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Same Sex Marriages and Churches

The issue of sexuality has created a range of debates in the country and globally with organizations and individuals expressing different views on the topic. The church has come under fire for failing to allow same-sex marriages in the country and preventing diversity in sexuality. While the political and legal environments on the issue have changed, the religious perspective has retained its conservative view on the topic (Evans and Tonge 338). Church leaders should allow same-sex marriage to align their practices with the changing perspectives in the topic. Additionally, the impact that the church has on the political and social aspects require that the institution takes on the role of leadership in the issue. The decisions of the church have implications on the level of discrimination and hate experienced by the members of the LGBTQ community. The justice system and the government have established measures to protect the members of the sexual minorities (Sherkat 395). However, the implementation of regulations on the issue depend on the path set by the religious practitioners in the country. There is need for the churches in the country to adapt to the modern perspectives on sexuality. More people including the clergy have indicated the need for equality among all people regardless of their sexual orientation. The church should allow same-sex marriages to facilitate the accommodation of the LGBTQ members into the community and to facilitate the implementation of the laws against discrimination based on sexuality.

The great role of religion in the social and political structures of the people requires critical consideration on the issues affecting the society. Many decisions made at the church level have implications on the views of the followers and the perspectives they support. In the Western culture, the church has influenced legal proceedings, policies, and the response of the public to the changing rules (Sherkat 394). Therefore, it is critical that the leaders of these institutions create policies and rules that are in line with the intended implications on the public. Churches could affect how the public views on same-sex marriage and homosexuality in general change over the years. By allowing same-sex marriages, the churches would be increasing the support for freedom of personal choices on the issue. The Supreme Court ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges* declares that people have a right to marry partners of the same sex as guaranteed in the Fourteenth Amendment of the constitution.

The reason for the churches to allow same-sex marriages is the level of discrimination and hate faced by gay members of the community. In the United States, there are still instances where people are barred from accessing services based on their sexuality. In spite of the laws protecting the gay people, there is still reluctance in how these choices are respected by the members of the public (Kirby 908). The church has the opportunity to influence these views among the individual followers by promoting the ideals that meet the interests of all people. Most of the hate directed towards the members of the LGBTQ community is associated with religious beliefs and practices. The church has an opportunity to change the perspectives associated with same-sex marriages by promoting the choices made by these couples. Allowing them to marry at the church would eliminate the religion factor that increases the level of hate and instances of violence against gay people.

Religion has an impact on how laws are made and interpreted especially in the United States. The American constitution has taken measures to separate the church from the state by ensuring that all the religions are accommodated and equally protected by the law. However, no law is made out of a vacuum and regulations are based on the beliefs and practices of the people (Rosenfeld 52). By allowing same-sex marriages, the church would play a critical role on improving the lives of the people who do not follow the traditional heterosexual views on marriage. Church leaders have indicated that they allow the government to pass laws on homosexuality but will not support these views in their places of worship. For this reason, the regulations on the issue have not achieved their goals of protecting personal views on homosexuality (Evans and Tonge 336). While the government has played a critical role in passing these laws, most gay people experience some form of hate from the public. The church has negatively influenced the accommodation of diverse views on sexuality in the country.

The views on homosexuality and issues involving LGBTQ rights have changed over the years and it is time for the church to accommodate these developments. In the 1960s, people were punished and harassed by the law enforcement officers for practicing homosexuality. Minorities faced the most critical challenge since they were discriminated on the fronts of sexuality and their race. With time, the government has increased the protection of the LGBTQ communities and led to positive change on the laws concerning people's rights (Sherkat 394). The church should adopt similar developments by supporting the rights of sexual minorities in the country. The most effective approach to guaranteeing sexuality rights is to allow these individuals to marry at the church to set an example among the followers. The teachings of the church affect the persona views and the beliefs of the community. Allowing same-sex marriages

would reflect the changes in the society's views on gay marriages and sexuality rights in the country and globally.

Sexuality is not the first issue of debate in the church and the clergy should learn from the past changes that have occurred in the practices of religion. In particular, the aspect of gay marriages should follow the trend of past changes in religion such as the allocation of leadership positions to women. While there have been few specific policies on the selection of female leaders in the church, religious leadership has been dominated by men for years. In the recent decades, more women have been appointed to lead in key decisive positions and they have been supported to study religion (Rosenfeld 52). The positions of the government and legal issues on gender equality has led to debates concerning the role that women can play in church leadership. Similar modifications of church regulations concerning same-sex marriage should be adopted. Religious leaders should model their rules to match the changes in the dynamic and sensitive topic of sexuality and gay marriage.

Church leaders should pay sufficient attention to the issue of same-sex marriages and the potential it has to influence the views of the society. Various issues have created debates in the church over the past but none has implications on the society like gay marriage (van der Toorn 1460). An increase in the number of openly gay people including some clergy has made this issue one of the most important debates in the past and present. Therefore, the religious leaders need to take this debate into greater considerations especially since it impacts more members of the community. There was less than 2% of the American population identifying as LGBTQ members in 2013 and the proportion had increased to 5% in 2018 (Kirby 911). This data shows that more members of the churches in the country are identifying with this group as well. Therefore, the decision of the church on same-sex marriage will affect more people who are

openly gay in the future. Church leaders should establish firmer efforts to deliberate on the advantages of allowing same-sex marriage and the proportion of the population affected.

Most people know the church to be the most accommodative institution in the country based on their messages of love and inclusion. While the churches emphasize on the moral character of the believers, they accommodate dynamic views and welcome people from different cultural origins. Most people judge others by the standards of the church and they attempt to follow the teachings of love as advocated by the religious leaders. This aspect of the church makes it necessary for the institutions to be more accountable about their policies. Americans believe that the standards of character set by the institutions are the ultimate requirements of morality at the least (Kirby 908). The debate in these religious institutions on the members of the LGBTQ community has significant implications on their ability to fit in the society. Therefore, it is essential that the leaders of these organizations accommodate the same-sex marriages to avoid the use of sexuality as a morality standard. The clergy should adopt rules that are accommodative and supportive of all members in the community.

Churches should not alienate people based on an issue that has created divisions even among some members of the clergy. Over the years, there has been an increase in the focus on the interpretation of the scripture on gay marriages. Some clergy feel that there is no explicit declaration of homosexuality as a sin in the Bible and neither do the teaching indicate how sexuality should be judged. Therefore, the debate creates a critical concern on how religion could be used to falsely segregate some members of the community and promote discrimination (Rosenfeld 55). In response to the variations on the views on sexuality among the church leaders, some have supported same-sex marriages and others come out as gay. These changes in views among the clergy reflects the diversity of the community on sexuality and marriage. The church

could significantly influence how the society in general views the issues of sexuality and the implications on the people.

Churches should allow same-sex marriages since sexuality should not be used as an identity or judgment of character within the institution. Most leaders in churches support heterosexual marriages only and have reservations about same-sex marriages (Kollman 71). The impact of such religious practices and rules is that some of the church members are discriminated from receiving some services such as a certified marriage. Therefore, the church discriminates against some members of the community who follow practices that are allowed by the law. Such an inequality and discrimination in the religious setup has even worse impacts on the lives of the gay people outside the church (van der Toorn 1462). They are forced to leave the church since their views and sexuality choices are not allowed by the leaders. Denying same-sex marriage is a huge discrimination against individuals who feel that they have the right to choose to marry into a same-sex marriage.

Some religious theorists have expressed reservations on support for same-sex marriage and expressed concerns on the potential impacts of such rules on division in churches. Since this institution was established, there have been variation in views that led to separations and creation of new denominations. Religious leaders have noted that LGBTQ members of the society should have equal rights as other people in the country (Kollman 66). Therefore, they have demonstrated the need to established equality with most churches supporting laws on nondiscrimination based on sexuality. However, the churches have noted that allowing same-sex marriages in the church would create implications that are more negative than positive for the LGBTQ members and the community in general. The churches that emphasize more on the

scripture rather than the changes in the community have been the most vocal in rejecting same-sex marriages. They feel that such provisions are against the beliefs of their members.

In spite of these justifications, the clerics and clergies opposed to same-sex marriages do not prove their point on the need to reject this change. Divisions and the diversity of views have been the norm for churches and should not justify discrimination (van der Toorn 1459). Early churches have disagreed on issues such as worship, the election of leaders, and even the scriptures' interpretation. Therefore, the possibility of a division in the global church institution should not be the basis of discrimination against the LGBTQ community. Religion should be sensitive to change and should reflect the diversity and social practices in the community. Moreover, church leaders should abide to the regulations in the state by supporting the government on the issues of equality among the members of the society (Kollman 71). The church has delayed the support for same-sex marriages and made the issue more complex, influencing how people feel about these regulations. It is time for the leaders at the church to accommodate the LGBTQ members by allowing same-sex marriages and promoting diverse sexuality. These changes in the rules by church leaders would have significant implications on how the followers of the religion view sexuality outside the scope of religion.

The church has an essential role to play in influencing the social and political debates associated with sexuality. Church leaders should allow same-sex marriage to ensure the accommodation of the LGBTQ members into the community. The government's capacity to promote the safety and protection of these individuals relies on how the church supports diversity on sexuality. Same-sex marriages are a sign of accommodation of diverse opinions and practices in the church and the community.

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