

## **Statement of the Czech Province of the Moravian Church on the issue of homosexuality (updated version, 2019)**

The Czech Province of the Moravian Church has been dealing with the issue of same-sex relationships for a long time. Even the Czech Provincial Synod of 1994 held in Nová Paka has passed a statement on this topic. After the Unity Synod held in Bethlehem, USA (2002), which called on the Provinces to deeply engage in this problem, and also following the challenge of the Unity Committee on Theology in 2011, the Czech Province has come to a decision to pass the following statement, which was further extended after the Unity Synod of 2016. This statement is therefore the result of a long-term, responsible search for complicated answers to this problem in the light of God's word, considering the contemporary medical knowledge as well as the impact on society.

For this reason, our declaration is divided into three parts which include theological, medical and social points of view.

### **Theological perspective**

At the beginning, we bring several remarks concerning the topic.

- 1) God's word teaches us that all of us are human beings. There is no special class of people we could mark as homosexuals in themselves. There are only people created to the image of God. However, humankind itself is God's fallen creation, affected and deformed by sin in many ways. For this reason, it is not good to condemn and repudiate those who practice homosexuality.
- 2) All of us are sexual beings. Our sexuality is – according to the Word – a part of our humanity. Angels may probably be sexless. However, God has created humans in a peculiar duality, as a man and a woman.
- 3) All of us are sinners, and therefore (among others) also sinners in the sexual area. Teachings about total depravity of man emphasizes that every part of human existence, including sexuality, has been defiled and disrupted by sin.
- 4) Nobody (except only for Jesus of Nazareth) is or was sexually sinless. Therefore, we may not approach this topic with an offended religious attitude of moral superiority. We all are sinners, we all stand before God's judgment and to all of us, God's forgiveness is necessary.
- 5) We differentiate between a person experiencing sexual affection towards persons of the same sex, which we do not deem a sin in and of itself, and a person who also practices homosexuality, which we see as clearly sinful from the biblical perspective (as is shown further).

## Biblical connection

The approach of the Scripture to the question of homosexuality is absolutely essential to us. The reason for this is, in the first place, the example of Christ himself, who argued by Scripture many times (e.g. Matt. 4:1-11), but also the significance conferred to the Scripture by the Ground of Unity (which is a fundamental part of the Church order of the Unitas Fratrum), stating that *“Scripture is the sole standard of the doctrine and faith.”* Therefore, we discuss the biblical perspective in a wider scope. Partially, we make use of a treatise by the Anglican theologian John Stott on the issue.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, we sometimes add the understanding of specific passages of the Scripture by our ancestors in faith, especially the ancient Unity.

## The creation of Man as male and female and the establishment of marriage

The basic section, which must be considered a starting point, is the establishment of marriage in Genesis. The Bible provides us with two accounts of the creation of Man. The first one (in Genesis 1) is general and it emphasizes *equality* between male and female, because both are created in the image of God and the stewards of the creation.

- Genesis 1:27-28<sup>2</sup> *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...’”*

The second account of creation of Man (in Genesis 2) is special and it emphasizes the *complementarity* of both sexes, which is the basis for the heterosexual marriage. **Marriage is defined by the Scripture as the relationship of a man and a woman, which is established by God.**

- Genesis 2:24 *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* This verse is also cited by Jesus and Paul, see Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. (This repeated citation emphasises the importance of the statement.)

The essence of marriage is the unity of one man and one woman, which must be publicly proclaimed (*leaving of their parents*), forever sealed (*joining of a man to his wife*), and physically shared (*they shall become one flesh*). The Scripture does not provide for any other type of marriage or sexual intercourse.

God imprints his undepictable image into the difference of the male and female sexes, as united in marriage (Gen. 1:27). Thus, a mysterious miracle of creation is inserted in each marriage of man and woman, which may not be replaced by anything else.

The Unity of man and woman naturally leads to fertility, which is an expression of God’s power of creation and is expressly gifted in creation (Gen. 1:28). Only the union of man and woman may give rise to new life.

<sup>1</sup> John Stott: „Same-Sex Partnerships? A Christian Perspective“. Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Bible quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New King James Version. Bible quotations identified as NIV are from the New International Version.



At the foundation of marriage, it is God himself who unites man and woman into one (Matt. 19:6). Only a marital union of man and woman is designated as “*mystery*” in the Scripture, reflecting in its nature the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32).

The beginning of every marriage, the wedding, also has great significance in the Scripture: Jesus himself started his public activity at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11); the entire Salvation history leads to its culmination at the wedding of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7).

In the next part of our treatise, we discuss the scriptural passages directly linked to homosexuality. However, it is necessary to emphasise that in a wider biblical scope, these individual verses are not the heart of the matter. On the contrary, the issue here is the overall concept of Man in Scripture (as male and female, as only their union in one is the image of God) and of marriage.

### **Biblical passages directly relating to homosexuality**

The Scripture includes four groups of passages relating directly to the question of homosexuality:

- ◆ Genesis 19: 1-13 and the story of Gibeans from Judges chapter 19
- ◆ Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, which explicitly forbids to “*lie with a male as with a woman*”
- ◆ Paul’s description of the life of pagan society in the Epistle to the Romans 1:18-32
- ◆ Paul’s two lists of sinners, each of which refers to certain homosexual practice (1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 and 1 Timothy 1: 8 – 11)

### **The stories of Sodom and Gibeah**

Genesis explains that “*the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD*” (13:13) and “*the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah*” was “*great*” and “*their sin*” was “*very grave*” (18:20-21) and finally “*He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground*” (19:25) by an act of judgment, which was completely in accord with justice of the “*Judge of all the earth*” (18:25). There is no dispute about that background of this Bible story. The question is: what kind of sin of Sodom (and Gomorrah) caused its extermination?

The traditional Christian approach sees the cause in the sin of homosexual practice, into which the men of Sodom wanted to involve, albeit unsuccessfully, two angels who were Lot’s guests. The word “*sodomy*” comes from this background. That is why e.g. Jan Hus declares homosexual practice “*the sodomite sin*” (see his treatise on the interpretation of the Decalogue<sup>3</sup>). In the same way,

<sup>3</sup> Jan Hus: “*Exposition of the Faith, of the Ten Commandments, and of the Lord’s Prayer*”. First issued in 1412.

the brethren of the ancient Unity call male homosexual practice the “sodomite sin” in their notes in the Bible of Kralice (see their note to the verse Lev 18:22<sup>4</sup>).

One of the first to challenge this interpretation was the Anglican theologian Sherwin Bailey in the 1950s<sup>5</sup> and many others followed. (We quote Bailey’s approach here and in other passages because with his approach, Bailey became an authority to many.) Sherwin Bailey challenged the traditional approach in two fundamental points which will be introduced and analysed further.

Firstly, according to Bailey, there is a false assumption that the request of men of Sodom: „bring them out unto us, that we may know them!” (Gen. 19:5) means “Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them” (as translated in New International Version). The reason for that should be that the Hebrew word “to know” (JDH) appears in the Old Testament 943 times, out of which it only refers 10 times to physical relationship and only to heterosexual. Therefore, it would supposedly be better to translate that sentence in following way: “so that we can get acquainted”. Then we could understand the men’s violence as a result of their rage over the fact that Lot overstepped his law of foreign immigrant, because he welcomed two strangers in his house, whose intentions could be hostile and whose credibility was not tested. In such case the sin of Sodom’s men would be the violation of confidentiality of Lot’s home and transgression against the ancient custom of hospitality. The suggestion to support this claim should be the fact that Lot asked the men to stop that because the guests came “under the shadow of my roof” (Gen. 19:8).

Bailey’s second argument is basically the rest of the Old Testament, which supposedly does not state anywhere that it was homosexuality which was the nature of the Sodomites’ sin. Instead of that Isaiah saw the nature in hypocrisy and social injustice; Jeremiah in adultery, frauds and general wickedness; Ezekiel in arrogance, stinginess, and lack of interest in poor. It is only in the Jewish pseudo-epigraphs from 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC that the sin of Sodomites was identified as unnatural sexual behaviour. That, in Bailey’s interpretation, clearly echoes in the epistle of Jude where it is said that: “as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh” (verse 7), and in works of Philo and Josephus Flavius, Jewish writers, who were shocked by homosexual practice of Greek society.

Sherwin Bailey approached exegesis of the story of Gibeah in a similar way because it is a close parallel. Another foreign immigrant (this time an anonymous old man) invited two foreigners into his house (that time not angels, but a Levite and his concubine). Evil men surrounded the house and (just as the Sodomites) requested that the visitor would be handed over to them, so that they “may know him” (Judg. 19:22). At first the owner of the house asked them not to be wicked to his guest and after that he offered his own daughter instead of the guest and the Levite offered his concubine. The sin of Gibeah, as he repeatedly states, is allegedly not in an attempt of homosexual rape, but in transgression of hospitality law.

<sup>4</sup> Bible of Kralice. First issued in 1579-1594. Reprinted by Czech Bible Society, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Derrick Sherwin Bailey: „Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition“. Archon Books, 1955.



Although Bailey had to know that his reinterpretation of both stories is experimental, he overstates his claim if he states that “there is not a single reason to believe that the city of Sodom and its neighbours were destroyed for their homosexual practice”. Instead of that he claims that the Christian tradition about “sodomy” was derived from late Jewish apocryphal sources.

Such argumentation, however, is not convincing because of several following reasons:

Bailey only uses language and statistical arguments in his assumptions, neglecting the context. Especially in Genesis, this method has not proven to be right.

The words “wickedly”, “outrage”, “lewdness” (Genesis 19:7, Judges 19:23, 20:6) are not an expression of hospitality violation. The fact that the women were offered in exchange, points unambiguously to sexual connotations of the story. Although the verb JDH is used for intercourse 10 times, it is used 6 times directly in Genesis, out of which once in the Sodom story itself (Lot’s daughters who “*have never known*” man – verse 8). For the book of Genesis, the word “JDH” is a cipher for sexual union of man and woman and cannot be overlooked as such (Gen. 4:1, Gen. 4:17, Gen. 4:25 etc.). In the account of the story of Sodom, the following is written: “*Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them.*” (Gen. 19:5).

The context of the story implies a clearly sexual aspect in the Sodomites’ utterance. Therefore, Lot tries to avert such a danger of homosexual rape from his guests by offering his virgin daughters to satisfy the lust of the attackers (Genesis 19:8 “*See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.*”) This passage may not be interpreted otherwise.

In the story of Gibeah, the fallacy of Bailey’s argumentation is even more evident: When the wicked men wanted to “know” the strangers (Judg. 19:22), homosexual rape was definitely in question. It is clear in connection to his wife, which the scoundrels have abused instead of him, when it is written that they have “known” her (Judg. 19:25).

To address Bailey’s second argument: Jude’s unambiguous claim may not be considered a mere error taken over from Jewish pseudo-epigraph. For the Epistle of Jude, as well as for the other books of the Bible, the truth applies that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (2 Tim. 3:16, see also 2 Pet. 3:15). Should we accept Bailey’s arguments here, we could, as a result, doubt the validity of the entire New Testament.

**There is no doubt that the homosexual behaviour was not the only sin of Sodom; however according to the Scriptures it was certainly one of them.**

### **Texts from book of Leviticus**

Both those text are parts of “Law of Purity”, which is the core of the book and calls on people of God to obey His laws and not to imitate the acts of Egypt (the place they had gotten used to live) or Canaan (the place the Lord led them to).

Such practices included forbidden sexual relations of different level (by God's law), sexual deviations, children sacrifice, idolatry, as well as various types of social injustice. In such a context we ought to interpret the following texts:

- Lev. 18:22 *"You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination."*
- Lev. 20:13 *"If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."*

Some theologians nowadays argue that the texts in Leviticus supposedly forbid the religious practice which ended long ago and have no relation to contemporary homosexual relationships. Others argue that these texts in Leviticus only applied to Jews and were only applicable at the time of Old Testament, similarly to, e.g. the order of sacrifices.

The context of both chapters in question, however, clearly points to these not being ritual regulations, but generally applicable rules of practical life. The context also clearly shows that the inadmissibility of such practices applies not only to the Jews, but generally (Lev. 18:24). The old brethren in the Bible of Kralice understood the verse in Lev. 18:22 in a similar way, as referenced in their notes to Romans, chapter 1, which does not concern any ritual practices and is directly referring to the gentiles. In such a way, Apostle Paul imposes the orders of the Law on the society at large in 1 Tim. 1:10.

Bailey himself writes concerning the texts in Leviticus that both of these decrees in Leviticus relate to an ordinary homosexual act between men rather than to ritual or other purposes, carried out as part of religion.

### **Paul's utterances in the Epistle to Romans**

- Romans 1:26-27 *"For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due."*

There is an accord in finding that the apostle describes idolatrous pagans in that time Greek and Roman world: They had certain knowledge of God through the created universe (verses 19 and 20) and their own moral recognition (verse 32), but they suppressed the known truth, so they could proceed in evil deeds. Instead of giving their praise to God who deserves it they turned to idols substituting the Creator with the creation. As a judgment *"God gave them up to"* perverted minds and decadent behaviour (verses 24, 26, and 28), which included *"unnatural"* sex. At first glance, it seems to be unambiguous condemnation of homosexual behaviour. However, two opposing arguments are presented:

The first argument says that Paul allegedly did not know anything about modern division between sexual orientation and *"perverted ones"* (those, who have homosexual relation, although they do have heterosexual orientation). Therefore, some argue, he condemns the other perverted ones, not the first ones. It is so, they argue, because they are described as the ones, who abandoned their



natural relations with women; no exclusive homosexual would have ever had such relations with women. The second argument says that that Paul clearly describes careless, shameless, debauched, and promiscuous behaviour of the people, whom God “gave up unto”. Such behaviour, some argue, should not be connected with faithful and loving homosexual relationship.

The answers to these arguments can be summarized, as follows:

It is undisputed that in verses 1:26 and 1:27 Paul spoke about homosexual relations. The description is not completely explicit; it is clear enough, however. The use of term *CHRESIS* is used for depiction of sexual intercourse quite commonly in Greek. The sexual behaviour of women and men is being described there separately. It suggests that the sex, which is being discussed, ceased to be the connection between woman and man, their shared common relationship, and became their own issue. Woman and man are the subjects of sexual behaviour separately from each other.

Firstly, women are discussed, as well as their substitution of natural sexual behaviour for such, which is “*against nature*”. The term nature (*FYSIS*) itself is Greek and it is typical of Stoic philosophy according to which it was “to live according to nature” (*TO KATA FYSIN ZEN*) a characteristic of a good and just life. In a case of sexual behaviour, “natural” surely means intercourse between a woman and a man. Thus “against nature” means sexual intercourse of a woman with not-a-man. That may be proved by the following statement about men, which explicitly says that men “*leaving the natural use of the woman*”. The statement is even more extensive in other manner; it is probably used for the purposes of gradation. Sexual intercourse between two men is not labelled with neutral *CHRESIS*, but it is characterized as “working that which is unseemly” (*TEN SCHEMOSYNE* in the meaning of “obscene act”). In connection to that men’s sexual behaviour there is also mentioned the “recompense” (revenge), brought to them by their error (*PLANE*). It is not further specified what is meant by that revenge here, but that is not essential for the overall meaning of the section.

**Homosexual behaviour is, according to the epistle of Romans, a result of the Fall and as such contradicts the natural order. It is sinful and condemnable in and of itself.**

#### Paul’s other texts

- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 “*Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.*” (NIV)
- 1 Timothy 1:9-10 “*We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.*” (NIV)



There are two lists of sins, which Paul finds incompatible with the Kingdom of God in the first place and with the Law and the Gospel in the second. We find out that one group of immoral ones is defined in Greek as *MALAKOI* and the other group of immoral ones is called *ARSENOKOITAI*. What do these words mean?

It is sad that some Bible translations use word "homosexuals". Then some rightfully protest that usage of this word induces a notion that "a person of changed sexual orientation even should he be moral, were to be automatically considered unjust and expelled out of the Kingdom of God". Fortunately, other translations use the term "those practicing homosexuality". Indeed, all of ten categories noted in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (with possible exception of "the greedy") mark people who sinned by their deeds; meaning idolaters, adulterers, and thieves.

However, the two Greek words *MALAKOI* and *ARSENOKOITAI* should not be used interchangeably, because they do have specific meaning. The first one literally means "soft when being touched" and among Greeks it metaphorically meant men (not necessarily boys), who had passive role in homosexual intercourse. The second term literally means (the one who is) "male in bed" and the Greeks used such term for the one who played active role in the intercourse. The Jerusalem Bible follows the translation of J. Moffatt in using the strict terms "catamites" and "sodomites", whereas others come to the conclusion that "probably Paul had in his mind a common pederasty between older man and post pubescent boys, which was the most common type of homosexual relationships found in the Ancient world"<sup>6</sup>. Such pederasty may be included in the named acts; however, the specific terms may not be narrowed down to just that. The ancient Unity translated in the Bible of Kralice the Greek word *ARSENOKOITAI* explicitly and literally as "male-coitals" (i.e. "those having coitus with a male"). The Greek words are clear enough to be applied to the practice of homosexuality in general.

From these texts of Paul, we may make a conclusion: Paul condemns homosexual behaviour as an obstacle preventing people from entering the Kingdom (1 Corinthians) and as a transgression, which should be condemned by moral law (1 Timothy).

Seeing these direct bible references to homosexuality we find out that there are not many in the Scripture, though their accounts are clear. Should we therefore conclude that it is a minor issue compared to the central message of the Scripture? Should we suppose that that the Scripture offer rather weak basis for clear rejection of homosexual lifestyle?

Christian rejection of homosexual practice is, however, not based solely on these „scarce texts" whose traditional interpretation is sometimes disputed. **For negative bans of homosexual practice in the Scripture attain their meaning first and foremost in the light of positive teaching about human sexuality and heterosexual marriage** (e.g. in book of Genesis, chapter 1 and 2). Without comprehensive positive bible teaching on sex and marriage would be our perception of homosexuality issue limited and narrowed. That is why we

<sup>6</sup> Peter Coleman: „Christian Attitudes to Homosexuality". S. P. C. K., London, 1980.



repeatedly refer to this positive teaching, summarised concisely at the beginning of this treatise.

At the end, we would like to express our view on the question of whether the practice of homosexuality may be included in the so-called non-essential issues, as some argue. As we pointed out above, the Scripture views practiced homosexuality as transgression against God's orders of creation. Practicing homosexuals are thus loved by God (just like all sinners), however, they are called to leave these sinful practices. If anyone stays in practicing homosexuality, his salvation is directly threatened (see 1 Cor 6:9-11). It would, therefore, be a misdeed against such a person, should they not be warned by the church. We hereby refer to the ancient Unity practice, which refused to "assure about salvation" those who stayed in sin.<sup>7</sup> That is why we may not say that the practice of homosexuality may be considered a non-essential issue.

### **Medical perspective**

The authority for this problem for the Czech Province is the Association of Christian Medics in the Czech Republic, which includes Czech Christian doctors and medical workers. Among the members of this organization are also doctors and medics which are members of the Moravian Church, Czech Province. This group has published a notification concerning the question of homosexuality, which is based on the materials gathered at the 11<sup>th</sup> national conference of the Association of Czech Christian Medics on the topic of „Ethical problems in medicine” in Prague, 2000<sup>8</sup>. We fully identify with this notification. Though it may be more than fifteen years old, we consider it still up-to-date, where the new findings confirm its basic message. The main results of this research are summarised here. In some cases, we complement this summary with new information.

#### **Frequency of homosexual activity in the population**

The occurrence of homosexuality fluctuates in the common population at about two per cent (the rate is higher at men – up to 3 %, lower at women – around 1 %).

In contrast to heterosexual relationships, the homosexual relationships show significantly higher promiscuity.

#### **Results of the homosexual lifestyle**

The most serious dangerous practice found in homosexual men is the anal sex, which is harmful especially for the “receptive” partner. The anal sphincter is only designed for minimal dilation and may be gravely harmed by sex in this part.

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<sup>7</sup> See e.g. „Agreement of the Rychnov Mountains”. (In Czech „Svolení na horách rychnovských”, in: „Acta Unitatis Fratrum V.”, National archives, Czech Republic.) Also known in English as “Unity Statutes of 1464”.

<sup>8</sup> „Homosexualita: normální varianta lidského chování?” (i.e. “Homosexuality: A normal variant of human behaviour?”) Notification of Association of Christian Medics, 2000. In Czech. <http://www.jbcr.cz/images/stories/vyjadreni-skz-2000.pdf>

That is why homosexual men suffer disproportionately often of related health problems, such as incontinence, anal ulcers, ruptures and haemorrhoids. A higher rate of rectal cancer is also included.

The homosexual lifestyle raises the risk of both sexually transmitted diseases (STD) as well as many diseases spread by faecal-oral path. Most homosexual men are carriers of one or more infectious diseases and most of these men have had at least one case of an STD. Among the most frequent non-viral infectious diseases of homosexuals are amoebiasis, giardiasis, gonorrhoea, shigella, salmonellosis, campylobacter infection, chlamydia, syphilis and ectoparasites. Viral diseases from the same causes include especially warts, herpes and infectious hepatitis A and B. Most homosexual men have suffered of infectious B hepatitis. Anal sex is also a high-risk behaviour for the transmission of the HIV – cause of AIDS.

Psychopathological states occur to homosexual individuals significantly more often than to average population. This includes severe depression, suicide thoughts and suicide attempts.

Homosexual lifestyle shortens the lifespan of men. From a medical point of view, it may not be considered a normal and natural variant of human behaviour on the field of sexuality.

### **The issue of innateness of homosexuality**

It appears that a certain genetic composition of a person may cause higher susceptibility to homosexuality but is not the cause of homosexuality. The innate nature of homosexuality is not scientifically supported.

Let us mention in this context that in 2016, Mayer and McHugh have published a study, grounded in 200 reviewed studies in human sexuality.<sup>9</sup> This study states that the understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity as “innate” rather than changeable “is not supported by scientific evidence”.

## **Social perspective**

Concerning sexual behaviour in the society it is true that when one social taboo is torn down, others follow more easily and fast. If a part of a dam is destroyed then the strong river of unclamped sexual instinct quickly destroys the entire dam. Defenders of homosexuality defend the phenomena as symbol of broader personal and sexual freedom and life in harmony with one’s nature. Homosexual lifestyle is thus significantly connected with loose sexuality in general. Observers of homosexual community convincingly state that the homosexual lifestyle is as much “homosexual” as “pansexual”.

In the contemporary society, we may see that advocates of homosexuality and of gender ideology advance one step at a time. As an example, we may show the public debate in our country: When the parliament was about to pass the bill on

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence S. Mayer, Paul R. McHugh: “*Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological, Psychological, and Social Sciences*”. *The New Atlantis*, Number 50, fall 2016.



civil partnership in 2005-2006, gay activists claimed that they would demand nothing more. Today, they demand the possibility of adoption for homosexual couples, as well as same-sex marriage.

Social recognition of homosexuality opens a door to LGBT activists on the issue of gender identity. In some countries, the public debate is being lead towards accepting the ability of a person choosing their own gender (male or female). The debate revolves in a similar fashion as on the issue of homosexuality – starting with compassion towards people suffering of a certain deviation and ending with social pressure to accept the reality that this group is perceiving, regardless of the reality. In these countries, it is demanded, for instance, that a biological man considering himself a woman is treated as one (and vice versa).

The recognition of homosexuality as a legitimate relationship also opens the door to paedophilia. Paedophilia in medical meaning means permanent or long-term affection or reactivity with erotic dimension predominantly or exclusively towards immature persons, boys or girls. By paedophile is labelled a person who is found with such affection. The term comes from Greek word *PAIDOFILIA* – love for children. It composes of words *PAIS* meaning a child or a boy, and word *FILIA* meaning love or friendship. Originally ancient Greek term was artificially coined as a part of psychiatric term “paedophilia erotica” in the year 1886 in writing *Psychopathia sexualis* by Vienna psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing. Close to paedophilia is ephebophilia (homosexual) or hebephilia (heterosexual), which is a specific erotic orientation on young pubescent objects. Especially homosexual men suffer from this paraphilia and for intimate sex they seek boys from 12-14 years of age. Till 1994 American association NAMBLA promoting legalization of paedophilia was a member of International league of gays and lesbians. It is proved that a considerable percentage of homosexuals do also have paedophile contacts. It is presumably only a matter of time before countries or possibly churches that now support homosexuality and claim it is equal to marriage would deal with legalization and “rights” of paedophiles. What arguments will they offer for legalization of paedophile relationships? Paedophilia is according to some sexologists also inborn and incurable. Will the countries and churches also so call “discriminate” against them or allow them status of minority especially when “they honestly love each other”? Will they have the understanding for their “love”?

Nowadays homosexuals organize their Pride marches all over the so called Western cultural world. The marches are unambiguously acts of an aggressive attack against centuries long social morals and they are open ridicule of biblical Christianity. It is known that such marches are distinguished by obscene manifestations that include public nudity and indecent exposure, public masturbation, simulated or genuine gay-lesbian or group sex. That happens entirely openly under the sights of passers-by and even children. Also, it is called “culture” and a “feast of joy”.

We can see that LGBT activists try to force their worldview into both the legislation and the school textbooks. Therefore, we see it as important that we as Christians bring a clear message on the biblical view of marriage as a bond



between a man and a woman, as given from creation, regardless of eventual difficulties or wrongs.

## Conclusion

Our view of homosexuality is based in the fundamental biblical view of Man and of marriage, as given in creation. Marriage is a God-established relationship between a man and a woman. Marriage's goal is unity of one man and one woman, which must be publicly proclaimed, permanently sealed and physically shared. A marriage between one man and one woman is the only bond within which sexual intercourse is approved and blessed by God. Homosexual practice is a result of the Fall in view of the Scripture and defies the natural order. It is sinful and condemnable as such. Only two practices of sexual life conform to the Scripture: life in marriage or life in sexual purity and abstention.

We perceive a person with homosexual feeling as a being loved by God which suffers from certain deviation. We consider this deviation in some cases removable, i.e. curable. Our primary approach is to provide hope in Christ for such person and not to condemn him or her. We do not want to add another problem to one that he already has. If such a person is met primarily with condemnation among Christians, then we are not helping God's work, but rather we are standing in its way. Our goal is to win that person for Christ and not to condemn, ridicule, or put shame on him. The relationship of churches to homosexuals ranges from so called homophobia to homophilia. Homophobia is openly hostile relationship, which sees in every homosexual the archenemy of the church. In contrary, homophilic relationship is identified by boundless acceptance of such lifestyle also often connected with willingness to give blessings to homosexual couples in churches. We consider neither of those stances to be biblically correct.

As for the ministry to homosexuals, pastors and ministers undergo preparation in therapeutic and pastoral care as part of their theological training in the Czech Province of Unitas Fratrum. The pastoral care tends to be individual from case to case, rooted in the overall biblical testimony.

We acknowledge psychiatric specialists and the general public who are convinced of the possibility of reparative therapy of homosexuals (sexual orientation change) in some cases (as has already happened many times). At the same time, we are convinced of the harmfulness of gay culture and gay lifestyle for the ones that are homosexually oriented, however they do not identify themselves with the gay culture and its activists and they want to abandon their homosexuality.

Legitimization of homosexuality as a norm and its removal from the list of mental disorders, which was in the USA determined rather by cultural atmosphere of 60s and not by scientific understanding of homosexuality causes and its therapy, leads naturally to weakening of social taboos in human sexuality, which were part of universal instincts of societies for thousands of years. We radically reject pressure events of gay-lesbian propaganda lobby and its way of argumentation.



Today, many churches with liberal theological orientation declare so called "human rights protection with no regard to sexual orientation". Some churches go even further and recommend active homosexuals and lesbians for ordination. We consider that to be unacceptable in Unitas Fratrum and incompatible with statement of faith stated in the Ground of Unity. We believe that there are only two practices of sexual life compatible with the Word of God: to live in marriage or to maintain sexual purity and abstinence.

We support the just cause of Third world's churches which call for repentance of western Christians from exporting their culture in the name of the Gospel in the past, as well as for stopping the current ethical imperialism in the matter of sexual behaviour.

We join the statement *Faith, Hope and Homosexuality* by Evangelical alliance<sup>10</sup>:

- 1) We recognize that all of us are sinners, and that the only true hope for sinful people - whether homosexual or heterosexual - is in Jesus Christ. Our earnest prayer is that his love, truth and grace would characterize evangelical responses to debates on homosexuality, both now and in future.
- 2) We affirm that monogamous heterosexual marriage is the form of partnership uniquely intended by God for full sexual relations between people.
- 3) We affirm God's love and concern for all humanity, including homosexual people, but believe homoerotic sexual practice to be incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture.
- 4) We repudiate homophobia insofar as it denotes an irrational fear or hatred of homosexuals. We do not accept, however, that to reject homoerotic sexual practice on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic.
- 5) We deeply regret the hurt caused to lesbians and gay men by the Church's past and present hatred and rejection of them.
- 6) We oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active homosexual partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship. We stand prayerfully with those in such churches who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.
- 7) We oppose moves within certain churches towards permitting the ordination of sexually active lesbians and gay men to ministry. We stand prayerfully with those in such denominations who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.
- 8) We commend and encourage those homosexual Christian people who have committed themselves to chastity and celibacy. We believe that such people should be eligible for ordination and leadership within the church. Where they are members of denominations which are considering an endorsement of sexually active homosexual partnerships, we are concerned that they may feel seriously undermined.
- 9) We call upon evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active homosexual people, but to do so in the expectation that they will

<sup>10</sup> „Faith, Hope & Homosexuality“. Report by the Evangelical Alliance's Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals (ACUTE). 1998. <http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/source.htm?id=276>

come in due course to see the need to change their lifestyle in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching. We urge gentleness and patience in this process, and ongoing care even after a homosexual person renounces same-sex sexual relations.

- 10) We commend the work of those organisations which seek to help homosexual Christians live a celibate life, and also commend those groups which responsibly assist homosexuals who wish to reorient to a heterosexual lifestyle.
- 11) We believe habitual homoerotic sexual activity without repentance to be inconsistent with faithful church membership. Where someone is publicly promoting homoerotic sexual practice within a congregation, there may be a case for more stringent disciplinary action.
- 12) We would resist church services of blessing for gay partnerships as unbiblical.

Unitas Fratrum honours the authority of God's Word. We understand the Bible as Word from God passed on by people. However, the human cooperation does not change the Holy Spirit inspired character of the Word of God. There are some cultural influences in the Word of God, but when dealing with the Law or the Gospel, the Bible is reliable and trustworthy.

We believe that in our emphasis on authority of the Word of God over the human life we share positions with Head of Church Lord Jesus Christ, followed by the Apostles, then represented by the Founding fathers and successors of Unitas Fratrum, and with most confessions and catechisms, old and new.

Therefore, the Czech Province of Unitas Fratrum takes the Bible accounts of condemnation of homosexual practice very seriously and considers the accounts to be trustworthy and decisive. Homosexual practices, same as heterosexual adultery, are put in the Scriptures under the judgment of the Word of God. Thus, we as well refuse to justify or relativize them.

We refuse to keep in ministry such ministers who live in contrast to the call of marital fidelity and inseparability of marriage. That also applies to such ministers who live in premarital and extramarital sexual intercourse or if they practice sexual life with same sex people (Genesis 2:24; Mathew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 7:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4).

The Czech Province of Unitas Fratrum considers sexual cohabitation of same sex persons as a violation of God's creation laws for man and thus as a sin (Genesis 19:1-13; Leviticus 18:20; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). The Czech Province does not bless such relationships, but it provides pastoral care to homosexual oriented people.

*In the Czech Republic, most of the churches actively stood out against legalization of homosexual partnerships in the time of debating their enactment (Moravian Church, Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, Silesian Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, Brethren Church, Pentecostal Church, Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, Evangelical Methodist Church, Brethren Unity of Baptists, and Seven Day Adventist Church).*