

A thick black L-shaped frame is positioned around the text. It starts at the top left, goes right, then down, then right again, forming a partial rectangular border around the central text.

QUEER IDENTITIES AND RELIGION 1

Religion, same-sex desires, and
gender identities

Queer sexualities and religion

How are dominant heteronormative discourses of gender and sexuality affirmed *and* challenged within religious traditions?

See this week's readings from Dag Ølstein Endsjø, *Sex and Religion*, ch.5.

Religious functions
Cultural functions



Culture or religion?

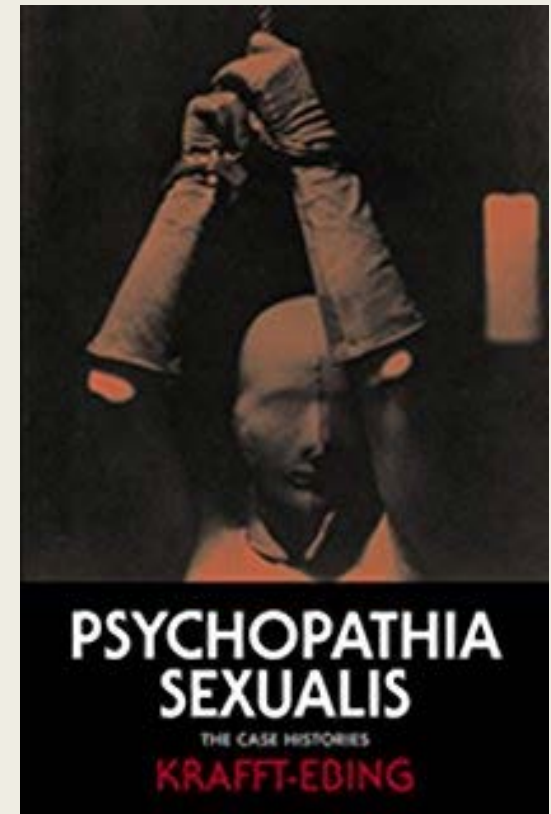
‘The connections between religion and homophobia [and transphobia] ... cannot be analysed without reference to cultural norms ... Religion alone is not always the primary agent of creation of homophobic [and transphobic] attitudes, and sometimes does not contribute to homophobic [or transphobic] attitudes at all. Indeed, in some cases, religion may reinforce or sanction existing positive attitudes towards homosexuality [and the trans community]’

James Wilets, p. 1.



Gender and sexuality are social constructs ... remember?

- There are no universal, fixed or timeless understandings of 'normative' gender and sexuality.
- The meanings ascribed to genders and sexualities is in constant flux across space and time.
- The terms 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' were first used in the 1860s by journalist Károly Mária Kertbeny. Adopted as a medico-legal term in 1886 by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*.
- The word 'bisexual' dates to the early 20th century; transgender was first used in medical discourses in 1965.



Robert Jeffress on What Jesus Thinks About the Transgender Debate



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BY [STOYAN ZAIMOV](#) , CHRISTIAN POST REPORTER

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Islam and Homosexuality: What Does the Koran Say?

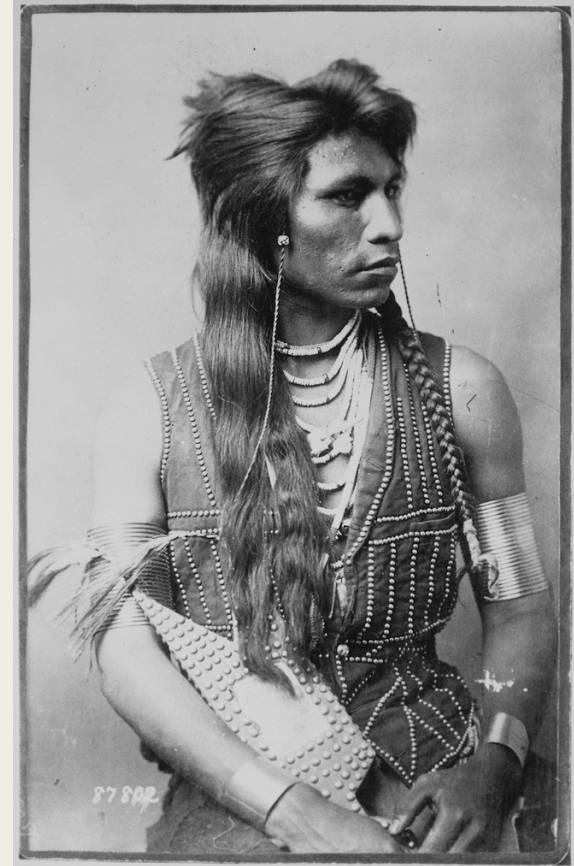
Here's a look at what ISIS, Islamic scholars and others in the region say about homosexuality.

Religious attitudes to sexual desires change over time and space

- Buddhism: a long tradition of same sex desires being tolerated between some Japanese Buddhist monks and younger novitiates. Desires between women less tolerated.
- Islam and Judaism: some toleration of same sex desires during Middle Ages and beyond.
- Hinduism: Vedic texts (c. 1500 BCE) and Kamasutra both regard male same-sex desires and non-binary genders as acceptable.
- Ancient Greece: Sexual desires between men tolerated in cultural and religious contexts – a reflection of divine activities.

Religious traditions challenging gender binaries

- Indigenous Americans - 'two spirit' people who embody both masculine and feminine.
- Voudou religion – wide acceptance of male same-sex desires and different gender identities.
- 'Third gender' in Hinduism (hijras)
- Mukhannath (transgender identity) recognized and tolerated in some Islamic hadith.
- But, can we say that religions **condone** or **sanction** homosexuality or trans identities per se?



Religious roots of homophobia

- Prohibition of same-sex desire between men found in many religions.
- Often grouped with other forms of sexual behaviour identified as illicit.
- Religious rationale:
 - *Contradicts divinely-mandated order*
 - *A source of impurity – matter ‘out of place’*
 - *A marker of ‘outsider’ sexuality*
 - *A consequence of ungodliness – divine punishment.*



How seriously are same-sex desires and trans identities taken within religious traditions?

- Do not appear to be a priority in sacred texts.
- Not always easy to determine – how were sexuality and gender understood when these texts were written?
- They are no more serious than other offences involving opposite-sex desires (e.g. adultery, pre-marital sex, divorce).
- Differences between the way male and female same-sex desires are treated.

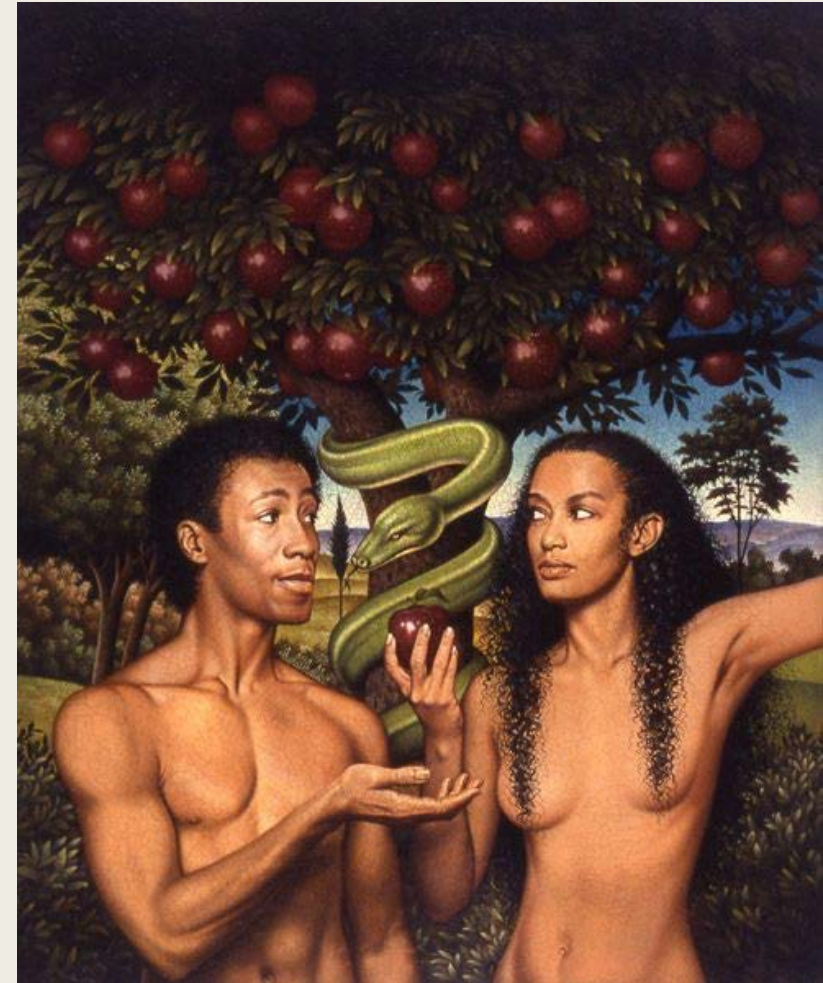


Again, we have to be cautious when evaluating these contemporary terms in relation to older texts and traditions.

Tradition – or interpretation?

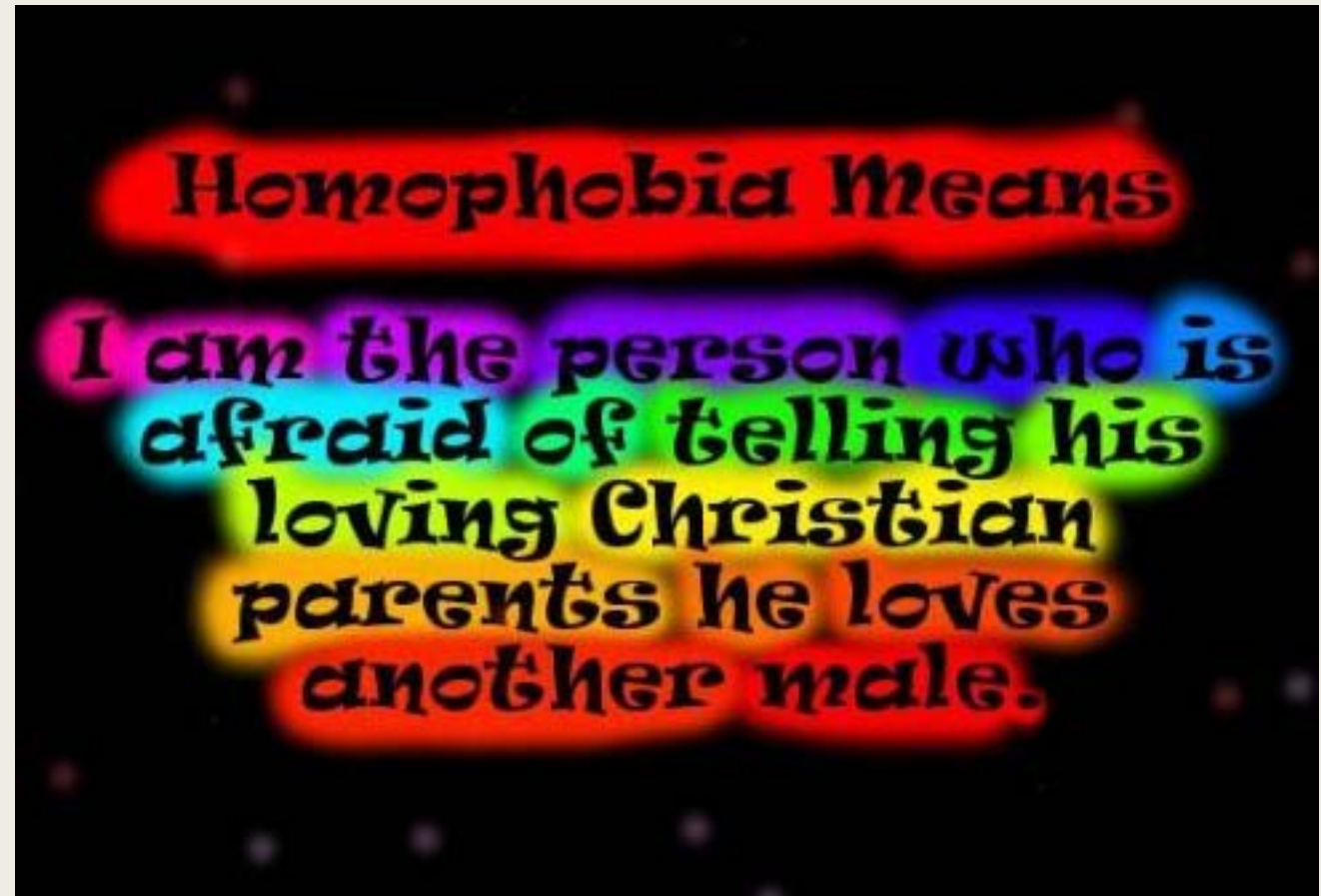
- Creation of ‘male and female’ (Genesis 1-2).
- Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19).
- Laws against “homosexuality” (Leviticus 18.23; 20.18)?
- Jesus and divorce (Matt. 19.3)
- Paul and undesirable sex (Romans 1.26-7)
- See Southern Baptist Convention's use of biblical texts in their response to transgenderism.

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2250/on-transgender-identity>

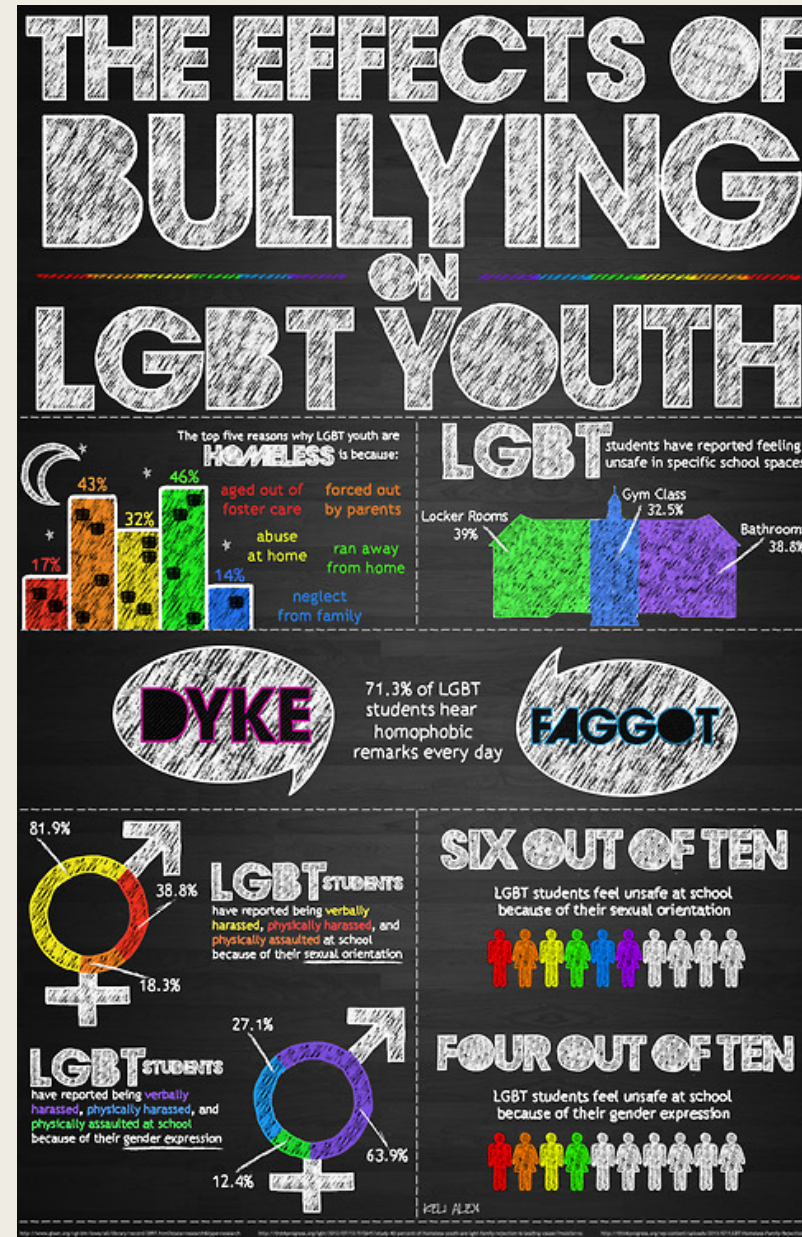
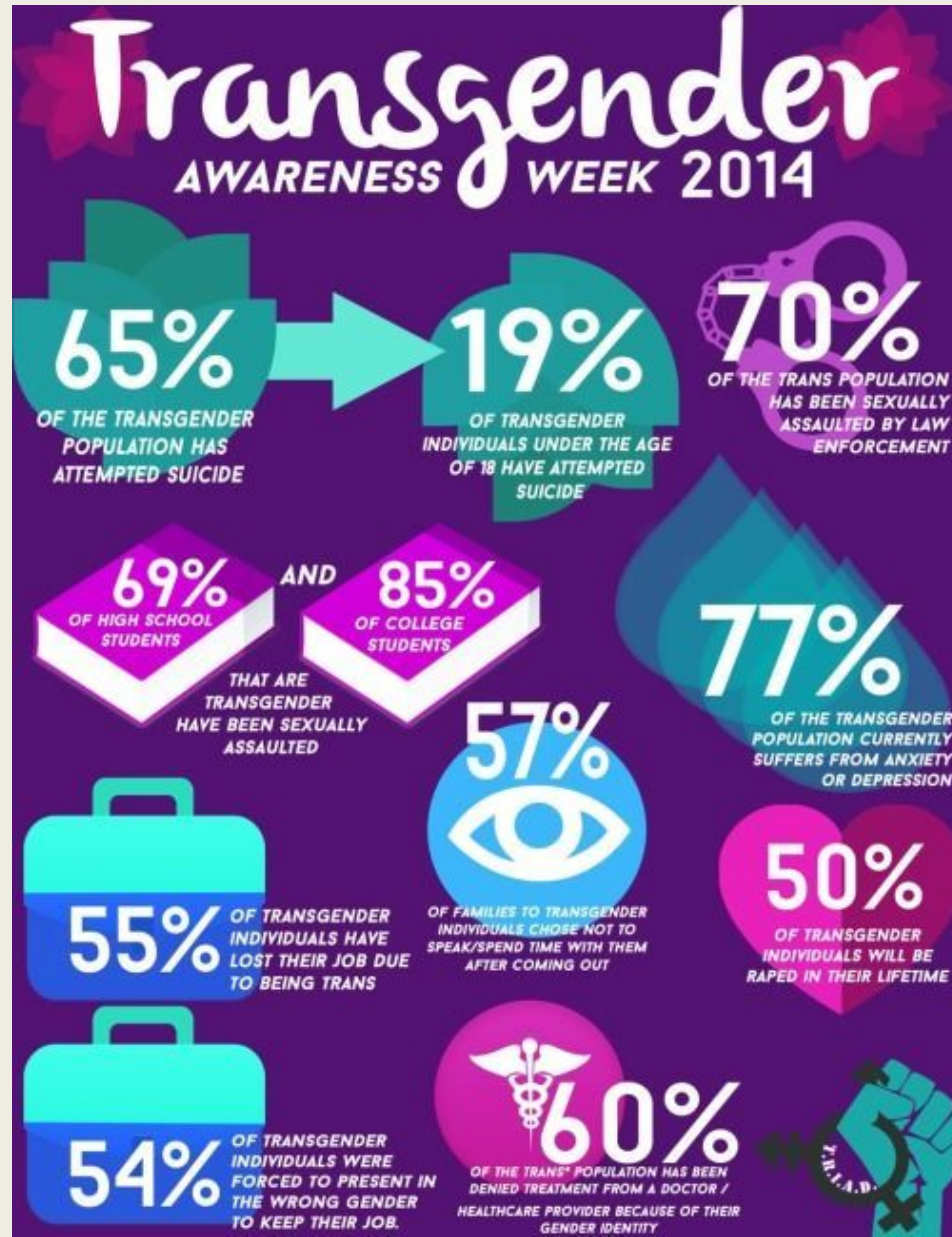


Transphobic and homophobic violence in religion and culture

- Subjective violence: physical violence
- Symbolic violence: violence of language
- Structural violence: institutional, legal violence.



Queer rights are human rights...right?



- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/transphobic-hate-crime-statistics-violence-transgender-uk-police-a7159026.html>

Responding to homophobia and transphobia in religion

- Cultural relativism...or universalism?
- Religious freedom...or oppression?

