The Influence of Christianity in the Process of Acceptance of Homosexuality: Guilt and Apostasy

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Abstract: The trilogy of money, sex, and power has always been actual. Only a naïve or demagogic vision would be able to deny the influence of them inside the churches. Sex and corruption scandals and false prophets with messianic and dictatorial postures are spread among us, grossly opposing the Gospel. A Christianity that does not have Jesus Christ in its core will demand a clear and common enemy to gather all the flock and, through fear and hatred, keep it together in the practice of tithing and, nowadays, serving as a political support to the ones appointed by their religious leaders. In a confused Christianity so typical of Brazil, the elected enemy once were the Catholic, later the Freemasons, the Spiritualist, the Communist and, in the last ten years, the homosexuals and the LGBT movement which are blamed for cases of pedophilia by Christian leaders in this country. Our goal here is not to prove the coherence or not of such gospel "jihad" though the analysis of the canonical books searching for answers, instead will try to understand who and how many of such people there are there, the connection between pedophilia and homosexuality, to be aware of what they have been through in their pursuit of correcting their sexual drive, their religious dilemma when facing the Christian intolerance, and their subsequent apostasy.

Keywords: homosexuality, religion, pedophilia, sexual abuse.

In 2019, a research conducted by the University of São Paulo among 10 of the major Brazilian cities said that 7,8% of all men regarded themselves as homosexuals and other 2,6% as bissexuals[1]. Such estimates say the ammount of homosexuals among the Brazilian population would come up to 17,9 million people[2], and a great percentage of them are brought up inside Churches.

Brazil is not a liberal country as portraited on television. And it seems to be getting more and more conservative. Even in more liberal and modern countries, we can not claim they are having easy or normal lives. In Portugal, for instance, studies developed by the Portuguese Government concluded that homosexuals suffer in that country three or more situations of phisical or verbal violence, and that the Christian religion was the main reason for that.

As for the USA, a research conducted by Columbia University among 32.000 young people with ages between 13 and 17, concluded that the probability of a homosexual to commit suicide was 5 times bigger than a young heterossexual. The Suicide Prevention Resource Center, one of the most reputable NGOs on the suicide prevention, published an article where they state that between 30 and 40% of homosexuals try to end their lives in some moment. Many are able to achieve it.

There are NGOs in Brazil that state that the number of victims among homosexuals is 8 times bigger than the overal Brazilian average (32 in every 100 thousand per year, against 4 in every 100 thousand).

We can hear declarations from Christian leaders saying that homosexuality is 'just fashionable nowadays' or 'result of the end of the time', stating that such behaviour is not natural, concluding that the high suicide rate among homosexuals were nothing but a result of their sinful choices. We started wondering if the Christian Church weren't behind such tragedy and decided to understand the influence of Christianity over this group of people listening to more than 1800 male homosexuals, but also listening to preachers, sexologists, psychologysts and other specialists to better understand the situation.

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

Along history we can notice that sex and emotional relationship among persons of the same sex tended to be considered as something natural until a small group of people appeared in a far away – but still very strategic – location, who preached there was only one God and in whose opinion sex should be only be done aiming procriation. Such idea was considered bizarre by all comunities around them, but it gradually spread out. Alternating moments of persection and indifference, the persecution intensified and became part of the stablishment after the XIV century, as the Black Plague killed millions. Such movement wasn't limited to Europe and the New Colonies in the Americas, but reached global dominance because of the ideals of the Puritans on the XVIII century, thank to the British Empire.

Since then, the homosexual started being considered not only a sinner but also a criminal, liable on condemnation of forced labour or even death. Heterossexuality started being considered the only acceptable way of sexual/emotional relation and anyone that didn't abide by that should be punished and/or outlawed.

The basis for such alegations were theologicals, philosoficals and strongly based on the Zeitgeist of that age. So, even Medicine started being used to reinforme the degradation stigma, when in 1886, the catholic doctor Mr Richard von Krafft-Ebing, author of Psychopathia Sexualis, stated that eroticism should be regulated by the need of procriation and the ideals of love for God and family values. In Brasil, the first studies on the subject were performed by a lawyer, Mr Viveiro de Castro, in its work 'Indecent Exposure: Aberrations in Sexual Instint'. Mr de Castro's work treated homosexuality not only as an aberration, but also as a medical condition. We have to bear in mind that a medical condition is any kind of physiological or anatomical deviation, which emplies a disease.

It took almost 100 years until the American Psychiatric Association, in a simbolic act, excluded homosexuality from a list of diseases, deviation or perversion from its'Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – DSM'.

As for Brazil, only in 1985 homosexuality stopped being considered a deviation and finally, in 1999, the Psychology Federal Concil decided to ban all kinds of psychologycal treatment which aimed to correct, or 'cure', homosexuality.

Five centuries or five hundred years may not seem much if we have the human history and its two hundred thousand years in mind, but for those who suffered persecution, this allegation makes no comfort. Although Freud used to consider homosexuality as natural as heterossexuality (being a supporter of their rights, saying that everyone could work as a psychoanalyst: what wasn't being the case at that time), that is not what some of prominent christian psychologysts defend, Reverend Silas Malafaia is one of them. This Reverend (president of Assembly of God Victory in Christ – one of the most important Christian denominations in Brazil) uses Freud's name and teachings in order to make people believe that Freud was a advocate for the 'gay cure'. What he makes with some saying of Freud, such as.. 'Homosexuality is assuredly no advantage, but it is nothing to be ashamed of, no vice, no degradation; it cannot be classified as an illness.', nobody knows.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND CHILD ABUSE

Although homosexuality has been removed from the list of mental disorders from Doctors and Psychologysts last century, it hasn't been the case inside most of our churches. The startement that there is a 'gay cure' implies the idea that being gay is being sick. For the large majority of scolars it is a sophism, for most churches that is an immutable truth, as spoken by an immutable God.

It is commum in Brazil to hear evangelical preachers saying that all homosexuals are the result of child trauma. Their opinions are largely outspread by their millions of followers. One of them, again Mr Silas Malafaia, even stated tha ll the homosexuals treated in his churches had been sexualy violated by homosexuals during their childhood. His conclusion is that if homosexuality is the result of a trauma, if the trauma is removed, so would be the

homosexuality. Another sophism. In order to have a clear comprehension of such topic, we send a questionnaire with 7 questions to hundreds of men that have sex (eventual or not) with other men. All these people were contacted by relationship gay sites from the Internet. Accepted to answer the questionnaire 286 volunteers. The results are as follows:

1) Have you ever been sexuality assalted before understanding your sexuality?

Answered "Yes" - 106 people, or 37,1% of them.
Answered "No" - 180 people, or 62,9% of them.

A research conducted by the Brazilian Government (Parana State) concluded que the percentage of children sexuality molested in the general population would be 5%, number much lower than among the homosexuals from our research. Eventhough is far from being the 100% claimed by the Christian preachers, it still is much higher than the average population.

We presented the results of our research to a doctor, who asked not to be identified, asking for his opinion. In his point of view, pedophiles approach potencial victms: a male child who has feminine features or gestures is more probable to be selected as a victim than another one, with more strong male features or behaviour. It may explain part of the question, but we suggest that more research to be made in order to get into the real existence between child abuse and sexuality. Only one thing we know for sure: the minority of homosexuals were exposed to some kind of sexual trauma during childhood.

2) If your answer was positive, how would define the abuse suffered? (104 answers).

Violation – forced into sexual intercourse – 35 answers – 33,7% of total of those who suffered sexual abuse.
Sexual Harassment – not welcomed approach – 69 answers – 66,3 of those who suffered sexual abuse.

Analysing this answer, we have a clear view about the quantity of people sexualy violated: 12,5% of the total. Closer to the Brazilian Government research covering the population in general.

3) In case you were abused, who was the one responsible for it? (104 answers)

Adult in authority position (family) – 30 answers – 28,8%
Other adult in authority position (teacher, others) – 06 answers – 5,8%
Other adult with religious authority – 05 answers – 4,8%
Unkown adult – 08 answers – 7,7%
Person with similar age (brother, cousin, neighbour, classmate) – 34 answers – 32,7%
Another person with similar age (unkown) – 01 answer – 1%
Others – 02 answers – 1,9%

4) In the case you suffered abuse, how long did it last? (103 answers)

Only once – 32 answers – 31,1%
Between 2 and 5 times – 48 answers – 46.6%
For years – 23 answers – 22,3%

5) Do you consider such abuse as something traumatic? (105 answers)

Answered "Yes" - 65 people – 61,9%
Answered "No" - 28 people – 26,7%
Other answers – 12 people – 11,4%

6) What is the influence such abuse had in the defintion of your sexuality? (104 answers)

- There is a link between the sexual abuse I suffered and my sexual orientation – 20 answers – 19,2%
- There was no relation between such abuse and my sexual orientation – 63 answers – 60,6%
- Not able to answer the question – 21 answers – 20,2%

We would like to enphasize that only 19,2% of those that suffered sexual abuse see a clear link between the episode and their sexual orientation (a total of only 6,99% of all male homosexuals interviewed). Such people certainly believe they would belong to the same sexual orientation group it the abuse had or had not happened.

6) In case of sexual abuse, who did you report it? (104 answers).

Father or mother – 16 answers – 15,4%

Teacher or another adult in the position of authority – 01 answer – 1%

Friends or others of similar age – 08 answers – 7,7%

Nobody ever knew – 79 answers – 76% of the total.

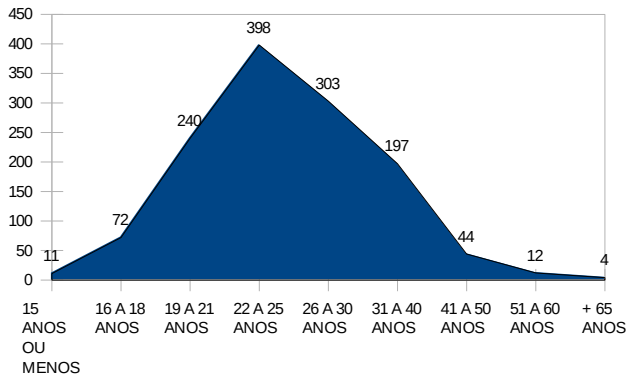
And that is perhaps the most scary data we get from this research: 3 in every 4 children that suffer sexual abuse never tell anybody what happened. Even in the cases where the abuse lasted for years. Shame, confusion and guilt are the results of it.

FINAL RESULTS

Our goal wasn't, and has never been, to dicuss homosexuality under the theological perspective, but to understand the result of such dilema in the people's psychologycal health and apostasy.

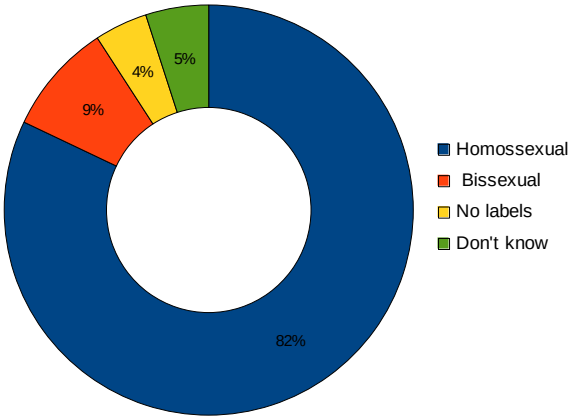
To achieve it knowing wher they come from, their sexuality acceptance process, the influence – positive or negative – of the Church in this process and final (or not) apostasy, we went on the field trying to hear men that have sex with other men of all ages and origens. We have the support of several different NGOs, some churches and even sites that promote date among gay people. At the end of 5 years, we manage to get 1288 forms fulfilled. Having all results being consolidated and all comments read, some participants were selected for further questioning, so we could better understand the influence of the Christian religion on them.

Brazil is divided into 28 states + the Federal Capital. The states with the highest number of contribuition were São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Paraná, Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo.

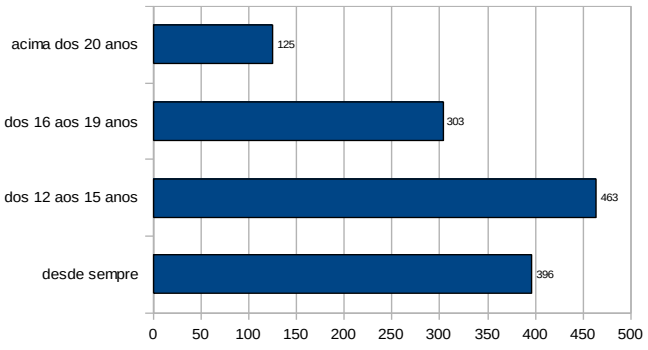


The age rage were 14 and 68 years of age. 4 people were 15 years old or yunger. 11 were over 65. The average age is 24.

A large majority (82%) declared to be only homosexual – 1056 answers. 9% declared to be bissexual. 4% preferred not to label themselves and 5% said they still do not know.

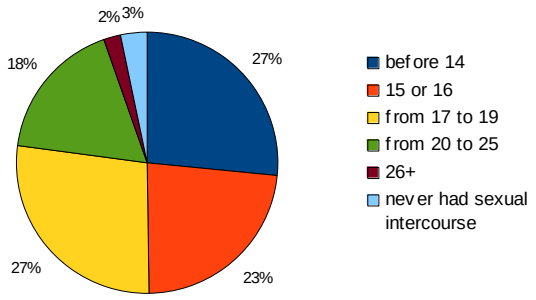


As for the moment of discovering their sexualities, most of them declared they realized they sexual orientation before the age of 15 (67%), but from those, 396 (31%) said they always knew who they were.

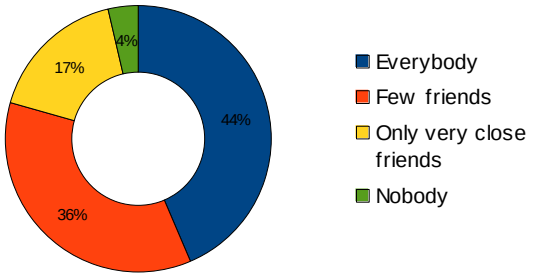


As for the beginning of their sexual life, we realized, by our surpresa, that the average initial age was

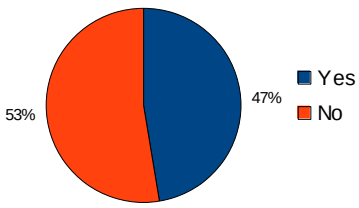
higher than among heterossexuals. According to the "Durex Global Sex Survey", performed in Brasil, the youngs lost their virginity at the age of 13 (on average). According to our research, only 27% lost their virginity at the age of 14 or before. Insteresting to point out that 42 of the interviewers (3% of total) had not yet had their first sexual encounter, but already considered themselves as part of the selected group for the research.



As for the openness about their own sexuality to family and society, only 44% declared that everybody around them (family and professional relations) knows about it.

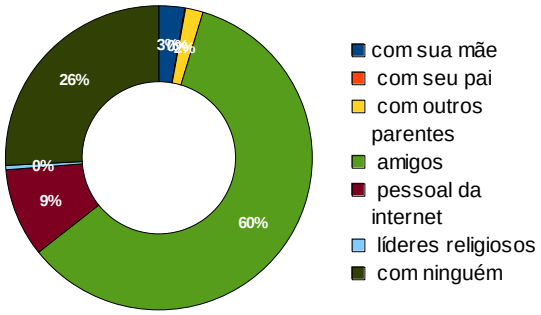


47% of the interviewers had already had sexual intercourse with the opposite sex.



The distance between the young people and their parents becomes very clear after the next question: only 1 person (among 1287) shared with his father his internal dilema. The mother was the choice of only 35 of them (3% of total). Religious leaders, only 6 people (less than 1%). The majority either spent those years of definition in complete silence (26%), chose to share only with close friends (60%) or virtual friends they met on the internet (9%).

The distrust to people of authority is more than clear here. 97% did not share their internal sexual issues with them.



LIVING WITH GUILT

In a interview given to us, the psychologyst and Master in Sexuality, Dr Olavo de Martino, points out the burden of the religious moral on the psychologycal construction of each person. In his experience in the Clinic, he couldn't see the Church offering proper acceptance to those in anguish due to its old view on people's sexuality. The result of such approach has been seen as the deny of their sexual pulsion, leading people to failling marriages, depression, low self-esteem, prejudice, homophobia, problems when relating to people.

Another professional interviewed was the psychoanalyst, Dr José Garcia, who used his own live as an example. Member of a protestant church, got married and had children, refusing to be a homosexual. Went through several psychologycal and spiritual treatments in order to deny his sexuality. The result of it was long years of unhappiness and strong homophobia. At the age of 60 (he

was 64 at the moment of the interview), tired of fighting agains his own feelings, got divorced and met another man in a gay relationship site. They decided to live together and, in his words, found happiness a little before the end of his life. He says that now he is able to help others not to go through what he had been and not waste their lives.

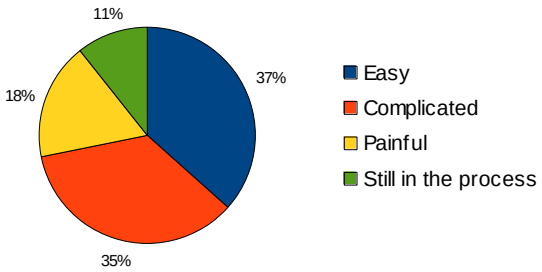
Pastor Fábio Inácio started his ministry at the age of 18, in a Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, where he stayed until he turned 22. He was forced to abandon the church due to problems related to his own sexuality. He said he was lucky to find it out before getting married (he was engaged at that time). Just after leaving the church he had his first meeting with another man. He is now married to another man and one of the leaders of an Inclusive Church, which accepts LGBT members into its community. He dedicates his life to those with psychologycal problems who flock to his church – many of them suffering persecution inside their own homes, saying their only scape is suicide.

Melancoly and tendency to suicide is also what faces, daily, the psycologyst Dr Edson Andrade de Oliveira. He says that many of the male clients he has come to him with dilemas related to homosexuality, who are developing panic syndrome, depression and different levels of frustration. He clearly opposes the claim that the Bible may be used to help build ethics and better human beings. He even refuses to attend those that he calls as 'christian fundamentalists'.

The cases where the clash between homosexuality and Christianity in Brazil do not end either in tragedy or in frustration are rare. The homosexuals are given no much choice: either have to live under the rule of pain, denials and guilt or they have to abandon the churches, when they are not expeled from them before. The next chart helps to clarifiy this topic.

When analysing their sexual growth-process, they were asked to evaluate that moment of transition. 137 people (11%) said they were still facing that moment. The evaluation was positive for 470 (37% of them) for whom the crossing had been easy. But for 677 (53% of them) that crossing was a painful and complicated moment.

Among the more than a thousand people interviewed, some narratives got our attention and most of them express different levels of suffering, usually very deep

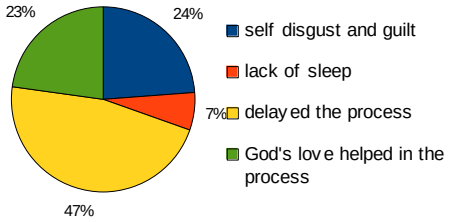


and in silence, due to the pressure and condemnation from churches and the impossibility of changing their natural sexual drive.

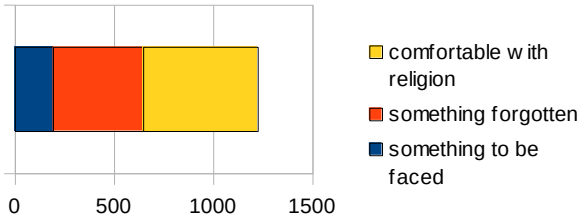
From the total of 1280 answers received, 453 said that Christianity had a very relevant, but negative, role in that process.

It seemed relevant to understand the thoughts of those that said that Christianity had a relevant role (either negative or positive) in that process and which ones identifying themselves as Christians.

We asked them how the religion impacted them. From the 609 people that stated that Christianity was relevant, only 139 (23% of this total) considered the Christian influence as something positive: for those, God's love helped them to better accept who they were. For the rest, Christianity (through its leaders) led them into having self-disgust, anguish and long lack of sleep (31%). for the other 47%, Christianity had a temporary impact but incapable to halt their sexual drive.



For the 1224 people that accepted to answer how they deal with religion nowadays, most claimed to be comfortable with the religion they had (557 of total)), to the others, religion was something not to be thought about (455) or something still to be faced (192).

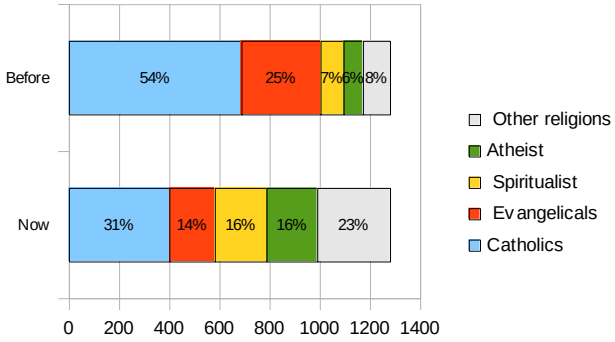


We considered important to understand where this people come from and were where they at (talking about religion) in the moment they understand their sexuality in comparison with the actual moment. The migration process has become very clear. 1280 answers collected and very relevant results:

Before accepting their sexuality, 54% of people interviewed were identifed as Catholics. This percentage dropped to only 31%. Among Evangelicals, the drop is even bigger: from 25% to only 14%.

If the percentage of Christians were cut by half, the ammount of people that are Espiritualist, Atheist or followers of other religions raised dramatically: Espiritualists, from 7% to 16%. Atheists, from 6% to 16% and followers of other religions (Umbanda, Candomblé, Budism), from 8% to 23%.

In comparison, among the total of Brazilian population, only 13% of the population aren't identied as Christians. Among homosexuals, this number rocket to 55%. Important to mention that this ammount of 45% of people that still identify themselves as Christians should decrease even more in time, after all there still are a good percentage of homosexuals that still consider the religion issue something to be faced – many of them surely will abandon Christianity.



As for the image that the Evangelical Churches (protestant or pentecostals) have among this public could hardly be more critical: from the 1258 people that answered this question, 96% said they had a negative impression of such churches (the most mentioned adjectives were prejudiced, false moralist, evil). Only 4% had a positive image (the most mentioned adjective was light).

When asked to describe better their opinion about Evangelical churches, that was clear the sorrow, bitterness and even prejudice. We can clearly notice an exchange of negative feelings, builing steriotypes and mutual hatred. Many homosexuals afirmed they couldn't care less about what is done inside churches in contrast with seem to be an obsession from the Christian leaders with what that group of people do with their lives, being constantly negatively mentioned in the sermons and always very uncomfortable with any kind of human right homosexuals achieve.

A public clash between those two groups perhaps gather votes and donations to some politicians or tele-evangelist preacher, but certainly will keep futher away important thinkful groups of our society, away from those that defend Human Rights, from cience, from the next generations, away from Christ's teachings.

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