



BIBLICAL PERSEPCTIVE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

APIRAK DETWINYA

**A Research Paper Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
in Philosophy and Religion
Graduate School of Human Sciences
ASSUMPTION UNIVERSITY OF THAILAND
2016**

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2016

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2017



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Accepted by the Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master Degree in Philosophy and
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ABSTRACT

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Name: APIRAK DETWINYA

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Homosexual is a term used to describe a person who has a tendency to direct sexual desire toward another of the same sex. Throughout history, homosexuals have gone through intensive pressure from society. Partly because of prejudices rooted in beliefs and traditions about sexuality and gender, and as a social minority group, homosexual people suffer from various forms of socioeconomic and cultural injustice. The lack of social recognition has an effect on the capacity of a homosexual person to fully access and enjoy their rights as citizens, especially within a religious setting like the Christian church, Muslim mosques, and Buddhist temples. Homosexuals will not be able to perform some of the religious acts or participate in several kinds of religious ceremony. Homosexual people are more likely to experience intolerance, discrimination, harassment, and the threat of violence due to their sexual orientation, than those who identify themselves as heterosexual. Homosexual people have gone through tremendous challenges growing up in a society where heterosexuality is often seen as the only acceptable orientation and homosexuality is regarded as deviant. They continue to face discrimination and exclusion across the world in all spheres of life.

It is obvious that homosexual people are a people who need to be comforted. They need emotional and spiritual support for their lives. If they cannot find peace and assurance in the religious institution, (in this case the church) then where will they find it? Two thousand years ago, sinners came to Jesus to draw spiritual water for their thirsty soul. They came to Jesus to find shelter and liberation from adversaries. Sadly, two thousand years later, sinners have no place in the Christian church just because some Christian calls them to be a homosexual person.

Christians in Thailand seem to struggle with how to handle homosexuality in the church. On one hand, it is God's command is to love everyone, even your enemy. On the other hand, it seems that the Bible has forbidden and condemned the act of homosexuality as a sin. Some raise the question that, "what if the individual homosexual person is a genuine believer and wants to be saved through baptism in Jesus name? Wouldn't the church warmly open their arms and allow them to be baptized?" Some homosexuals are hurt by their peers and society, and they are seeking salvation from Jesus.

This research paper seeks to look closely into the biblical perspective toward the matter of homosexuality and its background, to understand the background and context of each individual story in the Bible regarding homosexuality, and to assist believers in applying the biblical principle toward homosexual people with love and understanding.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor Dr. Warayuth Sriwarakuel, former dean of the Philosophy and Religion Faculty. The door to his office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. He consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right the direction whenever he thought I needed it. I would also like to thank the Dr.Wann Fanwar who help shape my ideas about theology.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Kajornpat Tangyin and Dr. Veerachart Nimanong, who always helped support the different procedures to get this research paper finished. They always have the heart to go an extra mile for their students.

Another person I would like to thank is Dr. John Giordano who introduced me to different books and sources of knowledge. I learned extensively from him.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my Bangkok Adventist Chinese Church (BACC) members, especially Khun Vilai Chensy, Grace Adventist Church (GAC), and my parents for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this research paper. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Significance of the Study

This research proposed is to study the biblical perspective on homosexuality. In brief, the research is primarily related to the issue of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) in Protestant Churches today within the Thai context. People come to church seeking refuge from the pressures pressed upon them from world. Homosexual people could be a group of people who may need the church most. Often when homosexual people come to church, they do not fully feel accepted. That is simply because they are not heterosexual. Two thousand years ago, sinners ran to Jesus to find grace and acceptance, but sadly, two thousand years later sinners run away from the church because they no longer feel the grace and acceptance within the body of Christ. In this case, true biblical understanding is needed. The whole Biblical perspective needs to be addressed in order to grasp the main principle. Only when the main principle of the Bible is understood, then the reader will properly know how to deal with this issue of homosexuality in church.

Different religions and schools of thought have a different story to the origin of sex and the origination of man and women. This research paper does not seek to explore every school of thought regarding the history of sexuality, but Buddhism was selected since we are dealing with the Thai Protestantism context. Knowing the religious and historical background on sexuality will help us appreciate why each religion and culture treated homosexuality differently. Understanding the Buddhist thought on homosexuality will help the Christians in Thailand to be aware and be more sensitive to the context of the country we live in. Moreover, it would allow Christians in Thailand to understand why Thai Buddhist people treat homosexual people with respect and dignity.

Essentially, according to Buddhist teachings the ethical and moral principles are governed by examining whether a certain action or speech is likely to be harmful to one's self or to others. So it is good to avoid any actions that are likely to be harmful. Buddhism talks of a skilled mind. Buddhism suggested that a skillful mind avoids actions that are likely to cause suffering or remorse (A Basic Buddhism Guide: Buddhist Ethics. (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2016.)

Thailand is one of the most tolerant countries in Asia about homosexuality. In recent years, these sexual attitudes and behaviors have undergone enormous changes influenced by the rapid economic growth, urbanization and exposure to Western cultures. According to one of the articles from zocialinc.com, Facebook has become the world that people can display their opinions, their stand, and especially their freedom regarding the third gender or homosexuality. Through this we discover that there are more than 15.4 million people who are gay around the world. Thailand has more than 340,000 gay, which makes Thailand rank number eight in Asia in gay population. However, this number did not include other homosexual categories, like lesbian, bisexual and transgender (10 October 2014, retrieved April 26, 2017 from zocialinc.com).

In Thai society today, people are affected by the western civilization. People are more self-expressive, which means people are more open to the world and care less about traditional or cultural practices. In other words, people do not care about what or how other people think, but care more of how they think more about what they think about themselves.

The Internet has provided the opportunity for people to share their opinions through blogs, Facebook, and through the comment sections on most any published news story or post with a much larger audience than ever before.

Modern society has given the opportunity for individuals to express freely who they are. Therefore, we can find gay people in the street, in the media or even in the political arena without the need to hide like before.

However, the issue of homosexuality has raised ethical questions, which leads to theological questions for the Thai Buddhist. The issue of homosexuality has stirred much conflict and disagreement in Thailand, a country that practices Theravada Buddhism.

At this point, we will examine some of the basic teachings of Buddha regarding homosexuality. Buddha himself is quite silent on the matter of homosexuality that is happening in our society today. Moreover, he did not say much about the issue while he was still alive. Yet the basic principles of his teaching are worth examining to understand how to ethically treat one another with respect and dignity. His teachings are still beneficial and relevant even in the modern day. Buddha's teachings help the Thai people to understand and be able to see things from the Buddhist perspective regarding homosexual issue in human.

Buddhist philosophy in Thailand has provided a fertile ground for adoption and mixing new religious beliefs with traditional beliefs. In Thai eyes, the superstition and metaphysics in animism, demonology, and Hinduism cosmology are not at odds with the Buddhist cosmology depicted in the Buddhist canon and religious folk tales. These belief systems maintain peaceful coexistence, and many Thais follow some of these practices to a certain degree during different parts of their lives.

Although the guidelines to achieve nirvana are offered, Buddhism emphasizes to the layperson the middle way and the importance of avoiding extremism. "This pragmatic approach is also seen in the domain of sexuality. Despite the deprecation of sexuality in the ideal Buddhism, celibacy is likely to be pertinent only to the monastic lifestyle, while diverse sexual expression has been tolerated among the lay followers, especially the men for whom

sexual, military, and social prowess has always been extolled” (Francoeur, 2004, p.1027).

The guidelines for lay Buddhists for a socially just life are quite liberal. Again, pragmatism prevails: all of the precepts are not rigidly expected to be adhere to in most lay Buddhists in Thailand (as well as in other Buddhist cultures) except for the elderly or extraordinarily pious laypersons.

According to Allyn, E. (1991), Buddhist idea specifically addresses human sexuality, which is to refrain from sexual misconduct or wrongdoing in sexual matters. Although being open to various interpretations, depending on the different contexts, misconduct is usually considered by Thai people to mean adultery, rape, sexual abuse of children, and careless sexual activities that result in the sorrow of others. On the other hand, Buddha himself did not explicitly mentioned premarital sex, prostitution, masturbation, cross-gendered behavior, or homosexuality. Any objection to some of these sexual phenomena is perhaps grounded in other non-Buddhist beliefs, such as classism, animism, or western medical theories.

Some people may have wondered whether gay marriage laws could be applied in a country in like Thailand where Theravada Buddhism is the official religion of the country. Is there any objection of the Buddha against same-sex marriage?

The answer according to Mettanando Bhikkhu¹ is

“No. There is no objection of the Buddha found in the Tipitaka regarding gay marriage.

Buddha was neither supportive nor against marriage between members of the same

¹ Mettanando Bhikkhu, The *Bangkok Post*, July 13, 2005; Bhikko qualified as a physician before he ordained as a Buddhist monk. He holds an MD from Chulalongkorn University, an MA from Oxford University, a Th.M from Harvard University, and Ph.D from Hamburg University.

gender. This is not because Buddhism is naive about homosexuality. In fact, in the first book of the monastic code, the Vinaya, in the Buddhist Pali canon, “there are hundreds of references to sexual relationship and most forms of deviant sexual practices, as appeared in Indian society over 2,500 years ago. Many of the cases often raise the eyebrows of psychologists and psychiatrists, such as bestiality (sex between a man and an animal), necrophilism (sex between a man and a corpse), paedophilia, etc. These cases reveal that Buddhism had spread far and wide into Indian society, and all these problems were unearthed to the growing Buddhist community” (The Buddhist Channel²).

It is clear that the Buddha acknowledged the difference between hermaphrodites and homosexual practitioners. Hermaphrodites and eunuchs are not allowed to be ordained, but there is no obligation against homosexuality. According to Jeffrey Hays (2014), there was a case of a gay monk who was overcome by sexual desire and could no longer restrain himself. He was seducing his friends and novices to have sex with him. They rejected him so he left the monastery and had sex with men who were elephant keepers and horse keepers. When news spread around the entire Buddhist community that he was homosexual, the Buddha was alerted to the problem and he issued a rule for the community not to give any ordination to a homosexual, and those ordained gays were to be expelled.

A similar issue happened in 1819, during the reign of King Rama II. A high-ranking monk, a Somdet who was also the abbot of Wat Saket who had just been promoted to take the position of the Supreme Patriarch, was found guilty of enjoying homosexual activities with some of his good-looking male disciples. It was a shock to all Buddhists of the time, and the case was considered the scandal of the century of Buddhism in Siam (former name of Thailand). Interestingly, the act was not severe enough to penalize him, even though the King

² The Buddhist Channel. (n.d.). Retrieved June 21, 2017.

had him removed from his position of honor and ordered him to leave the royal monasteries. (Religion and same-sex marriage. (n.d.). Retrieved May 03, 2016).

As for the lay homosexual people, the Buddha gives no rules or advice as to whether they should be allowed to marry or not. The Buddha simply reveals himself as the one who shows the way. He did not insist that he had any right to enforce on others what they should do. With this principle, the original teachings of the Buddha do not cover social ceremonies or rituals. Weddings and marriages of all kinds are regarded as mundane and have no place in Buddhism. The principle of universal compassion does not allow Buddhists to judge other people based on the nature of what they are, which is considered discrimination.

Buddhism sees gender as a sign of decay which contrasts with Christianity where sex and gender is a part of God's creation. Gombrich (Gombrich, R. F. 1988) proposed that, in the Buddhist version of the Genesis, Agga-asutta (also known as the Aphorism on the Knowledge of the Beginning), male and female genders were a part of the fall. Originally, the primordial ancestors of humans were self-luminous, mind-born and sexless.

So the mind is supreme and sexless, which is consistent with the higher form of existence. The most important principle to derive from that is there is no superiority of one gender over the other.

Based on this basic principle of Buddhism, homosexual people should not be discriminated against; they are humans who deserve all the rights and dignity endowed upon them as members of human race. This does not mean that Thai Buddhists are supportive of gay rights and homosexual marriage, or that liberal activists will be successful in their social campaign. Human rights issues have always received poor attention in Theravada countries, as the culture is rooted in the belief in the Law of Karma, which is more popular among Thai Buddhists than philosophical and advanced scriptural studies in Buddhism.

Many monasteries and monks advocate their lay followers to see the world through the lens of karma, because they believe that every person is born to pay back their sins. According to their explanations, all homosexuals and sexual deviants were once offenders of the Third Precept (prohibiting sexual misconduct) at least in their past lives, and they must pay off their past sins in their present life. “Homosexuals deserves all that society gives to them. This belief system creates strong conservative values in Theravada Buddhist culture. For these reasons, it is unlikely that Buddhists will easily approve a law to allow gay marriage” (Mettanando Bhikkhu July 13, 2005).

However, gay and lesbian activists in Thailand will probably not be as successful as in European and the western countries. It is important to note that, Theravada Buddhists outside of Southeast Asia, are generally more supportive, or neutral, to same-sex marriage, and homosexual rights as a whole.

Buddhist doctrine and philosophy does not emphasize the details of sex, gender, or homosexuality. But it does focus on of the universal truth that seeks liberation from suffering and ignorance.

For the question about homosexuality, it must be understood through The Four Noble Truths. Our deeds must be in-accord with The Noble Eightfold Path of Liberation. As mentioned earlier, gender is a sign of decay for Buddhism. It is the sign of imperfection. It does not matter whether a person is heterosexual or homosexual, because in the end it is all about the karma of each individual person. Our duty is not to judge or criticize, but to encourage and support one another into doing good deeds.

The Lord Buddha has taught “happiness comes from cherishing others, suffering comes

from cherishing ourselves.” Buddhism is a religion that prizes emptiness, yet has brought fulfillment to millions.

It is a philosophy that contends we have no soul, but it offers salvation to everyone. In the end, it is not wrong to be homosexual, it is the nature of karma and it is not a sin. According to the Lord Buddha, homosexuals cannot be ordained as a nun or a monk. The bottom line is all should aim to reach ultimate happiness, which is to attain the stage of nirvana.

Christianity and Buddhism often seem to come from utterly different worlds. One religion is built around a Middle Eastern peasant teacher executed at a young age, often depicted dying on a cross. The other is based on an Indian prince who became an elder sage; often shown seated cheerfully in the Lotus position. Both had life-transforming spiritual experiences around age 30, which led them to found religious renewal movements.

Christian can learn some of my most valuable insights into spirituality from Buddhism. An exquisite beauties and powerful insights that can greatly enriched the Christian faith.

Buddhism emphasis on universal compassion, respecting enemies and letting go of destructive ways of seeing and acting. Christ and Buddha both taught ethics of compassion and loving one’s enemies. Both taught followers to relinquish the need for power and desire by “letting go” and by “dying” to old ways of being. By living and sharing these basic principles of life we all can respectfully live together in peace and harmony. In this universal principle there is no division between, master and slave, homosexual and heterosexual, or Jews and Buddhist, because we are one in love of humanity.

1.2 Thesis Statement

Whereas some parts of the Bible may seem to forbid homosexuality, God's grace and acceptance through a pastoral approach can bring healing and reconciliation given that not all people are born heterosexual due to our corrupted sinful human nature.

1.3 Research Questions

2. What does the Bible really say about the issue of homosexuality?
3. How can we find a theological balance that will lead to social harmony in this matter?
4. How does the Christian community find a reconciliation point between love, grace, and acceptance vs. law, obedience and tradition?

1.4 Research Objectives

2. To look closely into the biblical perspective toward the matter of homosexuality and its background.
3. To understand the background and context of each individual story in the Bible regarding homosexuality.
4. To assist believers in applying the biblical principle toward homosexual people with love and understanding.

1.5 Research Methodology

Hermeneutical analysis, Biblical exegesis, face-to-face data collection, case study research, empirical study, and methodology of theoretical analysis: selection and discussion of theoretical material and descriptive material, in context, and detailed comparison of theories in terms of their applicability

1.6 Limitation and Scope of the Study

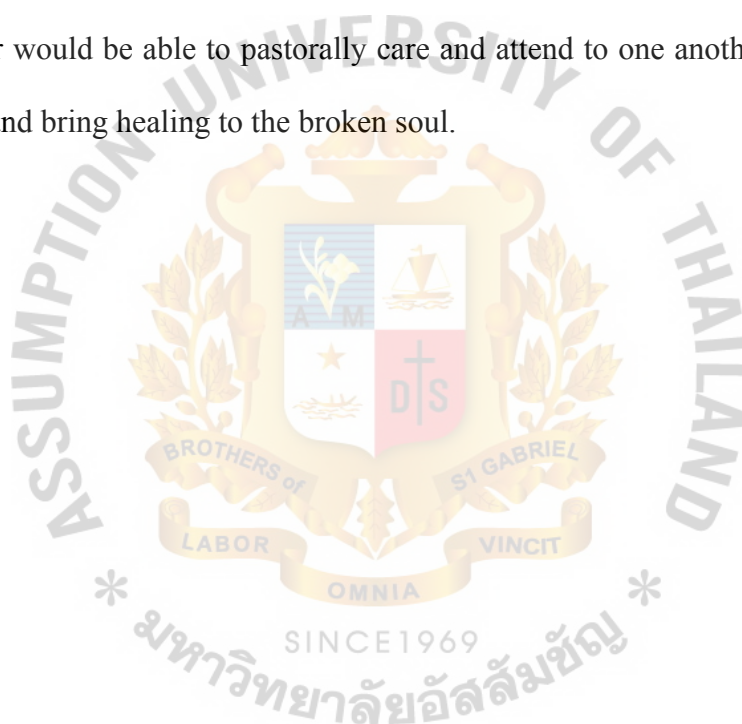
The Bible will be the main source of tool in this research paper.

1. Therefore in dealing with the scarred text we must admit that our minds are limited in their powers of comprehension, inductive reasoning ability, knowledge of Scripture, and proper application of hermeneutics.
2. Language is another limitation for this research paper. Sometimes we use the same language and the same word but convey different meaning. As Mander, A. E has put it. “The great majority of arguments and discussions in everyday life are utterly futile, sheer waste of time and temper, hopeless from the start. Simply because the parties are using the same words, but using them in different senses” (Mander A. E. 1947, p. 5).
3. Lastly, the limitation of this research is the quality of data by the interviewer. The quality of data received will often depend on the ability of the interviewer. Some people have the natural ability to conduct an interview and gather data well. Some interviewers may also have their own biases that could impact the way they input

responses.

1.6 Expected Results

2. That reader may gain a clearer understanding of biblical concepts of homosexuality.
3. That readers, particularly pastors, church leaders, and church members, may be able to know how to deal with the situation of homosexuality according to the biblical standard.
4. That reader would be able to pastorally care and attend to one another's need, in order to uplift and bring healing to the broken soul.



CHAPTER II

THE MATTER OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

2.1 Definition of Homosexual, Sin and Sex

Many people understand homosexuality, sex, and sin to be inseparable from each other. By having such a view, one may miss out of how a homosexual person feels. Homosexuality, sex, and sin each have its own definition and each of them stands alone in its action.

Until we understand each terminology with its own definition, we will not be able to grasp the whole idea about homosexuality. Moreover, we will not be able to give answers to complicated questions regarding the biblical perspective. For example, is it okay, biblically speaking, to be a homosexual person without having sexual intercourse or is it a sin to have sexual intercourse in a relationship of man to man in the context of marriage (one husband, one husband). Therefore, in this chapter we are going to define these three terms (homosexual, sex and sin) separately, to understand each word according to the context of this research paper.

The first known use of the word *homosexual* is in 1892. The Merriam-Webster dictionary characterized homosexual people this way: a person who has the tendency to direct sexual desire toward another of the same sex. Homosexual acts involving sexual activity between persons of the same sex. Also a person who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex (Homosexual. (n.d.) Retrieved March 28, 2017).

Next, we come to the definition of *Sin* according to Merriam-Webster dictionary

- a: an offense against religious or moral law
- b: an action that is or is felt to be highly reprehensible it's a sin to waste food

- c: an often serious shortcoming : fault
- d: transgression of the law of God
- e: a vitiated state of human nature in which the self is estranged from God

According to 1 John 3:4, sin is breaking God's law, in fact, sin is lawlessness. The first known act of sin is found in the book of Genesis, where Eve breaks God's command to not eat of the fruit of the forbidden tree by actually eating its fruit.

Lastly *sex*. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary:

- 1: either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures
- 2: the sum of the structural, functional, and behavioral characteristics of organisms that are involved in reproduction marked by the union of gametes and that distinguish males and females

The Bible gives the definition of sex this way. God created humans as sexual beings, somehow reflective of His own image (Genesis 1:27), and declared that this reality was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). One will look in vain; however, in the Bible for a single word for sex. The nearest biblical terms are “male” and “female.” The biblical language describes God's will and human behavior regarding this aspect of God's creative power: the power to bring new life into being within the family and the pleasure of companions within marriage. Sex is what makes us like God, as we are made in His image. Man has been given ability and power to create another soul.

2.2 General Statistic and numbers

It is difficult to grasp fully the size of the homosexual people population. The demographics of sexual orientation vary significantly, and estimates for the homosexual population are subject to controversy and ensuing debates. The most common figure given for the homosexual populations are 23% or lower (Demographics of Sexual Orientation. Retrieved April 02, 2017). However, obtaining a precise number is difficult for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons is that many studies rely on self-reported data.

Some self-reported data states that they have had same-sex sexual experiences before, but are not counting themselves as a homosexual person. According to respondents, they just want to experience new things. For some of the ancient Greek noble class, it was a part of learning and exchanging experience between the master and the student. Same-sex sexual activity is a common thing that happens from time to time in the military camp where a male soldier has sex with another male soldier friend in the camp. When asked are they a homosexual they say no, they are simply exchanging experience of pleasure that would satisfy their need, due to the lack of women. This group of self-reporting data would deny that they are homosexual. This is the reason why this research paper seeks to distinguish between homosexual, sex, and sin on the point above, to define what homosexuality really is. Do we define homosexual by the action of the motive? This kind of situation is similar to the biblical story about the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis chapter 19 and Judges Chapter 19 where man's desire governs over reason and God's law. This is where men abused the Divine's gift of choice and used it in their own way. Judges chapter 19:22-23 portray man's desire against God through the act of sex this way,

While they were enjoying themselves, a crowd of troublemakers from the town surrounded the house. They began beating at the door and shouting to the old man, “Bring out the man who is staying with you so we can have sex with him.”

(Troublemakers are people from the tribe of Benjamin, one of the Israelite tribes.)

The old man stepped outside to talk to them. “No, my brothers, don’t do such an evil thing. For this man is a guest in my house, and such a thing would be shameful. Here, take my virgin daughter and this man’s concubine. I will bring them out to you, and you can abuse them and do whatever you like. But don’t do such a shameful thing to this man” (Judg 19:22-23).

Judges 21:25 records that “In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes.” So statistically speaking, these kinds of people will not consider themselves to be homosexual, even though their actions sometimes may fall into the category of homosexual according to the description from a modern dictionary. Therefore, it is one of the challenges for data collectors to grasp fully the population size of homosexual people.

There are also self-reported data of people who identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual. In the U.S.A., fewer research subjects identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual than report having had sexual experiences or attraction to a person of the same sex.

In the last 50 years the number of countries that are starting to recognize the rights of the gay community is increasing. More and more people are coming and opening up about being homosexual. What was once considered taboo is now something that the society has perhaps begun to accept. Countries like England, Brazil, Wales, and France have allowed same-sex marriages recently, which make 17 countries where gay marriage is acceptable. However, there are some countries where gay marriage is allowed in certain areas for

example, 50 states in the US allow their citizens to marry the partner of their choice.

Below are list of Top 10 countries with the largest gay population in the world according to www.insidermonkey.com.³

1. China. Number one on the list of 10 Countries with the Biggest Gay Populations in the World is China. For some this might come as a surprise as China is not known as a country that supports or promotes topics like gay, lesbian or bisexual but since it is the biggest population on Earth, it also has the highest number of gay people. According to an estimate from 2013, one out of every six men in China is gay.

2. Netherlands. The Netherlands is not far behind Italy with one out of every seven men being gay in the country. It is also one of the friendliest gay countries in Europe. Gay marriages are legal in the country for years and gay population in Netherland hardly ever has to face any racial remarks or comments.

3. Italy. The Pizza country has also one of the largest populations of gays in the world. According to an estimate from 2014, there are over five million gays in Italy, which means that one out of every eight men is gay.

4. Canada. The coolest country on the list is also the coolest when it comes to respecting people from every corner of the world, with different cultures and tastes. The country has one out of every nine men gay.

5. France. France is probably the least tolerant gay culture country in the list but it has numbers that are likely to surprise you. One out of every ten men in France happens to be gay.

³ “10 Countries with the Biggest Gay Populations in the World.” (n.d.). Retrieved April 02, 2017.

6. The United States. The United States is also one of the friendliest countries when it comes to embracing the gay culture. Stars and Stripes have around five million gay population, which means one in every 12 men in the US is gay.

7. India. The largest democratic country in the world is also at the seventh spot on our list of 10 Countries with the Biggest Gay Populations in the World. India is a secular country and the gay culture is really becoming a norm here. One out of every 14 men in India is gay.

8. Philippines. This beautiful country is also one of the friendliest when it comes to treating their gay population. In the last decade, the gay population of Philippines has really skyrocketed. Experts are not sure about this growth but it is estimated that there are more than 804,000 gay men in the country. In other words, one out of every 16 men is gay.

9. Taiwan. An Asian country known for its diverse culture and beautiful tourist attractions, Taiwan, has also got a major gay population. One out of every 18 men in the country is homosexual.

10. The United Kingdom. At number 10, we have The United Kingdom, which is considered as one of the most liberal countries in the world. Gay marriages are allowed in the UK and according to an estimate one out of 20 men are gay.

According to thairath.com (2016, August 31),⁴ 3% out of the total population in Thailand are homosexual people. Which make Thailand ranks number 8 in Asia in term of the number of Homosexual people.

⁴ New information reported 3% out of the total population in Thailand are homosexual people. (2016, August 31). Retrieved August 02, 2017, from <https://www.thairath.co.th/content/707729>

Again, the numbers and statistics above depend on how one defines the word homosexual. Different cultures, different traditions may have a different way of interpreting homosexuality. It is wise to consider carefully each individual by case before calling someone a homosexual. To some it might be their pride to be labeled as a homosexual, but to some it might be an offence to them.

2.3 Choice vs. Hormones and DNA structure change

Choice or freedom of will is one of the greatest gifts God has bestowed upon humanity. It is what differentiates humanity from animals and all the others matters and objects in God's creation. God has created mankind in His image, and in God's image He has given the ability to choose. God gave this freedom of choice to humans and humans responsible for the choices they make. Aristotle suggests that what made us human is our ability to think and act rationally. Man can think analytically. He can analyze problems and come up with creative solutions. He is able to reason and philosophize about life. The reasoning powers in animals are limited. With the freedom of will, human also have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. He can and does make moral judgments. He has a conscience. Only to man could God speak of "good" and "evil". Because of man's sense of justice and his ethical orientation, God could fairly punish him for his willful disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

The King James Version Bible Dictionary defines choice this way:

- The act of choosing; the voluntary act of selecting or separating from two or more things that which is referred; or the determination of the mind in preferring one thing to another
- Worthy of being preferred; select; precious; very valuable.
- Selecting with care, and due attention to preference; as, to be choice of one's company.

When discussing choice in the biblical context, it always refers to our desire for God. The best thing man does for God is for man to have a receptive heart to love God and a desire to do according to His purpose.

All human beings possess the ability to choose. That person may be heterosexual or homosexual, infant child or grown up adult, the power of choice is always in them. It is just the matter of how a person uses this power of choice. There is a saying by Benjamin Franklin that, “you can achieve anything you set your mind to.” There are also Bible verses that support the idea that man can do anything or gain victory over any deflection if they choose to have faith and pray. Some of the verses are listed below.

- “Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” Mt. 18:19
- “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” Mt. 21:22
- “Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer...it will be yours.” Mk. 11:24
- “And I will do whatever you ask in my name...” Jn. 14:13
- “...ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.” Jn. 15:7
- “...I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” Jn. 16:23
- “...[the Lord] will give you the desires of your heart.” Ps. 37:4

This leads to the question, “will God change a homosexual person back to heterosexual if a person earnestly prays and have faith?” This boils down to two theories. A person becomes homosexual either by choice or by chance /no choice. However, before we dive down to discuss about choice or no choice, Biblically speaking, God is able and capable of raining down healing to all kind of defections. Healing power belongs to God, and He will

heal for sure. We just do not know when. God's healing may come instantly like when Jesus healed the leper, where at a moment the man was changed and transformed by God's miraculous healing power.

Alternatively, a person might have to wait for a while like Naaman who was a commander of the army of the king of Aram. On the other hand, the healing might not come at all in this life, but God has promise the fullness of life once again in the new earth, where mankind will be healed from all defections and will be brought to perfection again. It also means that there will be no more homosexuals or any kind of LGBT in the new earth. However, that does not mean that homosexual people in this corrupted world will not inherit the kingdom of God. It simply means that whatever is not a part of God's original plan will be cut off. Everything will be restored back to the edenic time. God's original perfect plan of creation will be restored. There will be no more sin and no more sinners, because through Jesus Christ we all will be redeemed from this corrupted life. Just as God promises in Isaiah 43:25, "But I wipe away your sins because of who I am. And so, I will forget the wrongs you have done".

At this point, this research paper seeks to find out how a person becomes a homosexual. In addition, there are two possibilities that this research paper is suggesting.

- A person becomes a homosexual by choice.
- A person ends up being a homosexual by chance/ a defection of DNA structural change.

A person can become a homosexual by choice. This usually happens because of peer pressure from society or the environment of how a person grows up. It is what happens around them that determines their choice. It could be through what they see, how they feel, what experiences do they have, or how they were treated by their peers.

I have served at Ekamai International School, a K-12 Christian school, for five years as

a chaplain and counselor. One of the many things I noticed about the student who has an inclination or a tendency of becoming a homosexual person is that they lack confidence in their original gender. I knew a girl since she was in grade seven. Her appearance was not quite that attractive to the opposite sex, judging from the materialistic eyes of our society today. As she entered high school, she found a few guys attractive, but sadly nobody was attracted to her. On the other hand, the friends who she hung out with were mostly beautiful. They received many flowers from boys each valentines or any special occasion. She was never jealous of her friends; she just felt that she never receive a responsive love from the opposite gender. As time went by her lifestyle slowly began to change to a tomboy, she felt that she is more accepted in this way. Even though she struggles a lot at first about her identity, but this is the only way she thought to find love and acceptance from society. The same goes with many boys and other girls who choose the path of homosexuality. It began with losing confidence in their original gender and identity. As teenagers who are homosexual reach young adulthood, many realize acceptance of self and identify more with the community of individuals who are homosexual. Disclosure to family members usually occurs during this period. Once a young adult has accepted his or her sexual orientation, relationships with true intimacy become a more likely possibility.

According to David S Reitman⁵ in Medscape article he said,

Teenagers who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB) are overwhelmingly similar to their

⁵ David Reitman hold a degree in Doctor of Medicine from Tufts University School of Medicine He also serves as Medical Director in American University. Prior to joining American University in 2013, he served as a university physician at George Washington University. There, he founded the George Washington University LGBT Health Initiative, a program that maximized the health care quality for LGBT students at the university.

non-GLB peers. However, because of societal stigma or potential rejection, these adolescents may face various challenges during their adolescent years and are at greater risk for substance abuse, depression, suicide, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) than their peers who are heterosexual (Reitman. 2015, August 13).

On the other hand, there are people who choose the homosexual path because of what they do for employment. Many people choose to be a lady-boy so they can earn a living. Some people choose to be a homosexual because it opens up more opportunities for them. In an entertainment business, there are many opportunities for people who are homosexual to express their creativity. There are many sensitive areas in different cultures where a heterosexual person cannot do, but it is totally acceptable for a homosexual person to do, such as Alcazar Cabaret show in Pattaya. Because of these opportunities, some people may want to consider being a homosexual. These are examples of homosexual by choice.

The Bible story of a man name Lot and a city of Sodom are well known and are often considered a classic reference to the practice of homosexuality by choice. Another example is the story in the book of Judges 19 about the Gibeah people from the tribe of Benjamin, where they asked to have sex with the man from the tribe of Levi, who is on his way back to the hill country of Ephraim with his concubine. “They began beating at the door and shouting to the old man, Bring out the man who is staying with you so we can have sex with him” (Gen 19:1-11). These two stories illustrate homosexual acts by choice that happens in the ancient biblical time. This kind of homosexual act is considered an abomination to God. And because of this evil act and evil intention, God wiped out the whole cities Sodom and Gomorra. A similar thing happened to the tribe of Benjamin, where their own brothers from the other 11 tribes of Israel wiped out the whole tribe due to their sexual improprieties.

However, some people become homosexual because of family influence and

background. I am using the word “become” because they are not born with this desire. They may have the tendency or inclination toward homosexuality, but in this stage, they still can choose. According to Daneen Akers in *Spectrum Magazine*, there are many cases of people who used to be a homosexual for many years and revert to being heterosexual. People like Virna and Lisa Santos, American sisters, who were both lesbian and now both of them “through the work of the Holy Spirit” are no longer homosexual (A Report on the “Gays in the Family” Conference. Retrieved April 10, 2017).

In this stage of choice, people can still choose. It is a matter of timing and the environment. Some people might need more time to choose. For some people the environment determines the factor of their choice. For Virna and Lisa Santos it is the knowledge and faith in the Bible that convicted them back to normal heterosexual gender. The important point in this stage of choice is a person can choose. It is something that deals with the mind and feelings. As long as it is with the mind and feeling, human can always intellectually reason and change according to how they convicted.

This research paper also points out another possibility of why some people end up homosexual. Besides choice, a person ends up being a homosexual because of a defection of DNA structural change. According to Michael Balter, “Over the past 2 decades, researchers have turned up considerable evidence that homosexuality isn't a lifestyle choice, but is rooted in a person's biology and at least in part determined by genetics. Yet actual “gay genes” have been elusive” (Balter. (2015, October 8). This means that this group of homosexual people has no choice. They do not choose to become a homosexual, but they have no choice as this paper’s thesis statement said, “not all people are born heterosexual due to our corrupted sinful human nature”. God made all of humans equal at the beginning of earth history, but because of sin, it changes everything, including the nature of a human’s gender. In this case, people

cannot choose to be born heterosexual or homosexual. And if a person is born homosexual or later has evolved to become homosexual because of the DNA or hormone structure change then there is nothing a person can do. It will only take miracle for a person be fully restore. For example, a baby boy born without arms. He has no choice; it is because of a defection of DNA structural change. If later he was asked him if he wished to be normal, a sensible person would say yes. The same goes with those who are born homosexual. They do not want to be born in such a way, most humans want to live a normal life and have a normal love if possible.

In Matthew 19:12 Jesus refers to three specific categories of people:

- Eunuchs by birth
- Eunuchs made by man
- Eunuchs by personal choice

While this passage does not explicitly refer to homosexuality, it does reveal that the Bible recognizes that some sexual departure from the norm can be inherited, acquired, or chosen. In addition, it demonstrates that Christ acknowledges that some persons choose sexual abstinence for the sake of the kingdom of God.

There is a pastor, named Bilay, who ministers to the Karen church in Ratchaburi Province in Thailand. He was a normal person until his mid-twenties, when his legs was slowly weakened due to the DNA structural change, until now he is fully cripple and cannot walk with his legs anymore. No matter how much faith he has, no matter how many people pray for him he has never regained the use of his legs. According to Mr. Teerapong Leeteerakul a pharmacist working for Leebuansua Company he affirms, “because of our corrupted and sinful nature, our DNA and hormones can change anytime. We just have to live with it”.

Glenn Wilson⁶ in his book *Born Gay* suggested that, sexual orientation is overwhelmingly innate. Social or family influences have little or no impact. Blaming parents and childhood upbringing for a child's gayness is mistaken and unfair. The idea that people become gay by seduction or choice is, they say, not supported by scientific research and empirical evidence (Wilson, G. (2008). This is similar to the experience of Apostle Paul. He wrote, “I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:7-10). Paul, too, prayed and pleaded with God to heal the defection that happens in his body, but God never answered him in this matter. All the Lord said was simply, “live with it, and know that my grace is enough for you”.

This is also true with human sexual orientation. When humans are born with homosexual tendencies, or when this sinful, corrupted world has changed the DNA of a normal person to be that of a homosexual person, then there is nothing a human can do. God’s suggestion is to accept your condition. Learn to live with it and know that His grace is enough to sustain our lives. Most importantly, His power is made perfect in human weaknesses. Apostle Paul penned, “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:27).

⁶ Glenn Daniel Wilson (born 29 December 1942) is a psychologist best known for his work on attitude and personality measurement, sexual attraction, deviation and dysfunction, partner compatibility, and psychology applied to performing arts.

In 2001, Wilson was ranked among the 10 most frequently cited British psychologists in scientific journals. He is a fellow of the British Psychological Society and makes frequent media appearances as a psychology expert, especially in TV news and documentaries.

He will glorify Himself though our weakness. If God can use a murderer like Paul to glorify Himself, He surely can use any genuine homosexual for this glory.



CHAPTER III EXPLORING THE OLD TESTAMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

3.1 Introduction to Abrahamic religion:

The Abrahamic religions are traced back to Abraham when God has called him out from the city of Ur to the new land. God promised him many children and through him nations will be born. “The Lord had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others”.-

Through Abraham’s children three major religions are born. The major Abrahamic religions in chronological order of founding are:

- Judaism (seventh century BCE)
- Christianity (first century CE)
- Islam (seventh century CE)

As of 2005, estimates classified 54% (3.6 billion people) of the world’s population as adherents of an Abrahamic religion, about 32% as adherents of other religions, and 16% as adherents of no organized religion. Christianity claims 33% of the world's population, Islam has 21%, and Judaism has 0.2% (Worldwide Adherents of All Religions by Six Continental Areas, Mid-2002. (n.d.). Retrieved March 28, 2017).

Abraham’s first born is Ishmael (Arabic: إسماعيل, Ismā‘īl). He is known in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as Abraham's son, born to Hagar. In Islam, Ishmael is regarded as a prophet and an ancestor to Muhammad.

He also became associated with Mecca and the construction of the Kaaba, as well as equated with the term “Arab” by some (Firestone, Reuven (1990). *Journeys in Holy Lands*).

Several years later after Ishmael, Isaac was born. Isaac is Abraham’s second son and he is the promised one according to Genesis 12. God promised Abraham that his wife Sarah, who was barren, would deliver a child. Through Isaac Jacob was born. Through Jacob the twelve tribes of Israel was born. These people are called the Jewish people. With their religion, philosophy, culture and way of life, Judaism was born. Judaism is an ancient monotheistic religion, with the Torah as its foundational text (part of the larger text known as the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible), and supplemental oral tradition represented by later texts such as the Midrash and the Talmud. Judaism is considered by religious Jews to be the expression of the covenantal relationship that God established with the Children of Israel. The history of Judaism spans more than 3,000 years. Judaism has its roots as a structured religion in the Middle East. Judaism is considered one of the oldest monotheistic religions. The Hebrews and Israelites were already referred to as “Jews” in later books of the Tanakh such as the Book of Esther, with the term Jews replacing the title “Children of Israel”. Judaism’s texts, traditions and values strongly influenced later Abrahamic religions, including Christianity, Islam and the Baha’i Faith. Many aspects of Judaism have also, directly or indirectly, influenced secular Western ethics and civil law (Busse 1998, p. 63–112).

Christianity is an Abrahamic religion that began as a Second Temple Judaic sect in the mid-1st century. Originating in Judea, it quickly spread to Europe, Syria, Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Transcaucasia, Egypt, Ethiopia, and India, and by the end of the 4th century had become the official state church of the Roman Empire (Rives, J. B., 2007). Following the Age of Discovery, Christianity spread to the Americas, Australasia, sub-Saharan Africa, and the rest of the world through missionary work and colonization (Kammer, F., 1991).

Christianity has played a prominent role in the shaping of Western civilization.

3.2 Abrahamic Religion view on Homosexual:

The Abrahamic religious text portrays the creation of mankind in this way.

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Gen 1:26-31).

The sexual distinction between male and female is a key feature of humanity. This is clear in the phrase: “God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). Building on this divine design, Genesis presents the ideal of human sexuality as consisting of marriage between a man and a woman. In the first chapter of Genesis, “heterosexuality is said to be the order of creation.” underlines an ideal theology of marriage: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). Dresner suggests that, “The word “therefore” (Hebrew: *‘al-ken*) connecting the creation of woman to the joining of marriage indicates that the relationship of Adam and Eve is upheld as the ideal pattern for all human sexual relationships” (Dresner, 1991, p. 309).

The reference to “a man (*‘ish*) and his wife (*‘ishto*)” indicates that a marriage between a man and a woman is the Edenic model for all time. This unique heterosexual marital form involving the sexual union of a man and a woman constitutes the divine paradigm, the “Creation order,” for humanity from the beginning” (Miller, p.214–216). It means that marriage cannot consist of the sexual union between a man and another man or a woman and

another woman.

This Creation pattern of marriage between a man and a woman remains the norm throughout Abrahamic religions text. For Christianity, the biblical writers portray any deviation from this heterosexual norm as a distortion of the Creation norm. As stated in Romans the first chapter.

So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved. (Romans 1:24-27)

The importance of male/female relationship in raising children and organizing society is similar in most societies and cultures. For Abrahamic religion, God creates marriage between a man and a woman for humanity before the entrance of sin. Marriage between a man and a woman lays a foundation for developing the holy image of God in healthy family relationships. The Torah, the Bible, and the Quran show the universality of the heterosexual norm by holding non-Hebrew people accountable for violations of this teaching (Gen 18–19; Lev 18:24–30; Ezek 16:53–59; Jude 7). This is what the three Abrahamic religions have in common regarding the issue of homosexuality.

3.3 Homosexual Practice in Narratives of the Pentateuch and the Prophets

According to Davidson, “The Mosaic Law strongly condemns all homosexual activity, In addition to the prohibition of male cult prostitutes (*qedeshim*) in Deuteronomy 23:17” (Davidson, R. M., 2007, p. 91-105). The basic law that forbids homosexual practice is found in the context of Leviticus 18.

“Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin . . . Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, for the people I am driving out before you have defiled themselves in all these ways. Because the entire land has become defiled, I am punishing the people who live there. I will cause the land to vomit them out. You must obey all my decrees and regulations. You must not commit any of these detestable sins. This applies both to native-born Israelites and to the foreigners living among you. Whoever commits any of these detestable sins will be cut off from the community of Israel. So obey my instructions, and do not defile yourselves by committing any of these detestable practices that were committed by the people who lived in the land before you. I am the Lord your God. (Lev 18:22-30)

Moses in Leviticus 20:13 elaborates and brings it further into the detail of penalty for those who do not obey God and continue to practice the act of homosexuality. “If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act. They must both be put to death, for they are guilty of a capital offense”. The language is devastatingly untechnical, leaving no room for ambiguity. According to Gagnon’s comment on Lev 20:13 he said, “the absoluteness of the prohibition is unlike anything else found in the ancient Near East or Greece contexts that made accommodations depending on active role, consent, age or social status of the passive partner (alien, slave, foreigner), and/or cultic association” (Gagnon, 2003, p. 63-64).

Hebrew scholar Roy gain said, “The Hebrew clause *lo’ tishkab* “you shall not lie” is a negative particle followed by the *qal* imperfect, expressing a permanent negative command. The phrase *mishkebeh ’isha* “the lying of a woman” is clearly a euphemism for sexual intercourse” (Gane, 2004, p 321). So this passage is a permanent prohibition of all sexual intercourse of a man with another male (*zakar*). This would also prohibit sexual feelings directed toward children or sexual activity involving a man and a boy since the term *zakar* refers to any male, and not just a grown man.

Although the ban in Leviticus 18 clearly mentions only male homosexual relations, this prohibition applies also to lesbian relationships. “The masculine singular in Hebrew often expresses gender inclusive situations, as for example, in the prohibitions of the seventh and tenth commandments of the Decalogue” (Gagnon, 2003, p.117-120). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the legislation in the Leviticus 18 ban corresponding sexual offences by females even when it addresses only men. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 help us see the underlying characterization of homosexual practice from the divine perspective. God considers homosexual practice an abomination or *‘ebah* in Hebrew. The basic meaning of *‘ebah* is an abominable, detestable, offensive thing. The fact that among the list of specific prohibitions of sexual acts in Leviticus 18, the word to *‘ebah* is only mentioned with regard to homosexual intercourse, tells us the degree of offensiveness associated with homosexual activity. Indeed, in the entire Pentateuch the only forbidden sexual act to which the word to *‘ebah* is specifically attached is homosexual intercourse. This, however, should not be translated that God deals with the heterosexual immoralities mentioned in this chapter with any less severity.

That the law in Leviticus 18 comprises universal moral law, and not just ritual law for Israel, is clear from the fact that these laws are explicitly applied to the “stranger” or

”resident alien” as well as to the native Israelite. Verse 26 states that, “You must obey all my decrees and regulations. You must not commit any of these detestable sins. This applies both to native-born Israelites and to the foreigners living among you”. The reason of the prohibitions in Leviticus 18, including homosexual practice, rests upon the foundational principles of Creation in Genesis 1:27-28: the creation of all humanity in the image of God as “male and female”. It is the call for a man and his wife to become one flesh, and the command to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. “These principles describe the order and structure of humanity in two relationships: to God and to society. All the laws of Leviticus 18 may be understood as violation of these principles” (Wold, D. J., 2009, p. 130). Both the heterosexual and homosexual activities listed in Leviticus 18 and 20 are portrayed as “abominations” because they violate God’s order of gender set forth in Gen 1:27 and 2:24.

3.4 Homosexual Practice in the latter Prophets

The Prophet Ezekiel in the book of Ezekiel chapter 16 and 18 compared the activity of the men in Sodom and Gomorra as recorded in Genesis 19 with the condition of Judah people during his time.

Your older sister was Samaria, who lived with her daughters in the north. Your younger sister was Sodom, who lived with her daughters in the south. But you have not merely sinned as they did. You quickly surpassed them in corruption. As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, Sodom and her daughters were never as wicked as you and your daughters. Sodom’s sins were pride, gluttony, and laziness, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door. She was proud and committed detestable sins, so I wiped her out, as you have seen (Ezek.16:46-50).

Some have argued that Ezekiel believed the reason that God punished Sodom and Gomorra was because of their inhospitality and not homosexual practice. What Ezekiel

highlights was Sodom's non-sexual offences. "Sodom's sins were pride, gluttony, and laziness, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door" (Ezek 16:49). But those who argue solely for non-sexual sins at issue here fail to read this chapter in a wider context. Because in the very next verse (v.50), Ezekiel uses the word "abomination" (to *'ebah*) to describe the acts committed by Sodom, and this word "abomination" (to *'ebah*) is the exact term used to describe homosexual practice in Lev.18:22 and 20:13.

In addition to the linkage between the term "abomination" in Ezekiel and homosexual practice described in Lev.18 and 20, one cannot ignore the dominant overtone of sexual immorality throughout Ezekiel 16, which lends further support to the interpretation that for Ezekiel Sodom's sin included sexual immorality.

Moreover in Ezekiel 16:43 God said to His people that, "have you not committed lewdness (*zimmah*, in Hebrew) beyond all your abominations?" The word *zimmah* "lewdness, wickedness, depravity" in this passage is the very term used in Leviticus and also often in Ezekiel to refer to "premeditated sexual sin" (Wold, 2003, p.88).

The Old Testament is concerned with the act of *'ebah* or abomination, but furthermore God is concerned more about the motive than the action. The two main stories in the Old Testament in Genesis 19 and Judges 19 portray an evil motive that results in an evil action. What they are committing is an act that puts a challenge to toward God. Their motive and action is nothing about love or relationship. It is all evil desire and arrogance. They have no desire for holiness of God, but yet are self-centered and giving their desire for lewdness. For them it is not about homosexual or sex, but it is all about sin and madness.

CHAPTER IV

EXPLORING THE NEW TESTAMENT ON HOMOSEXUALITY

4.1 Homosexual Practice According to Jesus' Teachings and the Jerusalem Council

In Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:6-8 Jesus affirms the creation ideal of marriage between a man and woman by quoting from Genesis 1:27 and 2:23 in this way, “But God made them *male* and *female* from the beginning of creation. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife” (Mk 10:6-8). Jesus’ emphasis on the fact that “God made” this arrangement “from the beginning of creation,” shows His acceptance of the prescriptive nature of the Creation texts, and affirms that man-woman relations as divinely ordained in Genesis 1 and 2 remain normative in New Testament times.

Jesus uses the word “πορνεία (*porneia*)” in Greek for sexual immorality. His pronouncement against *porneia* is in Matthew 5:32; 15:19, 19:9 and Mark 7:21, and when viewed against the Old Testament background, include same-sex intercourse as well as other heterosexual practices in Mt. 10:15, 11:23-24, Mk. 6:11, Lk. 10:12, 17:29:

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Mt 5:32).-

For out of the heart come evil ideas, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander (Mt 15:19).

For from within, out of the human heart, come evil ideas, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and folly.

All these evils come from within and defile a person (Mk 7:21-23).

I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Day of Judgment than for that town! (Mt 10:15).

But on the day Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all” (Lk 17:29).

The nature of the word “*porneia*” or sexual immorality as used by Jesus and the various New Testament writers has been the subject of much debate. The Old Testament provides the key to its identification, especially significant is its usage in Acts of the Apostle 15:28-29 where intertextual allusions to Leviticus 17 and 18 are unmistakable.

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay no greater burden on you than these few requirements: You must abstain from eating food offered to idols, from consuming blood or the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. If you do this, you will do well. Farewell (Acts 15:28-29).

The Bible in the book of Acts chapter 15 verse 29 as seen above lists four prohibitions for Gentile Christians given by the Jerusalem council: “that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled and from sexual immorality (*porneia*)”. The important thing is that this is the same list, in the same order, as the four major legal prohibitions explicitly stated to be applicable to the stranger as well as to native Israelites in Leviticus 17 and 18. These Old Testament Chapters forbid:

Sacrificing to demons/idol (Lev 17:7-9)

The people must no longer be unfaithful to the LORD by offering sacrifices to the goat idols. This is a permanent law for them, to be observed from generation to generation. “Give them this command as well. If any native Israelite or foreigner

living among you offers a burnt offering or a sacrifice but does not bring it to the entrance of the Tabernacle to offer it to the LORD, that person will be cut off from the community.

Eating blood (Lev 17:10-12)

And if any native Israelite or foreigner living among you eats or drinks blood in any form, I will turn against that person and cut him off from the community of your people, for the life of the body is in its blood. I have given you the blood on the altar to purify you, making you right with the LORD. It is the blood, given in exchange for a life, that makes purification possible. That is why I have said to the people of Israel, ‘You must never eat or drink blood neither you nor the foreigners living among you.’

Eating anything that has not been immediately drained of its blood (Lev 17:13-16).

And if any native Israelite or foreigner living among you goes hunting and kills an animal or bird that is approved for eating, he must drain its blood and cover it with earth. The life of every creature is in its blood. That is why I have said to the people of Israel, ‘You must never eat or drink blood, for the life of any creature is in its blood.’ So whoever consumes blood will be cut off from the community.

Various immoral sexual practices (Lev 18:6-23)

You must never have sexual relations with a close relative, for I am the LORD. Do not violate your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; you must not have sexual relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with any of your father’s wives, for this would violate your father. Do not have sexual relations with your sister or half-sister, whether she is your father’s daughter or your mother’s daughter, whether she was born into your household or someone else’s. Do not have sexual relations with your granddaughter, whether she is your son’s daughter

or your daughter's daughter, for this would violate yourself. Do not have sexual relations with your stepsister, the daughter of any of your father's wives, for she is your sister. Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister, for she is your father's close relative. Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, for she is your mother's close relative. Do not violate your uncle, your father's brother, by having sexual relations with his wife, for she is your aunt. Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law; she is your son's wife, so you must not have sexual relations with her. Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife, for this would violate your brother. Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. And do not take her granddaughter, whether her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, and have sexual relations with her. They are close relatives, and this would be a wicked act. While your wife is living, do not marry her sister and have sexual relations with her, for they would be rivals. Do not have sexual relations with a woman during her period of menstrual impurity.

Do not defile yourself by having sexual intercourse with your neighbor's wife. Do not permit any of your children to be offered, as a sacrifice to Molech, for you must not bring shame on the name of your God.⁹ I am the LORD. *Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin.* A man must not defile himself by having sex with an animal. And a woman must not offer herself to a male animal to have intercourse with it. This is a perverse act.

We can see clearly in this intertextual relationship of the Old Testament and New Testament that the Jerusalem Council undoubtedly concluded that what should be prohibited to Gentile Christians were those very practices forbidden to the uncircumcised people (those who are not Jew) in Leviticus 17 and 18.

The detail of the word may change, some of the practices may change from the Old Testament to New Testament, but the principles of the Bible never change.

The parallel of the fourth prohibition in each passage is very clear. What Acts 15 labels *porneia* are those immoral sexual practices included in Leviticus 18. These activities can be summed up in general as improper sexual intercourse including incest, adultery, homosexual practices and bestiality. The relationship between Acts 15 and Leviticus 17 and 18 provides a solid foundation for determining what the early Church understood by the term *porneia*. “No first-century Jew could have spoken of *porneiai* (*sexual immoralities*) without having in mind the loss of forbidden sexual offences in Leviticus 18 and 20, particularly incest, adultery, same-sex intercourse and bestiality” (Gagnon, Retrieved April 19, 2017). Jesus’ denunciation of *porneia* also includes all forms of sexual immorality including homosexual practice.

4.2 Homosexual Practice and the Pauline Epistles

The Pauline epistles are the books in the New Testament that are believed to be written by the Apostle Paul. The New Testament Epistles are generally divided into the Pauline Epistles and the Non-Pauline or General Epistles, which we will come to it later in the next section.

Paul’s epistles fall into two categories: nine epistles written to churches (Romans to 2 Thessalonians) and four pastoral and personal epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon). Eight Hebrew Christian epistles (Hebrews to Jude) then follow. Naturally, many questions will arise as to the meaning and application of the gospel for Christians. However, the Epistles answer these questions, give the interpretation of the person and work of Christ, and apply the truth of the gospel to believers.

In the Pauline epistle, Apostle Paul specifically mentions homosexual lust and practice in three passages:

So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen. That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved. (Rom. 1:24-27)

Another passage is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians churches.

Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (Cor. 6:9-11).

As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul wrote a counsel to a young man name Timothy that, "The law is for people who are sexually immoral, or who practice homosexuality, or are slave traders liars, promise breakers, or who do anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching" (1 Tim. 1:10). Each of these verses must be interpreted according to the Old Testament context to which it talks about. Romans chapter one reveals that Apostle Paul's

entire discussion was based on the Old Testament, which is his source of ultimate authority for normative social behavior.

In Romans 1, Paul begins by referencing the creation of the world, and the power and divinity of God as seen through what He has made, but then Paul reflects how the story has changed.

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen (Rom 1:20-25).

Humans remade the glory of God into an “image” and “likeness” of “corruptible man,” as well as of “bird,” “animals,” and “creeping” things. The human then ends up worshipping these very creatures that humans were meant have dominion over, and abandons the nature use of the “male” and the “female”. This is completely turned around, instead of having dominion over the beasts; humans now serve “the creature rather than the Creator.” They remake the image of God, in church both male and female were made, into an intensification of either masculinity or femininity (Hays, 2003, p.77-78). Paul's concern in this passage is with the image of God according to the Genesis Creation story, which humans have corrupted with idolatry and ensuing heterosexual and homosexual immoralities. Paul is concerned

because these departures from the original design cannot reflect God's glory.

Further, in the list of 1 Cor 6:9, Paul mentions the *malakoi* (lit. "soft men"), which likely alludes to men who are lain with as a man lies with a woman (see Lev 18:22 and 20:13) (Hays, 2003, p.382-383). First Cor. 6:9 also refers to the *arsenokoitai* "men lying with males," and this term appears again in Paul's list in 1 Tim. 1:10. Against those who see a Greco-Roman background behind Paul's condemnation (and thus limit this term to something less than all same-sex intercourse), it cannot be overemphasized that this term never appears in the secular Greek of Paul's day, but only in Jewish-Christian literature. The compound term points to the background of the LXX translators in their rendering of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, as they combined the words male (*arsēn*) and lying (*koitē*), corresponding to the Hebrew terms *zakar* (male) and *mishkab* (lying), to denote "homosexual intercourse" (Ganong, *Homosexual Practice*, 306-312). The undeniable intertextual link between Paul's use of *arsenokoitai* (1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10) and Lev. 18 and 20, tell us that Paul is primarily referring to the Old Testament Levitical background which forbids all same-sex intercourse and not just issues of exploitation or orientation (Seminary on Homosexuality & Pastoral Care, 2015)

4.3 Summary of Biblical teachings on Homosexual Practice

This research paper has examined the relevant passages throughout the Bible, the authoritative norm for Christian life and teaching, has revealed the following three points.

First, Scripture teaches a uniform and explicit condemnation of homosexual practice. Not only is there obvious condemnation of homosexual practice throughout the Old and New Testaments, but many lines of evidence connected to the Levitical legislation and New Testament references to this legislation (Acts 15) point to the universal (trans-cultural) and

permanent (trans-temporal) nature of the prohibitions against all types of homosexual activity. Ekkehardt Mueller states, “The study of the Pauline passages dealing with homosexuality shows that homosexuality is not limited to violent and promiscuous activity; nor is it restricted to pederasty. All homosexual activity is against the Creation order and against divine law and is, therefore, a sin that needs to be repented of, forgiven, and given up” (Mueller, 2010, p.29).

After surveying the evidence of both Old Testament and New Testaments, New Testament scholar Richard Hays summarizes the biblical witness concerning homosexual practice:

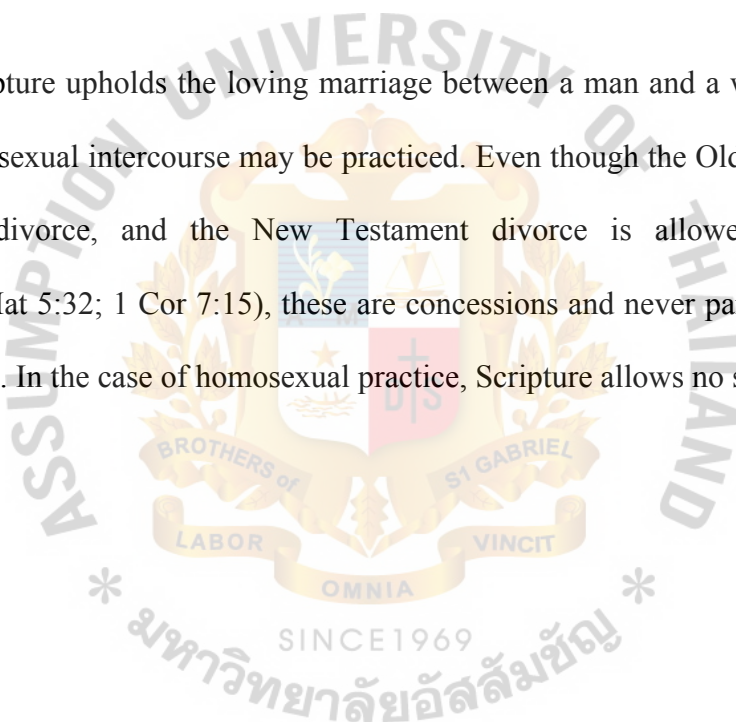
Though only a few biblical texts speak of homoerotic activity, all that do mention it express unqualified disapproval. The biblical witness against homosexual practices is univocal. Scripture offers no exception clauses that might allow for the acceptance of homosexual practices under some circumstances. Despite the efforts of some recent interpreters to explain away the evidence, the Bible remains unambiguous and univocal in its condemnation of homosexual conduct (Hays, 2003, p.73, 78).

It should be noted, however, that the biblical materials condemn homosexual practice, but there is no discipline that comes with homosexual orientation by itself.

Second, Scripture condemns all forms of sexual immorality, whether homosexual or heterosexual. The Hebrew Bible assumes that after the Fall all humans have a sinful nature. To be sure, the implication of the seventh commandment and tenth commandment is that even the thoughts are to be kept pure, and sexual temptations arising from the fallen nature are to be resisted with both heterosexual and homosexual (Mt 5:27-30). Moreover, we see that in 1 Cor 6:9-10, Paul groups homosexual activities together with other immoral individuals: “Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,

nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers.” Then he adds, “None of these will inherit the kingdom of God.” At the same time, the Apostle Paul teaches the possibility that homosexuals can also experience renewal like the rest of the group. He writes, “And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (1 Cori 6:11). For those who struggle with heterosexual and homosexual immorality, divine power is available through Christ to enable us to live above sinful tendencies and nature.

Third, Scripture upholds the loving marriage between a man and a woman as the only context in which sexual intercourse may be practiced. Even though the Old Testament allows polygamy and divorce, and the New Testament divorce is allowed under extreme circumstances (Mat 5:32; 1 Cor 7:15), these are concessions and never part of God’s Edenic ideal (Mark 10:5). In the case of homosexual practice, Scripture allows no such compromise.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Grace and Acceptance

Whereas the Bible may seem to forbid homosexuality, God's grace and acceptance through a pastoral approach can bring healing and reconciliation given that not all people are born heterosexual due to our corrupted sinful human nature.

Grace and acceptance has shown to be the main theme of the Bible and God's plan of salvation for the human race. God's mercy has been revealed throughout the Old Testament. Christ's redemptive character has been made clear through his actions on earth, and especially on the cross.

The grace of God is revealed in the Old Testament portrayals of these sexual and family distortions. Homosexual practice is presented as part of the Canaanite abominations condemned in Leviticus 18 and 20. However, these Canaanite people, with their abominable practices, were given 400 years of probation according to Genesis 15:16, with many opportunities to learn of the true God and the universal standards of morality and holiness, and many did join God's covenant people. In another story in Genesis 14, Abraham was divinely directed to rescue Lot, his nephew, and the inhabitants of Sodom from the hands of the four invading kings and possibly some of these people may have been a part of the crowd that attempted the homosexual rape at Lot's house. Moreover, in Genesis 18 God would have spared the whole city, including those homosexual people if there had been even ten righteous people in Sodom.

According to Ezekiel chapter 16:51, Judah had more “abominations” than Sodom, including the abomination of homosexual practice. Just two chapters after the allegory of Ezekiel 16, God bares his heart, revealing his gracious attitude toward Judah, God said,

Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?

For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD.

Turn, then, and live (Ezek 18:31–32).

According to Ezekiel 37, God promises a spiritual resurrection from the dead for people who return from Babylonian exile, and in this context, he also promises power to keep his statutes. He even takes responsibility for Israel’s obedience: “I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:27). Over every distorted practice and abhorrent abomination, to which we as humans are affected, God’s forgiving and empowering grace still prevails and gives power for a new life.”

Also, after condemning homosexual practices in Romans 1:26-27, Apostle Paul said in Romans 2:1 that, “Therefore you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge others; for in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things.” Thomas Schmidt has provided wise admonition for us today: “We must express our disapproval of homosexual practice in the context of our own sexual fallenness” (Schmidt, 1995, p, 172).

We must balance between the justice and grace of God as we continue to uphold the Scriptural view of holiness and morality. When applying redemptive discipline we must emphasize God’s provision of forgiveness and His promised empowerment to bring about behavioral change in the lives of those who struggle against homosexuality, or any other

kinds of immoral sexual practices. We must show the face of God depicted in the Bible, who is “infinitely knowing, intimately caring, invincibly loving” (Grenz, S. J., 1998 p.175)

5.2 Sensitivity questions that many homosexual persons wrestle

Genuine Christian should stand against any antipathy toward homosexuals as well as any cultural biases that fuel a lack of Christ-like love toward them. These kinds of attitudes need to be repented of and the Church needs to provide more intentional ministries directed toward gay and lesbian persons (Matt 9:13; John 3:17). We should be aware of how easily we might fall into self-righteous judgmentalism. Such examination might lead us to a greater sensitivity to the following questions that many gay and lesbian persons wrestle with:

- “Did God make me this way and if so, why?” Most researchers state that many factors contribute to same-sex attraction and homosexual orientation. Some persons describe their attraction to the same sex as being among their earliest memories and contend that they would not have chosen the painful experience of being gay or lesbian (Crooks and Baur, 2014). Simplistic answers to the “why” question should be avoided but we should be clear that all evil in this world is a consequence of the fall into sin (Rom 3:20, 25).
- “If God made me this way, can He change me?” Recent literature denies the possibility that gay and lesbian persons can be changed, and even claims that change attempts are harmful.⁷ Other important studies show that there are occasional reliable testimonies of such change among those that seek for faith-based counseling (Jones and Yarhouse, p. 367–392). However, does change mean that all same-sex attraction disappears?

⁷ American Psychological Association. April 4, 2005

Some who are now in monogamous heterosexual marriages report that they still experience homosexual attractions, but that they choose not to act on them.⁸

Others have pled with God to change them and have submitted to therapy with the goal of change but have not been changed.⁹ They have accepted their same-sex attraction as their life-long reality, and have chosen a life of celibacy. Working through this process, whatever the result, can be extremely difficult. As Christians, love would dictate that we are supportive, within the framework of biblical standards, of people as they work to sort out this matter in their lives and that we affirm their identity as persons for whom Christ died.

- “If I accept myself as a gay or lesbian person, do I have a place in the Church?” We are a Church made up of sinners saved by grace with love as its foundation (Matt 22:36–40) and such love should be shown equally to all members. Gay and lesbian members who choose to, and remain abstinent should be given the opportunity to participate in all church activities including leadership positions in the Church. Those who struggle with temptation to sin should be treated the same way as other members who struggle with sexual sin (Matt 18:4; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31; 19:10). This research paper affirms that homosexual persons have a place in the church family.

⁸ Winston King, “‘Born that Way’ and Redeemed by Love,” in *Homosexuality, Marriage, and the Church*. (ed. Roy E. Gane, Nicholas P. Miller, and H. Peter Swanson; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2012), 485–495.

⁹ Daneen Akers and Stephen Eyer, directors and producers, “Seventh-Gay Adventists,” documentary film (Filmmakers Library, 2012).

5.3 Two main misconceptions about gay and lesbian

There are two main misconceptions about gay and lesbian persons that need to be straightened out:

- “They are sinners, therefore, they must not love God.” In reality, some gay and lesbian persons passionately love God. Many homosexual people claim to be Christian, and claim to have some type of meaningful personal commitment to Jesus Christ. They may have vibrant spiritual lives, have wrestled with God about their sexual identity, and have drawn close to Him despite their struggles. We should reflect the compassion of Jesus Christ who never condemned a struggling person but helped everyone to live a life of holiness (Jn 8:1–11).
- “They don’t want to be part of the Church community.” Although it is true that many Christian gay and lesbian persons have been hurt by the Church and that some have chosen to leave as a result, many love the Church and want to be a part of its fabric. Many have grown up in the Church, participated in Pathfinders¹⁰, and attended church schools, and the beliefs and culture of the Church are a part of them. They want and need a home in which they can be welcomed and accepted even though their sexual orientation is different.

¹⁰Pathfinders is a department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA), which works specifically with the cultural, social and religious education of children and teenagers located in the age group between 10 and 15 years

The Society of Catholic Social Scientists¹¹ has warned the church that there are erroneous assumptions founded on homosexuality. The Society highlights:

1. False statements are being made about homosexuality being biologically determined.
2. Catholic homosexuals are being told wrongly that sexual-orientation change is never possible.
3. The term "gay" is being wrongly used to describe people of a homosexual orientation who do not identify with the gay socio-political position.
4. A separate "gay spirituality" regrettably is being encouraged, and gay ministries tell us that a person who suffers from the homosexual disorder has special "gay gifts" for the Church.
5. Catholics are being informed wrongly that the homosexual condition is not disordered.

This reveals that there are a lot of misconceptions regarding homosexuality among Christianity that need to be straightening out. Churches in different denomination may disagree theologically on the issue of homosexuality, but we can all agree in love for humanity. Therefore pastoral approach/pastoral care is needed in order to attend to the spiritual need of homosexual people.

5.4 Pastoral Approach

Love demands that we continue to learn about homosexuality and that we compassionately reflect God's love for gay persons. Love also demands that we support them when we see them being treated unfairly. "The Lord gives righteousness and justice to all who are treated unfairly" (Ps 103:6). As the Church continues to wrestle with this issue, we want to do so in good faith exhibited in practical action.

¹¹ Pastoral Care for Homosexual persons. (n.d.). Retrieved August 10, 2017

We cannot ignore the needs of families who are faced with the reality of a spouse, child, or other relative who is same-sex attracted. Family members find themselves conflicted between their love for their family member and their Scriptural beliefs. They don't know what to do to provide the best help. The Church should be always ready to help those who experience deep emotions such as pain, guilt, and shame, and be prepared to sincerely talk to them about their struggles (Gal 6:2). According to the Catholic Teaching in October 1968 stated that,

"The human person made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties - but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: a creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life." (Letter from the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith - October 1986).

By this it means that we don't see those with homosexual inclinations as problems but as persons, persons whom Jesus redeemed by His Cross, persons called to holiness, persons with an inviolable dignity and an eternal destiny bestowed on them by God, persons like all of us, persons who have a welcome place in the Church.

While being faithful to biblical teaching about homosexuality, we must also seek earnestly to understand and empathize with the struggles and challenges that face those who struggle with sexual immorality. This applies equally to gays and lesbians persons. In order to understand them, we must seek them out and listen carefully to their stories. Many have been deeply hurt emotionally by their heterosexual brothers and sisters. We must also be sensitive

to the reality of high rates of homelessness and suicide among gay youth. Jesus mingled with and ministered to all who were outcasts (Mt 9:11; Lk 5:30; 15:2). As Christians who are called to love as Jesus loved, we too must be concerned with the real needs of homosexual people. Many homosexuals have been bullied, beaten, or even killed in various parts of the world. Gay people have not felt welcome in some churches and have often been the victims of gossip and crude jokes. Some have been expelled from our Christian schools when they revealed their attraction to the same sex. Most, if not all, have heard sermons that condemn homosexuals as persons, failing to distinguish between homosexual attraction or orientation and the practice of homosexuality. All persons, including practicing homosexuals, should be made to feel welcome to attend our churches while non-practicing homosexuals should be welcomed into membership and church office. All should receive spiritual care from the Church (Gal 6:1). We should be aware of persons who have homosexual inclinations, accept them as brothers and sisters in Christ and support them by authentic love and prayer

5.5 The Call to Holiness

One of the intent of this research paper is to call everyone, whether heterosexual, homosexual, married, or single, to conform to God's ideal of holiness. At the heart of this call to holiness lies the call to sexual purity. In our age of casual sex and all types of promiscuity and immorality, it is easy to think of sexual intercourse as a matter of private decisions and preferences. But this is not how Scripture thinks about sex. Apostle Paul plainly teaches that our bodies are individually temples of the Holy Spirit and that we are not our own but bought with a price. Therefore we must glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor 6:19–20, 10:31). Because our bodies belong to God, we may not do with them as we please. Rather, we must be conformed to the image of the Son of God (Rom 8:29).

This call to holiness is extended to all of Christ's followers. It is the contention of this research paper that such holiness is possible only when we use our bodies in line with God's creation ideal for which we were created as male and female. It is the hope that by understanding the biblical perspective on homosexual, many who struggle with their sexuality will come to embrace the divine ideal of holiness and sexual purity as their Christian calling. May our gracious God give us His Spirit (Ezek 36:25–27; Rom 8:4, 14), who provides victory over sin and power to live in harmony with His will through our Lord Jesus Christ.



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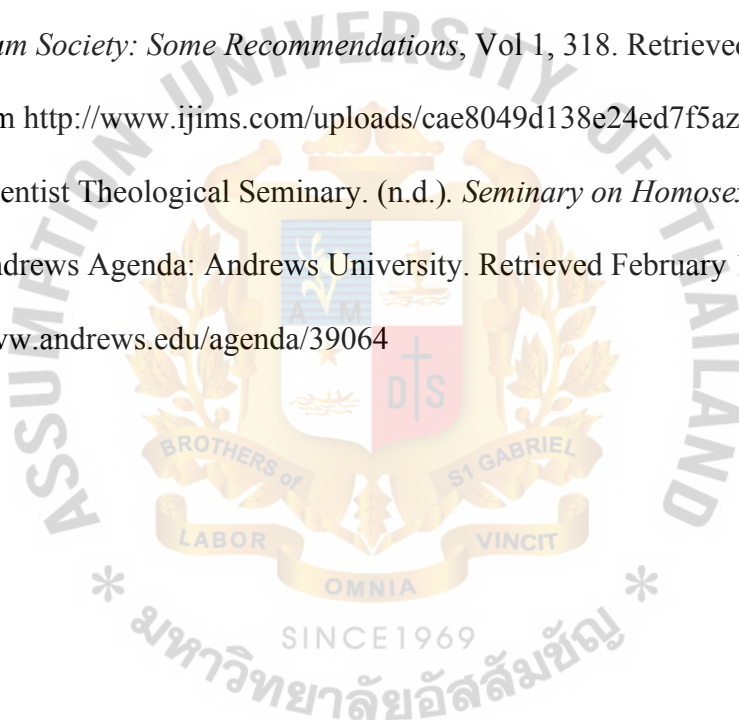
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