectations on how to talk, act, dress, appear, and the like. Such children are unable to complete their education due to such negative experiences in school; they drop out and migrate to urban areas where they meet people with similar experiences.

¹³ Did Man or God Create Woman? Feminist Interpretations of the Story of Eve and Adam

Discrimination in terms of employment for the gender and sexual minority communities happens in various forms. For the many drop-outs that are unable to complete their education, the opportunities for employment are very limited. Despite having a similar qualification and experience, denial of a job, underemployment, and less compensation is common. The lack of identity documents in their preferred gender is another challenge.

Health care has always been a challenge for the LGBTIQ community. Their general health and well-being and emotional and physical needs are not given enough attention but relegated to HIV and AIDS and to sex reassignment surgery. Since many, if not most, religious leaders look at HIV and AIDS only as a sexual aberration spread through the bad and immoral practices ascribes a negative label to the LGBTIQ community. The daily struggles for sustenance when they are out of their immediate family keeps them involved in tedious tasks, which results in ignoring their health or denying their health needs. Their lifelong dream of sex reassignment surgery is unattainable because the medical system in spite of many advanced techniques and research is not in a position to provide accurate, efficient and affordable surgeries.

The media has a tendency to portray a negative picture of the LGBTIQs. They give less or distorted coverage of their issues. In accessing public spaces, they face silent and loud physical and sexual abuses. Using the toilet is one of the most common challenges for them where they are sometimes abused sexually and physically. The absence or inadequate housing is also a serious problem when they are kicked out of the family home and neighbors do not want them around. The issue of housing is not merely having a place to reside: it includes other issues like accessibility to housing, security, availability of resources, belonging to a community, and so on.

We need to advocate for the liberation of our bodies from the confines of religious and cultural stereotypes. Acknowledging that we are spiritual and sexual beings gives us opportunities to be more prophetic and articulate on “sacred” issues such as sexuality that have been portrayed as taboo.

According to Denise Ackerman and Tahira Joyner, the chain of command from God to man, from animals to inanimate objects, is replicated in human relations, men over women, rich over poor, white over black, able-bodied over disabled, healthy over sick, heterosexual over homosexual, and so on. In such a hierarchical and dualistic world view, difference is not seen as a gift but as a threat.

The Bible has different trajectories, the Mosaic and Davidic trajectory, the oppressive and liberating trajectories, and more. The oppressive trajectory is still the most popular in most churches. Theological experts and students must ensure that all work done and ongoing liberates the people who come to church every Sunday.

Homophobia and transphobia are a challenge that we have to deal with in the church. We cannot continue pretending as if it is not a problem. We must remember that we are all created in the image of God. When we criminalize people's identity, we increase their vulnerability to violence and prevent them from accessing their sexual and reproductive health rights. It is the role of the church to nurture all her constituents for who they are and not to deprive them of their growth and humanity just because they do not fit the mold that the church have set.

In spite of all the apprehensions about the legal system, the system with the constitutional guarantees ensures powerful tools for the community to move forward. It is very important to mobilize existing legal frameworks that guarantee and affirm the space and rights of the gender and sexual minorities as citizens of the country. The task is to make sure that local and international laws which ensure dignity and rights for all genders are implemented. The faith groups should stand with the community-based groups and other networks who take lead in such struggles rather than sabotaging it. We need to create and strengthen larger networks of faith groups to reject homophobia and transphobia and to create a welcoming and safe space for the transgender and transsexuality communities.

Most sectors of society, ranging from religious institutions to small families, avoid and actively discourage the discussion of gender and sexuality due to dominant heteronormative and patriarchal notions of gender and sexuality making us severely equipped to nurture authentic sexual health in our communities. Specific advocacy efforts must be worked out to ensure education rights of the LGBTIQ communities and support groups from the family, peer groups, teachers, employers, etc. Sensitization programs must be conducted in employment institutions to avoid insensitive and discriminatory practices. Religious institutions should take a lead in breaking the existing nexus of gender and sexual minorities with sin and immorality and ensure access to health care without guilt and shame. It is also important to clear the issue on gender identity and sexual orientation as a choice and orientation rather than a disorder.

The media should also help to enhance a favorable public opinion, support, and social inclusion to develop a deeper understanding of the diversities of sexuality and facilitate legal support and counsel in ensuring their legal provisions. To do that, media should gain a deeper awareness and knowledge about the LGBTIQ community so they can transmit right knowledge to the general population.

As individuals, there are also effective ways that we can do to advocate gender equality like sharing and listening to women and LGBTIQ stories. For them to share their stories is also a part of their healing process. We also need to create opportunities to increase the number and visibility of female and LGBTIQ leaders as well as mentoring and sponsorship. Micro-inequities or instances of unconscious bias must be noticed and corrected. Accountability metrics at all levels in all sectors must be established. Some institutions may have gender desks or departments but this has to be prioritized and concrete programs towards achieving a community of equals must be implemented.

The church ceases to be a church if it engages in any act of dehumanization of any individuals based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, caste, class, and race or of any differences whatsoever. It is the responsibility of faith groups to promote an understanding of sexuality, which is body affirming, inclusive and which celebrates differences. The church needs to boldly affirm, acknowledge, and welcome the presence of LGBTIQ community in the whole life of the church. It can no longer remain a silent spectator while LGBTIQs face discrimination and marginalization from within the church. Can we move towards gender equality and inclusivity that creates safe spaces in our

congregations and communities? Can the rejected communities enter a place of healing, affirmation and restoration within the church to create a community of equals?

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"Let Grace Be Total" (LGBT): UCCP Statement on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Concerns

1. Understanding LGBT

What is LGBT?

This is primarily a matter of the sexual or gender orientation of the person, where a woman may feel, act and think like a man (lesbian), and where a man may think, feel and act like a woman (gay) or adopt both orientations (bi sexual), or one who may have actually undergone physical change in order to fully transform into one's own sexual or gender orientation (transgender). Society generally views this group as a kind of aberration, something that goes against the accepted, regular norm of the society. Thus, this is a group that has been experiencing rejection, ridicule and even harassment and bullying from some sectors of the society.

2. What can our faith tradition say about the LGBT?

The church, particularly the UCCP stands on a tradition of faith that has always been regarded as an affirming, welcoming, accepting and caring community of the followers of Christ. This Protestant, Reformed, Evangelical faith tradition is rooted primarily and solely on a theology of grace, not a theology of law or pure legalism. Within this faith tradition, we consider the grace of God as an unconditional gift of God. All people, regardless of race, gender, nationality, political affiliation or even religious conviction are seen as one in Christ and are all objects of God's redeeming, healing and reconciling love (cf. Gal. 3:28). It is in the spirit of this so profound and immeasurable love of

God for the world, "not counting equality with God as a thing to be grasped," (Philippians 2:5-8) that God sent His only begotten son in humble solidarity with the lost, the last and the least in this world, completely humbling himself as a servant, and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (cf. Phil. 2:8; John 3:16;).

This is the very nature of this God we worship which makes the Christian faith truly unique and distinct from all other religions. We worship and follow a God who in the spirit of this great love for all took the most unthinkable and so radical step for a powerful, divine being to undertake, to humble Himself and stand in complete solidarity with the most ordinary, powerless, alienated and struggling people of this world.

As demonstrated by Jesus in his numerous encounters with people caught in various kinds of situation, God does not impose conditions to being accepted, or being healed. Jesus even gave especial attention to people who are considered as outcasts like the lepers, the sinners, such as the tax collectors like Zacchaeus, the widows, the poor, the immoral, the rejected, the ostracized and the marginalized, those who are objects of ridicule, contempt and outright judgment and condemnation by the rest of the society.

3. The Present situation of the LGBTs

The LGBTs, as a group has long been an object of ostracism and judgment, ridicule and condemnation by so many in our society. This is largely due to cultural ethos and values that are so patriarchal in nature, legalistic in perspective, pharisaic in world view and self-righteous in outlook. From such a perspective, world view and outlook, the LGBTs have no place, since this is a world only for either male or female. There can be no in between. There can be no gray areas. It is either black or white.

Jesus has long denounced and rejected such a narrow, legalistic, patriarchal, pharisaic, self-righteous outlook and even hypocritical perspective (Matt. 23:1-28). Within this purview of the teachings and work of Jesus, the LGBTs can be considered as well embraced, affirmed and upheld by the gracious and loving presence of God in Jesus Christ.

4. The Gifts as well as Accountability of the LGBT

With the gift of God's grace that heals and accepts unconditionally, LGBTs therefore can take their own place within the body of Christ and can contribute their own gifts towards the ministry and mission of the church. They are to be considered and respected as legitimate members of the community and fellowship of the church and as such should be protected from the prejudices, discrimination and even bullying by some sectors of the community.

At the same time, a code of moral and ethical conduct will have to be observed and expected from the LGBTs in the same degree that is to be expected of any other person or member of the community. A gay person or LGBT who commits an illegal, immoral, unethical act, or an actual crime is to be held liable and responsible for such act in the same way that an immoral and unfaithful spouse or a corrupt politician-thief, or a bullying student had to be held accountable for their acts.

5. What the church can do to address the concerns of the LGBT?

Subsequently, the church needs to address the prejudices of society against the LGBTs by engaging in educational seminars and fora on this issue for both members and the wider community. A program on Gender Sensitivity that will include issues related to LGBT concerns may be launched on the conference and local church levels. Such program may focus also on the LGBT's own struggle for justice and equality of treatment and against prejudice, discrimination and rejection.

This stand of the church should be seen as being in line also with our goal for greater unity in the church of our only one Lord and God in Jesus Christ, (that they may be one, John 17:11, 21, 22, 23.). In this high priestly prayer of Jesus, just before he gets arrested, tried, tortured, and executed by crucifixion, Jesus more than once expressed this prayer-wish for the unity of the church to be sealed by the love of God for his people as perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ. Finally, in the last verse of this prayer of Jesus, he himself had expressed the wish that this love of God, this love that expressed full acceptance of and solidarity with the beloved, this love that is even willing to sacrifice for the beloved is the very same love that should characterize the life of his followers.

The Stance of the Methodist Church Sri Lanka on Homosexuality

Rev. Duleep Fernando

I. Introduction:

The response of the Church to Homosexuality has become a burning question for Christians, especially in the West. Up to the 19th Century, Homosexuality was not acceptable in the Church. In the 20th Century, however, many western churches have taken a different view on Homosexuality. It is no longer considered a sin. It is seen as something normal for those whose sexual orientation is different to that of the majority. It is argued that people with a homosexual orientation should be free to express their sexuality in homosexual acts. They must be given all the rights of the Church including marriage. The Western Church is divided and even splits and schisms have taken place because of this issue.

II. The Sri Lankan Situation:

The situation in Sri Lanka is very different. Sri Lanka Law forbids homosexual activity. It is a criminal offence punishable with fines and even a prison sentence. However the Law is rarely implemented. For almost 50 years no cases have come up in the Courts where people have been charged for Homosexual activity among consenting adults. Homosexual activity among adults and minors, however, has been taken seriously and several people have been convicted for this type of child abuse. As the Law is still in force, many Homosexuals are ashamed to admit their orientation fearing being ostracized in our shame dominated culture. Hence most of them are secret homosexuals.

More recently, however, the LGBTQI community has been active even though up to now most of its activities has been conducted covertly. Certain organizations have spearheaded work among this community and events such as 'Colombo Pride' have been held since 2005. This event has mainly concerts, musicals and processions. These organizations also offer counselling and support for the LGBTQI community. 'Human Rights Watch' reported that the homosexual community are discriminated against in Sri Lanka when attempting to obtain employment, housing and healthcare (Salendra 2017). In 2008, Sri Lanka refused to sign the UN Declaration that urged members' states to decriminalize homosexuality.

III. The Sri Lankan Church:

Within the Church in Sri Lanka homosexuality has been a non-issue. It does not come to the forefront in the churches thinking and there have not been discussions on the subject in Church Seminars and other fora. A few voices have been raised asking the Church to give freedom to those with different sexual orientations to express themselves, but there has been much opposition to these views and the churches are firm in their commitment to the traditional attitude to homosexuality. No self-confessed homosexual is given any office or leadership in the church. There have been a few isolated cases of homosexuality, but these have not been given much publicity and been dealt with under the normal disciplinary processes in the church.

IV. Reasons for the Church's Stand against Homosexuality:

1. The Biblical Prohibitions:

The first reason for the Church's stand against homosexual relations is that the Scriptures condemn it as an activity against God's will. As our Church believes in the divine inspiration of the Bible and bases its faith and practice on its teaching, it finds it difficult to approve gay and lesbian sexual relationships. It is true that many interpretations have been given to soften the harsh teaching in the Bible on homosexuality, yet the Methodist Church Sri Lanka holds to the traditional teaching that the Bible does not endorse homosexual relations.

There are 6 passages in the Bible that seems to specifically condemn homosexuality.

- A. The condemnation and subsequent punishment of Sodom for homosexuality. In Genesis Chapter 19, two angels came to Sodom and Lot welcomed them to his house. The men in Sodom came to Lot and demanded that they bring them out 'so that they may know them' (vs 5). The word 'know' is used over 900 times in the Bible but used only 10 times to knowing a person through sexual relations. It is therefore argued by those who support homosexuality that Genesis 19 refers to getting to know people by being acquainted with them. Lot was a recent resident in Sodom and did not know the rules in Sodom that strangers should be introduced to the men of the city, partly for security reasons. Of the 10 times the word 'know' is used for sexual relations, 6 of these times it is used in Genesis and it is quite possible that Genesis 19 refers to sexually 'knowing'. The fact that Lot offered his daughters to them to protect the 2 angels seems to suggest that there was a sexual motive behind the demand of the men of Sodom. Jude 1:7 states that Sodom and Gomorrah were punished for indulging 'in sexual immorality and unnatural lust'. Other passages in the Old Testament refer to social justice, oppressing the poor, deceit, arrogance and greed as some of the sins of Sodom. John Stott states that "the pseudo-epigraphical writings of the second century have identified Sodom's sin as unnatural sex behavior"¹ The sin of homosexuality seems to be one of the sins among others that Sodom was punished for.

¹ Quoted in "Issues facing Christians today" by John Stott. pp. 305 Gospel Literature Services

- B. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 – in these 2 texts “lying with a male as with a woman” is called an abomination and is punishable with death. These verses come in the section known as the ‘holiness code’. God's people are warned that they must not indulge in the sins of the Egyptians and Canaanites because they were a people separated to be God's people. Homosexuality was widely practiced in these countries but the Jews were not to have any part in it as they were called to be a holy people. Some argue that these laws refer to ritual impurity and are not relevant for today. Moral Laws are found alongside ritual Laws and at times it is difficult to distinguish between them. Saint Paul, however, includes homosexuality together with moral sins in 1 Tim. 1: 8-10 and prohibits it. Others have identified the sins mentioned in Leviticus 18-20 as sins associated with cult worship in Canaan where adherents had sex with temple prostitutes both male and female as part of their religious rites. They argue that these practices have no relevance to modern times especially when consenting adults have homosexual relations out of love and commitment to each other. One does get the impression that these arguments seek to interpret scripture to fit in and endorse their views and practices. The plain teaching of Scripture must be considered first and applied to our lives before we try to interpret Scripture to suit our life-style.
- C. Romans 1:26-27. Here Paul states that the Gentiles reject God though they see His power and divine nature in creation. Consequently they worship the creature rather than the Creator, worshipping images made with human hands. God gives them up to their own depraved minds and decadent practices. They go deeper and deeper into sin and degrade their bodies by not engaging in natural forms of sex, but rather had intercourse with those of the same sex.

Paul seems to suggest that the natural sexual order is heterosexual sex. Homosexual relations are unnatural and goes against the natural order God ordained for humans. Some have suggested that Paul's use of words like 'exchanged' and 'abandoned' natural forms of sex for unnatural ones is a reference to those who were heterosexual in their nature and practice but who because of their perversity and lust had homosexual relationships as well. Their argument is that the passage does not apply to those whose orientation is homosexual and have homosexual relationships out of love and commitment to their partner. It is hard to see Paul making this distinction. He was aware of the conditions of Roman society where there was widespread homosexuality. To him all homosexual relationships seen in their society was wrong because of the nature of humans and the mandate God gave them when they were created to have sexual relations only within marriage.

D. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10

In 1 Timothy 1:8-10 Paul states that Sodomites live lives that don't conform to the Gospel of Christ. In 1 Cor. 6:9-11 he states that Sodomites will not enter the Kingdom of God. The Greek word 'Arsenokoitais' is used in both places and has been translated as homosexuals in some versions of the Bible and Sodomites in others. Those who support homosexuality have argued that the word 'arsenokoitais' cannot be applied to those who have loving relationships with their homosexual partners. Others say the word applies to older men (active partners) having sexual relationships with adolescent boys (passive partners). Robert Gagnon, an authority on this subject states, "These terms are correctly understood in our contemporary context when they are applied to every conceivable type of same sex intercourse".² There is no doubt that Paul condemns homosexual activity of every kind that was widespread in Roman and Greek societies.

² Quoted in "Homosexuality" – CTS Publishing Unit Colombo pp. 61

Some have argued that Jesus never spoke about Homosexuality being wrong. It is most likely that because Jesus spent most of his time with the Jews he did not see a need to address the question. Among the Jews, homosexuality was condemned and its practice was very rare. Hence there was no need to include it in his teaching. He didn't speak about incest or sexual abuse of children not because he approved of these practices but because Jewish society condemned these practices. What is important is that Jesus never condoned sexual activity outside the context of a lifelong heterosexual commitment. Therefore the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka accepts the plain teaching of the Scriptures that prohibits homosexual activity.

2. God's Intention for Sex and Marriage

The Church's rejection of homosexuality does not depend only on the interpretation of these 6 passages in the Bible. What the Bible states about sex and marriage is also important in forming its attitude to homosexuality.

God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone'. He therefore created a woman and gave her to him to share his life with her and be united intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and physically with her, He created humans – male and female, with different sexual identities. In marriage, 2 people complement each other and share their common life. They leave their father and mother and cleave to their partner and become 'one flesh. The one flesh is achieved when they are bound together in a sexual bond. The sex act is a symbol of the union of these 2 people.

Since humans are bodily creatures, their union is completed and sealed when their bodies come together. The difference in their bodies enables them to complement each other and bring unity into the sex act.

Male and female bodies bring something unique to their sexual union and their unity is complete in the act of sex. Sex is God's gift to humans and the divinely intended meaning of the sex act emerges only when it occurs in the context of marriage.

In homosexual relationships since the body parts are similar they don't bring anything unique into the union and there is no diversity that is united in the sex act. It is just a pretense or imaginative simulation of the real thing. As John Harvey states, "Same sex intercourse does not lead to a true union of human persons on the physical genital level. This maladaptation of parts is symbolic of the Pseudo Complementarity on the Psychological and Spiritual Level".³

Loving gay relationships cannot capture the symbolism of sexual intercourse as there is only a superficial union of one's bodily sexual organs.

Sex intercourse is also the means of procreation. There is the potential to bring new life through the sexual experience. It is God's means of bringing children into the world. While every act of sexual intercourse is not intended to produce children, the possibility of bringing children is an important aspect of sex as it was originally designed by God. To engage in sex without one of the purposes of sex being possible is to deny God's mandate for sex.

Therefore, sexual relationships among gays falls far short of God's design for sex, as it is incompatible with the attainment of 'one flesh' which is God's design for marriage.

⁴ Quoted in "Welcoming but not affirming" Stanley J. Grenz pp. 11 Westminster Knox Press

3. Sexual Instincts and desires can be controlled

The church believes that it is possible to control one's desires and not express them in an inappropriate manner. Some argue that gays are by nature attracted to those of the same sex. They are biologically created with a homosexual orientation. Stanley J. Grenz states "The quest for a biological foundation for Homosexuality has looked in 3 general directions – genetic make-up, pre-natal or post-natal hormonal levels, and the anatomy of the brain".⁴ Much research has gone into seeking for a biological cause for homosexual desire but there is no conclusive evidence to show that biological factors have caused homosexuality. Some experts have identified psychological reasons for homosexuality. Difficulties in the parent child relationship, especially in the early years of life. Some deficit in the relationship with a parent of the same sex and a desire to make good this deficit causes homosexuality. Lawrence Hatterer states, "A dominant, aggressive, hostile, hypercritical mother combined with a passive, ineffectual, rejecting, indifferent father, makes boys not want to be like the father and as a result he does not internalize male gender identity".⁵

However, what is important for Christians is not the cause of homosexuality but its morality. Whether we have homosexual desires by nature or by nurture what is important is that these feelings can be controlled. Human beings are by nature sinners. We are constantly tempted because of our own sinful nature and because of the attractions in the immoral world around us. We have to learn to overcome sin and fight our bias to sin. We have seen alcoholic parents produce children who are alcoholics.

However, there are some children of alcoholics who have come under the strong influence of a mentor, a parent or a friend and been able to overcome the temptation of being addicted to alcohol. The Church is called to lead people to holiness. This means helping

⁵ Quoted in "Welcoming but not affirming" Stanley J. Grenz pp. 21

⁶ Quoted in "Welcoming but not affirming" Stanley J. Grenz pp. 17

people to fight their evil instincts and desires and eradicating them. Our societies are often obsessed with sex. People look for the pleasures that sex brings but cannot control their sex instinct. They are so individualistic that they think they are free to do anything in the area of sex without considering the effect their actions have on others and society at large. Thus they compromise on Christian standards of sexual behavior by permitting premarital sex, adultery, incest and homosexuality. The Church cannot take its standards from the world. It takes its directions from the Word of God and helps its members to obey the will of God. While sex is an important part of our life, sexual activity must be controlled at all times. In sexual behavior abstinence must be the norm when it comes to sexual relationships not authorized in the Scriptures like fornication, adultery, incest or homosexuality. If our sexual orientation is gay either by nature or nurture we cannot indulge in sexual activity. Many have chosen celibacy as their option in sexual relationships either because they couldn't find a suitable partner to share their lives with, or they were called to a higher service to serve God and their fellows. Gays too may have to sacrifice sexual activity because their orientation is homosexual. Those who make that sacrifice often lead much fulfilled lives and realize that there are higher goals in life than sexual fulfilment.

4. The effect of approving homosexuality in our witness

In Sri Lanka, Christians are a minority in a predominantly Buddhist country. We also have a sizeable Hindu and Muslim community. All these religions condemn homosexuality. If we Christians condone homosexuality it will affect our witness to the Non-Christians in our country. A few years ago a few westernized politicians brought proposals to legally decriminalize homosexuality. Many Buddhist clergy and clergy of other religions opposed this bill and it was hastily withdrawn. Many Buddhists feel Christianity is an imported religion – a product of western imperialism. Sadly many Christians follow the cultural behavior patterns of western countries. We in Sri Lanka owe much to the Christian missionaries who brought the Gospel to our land and

planted churches here. However, some of these missionaries brought their cultural baggage with the Gospel. Many Christians who accepted the Gospel they brought, adopted their western culture. This gives a bad impression to Non-Christians who think Christians are aliens in this land, who blindly imitate the west. Responsible Christians struggle to build up a lifestyle that is in keeping with Sri Lankan culture and is rooted in the native soil. In our forms of worship, our entertainment, our festivals, our pleasures, our various rituals; we need to show that Christians can practice those cultural norms and practices in Sri Lankan culture which are not contrary to their faith. To accept homosexuality which Sri Lankans know comes from the west, will have a negative impact on the Church's witness.

5. **Love and law must go together**

There are those who think that if two people love each other they are free to do anything provided it is done in love. So they argue that if two from the same sex love each other and are faithful and committed to each other, they should be free to express their love through sexual activity. However, love cannot be the absolute standard because human love falls short of 'perfect' love. Love cannot abolish the moral law. Love needs the law to guide it. Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments". Loving a person is essential, but it must be guided by law otherwise people will do anything under the pretext of love. Polygamy, adultery, fornication and homosexuality can be practiced saying that they love each other. Love is not the only criterion to judge right and wrong. If it is true love it must be compatible with God's law. So no one can say, "We can have sexual relationships because we love each other". All their actions must be compatible with God's law because the highest human welfare is achieved when we obey God's law.

6. Homosexuals can be changed

The question is often asked whether gays can change their sexual orientation. The Church must make every effort to change homosexuals. We can work for many changes. Firstly, those with Homosexual inclinations can be changed so that they do not engage in sexual activity even though they retain their sexual orientation.

Secondly, there are those who have given up their homosexuality and become heterosexual through therapy and counselling. Psychologist Irving Bieber after doing research on male homosexuals writes, "The therapeutic results of our study provided reason for an optimistic outlook. Many homosexuals become exclusively heterosexual in psychoanalytic treatment".⁶

In our judgment a heterosexual shift is a possibility for change of homosexuals who are strongly motivated to change.

Thirdly, religious conversion has resulted in people being driven to give up homosexual habits and get into heterosexual relationships. There have been testimonies of such conversions in our churches. It is a struggle for homosexuals to give up their sexual habits, but if they are motivated to do God's will and if they depend for strength on the activity of the Holy Spirit, they will find that the Holy Spirit helps them in their weakness and they can overcome their homosexual inclinations.

Fourthly, there are practical measures that have been used in churches to change sexual orientation. The Church can help homosexuals to have wholesome relationships with parents whose influence during their childhood may have caused them to become homosexuals. Encourage same sex relationships with friends yet keeping strict limits that exclude sexual activity. Encourage heterosexual relationships with friends who

⁶ Male Homosexuality – Irving Bieber Canadian Journal of Psychiatry pp. 416 and Homosexuality and the Christian – Mark A. Yarhouse – Bethany House Publisher

care for the homosexual. Engage in activities outside the realm of sex so that homosexuals can sublimate their sex instinct and find fulfilment in other activities like sports, study, hobbies, church work, exercise etc. Organize groups like Alcoholics Anonymous where converted Homosexuals can find friendship and fellowship and encourage each other by sharing their struggles and triumphs.

V. How does the Church treat homosexuals?

The Church cannot condone homosexuality, but it can welcome homosexuals to the Church and to the homes of members. They should not be judged or rejected but welcomed and pastorally cared for. Just as Christ welcomed sinners without affirming their sin, we too must follow his example. However, based on our beliefs we cannot solemnize marriages of homosexuals, nor ordain homosexuals. Indeed, we cannot give leadership to practicing homosexuals in our churches because as Paul says, “a leader should lead an exemplary life and not be a stumbling block to weaker brethren” (1Tim. 3). They should have people who help them to fight their sin and motivate them to give up homosexuality. If homosexuals use the tools of counseling, prayer, friendship, psychotherapy and the resources in the Word of God, they will be changed – ‘for with God all things are possible’.

Conclusion

The Methodist Church Sri Lanka stands firmly against recognizing homosexuality on the grounds that scripture forbids it and it is therefore not the will of God. It goes against the whole concept of marriage which is God’s chosen way to use the gift of sexuality. We however, welcome homosexuals to our church communities and show them love and pastoral concern. We will also help them to overcome their sexual orientation and become those who lead lives in keeping with God’s purposes.



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THE DODOMA STATEMENT POSITION STATEMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN TANZANIA (ELCT) REGARDING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE January 2010

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT hereinafter), thanks GOD that in His immeasurable wisdom, and through His Son Jesus Christ, all believers worldwide have been joined as one body; thus, making us be in communion. In this way, we can walk together to prosper in God's mission.
- 1.2 In our relationship as one body, we have co-operated in many and varied ways through both trying and undemanding issues. We were able to hold together all this time because of God's favor, and also through our unrelenting devotion in the entire Church, in regular services, where we confess the Creed and believe in God's Church as being One, Holy, Universal and Apostolic. Therefore any action in any church which is abnormal and non-conforming to the received and affirmed position and teachings of the church over the centuries in the whole Church of God, will inevitably produce shock and varied reaction from other churches around the world.
- 1.3 Currently, one such abnormal incidence, as viewed by ELCT, is the one associated with some churches -- especially in Europe and America -- deciding to accept same-sex marriages. The respective churches give several reasons in an effort to justify their decisions; and here we briefly make mention of only a few of such reasons.

- 1.3.1. They claim that church teachings on marriage, according to the Holy Scripture, are directed to "man and woman" -- giving them room to decide; as opposed to the age-old interpretation, meaning that marriage is only for "man and woman". In this way they erode the foundation, bit by bit, to weaken the authentic Biblical truth that marriage is between "man and woman" only. They introduce these "new and misguided" interpretations which negate long-held Church teachings and understanding of the Word of God dating from time immemorial. Some of the verses in the Bible that fall prey to the pundits and supporters of same-sex marriages are as follows: Gen.1: 27-28, 2:24; Mt.19:5-6a; Rom.1:26-27a and Gal.3:28.
- 1.3.2. And that, what is essential in marriage or other forms of matrimony is love. Provided the two love each other, they claim, such relationship is correct and legal.
- 1.3.3. And that the circumstances nowadays, they claim; are different from conditions and settings in biblical times as regards what is, and what is not legal in love and marriage. They further claim that the question of values, virtues and morals changes with time, places and circumstances. Such claims distort what is classified as sin to depend on where and how it is committed. In this connection they want the whole Church to adopt their view regarding love and marriage especially between same sex partners as having evolved over time. Furthermore, they claim that the church is not changing with the times; and that it is "old-fashioned" to reproach and reprimand same-sex lovers and proponents. They insist that the whole Church should shake up and move with the times, like them, in the contemporary circumstances!
- 1.3.4. They further claim that, marriage laws in the countries where same sex marriages are taking place have changed so much that churches in those countries would have been in dire straits if they did not follow suit to the changed laws. It is our understanding that

churches in these countries fear the backlash from political or authoritative vendetta. This will imply that churches in those countries might lose their perks with authorities if they continued in this stance -- refusing and rejecting legalization of same-sex marriages.

- 1.3.5. They further claim that the issue of relationships -- marriage, love-making and other forms of copulation - is the prerogative of the affected two individuals. And that they are free to make their own decisions in these matters; and should be left alone to do so - thereby stressing personal freedom as the virtue. So, there are many reasons such as enumerated above that have surfaced through word of mouth, writings and even actions from the churches that have legalized same-sex marriages.

2. THE COUNTER POSITION

- 2.1. Regarding these views from the same-sex marriage supporters/proponents, the ELCT does not accept any reasons whatsoever of legalizing such marriages.
- 2.2. This Church, (ELCT), stands firmly on the foundation of the Word of God; that marriage is as taught in the Bible through the texts described in section 1.3.1 above. These texts are being given perverse interpretations, which we cannot accept. All of us in this church, and elsewhere in the world, who reject same-sex marriages, believe that the Bible is self-interpreting; and does not need imposition and wishes according to certain people, certain place, or certain authority. Holy Scripture is accurate, fixed and unchangeable.
- 2.3. This church firmly believes that love is the basis for relationship and real marital union between two lovers. Nevertheless in Holy matrimony this love is between two people of opposite sex. In addition, ELCT recognizes that the subject of love is very broad, and that there are specific values involved in the divine attributes of love and loving. That is why, if taken lightly, it could lead to ideological acceptances and varied use of love to implicate, accept and legalize marriages that neither the Bible, nor society has counte-

nanced over the years. If such a situation were to develop, and be allowed to flourish; then the Church and society may soon find itself in a complicated scenario in which it would be difficult to disentangle -- where marriages are accepted between relatives, parents and children, and even between humans and animals -- so long as there is "love" in between! Does it not matter what interpretation is used? What we are stressing here is that, we have to be very careful in referring to love especially by making it the most profound and only factor in marriage.

- 2.4. In making the foregoing statement, ELCT is fully aware of contentions in the various countries where same-sex marriages have been legalized, that conditions and cultures have evolved to accommodate 'modern' living styles, where it is no longer seen as bad taste for same sex union. It is inevitable that changes will occur within society. But this Church also recognizes that some things will change, while other things will never change. For example, ELCT knows and believes that, there is not going to be a time when the nose will change and be the mouth or when the ear will turn to be an eye!!
- 2.5. It is true that values viewed in a negative outlook in years gone by, may now be perceived in a positive and acceptable manner. And it is obvious that modern-day society will see many things differently. It is also true, though, that the Church cannot be based on shifting values and foundations. It is imperative that Church values and principles remain steadfast even within scientific, cultural, political, social, economic, and other forces. This Church believes that in the Word of God dwell principles of life that cannot be changed or redirected by time, place, or circumstance. One such principle is the principle of holy matrimony, and its derivatives. Consequently, accepting same sex marriages sabotages the foundation of the Word of God concerning continued procreation.
- 2.6. In addition, cultural or societal changes in some areas such as Europe or America should not be construed as directives to other areas worldwide. And such societal changes should not be forced on to countries outside of the immediate culprit locality; because in other locations people have their own values and cultures they may wish to protect and perpetuate. We as Tanzanians/Africans have our own values and cultures, built over the years, that have guided our lifestyles and which accept only marriages between

man and woman. Hence, while some areas may have their circumstances changed to accept same-sex marriages, it should be clearly understood that our conditions (cultures and values) do not allow such marriages.

- 2.7. The view that marriage or relationship between two people is "between the two people" is a view held only by the one side. We believe that ELCT, on our part, that the subject of marriage is not a practice of just two people, but one where the 'two' remain part of a family that continues to affect others for many years. That's why the two cannot be allowed to just take everybody for a ride on the basis of, "Leave us alone, don't interfere with our things; these are our own things, and it's just our own decision to do what we've done," etc. No!! The Church and society, in general, have areas, like environmental and cultural preservation, where we must concern ourselves in human issues, regardless of where they are taking place, in full cognizance of humankind responsibility; that no one will do anything that destroys someone else's humanhood, in broad daylight and get away with it. That is how it is, in this same-sex marriage issue.

3. IN CONCLUSION

- 3.1. Therefore, based on this firm foundation and understanding of the One Church concept, and in view of the necessity to direct the Church in pastoral reverberation, always mindful of the Word of God and its profound meanings, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania is not ashamed to stand with the Lord. ELCT ardently wishes to record its stance in prophetic voice, that same-sex marriage is disastrous and a thorn to the body of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Cor.12:12-27); a thorn that is causing a lot of pain on an old wound in ELCT and elsewhere the world over; where similar views are shared on a tasteless and scandalous subject of same-sex marriages. A taste that is already causing untold cacophony, friction and embarrassment in many levels of international relations and leadership.
- 3.2. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania considers any one-sided decisions oblivious to generally accepted and recognized norms in marriage as flouting, and dreadfully detrimental to the Church as a Body of Christ.

- 3.3. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania vehemently refuses misinterpretations and scandalous use of Holy Scripture to legalize same-sex marriages.
- 3.4. We believe that there is not a single area in the Church of God which can effectively deal with all challenges single-handedly, without the synergies of unity found in the Body of Christ. As the saying goes: Unity is strength. And this subject of same-sex marriage has grossly undermined our unity and diminished our common strength.
- 3.5. Undoubtedly, it is not going to help, nor be enough, to blame and judge each other about our differences on this issue. We pray for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to prevail and guide us in prayer, repentance, and continued loving spiritual admonition. We must remain forever mindful of the Word of God as in Col.3:5-17.
- 3.6. We encourage and firmly join hands with those inside the church around the world -- whether they are many or only a few -- who oppose the decision to legalize same-sex marriages, we extend a call to stand together in continuing to be the 'salt' and the 'light' in our relations, thus directing our strengths towards communal unity amongst us - unity that will not ever again allow any more wounds on the body of Christ, meaning the Church.
- 3.7. We see these as wicked times; wickedness that seeks to destroy the Church of God. Therefore we call on Christians in ELCT and other likeminded churches to stay in intense intercessory prayer, and preserve individual testimony to bless the entire Church of God.
- 3.8. We have to signal the warning to every ELCT member to be vigilant; stand up, study the Word of God, and refuse strange teachings which can easily devour, new as well as old, believers in this globalized setting.
- 3.9. In all our actual relations -- with churches in Europe, America and elsewhere -- this Church has made its position clear. For example, responding to the questionnaire of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) regarding exchangeability of Ministers -- believing that the objective of such questionnaire was to integrate extensive views of the wider LWF membership -- we said;

- 3.9.1 ELCT, as an LWF member, declares that our church will not be ready to entertain exchangeability of Ministers who are in same-sex marriage relations or their supporters or fanatics. Plainly, ELCT will not welcome anyone living in or supporting same sex marriage or relation to work in this Church. ELCT remains firm and cannot change its position on this matter and thus solicitation, financial conditionality and undue pressure are not acceptable.
- 3.9.2 Even in its relations with other organizations such as LWF, WCC, LMC and others, ELCT will not endorse any efforts of campaigning or eventual infiltration of people from same-sex marriage camp, or supporters of same-sex marriages, or other forms of homosexual practices.
- 3.10. ELCT cannot force people in Europe and America to view and work like us in this issue of same-sex marriage, but what we can do, is to be candid in our explanation on the subject. It is our belief that the other side will understand and respect our stance as unmistakably seen in this statement. In addition, ELCT expects that her friends and partners, wherever they may be, who now, however, heatedly disagree with us as ELCT on this issue of same-sex marriages, will not try -- and please refrain from trying -- in any way whatsoever, at whatever time, or whatever place; to meddle with ELCT standpoint on same-sex marriage or any, or all, other forms of homosexual practices.

BISHOPS OF ELCT

1. Bishop Dr. Alex Gehaz Malasusa, ELCT East and Coastal Diocese and Presiding Bishop of ELCT
2. Bishop Andrew Gulle, ELCT East of Lake Victoria Diocese
3. Bishop Thomas Laiser, ELCT North Central Diocese
4. Bishop Michael Adam, ELCT Diocese in Mara Region
5. Bishop Festo Ngowo, ELCT Dodoma Diocese

6. Bishop Dr. Owdenburg M. Mdegella, ELCT Iringa Diocese
7. Bishop Dr. Benson K. Bagonza, ELCT Karagwe Diocese
8. Bishop Dr. Martin Shao, ELCT Northern Diocese
9. Bishop Elisa Buberwa, ELCT North Western Diocese
10. Bishop Dr. Stephen I. Munga, ELCT North Eastern Diocese
11. Bishop Eliuphoo Sima, ELCT Central Diocese
12. Bishop Dr. Israel-Peter Mwakyolile, ELCT Konde Diocese
13. Bishop Cleopa A. Lukilo, ELCT Southern Diocese
14. Bishop Dr. Hance Mwakabana, ELCT South Central Diocese
15. Bishop Job T. Mbwilo, ELCT South Western Diocese
16. Bishop Zebedayo Daudi, ELCT Mbulu Diocese
17. Bishop Paulo Akyoo, ELCT Meru Diocese
18. Bishop Jacob Mameo Ole Paulo, ELCT Morogoro Diocese
19. Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Eliraha Mmwiri, ELCT Pare Diocese
20. Bishop Renard K. Mtenji, ELCT Ulanga Kilombero Diocese

Dodoma
7 January 2010

The Communion of Churches Indonesia (CCI) Pastoral Statement about LGBT

Responding to the controversy that arose and developed among the churches and in the midst of society regarding the existence of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender), the CCI Daily Executive Board conveyed several considerations as stated below. It was realized that the attitudes and teachings of the church regarding this matter were very diverse, and these considerations were not intended to uniform them. These considerations are precisely an invitation to the churches to explore this issue further. The CCI Daily Executive Board will be very grateful if from the results of the deepening, the churches can provide the main points of thought as feedback to the CCI Daily Executive Board to improve the CCI Demeanors and Views on this issue.

Introduction

1. Humans are perfect reflections and images of God. As a perfect image of God, humans have rate and dignity that must be respected and upheld.
2. God created man, creature and all kinds of diverse creations and different from each other. We live in a diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and religion. This diversity is a reality that God gives to us, which we should be able to accept with a positive and realistic attitude.
3. Being positive and realistic in diversity means we must accept, love one another, appreciate and respect one another. Being positive and realistic about the diversity that God gives means we try to understand and accept in compassion all the differences that exist. Being positive and realistic towards diversity means that we fight all forms of hatred, injustice, discrimination, exploitation and oppression of our fellow human beings, all creatures and all of God's creation. Instead we try to dialogue all these differences without negative prejudice. Being positive and realistic means that

we protect and maintain this diverse human community to bring good to mankind, to all beings and for this earth.

A Turning Point

4. Talking about LGBT people is talking about humans who are God's beloved creatures.
5. The existence of humans with LGBT tendencies is a phenomenon that has existed since the past. LGBT is not a modern cultural product; nor is the product of Western culture. This LGBT phenomenon is in our society and socio-anthropologically LGBT has long been accommodated in the culture of several tribes in our society.
6. When we face moral problems, one of the biggest problems arises from the way we interpret the Scriptures. The interpretation of the Scriptures that do not take into account the intent and purpose of the texts written by the biblical writers has the potential to produce completely different interpretations of the purpose of the text being written. With regard to LGBT, the Bible does allude to the LGBT phenomenon, but the Bible does not give a moral assessment of their existence. The Bible does not criticize someone's sexual orientation. What the Bible criticizes is evil and exploitative sexual behavior carried out by anyone, including those carried out by heterosexuals, or who have been considered 'normal'. The main message of the creation story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 1: 26-28; 2:18, 21-24), for example, is about the embryo of the occurrence of family institutions and that humans are given the responsibility to fulfill and maintain the earth. This story is not intended at all to reject the existence of LGBT people.
7. There are several other texts in the Bible that are interpreted inappropriately so that the verses seem to judge LGBT people. Even though through a more accurate interpretation, biblical criticism in these verses is directed at other objects. For example: the Bible strongly criticizes the religious worship of fertility (worshiping Baal and Asherah, Judges 3: 7; 2 Kings 23: 4) by the neighboring nations of Israel at that time, who practiced devotional service,

¹ French word for small inns, could also mean restaurants or combination of both.

namely same-sex sexual behavior. As part of the Baal religious service (Deuteronomy 23: 17-18); so did Roman idolatry in New Testament times (Romans 1: 23-32). The Bible also criticizes the xenophobic attitude of the Sodom people to foreigners by practicing sexual exploitation of those of the same sex. The aim was to humiliate them (Genesis 19: 5-11 and Judges 19: 1-30). Therefore these parts of the Bible are not intended to attack, reject or discriminate against the existence of LGBT people. Other biblical texts, which are often used to judge LGBT people are Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10; 1 Timothy 1:10). What is rejected in the biblical texts is that all kinds of sexual behavior are evil and exploitative, carried out by anyone, on any basis, including on the basis of religion, and aimed at anyone, including women, men and children.

Recommendation

8. PGI reminded that we all consider the results of recent research in the fields of medicine and psychiatry that no longer include LGBT sexual orientation as a disease, as a mental disorder or as a form of crime. A statement from the world health agency, WHO, Human Rights International which is based on the advancement of medical science research is able to understand the existence of LGBT and join in struggling to uphold their rights as fellow human beings. The Indonesian Mental Medicine Specialist Association (PDSKJI) refers to the 1983 edition of the Classification Guidelines and Diagnosis of Mental Disorders in Indonesia (PPDGJ II) and PPDGJ III (1993) that LGBT is not a mental illness. LGBT is also not a spiritual disease. In many cases, LGBT tendencies are experienced as something natural that has been accepted since someone was born; also there are cases of LGBT tendencies occurring as a result of social influence. It is difficult to distinguish which is natural and which is nurture because of social influence. However, for many actors, the tendency of LGBT is not an option, but something that is accepted (given). Therefore, being LGBT, especially what has been received since birth, is not a sin, therefore we cannot force them to repent. We also cannot force them to change, but on the contrary, we must help so that they can accept themselves as a gift from God.
9. The Church, as an inclusive community and as a family of God, must learn to accept LGBT as an integral part of our fellowship as "the Body of Christ." We must provide opportunities so that they

can grow as human beings who are whole physically, mentally, socially and spiritually.

10. PGI calls on churches to prepare and conduct pastoral guidance to families so that they are able to accept and embrace and love their families who tend to be LGBT. Family rejection of their LGBT family members has the potential to create psychiatric disorders, creating self-rejection which results in increased potential for suicide among LGBT people.
11. So far LGBT people have experienced physical, mental-psychological, social, and spiritual suffering because of the stigmatization of religion and violent behavior committed by some people. They become groups that are demeaned, ostracized and discriminated even by the state. The church must take a different attitude. The Church must not only accept them, but even struggle so that LGBT people can be accepted and recognized by their communities and the state, especially the rights not to be discriminated against or ostracized, protection against violence, rights to obtain employment, and so on. The stakeholders of this country must ensure that the rights and dignity of LGBT people are respected! LGBT people must be given the opportunity to live in justice and peace.
12. PGI calls on churches, communities and state to accept and even fight for the rights and dignity of LGBT people. Our greatness as a civilized nation can be seen from our ability to accept and help those who are experiencing discrimination and injustice. Even so, PGI is aware that the church and Indonesian people cannot yet accept same-sex marriage. PGI together with church residents and all citizens still need deep dialogue and theological conversation regarding this matter.

Closing

13. LGBT itself is not a problem. LGBT becomes a problem because we are the one who questions it. We are the ones who gave them a negative stigma. Therefore, it takes a mature, humble, rational attitude and the ability to be fair in addressing this case. We must abstain from the tendency to judge or mislead anyone. On the contrary, we must learn to build the nation's communion and the alliance of mankind based on equality and justice.

14. So it is we convey this pastoral statement first to the churches in Indonesia, and also to the Indonesian people as a whole. May churches continue to direct themselves to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to deepen understanding and strengthen the commitment of faith regarding the acceptance of LGBT people.

Jakarta, May 28, 2016

On behalf of Assembly of the CCI Daily Executive Board

Rev. Dr. Henriette T. Hutabarat Lebang (sgd.)
Chairperson

Rev. Gomar Gultom (sgd.)
General Secretary



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17 Juni 2016

No : 360/PGI-XVI/2016

Hal : Pengantar Pernyataan Sikap PGI

Yang terhormat
Pimpinan Gereja Anggota PGI
Di seluruh Indonesia

Salam sejahtera!

Sebagaimana kita ketahui bersama, sejak tahun lalu masyarakat Indonesia sangat ramai mempertanyakan perihal LGBT. Berbagai silang pendapat mengenai hal ini, tiba-tiba saja mengemuka, yang potensial membelah masyarakat kepada posisi pro dan kontra. MPH-PGI menerima begitu banyak pertanyaan dari berbagai kalangan tentang sikap PGI mengenai hal ini. Oleh karena beberapa pertimbangan, MPH-PGI memilih untuk lebih dahulu mempelajari secara komprehensif sebelum memberikan pandangan dan pertimbangan mengenai isu itu. Memang sudah ada pandangan beberapa gereja mengenai hal ini, sebagaimana terungkap dalam rekomendasi Konsultasi Teologi Nasional 2013 dan Sidang Raya 2014, tetapi masih sebatas pada himbauan untuk tidak mendiskriminasi LGBT dalam pelayanan dan ajakan untuk memperjuangkan hak-hak mereka sejalan dengan perlindungan HAM.

Setelah melalui studi dan pendalaman yang komprehensif, Sidang MPH-PGI pada 26-28 Mei 2016 sampai pada beberapa pertimbangan sebagaimana dokumen terlampir. Disadari bahwa sikap dan ajaran gereja mengenai hal ini sangat beragam, dan pertimbangan-pertimbangan ini tidaklah dimaksudkan untuk menyeragamkannya. Pertimbangan-pertimbangan ini justru sebuah ajakan kepada gereja-gereja untuk mendalami masalah ini lebih lanjut. MPH-PGI akan sangat berterima kasih jika dari hasil pendalaman itu, gereja-gereja dapat memberikan pokok-pokok pikiran sebagai umpan balik kepada MPH-PGI untuk menyempurnakan Sikap dan Pandangan PGI mengenai masalah ini. Mari kita doakan semoga Roh Tuhan mengarahkan kebijaksanaan-Nya kepada kita dalam menggrumuli masalah ini.

Atas perhatian yang diberikan, kami ucapkan terima kasih.

Salam dan doa,

a.n Majelis Pagi Gereja Anggota PGI

[Signature]

Pdt. Dr. Henriette T. H.

Ketua Umum



[Signature]

Pdt. Gomar Gultom

Sekretaris Umum

Pernyataan Pastoral PGI tentang LGBT

Menyikapi kontroversi yang muncul dan berkembang di kalangan gereja-gereja dan di tengah masyarakat menyangkut keberadaan LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual dan Transgender), Majelis Pekerja Harian PGI menyampaikan beberapa pertimbangan sebagaimana tertera di bawah. Disadari bahwa sikap dan ajaran gereja mengenai hal ini sangat beragam, dan pertimbangan-pertimbangan ini tidaklah dimaksudkan untuk menyaraginkannya. Pertimbangan-pertimbangan ini justru sebuah ajakan kepada gereja-gereja untuk mendalami masalah ini lebih lanjut. MPH-PGI akan sangat berterimakasih jika dari hasil pendalaman itu, gereja-gereja dapat memberikan pokok-pokok pikiran sebagai umpan balik kepada MPH-PGI untuk menyempurnakan Sikap dan Pandangan PGI mengenai masalah ini.

Pengantar

1. Manusia adalah gambar dan citra Allah yang sempurna. Sebagai citra Allah yang sempurna, manusia memiliki harkat dan martabat yang harus dihormati dan dijunjung tinggi.
2. Allah menciptakan manusia, makhluk dan segala ciptaan yang beranekaragam dan berbeda-beda satu sama lain. Kita hidup dalam keanekaragaman ras, etnik, gender, orientasi seksual dan agama. Keanekaragaman ini adalah sebuah realitas yang Allah berikan kepada kita, yang seharusnya bisa kita terima dengan sikap positif dan realistis.
3. Bersikap positif dan realistis dalam keanekaragaman berarti kita harus saling menerima, saling mengasihi, saling menghargai dan saling menghormati satu sama lain. Bersikap positif dan realistis terhadap keanekaragaman yang Allah berikan berarti kita berupaya memahami dan menerima dalam kasih segala perbedaan yang ada. Bersikap positif dan realistis terhadap keanekaragaman berarti kita melawan segala bentuk kebencian, ketidakadilan, diskriminasi, eksploitasi dan penindasan terhadap sesama manusia, segala makhluk dan segenap ciptaan Allah. Sebaliknya kita berupaya mendialogkan segala perbedaan itu tanpa prasangka negatif. Bersikap positif dan realistis berarti kita menjaga dan memelihara persekutuan manusia yang beranekaragam ini agar mendatangkan kebaikan bagi umat manusia, bagi segala makhluk dan bagi bumi ini.

Titik Tolak

4. Membicarakan kaum LGBT adalah membicarakan manusia yang merupakan ciptaan Allah yang sangat dikasihi-Nya.
5. Keberadaan manusia dengan kecenderungan LGBT merupakan sebuah fenomena yang ada sejak masa lalu. LGBT bukan produk kebudayaan modern; bukan juga produk kebudayaan Barat. Fenomena LGBT ini ada dalam masyarakat kita dan secara sosio-antropologis LGBT ini sudah sejak dulu diakomodasikan dalam budaya beberapa suku di dalam masyarakat kita.
6. Ketika kita menghadapi persoalan moral, salah satu masalah terbesar muncul dari cara kita melakukan interpretasi terhadap teks Kitab Suci. Penafsiran terhadap teks Kitab Suci yang tidak mempertimbangkan maksud dan tujuan dari teks yang ditulis oleh para penulis Kitab

Suci berpotensi menghasilkan interpretasi yang sama sekali berbeda dari tujuan teks itu ditulis. Berkenaan dengan LGBT, Alkitab memang menyinggung fenomena LGBT, tetapi Alkitab tidak memberikan penilaian moral-etik terhadap keberadaan atau eksistensi mereka. Alkitab tidak mengeritisi orientasi seksual seseorang. Apa yang Alkitab kritisi adalah perilaku seksual yang jahat dan eksploitatif yang dilakukan oleh siapa pun, termasuk yang dilakukan kaum heteroseksual, atau yang selama ini dianggap 'normal'. Pesan utama ceritera penciptaan Adam dan Hawa (Kejadian 1:26-28; 2:18, 21-24), misalnya, adalah tentang cikal bakal terjadinya institusi keluarga dan bahwa manusia diberi tanggungjawab untuk memenuhi dan memelihara bumi. Ceritera ini sama sekali tidak ditujukan untuk menolak keberadaan kaum LGBT.

7. Ada beberapa teks lain dalam Alkitab yang diinterpretasikan secara kurang tepat sehingga ayat-ayat itu seolah menghakimi kaum LGBT. Padahal melalui interpretasi yang lebih akurat, kritikan Alkitab dalam ayat-ayat tersebut justru ditujukan pada obyek lain. Contohnya: Alkitab mengeritisi dengan sangat keras ibadah agama kesuburan (menyembah Baal dan Asyera, Hakim-hakim 3:7; 2Raja-raja 23:4) oleh bangsa-bangsa tetangga Israel pada masa itu, yang mempraktekkan semburit bakti yaitu perilaku seksual sesama jenis sebagai bagian dari ibadah agama Baal itu (Ulangan 23:17-18); demikian juga terhadap penyembahan berhala Romawi di zaman Perjanjian Baru (Roma 1:23-32). Alkitab juga mengeritisi sikap xenofobia masyarakat Sodom terhadap orang asing dengan cara mempraktekkan eksploitasi seksual terhadap mereka yang sesama jenis. Tujuannya adalah mempermahukan mereka (Kejadian 19: 5-11 dan Hakim-hakim 19:1-30). Oleh karena itu bagian-bagian Alkitab ini tidak ditujukan untuk menyerang, menolak atau mendiskriminasi keberadaan kaum LGBT. Teks-teks Alkitab lainnya, yang sering dipakai menghakimi kaum LGBT adalah Imamat 18:22; 20:13; 1Kor 6:9-10; 1Tim 1:10). Apa yang ditolak dalam teks-teks Alkitab itu adalah segala jenis perilaku seksual yang jahat dan eksploitatif, yang dilakukan oleh siapa pun, atas dasar apa pun, termasuk atas dasar agama, dan ditujukan terhadap siapa pun, termasuk terhadap perempuan, laki-laki dan anak-anak.

Rekomendasi

8. PGI mengingatkan agar kita semua mempertimbangkan hasil-hasil penelitian mutakhir dalam bidang kedokteran dan psikiatri yang tidak lagi memasukkan orientasi seksual LGBT sebagai penyakit, sebagai penyimpangan mental (*mental disorder*) atau sebagai sebuah bentuk kejahatan. Pernyataan dari badan kesehatan dunia, WHO, Human Rights International yang berdasarkan kemajuan penelitian ilmu kedokteran mampu memahami keberadaan LGBT dan ikut berjuang dalam menegakkan hak-hak mereka sebagai sesama manusia. Perhimpunan Dokter Spesialis Kedokteran Jiwa Indonesia (PDSKJI) mengacu pada *Pedoman Penggolongan dan Diagnosis Gangguan Jiwa di Indonesia* edisi II tahun 1983 (PPDGJ II) dan PPDGJ III (1993) bahwa LGBT bukanlah penyakit kejiwaan. LGBT juga bukan sebuah penyakit spiritual. Dalam banyak kasus, kecenderungan LGBT dialami sebagai sesuatu yang natural yang sudah diterima sejak seseorang dilahirkan; juga ada kasus-kasus kecenderungan LGBT terjadi sebagai akibat pengaruh sosial. Sulit membedakan mana yang natural dan mana yang nurture oleh karena pengaruh sosial. Meskipun demikian, bagi banyak pelaku, kecenderungan LGBT bukanlah merupakan

pilihan, tetapi sesuatu yang diterima (*given*). Oleh karena itu, menjadi LGBT, apalagi yang sudah diterima sejak lahir, bukanlah suatu dosa, karena itu kita tidak boleh memaksa mereka bertobat. Kita juga tidak boleh memaksa mereka untuk berubah, melainkan sebaliknya, kita harus menolong agar mereka bisa menerima dirinya sendiri sebagai pemberian Allah.

9. Gereja, sebagai sebuah persekutuan yang inklusif dan sebagai keluarga Allah, harus belajar menerima kaum LGBT sebagai bagian yang utuh dari persekutuan kita sebagai "Tubuh Kristus". Kita harus memberikan kesempatan agar mereka bisa bertumbuh sebagai manusia yang utuh secara fisik, mental, sosial dan secara spiritual.
10. PGI menghimbau gereja-gereja agar mempersiapkan dan melakukan bimbingan pastoral kepada keluarga agar mereka mampu menerima dan merangkul serta mencintai keluarga mereka yang berkecenderungan LGBT. Penolakan keluarga terhadap anggota keluarga mereka yang LGBT berpotensi menciptakan gangguan kejiwaan, menciptakan penolakan terhadap diri sendiri (*self-rejection*) yang berakibat pada makin meningkatnya potensi bunuh diri di kalangan LGBT.
11. Selama ini kaum LGBT mengalami penderitaan fisik, mental-psikologis, sosial, dan spiritual karena stigmatisasi agama dan perilaku kekerasan yang dilakukan oleh sebagian masyarakat. Mereka menjadi kelompok yang direndahkan, dikucilkan dan didiskriminasi bahkan juga oleh negara. Gereja harus mengambil sikap berbeda. Gereja bukan saja harus menerima mereka, tetapi bahkan harus berjuang agar kaum LGBT bisa diterima dan diakui hak-haknya oleh masyarakat dan negara, terutama hak-hak untuk tidak didiskriminasi atau dikucilkan, perlindungan terhadap kekerasan, hak-hak untuk memperoleh pekerjaan, dan sebagainya. Para pemangku negara ini harus menjamin agar hak-hak asasi dan martabat kaum LGBT dihormati! Kaum LGBT harus diberikan kesempatan hidup dalam keadilan dan perdamaian.
12. PGI menghimbau agar gereja-gereja, masyarakat dan negara menerima dan bahkan memperjuangkan hak-hak dan martabat kaum LGBT. Kebesaran kita sebagai sebuah bangsa yang beradab terlihat dari kemampuan kita menerima dan menolong mereka yang justru sedang mengalami diskriminasi dan ketidakadilan. Meskipun demikian, PGI sadar bahwa gereja dan masyarakat Indonesia belum bisa menerima pernikahan sesama jenis. PGI bersama dengan warga gereja dan segenap warga masyarakat masih memerlukan dialog dan percakapan teologis yang mendalam menyangkut soal ini.

Penutup

13. LGBT pada dirinya sendiri bukanlah sebuah persoalan. LGBT menjadi persoalan karena kitalah yang mempersoalkannya. Kitalah yang memberinya stigma negatif. Oleh karena itu dibutuhkan sikap yang matang, rendah hati, rasional serta kemampuan bersikap adil dalam menyikapi kasus ini. Kita harus menjauhkan diri dari kecenderungan menghakimi atau

menyesatkan siapa pun. Sebaliknya, kita harus belajar membangun persekutuan bangsa dan persekutuan umat manusia yang didasarkan pada kesetaraan dan keadilan.

14. Demikianlah pernyataan pastoral ini kami sampaikan pertama-tama kepada gereja-gereja di Indonesia, dan juga kepada masyarakat Indonesia seluruhnya. Kiranya gereja-gereja terus mengarahkan diri pada tuntunan Roh Kudus untuk memperdalam pemahaman dan memperkuat komitmen iman menyangkut penerimaan kaum LGBT.

Jakarta, 28 Mei 2016

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Academic Journal of Asia Region

Sixth Edition



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