

A fresh look at homosexuality in the Bible

By Leen La Rivière¹

As most people know, there are 4 bible verses that deal with homosexuality. To understand them you have to put those texts in the contextuality of the time those texts were written. If you do not do that, you get really weird and unpleasant situations like the verse 'an eye for an eye' as good punishment for such situation/transgression. Or should we still stone to death a women caught for adultery. Jesus broke with those extreme explanations of those harsh laws. See His behavior in many stories in the 4 gospels.

The following analyses of the 4 verses may help:

1. Leviticus 18:22 (repeated in Leviticus 20:13) *'thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination'*. First about the position of this text in the Bible. This whole book of Leviticus deals with laws to separate the people of Israel from all the customs and habits of Egypt they left and of the clans living in the promised land Canaan. The Exodus out of Egypt is appr. 1300 BC. In those days incest was normal (like pharaohs marrying their (half) sisters) and other strange sexual practices (like sex with animals). The clans in Canaan worshipped Baal and Astarte. Practices going along with that worship was sex (with anybody) and those worships lead even to human sacrifices and finally child abuse and child sacrifice (by fire)². When people having sex with anybody, it leads easily to sexual transferred diseases, a plague at that time, killing many. So Leviticus deals with purity and health care and to separate Israel from the clans and peoples around them; otherwise Israel would be easily infected too (The children of Israel were not allowed to marry somebody from those clans/peoples, not being an Israelite). *To my opinion this bible verse has to do with health.*

2. Sodom and Gomorrah: Genesis 13:13 tells that the men of those cities were wicked and sinners. In Genesis 18 and 19 you find the story of Abraham begging for mercy for those 2 cities, but as no even 10 just, righteous person is found, the destruction is inevitable. Lot (family of Abraham) lives in Sodom and get angelic visitors. The mob (young and old men) of the city want Lot to bring those visitors to the street so they can rape them. An incredible transgression of the sacred protection of guests. A related verse is Romans 9: 28, 29 connects the destruction of those cities to the lack of righteousness. See as well 2 Peter 2:6, the destruction as result of ungodly living. (see as well Jude 7, mentioning all forms of fornication as unjust). *To my opinion this bible episode deals with injustice.*

So, if you have solved the health care issue and you are a godly, righteous person, both text are not valid for today, as equal are not valid anymore OT verses to stoning men or

¹ He is author, speaker, leader. More about him at the end of this study.

² The Moloch. Malik or Molek was this idol. This idol required human sacrifices to keep him happy, especially child sacrifices as sign of total obedience.

women to death because of adultery³. Very important is that you cannot be selective using verses of the Old Testament. If you believe you should keep to these 2 verses, than you should keep as well the other verses from Leviticus and keep all the hygiene, all the rules, laws and regulations. So men should be circumcised and should keep all the hygiene, food, hair, cloth, travel, marriage laws and restrictions. But we do not do that, as they are not valid (see footnote 3 again), equally those 2 bible verses do not matter as the Old Testament has no validity for new testament Christians, so using these verses is not relevant.

But relevant are the 2 verses in the New Testament, the letter to the Romans and in the letter to the Corinthians. Both written by Paul (about around the year 55) AD. Who was Paul? He has had an excellent Greek education and a great orthodox Jewish education from the best Jewish theologian scholars of his time. So Paul knew all about the cultural behavior and customs of the Greek elite, including sexual behavior. How was Greek sex in his time? The free elite men had a woman only for offspring. Besides that, normal sex was between men, and especially with young men, boys (pedophilia). Even educators/teachers had sex with their pupils (boys), this was seen as a positive learning experience. It should be noticed that these passages do NOT appear in any other writing of Paul. Why? Well, the Romans worshipped Greek culture and many customs of Greek culture were imported to Rome, even the Greek Gods (who were as well very sexual active in many ways, read their mythology). Corinthians: this was the Greek international trade city⁴. The most sacred part of that city was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love/sex, who employed appr. 1000 girls (1 Cor 6, 10 refers to this temple prostitution) serving many travelers. The complete destruction of what love is into sex-exploitation drives Paul in this letter to restore love: what is real love? You find this example of world class poetry in I Cor. 13⁵. Back to the main line of thought: As Greek city, in Corinth was the 'normal' sex: men with boys.

³ A sidetrack is the validity of the Old Testament for Christians. For ages there was the replacement theology, stating that the church had come in place of the children of Israel. The true people of God were Christians not the Jews. This led to call Jews traitors and God killers, rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. This led to pogroms and genocides (including the holocaust). Most theologians have left that perspective. An other extreme is a minority that states that with the verdict of the Apostle convention in Jerusalem (council of Jerusalem appr. 44 BC), KJ Acts 15, 20, 29; 21,25: *Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:*²⁰ *But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.* So they say: We have nothing to do with the Old Testament at all, only the teachings of Jesus and the apostles matter (so the New Testament) and skip the book of Hebrews, as that letter is for the Jews, as we believers are gentiles. Paulus has a position in the middle: all what has been written is an example for learning (see 1 Cor.10,6). Finally Jesus quoted on and on from the Old Testament.

⁴ Corinth had to the west Athens, to the south Sparta, to the north Macedonia and to the East Italy (the heartland of the Roman empire), to compare with the position of Rotterdam in Western Europe.

⁵ NIV: *If I speak in the tongues^[a] of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast,^[b] but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but*

Knowing that it explains his writings:

3. Romans 1: 26, 27. (KJ): *or this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

²⁷ *And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

²⁸ *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

Key word in this passage is not the natural sex but **lust, misuse**. And who are those **men? Well, men with boys.**

4,1 Cor. 6: 9,10: (KJ): *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor **abusers** of themselves with mankind, (The Scofield translates here male prostitutes)¹⁰ Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God⁶.*

Here is the word: *abuse* (is not regular sex between two equal partners out of free will), so we talk about not regular homosexuality but pedophilia⁷.

When the King James was written not much was known about the various forms of homosexuality, and nobody dared to write about misuse of young boys. It is sad that in the translation in both examples the better wording would have been pedophilia. When you read those verses and but this word in the text, it becomes suddenly very clear and solves the ongoing debate about the position of homos in our congregations.

We know personally many LHBTQ+ persons who live a godly live and live out righteousness and do not abuse others. They are my beloved and great brothers and sisters (them, it) and are welcome in our meetings and in society.

A befriended homo read those 4 verses and said: well it is clear, because it is not about me. A great exegesis, because he took care of his health, did not surrender to lust, or

rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

⁶ I add on purpose verse 10, as we hear never sermons about this verse. We are hypocrites if we only zoom in homo's and do not relate to what has been mentioned in this verse. We refuse to bless the marriage of homo's, but we keep blessing marriages where partners practice: (Scofield translates) homo-sexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanders, swindlers...

⁷ In this light I recall a quote from president Putin who condemned that all homo's were pedophiles. In orthodox translations it refers correct to pedophilia, but clear most homo's are not pedophiles.

abuse (of others or young boys), he had an ongoing stable relationship with a partner and had a godly live, following Jesus.

Closing: a comedian said: there are 4 warnings in the bible against homosexuality, but there are 365 warnings for heterosexuals in the bible, so what is more dangerous...

APPENDIX 1

There is quite a discussion about marriage and blessing⁸. Can we bless a marriage of 2 persons of the same sex. Here is lot of opposition among Christians. Why? They say a marriage can only be done between one man and one women. Unfortunately you find in the bible quite a number of marriages of a man with several women⁹; see as well appendix 2. And all those marriages were blessed by God. I do not want to spend time on semantic discussions. So what does marriage mean? It is an alliance, union, commitment, covenant, a binding connection, an oath. Going to the original meaning, to my opinion you can bless the commitment of two same gender partners and have it blessed in church. An interesting example can be found in 1 Sam.20: David and Jonathan made an commitment, an oath and God blessed that and David kept that commitment even with the offspring of Jonathan. Mentioned in the Bible passage is that David and Jonathan loved each other dearly.

Two months after my wife and I started dating I ask her to say 'YES' to me. We both gave each other our holy commitment¹⁰. A 9 months later we signed the covenant at the townhall and later the blessing in the church, which was the confirmation of our original commitment. We are still together doing great after 55 years.

So pastors and church boards having problem with the blessings using the word marriage for persons of same sex, I suggest using the other words: alliance, union, commitment, covenant, a binding connection, partnership.

APPENDIX 2

What about polyamory? This new problem is invading the western church. It is easily condemned as wrong, but is it? In the Old Testament there is a long list of great believers, having more wives (see footnote 1). We do not condemn them. Jesus said that from the beginning it was meant to be one man and one women, but it was allowed to have more women¹¹. From mission history we know, that when in Africa a man, having 10 wives) became Christian he had to send away 9 women, and that meant starving from hunger and death for those 9. Not long ago this problem was recognized by indigenous churches and decided was in several occasions, that becoming a Christian and you have 10 wives, you keep them. To my opinion a wise decision. In the mission history we have put too many time our western-world morale, ethics and customs on the peoples

⁸ There are at least 196 passages in the Bible mentioning blessing, to bless, etc. Who are blessed? What is blessed? Well: generations, a house, family, a city, food, crops, meetings, peoples, one person, a tribe, harvest, a wife and husband, inheritance, peace, the house of the Lord, Sion, children, offerings, the king, Maria, the Kingdom of God, the unborn, etc. Here you can add whatever you want to this endless list. What a wonderful secret of Gods Kingdom: Gods blessings are abundant and as well for the HGTBQ+ community. The greatest blessing is probably the beatitudes (Matthew 5). Whi are blessed?: the poor in spirit, who mourn, the meek, the hungry, the merciful, pure hearts, peacemakers, the persecuted, the insulted... I love to add the LHGTB community.

⁹ See Abraham, David, Salomon and so on; all great heroes of faith and anointed by God.

¹⁰ Jesus said, let your yes be yes and no be np, do not taken an oath.

¹¹ Feminist will argue here the right for one women to have more men.

around the world, like teaching classical music to Indians in Columbia as being true and better as their music, or forbidding African tribes to dance.

A friend remarried and divorced 4 times, but was chronological monogamous, and got every time a blessing in the church; I have more problems here as the man never solved his real problem of domination. But I have full sympathy for the 4 women who quit this manipulative controller.

APPENDIX 3

Closing with a brain teaser. Was Jesus a Christian? The answer is no. He was an itinerant rabbi. But He proved to be the Messiah, the Christos. We are named after Him.

Was the murderer (who begged Jesus for mercy) at the cross a Christian? No, still we will see him in paradise, the heavens. Are we too narrow minded? Or what about this text: *you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him.* (1 John 2:29) The meaning has quite some implications. Or what about the text: *In the past God overlooked such ignorance* (Acts 17:30, it is about worshipping gods, Paul's lecture in Athens). This has as well quite some implications. Are we too narrow minded?

Who is Leen La Rivière?

Born in 1946. Married with Ria (1968), 3 sons, 4 grandchildren. He is of French origine (Huguenot), but native Dutch. He studied education and theology (1963-1968). In 2021 he did the master Religion and Society at the Utrecht University. Founder of the ministry Continental Sound (1970; www.continentalsound.org); Founded the publishing House Continental Music 1975; www.continentalsound.org); founder of Christian Artists Europe (1980; www.christianartists.org); founder of Continental Ministries Europe (1985; www.continentalministries.org); founder of the national Christian trade union for arts and culture (1989; CNV-Kunstenbond); founder of the international Christian artists network (1995; www.christianartists-network.org); founder of the Christian artists academy (2000; www.christianartists-academy.org); founder and lector of the masterclass cultural leadership (2015; www.masterclassculturalleadership.org). Leen wrote 29 books. Several books were translated in other languages, the most translated one is Biblical view on creativity and art (14 translations; 2023 in Croatian, 2024 in Mongolian even). Chief editor of the Christian Culture magazine SjoFar (Dutch, released every quarter since 1974). He has been key-note speaker at conferences around Europe, South Africa, Australia) and preached in many churches and meetings. He produced over 100 CD's of Continentals, Young Continentals, Continental Kids and other Christian Artists.