

The Gay Issue: An Alternative View

In our relentless pursuit for globalization, we have to face the issue of homosexuality sooner or later. The issue is unavoidable not simply because we need to employ gays in top positions. The issue needs to be discussed because homosexuality is a lifestyle that is an offshoot of liberalization. We have been told that globalization and liberalization goes together. But do they have to be? By putting the two together means that to be part of a changing world, we need to adopt its new trends and lifestyle. In short, we have to be liberal to a certain degree. We need to relax the rules, and broaden our social perimeters if we want to make corporate Singapore more exciting and kinky for the expatriates and professionals. We need to open up the theatre to allow for nudity so that drama and art can be made more real. We need to be more open-minded about social behaviour if we want to be a cosmopolitan city. Apparently more and more people are seeing the need to be open-minded if we want to open up corporate Singapore to the world.

Homosexuality is part of a liberal lifestyle. It is not exactly a new lifestyle. The Greeks and the Romans had baths and parties where boys could play with boys. But in all societies, ancient or modern, homosexuality is an alternative liberal lifestyle. But gay activists in some cities have succeeded in coercing the policy makers to make it an acceptable lifestyle. Will this be the case in Singapore?

Like I said earlier, we have to face the issue of homosexuality inevitably. But it is striking how the issue is being discussed in Singapore. In most western cities, the issue becomes public through the efforts of gay activists lobbying for their rights in forum, parades, and other gatherings. But here in Singapore, it strikes me that the issue becomes public through the comments of our political leaders.

Homosexuality is an emotive issue. Everyone has an opinion about it. We are not yet at that stage where Singapore is going to make new laws endorsing its practices. But with gays in high offices, and our leaders making favourable remarks, this may be something that will happen in the near future. And before anything like this is to happen, we need to hear all sides of the debate.

Like I said, everyone has an opinion. My opinion differs with those who are pro-gay. And it is hard for me to state such a position. A remark like this is bound to be misunderstood by those who favour a pro-gay Singapore. If I am to state my position in the west, I may be viewed as one who goes around with a club beating the heads of the gays. (I assure my readers that I detest such violence).

I take sides with those who view homosexuality as a deviant social behaviour. Even honest homosexuals concede that it is. What they want to see happening is for a more tolerant society to accept their behaviour.

"To accept, or not to accept." That is the question. For those who favour accepting homosexuality, they find justification in their economic contributions to society, their genetic make-up, their craving for love and attention, their rights as any human beings, etc.

What about those who do not accept homosexuality? What are their reasons? Rather than fleshing out all the reasons in a public forum like these, I prefer to bring out some factors for consideration. I do this deliberately so that I can put my opinions formally for thoughtful reflection.

1. The gay issue is not just about dollars and cents. In fact, the issue should not be approached

in purely economic terms. When we do this, we end up measuring the ethical value of a thing purely on pragmatic terms. Pragmatism says "if it works, then it is right".

2. Gay behaviour is not genetic. Scientifically, the evidence is not conclusive. In a study of gay men, scientists have found a part of the brain of a gay man much smaller. But this is a question of the horse and the cart. It is very likely that their behaviour has reshaped their size, and not other way round. Historically, the politics of intimidation was used to pressurize the American Psychiatric Association into making vague conclusions about gay and genes.

3. Homosexuality is not a trivial issue. It is an issue that inevitably redefines what a family is. And this is why the issue is so serious. The strength of a society rests in the strength of its family. The Singapore government should be praised for astutely seeing this. For this reason, it has laid out for us some core family values to strengthen the family bond and tie. Singapore does this because our leaders are convinced that nation building begins with family building. But what will happen to this basic nucleus of our society when homosexual marriages are permitted? At the end of the day, nation building is at risk.

4. Homosexuality is a moral issue. The gay issue is not a gray issue. There is a right and wrong view about the matter. Traditional religions and culture have a definitive judgment about it. For this reason, religious views should be sought before a public statement should be made. Homosexuality is a new morality. As such, a moral and ethical team should be formed to discuss the new morality and its implications before any thing is to be said officially in public.

5. We should distinguish their identity from their behaviour. By identity, I refer to who they are apart from their homosexual practices. In short, they are like the rest of us. They are members of a society, with every right to vote, to work, to travel, etc. In spiritual terms, they are like us, sinners in need of God's saving grace. Without Christ, we stand with them on the same level. As such, we Christians do not discriminate against them. For me personally, employing gays in jobs is a non-issue. It should not be. But approving their behaviour is quite another matter. Homosexuals have a sexual behaviour that is problematic. Unlike others, they prefer partners of the same sex. This is where they differ with us. Some attribute this difference to genes, others attribute it to social and personal factors. But it is clearly not a gene issue. My standpoint is that it is a sin issue - it is born out of a preference for a sinful lifestyle. The common mistake here is to make an issue of their common identity and ignore their problematic behaviour. The fact that homosexuals seek help to correct their sexual orientation indicates that they have a problem that needs to be solved. We must not ignore the problem just so that we can integrate them into society. In fact, properly speaking, they are part of our society. Homosexuals do not lose their rights to live in the secular society. But the secular society must make a judgment call whether to endorse their behaviour or to disapprove it. And it seems that in time to come, Singapore will have to make that judgment call.

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