

Colours of Subjection: Linguistic Utterances on (Homo)Sexuality in an Evangelical Church

Cores da Sujeição: Enunciados sobre a (Homo)Sexualidade dentro de uma Igreja Evangélica

*Antônio Augusto Lemos Rausch¹ 

*Marco Aurélio Máximo Prado² 

Abstract

This article discusses the discourses of religious leaders on the inclusion of homosexuality in evangelical churches, highlighting the theological and biblical interpretations present in the evangelization practices of a ministry aimed at LGBT individuals. Based on the concepts of censorship, closet and subjection, we explore how these discourses on homosexuality operate a double movement of constraint and recognition, materializing the prohibition of homosexuality in the religious context. To this end, the discourse of religious leaders, evangelistic materials, news and posts on social networks are analysed. The article concludes that homosexual subjects and their presence within the church are comprehended as different parts of a body, each representing a different ministerial “function” or a gift granted by divine grace.

Keywords: discourse analysis; religious discourse; sexuality; homosexuality.

Resumo

Este artigo analisa os discursos de líderes religiosos sobre a inclusão da homossexualidade nas igrejas evangélicas, destacando as interpretações teológicas e bíblicas presentes nas práticas de evangelização de um ministério destinado a pessoas LGBT. A partir dos conceitos de censura, armário e sujeição, compreende-se como estes discursos sobre a homossexualidade operam um movimento duplo, de constrangimento e reconhecimento, materializando a proibição da homossexualidade no contexto religioso. Para tal, analisa-se o discurso de líderes religiosos, materiais evangelísticos, notícias e postagens em redes sociais. Ao final, evidencia-se como os sujeitos homossexuais e sua presença dentro da igreja são compreendidos como partes diferentes de um corpo, e cada qual representa uma “função” ministerial distinta, ou um dom concedido pela graça divina.

Palavras-chave: análise do discurso; discurso religioso; sexualidade; homossexualidade.

¹ Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia (PPGPSI/UFMG, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brasil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0133-6078>.

² Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia (PPGPSI/UFMG, Belo Horizonte, MG, Brasil). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3207-7542>.

Introduction³

The public debate on sexuality and religion is permeated by distinct actors articulated around a range of political categories and issues. Prejudiced discourses on homosexuality and transgender identities made by religious leaders and “corrective practices” have sparked controversies in which the defence of unrestricted religious freedom is presented as antagonistic to the recognition of sexual and gender diversity within religious contexts. Although actors from various religious affiliations participate in this debate, evangelical involvement is particularly significant in the media and across different institutional levels of the Brazilian state.

This article explores a study of diverse positions evident in the discourse on sexuality in evangelical churches, focusing specifically on the Lagoinha Baptist Church (*Igreja Batista de Lagoinha: IBL*) in the interior Brazilian city of Belo Horizonte. “Lagoinha,” situated in the São Cristóvão neighbourhood of the city, is an evangelical church founded in 1957 by missionary José Rego do Nascimento and 32 other religious youth who had previously congregated at the Barro Preto Baptist Church. In July 1961, the IBL (along with 32 other Baptist churches) was expelled from the Convention of Baptist Churches of Brazil, held in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais. The expulsion arose from theological divergences relating to the charismatic practices adopted by these churches, delegitimized by traditional Baptist religiosity (Tognini; Almeida, 2007).

Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Lagoinha Baptist Church expanded its influence both in Brazil and internationally through intense media participation. Among its notable activities are the *Louvor Diante do Trono* (Before the Throne Praise Ministry: known simply as DT), led by singer Ana Paula Valadão, and the *Ministério Fé* (Faith Ministry), led by Pastor André Valadão (currently the senior pastor of Lagoinha Global), the brother of Ana Paula, who was a member of DT, is also the son of Pastor Márcio Valadão, former president of IBL. The church’s political activities have distinct impacts at regional and national levels. However, the media and promotional expansion of BT and the “Valadão Family” have made the church notorious in the Brazilian religious and political setting. Beyond its institutional influence, including support for candidates running for legislative and executive positions at municipal, state and federal levels, the church also wields significant cultural influence. One example is the frequent public declarations by Ana Paula and André Valadão condemning homosexuality, which have provoked public outcry from social movements and other sectors of society.

Despite its controversial public declarations, Lagoinha has developed various activities over the years aimed at the LGBT community. These initiatives have included psychotherapy services, popularly known as “gay cure” therapy (primarily channelled through the now-defunct Gileade Ministry), spiritual retreats, and evangelistic efforts at LGBT pride parades in Belo Horizonte, initially linked to the church’s youth ministry, known as “Mocidade Lagoinha.” In 2014, the church began hosting the Colours Movement (Movimento Cores), an evangelistic ministry specifically targeting LGBT people, led by Pastor Priscila Coelho, who remained affiliated with the institution until her departure in 2023.

³ These reflections are based on the study conducted for the master’s dissertation entitled *Religious Practices, (Homo)sexuality, and Psychology: Sexual Politics and Subjectivation Between the Church and the Secular World*, submitted to the Postgraduate Program in Psychology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais in February 2024.

The ministry operated from Lagoinha Savassi on Avenida do Contorno until 2022 and on Rua Rio de Janeiro, in the centre of Belo Horizonte, until 2023, the year in which it severed ties with IBL. This occurred in the wake of the national repercussions of Pastor André Valadão's homophobic remarks in his preaching and his incitement of violence against homosexual people. In a video posted on Instagram, Priscila Coelho announced that she was leaving the Lagoinha Baptist Church because of disagreements over the evangelistic approach to the LGBT population. Rather than understanding this departure as an effect of recent incidents, we turn back to the events of the last decade to understand the emergence of these positions on inclusion/exclusion of the LGBT community within the institution.

Methodology

The empirical data for this research consists of documentary data, including texts, videos, live-streamed church services and lectures, television programs, social media posts, and promotional and evangelistic materials produced by the Colours Movement (*Movimento Cores*: MC) and the *Igreja Matriz*, the Mother Church, as the unit located in the São Cristóvão neighbourhood of Belo Horizonte is called. The study adopts documentary research as a methodological strategy (Sá-Silva; Almeida; Guindani, 2009; Nunes; Simeão; Pereira, 2020; Grazziotin, Klaus; Pereira, 2022). Based on the records produced in the religious context, this approach enables the recovery of part of the history of social practices from primary sources, minimizing researcher intervention in their production.

Furthermore, discourse is understood as an articulatory practice that constitutes and organizes social relations, rather than as a merely cognitive or contemplative entity (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015, p. 167). In this sense, we proceed from the assumption that the identities performed in this material are not stable or immutable entities. On the contrary, they are transformed through the processes of articulation and enunciation inherent to the discourse itself. Articulation, in this conception, is a process of making differential positions equivalent within chains of meaning that transform the elements articulated by this same process (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015). In this investigation, we focus in particular on the regulation of homosexuality; however, we understand here that these forms of prohibition also operate through movements of discursive production and enunciation. The analysis of discourse and the prohibition of homosexuality is thus framed here as a description of the performative effects of prohibitive utterances.

Prohibition, Censorship and Subjection: Theoretical Reflections

In the Bible, the most notable passage on the prohibition of homosexuality appears in the Old Testament, in Leviticus 18:22: "You shall not lie with a man as with a woman; it is an abomination." This brief excerpt frequently surfaces in the inflammatory speeches of certain evangelical pastors and leaders, such as Bishop Edir Macedo, Pastor André Valadão and Pastor Silas Malafaia. These and other evangelical figures often cite this verse as biblical justification for condemning homosexuality and excluding it from social and religious life. This same use of biblical text appears in parliamentary speeches on "gay marriage" or other issues concerning the rights of *sexual minorities*.

However, we can consider that the statements of these conservative religious leaders are insufficient to achieve what they set out to do: eliminate homosexuality from the realm of linguistic recognition. On the contrary, to effectively produce the intended prohibitive effects, the “second part” of the verse is equally (and perhaps even more) significant. It is through the rhetoric of “abomination” that a new regime of recognition of what is commonly referred to as “homosexualities” is established, a form by which sexuality and gender are understood within the religious text, framed as gendered abominations, their multiple dangers, and the ways to deal with them. We analyse this structured repetition of prohibitions in religious practices and how these prohibitive commands function as imperatives to action.

Starting from the idea that “abomination” becomes the “artifact” of prohibition, and consequently a possibility for its experiencing, two questions arose for consideration: first, how certain forms of control and surveillance over sexuality are organized within social relations, structured by forms of knowledge and lack of knowledge about it; second, how prohibition establishes a regime of recognition through negation, in which action is restricted in some respects while simultaneously expanded in others. These two questions are not easily separable, but we use these two analytical lenses to comprehend how the discursive regulation of sexuality is constituted within the context of religious experiences and how these modes of thought and epistemic practices expand or contract within the social field.

The closet (*armário* in Brazilian Portuguese) is an experience that traverses much of contemporary queer experiences at varying levels and in diverse forms. “Coming out of the closet” can be conceived as an action or rite through which the person reveals to the world a sexual identity previously kept secret. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (2007) argues, those on the outside who receive this information may react with surprise, claim they already knew, respond with anger, or even with affection. The “outside” of the closet is a contingent space of unpredictable reactions. Nevertheless, what the scene of the closet evokes is a lack of knowledge of sexual identity as an act of not knowing, not as an absence of knowledge. By revealing another sexual identity, the lack of knowledge of the “other” is shown to be a space densely occupied by a presupposition of knowledge about sexuality.

Eve Sedgwick's (2007) thinking helps us interpret the coming out scene and poses a new question: when does the person enter the closet? Much is said about the moment of coming out, but the action of entering does not seem like an easy narrative to recover. Eve suggests that closets are formed as relationships happen, as the subject is faced with a new calculation of whether or not to reveal their sexual identity, and the possible consequences of this. With each new colleague, new boss, new students... with each new person who crosses our life line, other walls are built, to the point that even if someone is publicly and openly gay, they will still be in the closet for someone, like their bank manager. What the experience of ‘coming out’ also reminds us of is that this way of knowing, or the act of not knowing as a presupposition of knowledge, takes place in a field of recognition, where the subject is in some form subject to another. The act of “revealing” or “concealing” an expression of sexuality requires a calculation that jeopardizes the subject’s capacity to survive, their recognition within the normative field and the very stability of this normative field.

We can consider that even before the recognition of a sexual identity, we are subjected to this normalizing and heteronormative field. We can think of the space of the closet as a social logic that precedes recognition, or not, as part of a sexual community. Hence, we could also contend that we are born in the closet (since this social organization precedes our existence) and we become gay (or trans, lesbian, queer, bi, pan, etc.) through it. The closet does not depend on our autonomy to decide on the terms in which we recognise ourselves; on the contrary, it imposes a certain organization of sexuality through recognition, a nature to be constantly produced on the basis of certain constraints and invitations to action.

This is similar to what Butler (2021) advocates about censorship as a form of discursive production based on prohibition. Censorship precedes the text (and consequently discourse); nonetheless, it is always a partial act that is unable to restrict the content completely, since censorship itself publicly enunciates the terms that it seeks to abolish, making them visible as prohibitions. This affirmation alone would be insufficient to reflect on the problem of censorship and the closet, since, as a generalized form of the functioning of language, it would be inevitable. Given that every text is censored and writing requires a selection of what can and cannot be said, it would make no sense to oppose forms of censorship. Against this, Butler revises this thesis by arguing that intelligibility is formulated *in* and *by* power. Since its exercise is rarely recognised as such, censorship would be one of the most implicit forms of power that acts through eligibility, escaping the terms it itself produces. Explicit forms of censorship, on the other hand, such as moral or legal prohibitions,

are exposed to a certain vulnerability precisely because they are easier to decipher. Regulation that declares *what it does not want to declare* frustrates its own desire and commits a performative contradiction that questions the regulation's ability to signify and do what it says, in other words, its claim to sovereignty. These regulations introduce the censored discourse into the field of public discourse, establishing it as a place of contestation, that is, as the scene of the public enunciation they were intended to prohibit. (Butler, 2021, p. 214).

Returning to the closet, it is because the logics of censorship and lack of knowledge are also implicit and difficult to decipher as operations of power that the closet becomes a paradigm of the queer experience. Of course, the blue and pink present in the discourse of political leaders or in rituals such as gender-reveal parties are easily decipherable codes, but the sense of a "nature" that regulates behaviour is something that escapes this enunciation. The closet not only produces lack of knowledge of the sexuality of the "other who comes out," but also lack of knowledge of sexuality itself, the spaces in which desire can circulate. In all likelihood, at a gender-reveal party the guests will not be dressed in blue and pink, but there is a high probability that they will recognize themselves in some gender term that will give stability to a representation of what it is to be a "man" or a "woman," even if they do not know when they first began to identify themselves in these terms. The prohibition on gender "insubordination" is only effective to the extent that gender also organizes the recognition of one's own body and defines the terms by which one can identify oneself.

Explicit censorship presents legally or socially as a code, but implicitly it acts by rendering unfeasible any representations (whether bodily, aesthetic or discursive) that threaten to dissolve an unconscious and involuntary sense of “order,” and in this case, “sexual nature.” The failure of the closet appears when someone recognizes themselves in it, when unintelligibility becomes the perception of a prohibition in the field of recognition. Something previously “unspeakable” and “implicit” becomes something “that must not be said.” The failure of censorship resides in its “inability to effectively circumscribe the social domain of sayable discourse” (Butler, 2021, p. 216), as well as the impossibility of complete subjectivation through legal means (ibid) and other explicit forms of interdiction. If censorship is one of the forms in which power materializes (*in*) discourses, this is also a problem, since by assuming the contingent nature of regulation and its very foundation, its legitimacy as a form of power also comes into question.

Both censorship and the closet present the problem of prohibition no longer as an interdiction of statements, but now as a problem in the field of social intelligibility and the recognition of the self and others by subjects. In this discursive field, the subject is no longer understood as an equivalence to the individual, but as a linguistic category that is both the agent of an enunciation and formed and constituted by the very action it enunciates (Butler, 2017). With this in mind, the “problem” of sexuality in evangelical churches is caught between these two movements of constraint and production, and the intimate relationship between them in the formation of the normative field.

Homosexuality, Celibacy and Marriage

Missionary Priscila Coelho was invited by television producer and director Alex Passos, known as Balaio, to present the Amplificador (Amplifier) programme on Rede Super de Televisão, IBL’s local TV station, in 2011. The programme aimed to address issues surrounding the experiences of young evangelicals, alternating them with cultural productions such as live music and video clips. Two years later, in 2013, the missionary started the Colours Movement (*Movimento Cores: MC*) with the aim of promoting evangelization activities aimed at homosexual people, which was incorporated as a Lagoinha ministry in 2014. Two recurring activities publicized by the movement, up until the time of this research, were the “Grupo Entendidos,” a Bible study group held every Wednesday, and the Grupo Alegria, on Mondays, with ministrations and moments of praise and worship.

As well as activities in the Church’s spaces, Colours is also present at events aimed at the LGBT public, approaching people in bars, nightclubs and even during the Belo Horizonte Parade. Priscila’s physical appearance and behaviour are striking when compared to other Church leaders. She is a young-looking black woman with dreadlocks, tattoos and piercings; she wears little make-up and clothes that would not be easily identified as feminine. While her peers wear social attire, skirts, dresses or “designer” clothes, the pastor was seen wearing jeans, skater trainers and baggy T-shirts. For her, her physical appearance, which is different from traditional gender expectations, helps her form closer ties with the “LGBT” or “alternative” public.

A quick search on the internet reveals videos of sermons, TV programmes, interviews and podcasts in which Pastor Priscila presents her personal testimony of conversion and her struggle with her own sexuality. In this article, we analyse the talk given at the 2022 edition of *Confracjovem*, entitled “Homosexuality, celibacy and marriage,” and some of the ministry’s other evangelistic materials. This ministration took place at the Mother Church in Belo Horizonte on 22 April, was broadcast live on Lagoinha’s YouTube channel and is still publicly available (at the time of publication of this article).

The talk began with the presentation of the leaders of the Generations Ministry, the couple formed by Pastor Vanessa Jaffar and Pastor Eduardo Queiroz. This couple deviate from some of the pastoral leadership’s expectations. Both are white, young-looking and wore casual clothes in front of the LED panel that reproduced the visual identity and theme adopted that year: Resistance. Like Priscila, their way of speaking sounds less “orthodox,” they use colloquial expressions and everyday examples in their oratory. At the beginning of the conference, before the guest spoke, Vanessa asked the audience to turn to look at the person next to them and say “sex.” The objective is to open up the faithful to a more relaxed conversation on a topic that is normally taboo: “Today we as a society are suffering the consequences of the church’s failure to talk about this subject.” Vanessa also presents an expanded concept of sexuality, which goes beyond sex or “sexual choice,” “desire,” “attraction” and “sin.” Sexuality, for her, concerns behaviour, the way of relating to the world and, ultimately, each person’s identity.

Priscila, who spoke next, answers Vanessa’s question about why it took the church so long to assume responsibility for talking about homosexuality. For the pastor, the omission is related to a lack of theological knowledge about deep issues that society and secular knowledge have been addressing for a long time. She says that she was very surprised when she pastored a church of heterosexual people, when she discovered that the people there also had sex. She joked: “Guys, I thought LGBT people were the only sinners on the face of the earth!”

She continues her speech by describing her personal journey and her struggle with her own desires and sins. “As everyone knows, I’m not this testimony of a superwoman, of superhealing,” she says. “I’ve always known that my difficulty would lie in my sexual orientation.” Priscila shares that she was introduced to homosexuality at the age of five, and, as a result, even after her conversion, she still had emotional and bodily memories of those moments. “We are shaped by our experiences; they transform us in various ways.” She links her homosexuality to this precocious sexual development and later attributes it to an attempt to cope with an emotional void: “In homoaffective relationships, I see it much more as using the other to resolve an internal issue rather than genuine love.” The pastor complains that the Church has sidelined science and psychology, which she describes as “an interesting resource for those dealing with trauma,” and psychiatry, which can assist along side medication in cases of compulsion. Regarding secular knowledge, she does not place it in opposition to faith but as a complementary factor: “You will be helped by God, via a professional.”

Pastor Eduardo also presents an argument against the demonization of sexuality – that is, its reduction to merely a spiritual problem. For him, this amounts to an “easier” way out than addressing the issue of sexuality within all of us, which,

he suggests, would make us “better people.” “We aren’t men and women the moment we’re born. Biologically, we’re born male and female,” he continues, “but from our mother’s womb, we’re bombarded with labels.” “From the moment we’re born, we’re searching for affection, attracted by our desires and seeking pleasure.” The challenge, therefore, is to manage all these dimensions of sexual life, with the help of God. Later, the pastor asserts that if there’s one thing religion is unable to do, it is to repress sexuality. Sexuality, he suggests, pertains to how each individual relates to others and is profoundly shaped by the earliest references encountered “when we come into the world.” These diverse references foster diverse ways of people relating to one another, since experiences of masculinity and femininity are never the same for anyone. He goes on to explain how these encounters can be thwarted, which happens when individuals are exposed to unhealthy models of masculinity and femininity. The church’s mistake, he argues, resides in attempting to place everyone on the same level without considering these unique histories and lived experiences, which are embodied in one’s sexuality.

Once again, the importance of a humanistic evangelistic practice is emphasized. Pastor Priscila also criticizes the Church for over-spiritualizing the gospel, focusing on dealing with spirits rather than human beings. She stresses the need for empathy towards resistant individuals, illustrating this point once more through her own childhood experience of sexual abuse: “I went through this at the age of 5, ‘I don’t want to be used, I already have been.’” “Generally the question that arises in such moments is ‘Where was God when I was abused?’” Her response is: “With you, crying alongside you.” For her, this is the posture to adopt: remain silent and weep together, since “what abuse does to someone has no answers.”

The conference, which lasted 1h33m, continued to address homosexuality as a subject to be discussed within churches and emphasized the importance of non-combative stances towards homosexual people, who are sinners just like everyone else. The pastors emphasize how celibacy, like marriage, are divine gifts, and not “final” solutions to the conflicts of each individual and their issues, which will continue throughout their lives. Celibacy is a gift in which “you prefer to relinquish a promiscuous life in order to live a true one.” This is not only be a problem for homosexuals, but for everyone with some conflict regarding their sexuality. The “idolatry of marriage” for example, present among the faithful, and excessive religiosity are understood as causes of embarrassment for homosexuals, divorcees, asexuals or anyone else who does not conform to a normative framework.

The pastors criticize the church’s combative stances on this topic, attributing them to hypocrisy. Even so, they position themselves against so-called “Inclusive Theology” and a reinterpretation of the biblical sin of homosexuality. Sin is understood not merely as a spiritual question but as an identity-based and emotional issue that must be addressed continuously on a subjective level.

In another video, made for the programme “Nunca é Tarde,” presented by Pastor Lucinho Barreto, broadcast on Rede Super and available on YouTube, Priscila recalls her life story. Starting with her life before her conversion, she identifies the sexual abuse she suffered at the age of 5 as the beginning of the precocious development of her sexuality, which made “the sex thing “very open,” to the point that she had relationships with school peers from an early age. At the age of 14, she says she started liking girls. “I didn’t have enough sin in my spine, I

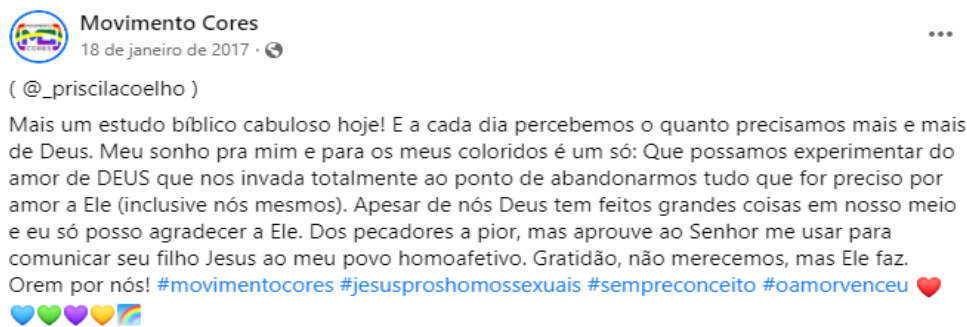
said: ‘Now I’m going to go with a girl.’ And then I went completely off the rails, because the Bible says that says that one abyss calls to another.”

Talking about homosexuality is very complicated; only those who live it truly understand. I don’t believe that a person wakes up one day and says, ‘Hey there, I’m gay.’ Only if they’re crazy. Because it’s something that no one, not even gay people – I’ll tell you this, and it’s going to cause some controversy, but I’ll say it—not even gay people... because I have [gay] friends... they are happy being gay... because it’s something stronger than them, and I know that it is. I can only say ‘no’ to homosexuality and ‘no’ to sin because of Christ who dwells within me. If they don’t have this Christ, they won’t be able to wake up and say, ‘I don’t want to be gay. I don’t want to be a murderer. I don’t want to be a sinner. I don’t want to be a prostitute.’ You know? No one has that strength. That strength comes from the Holy Spirit. So every day, when I wake up, and sometimes I have bad dreams about how I used to be, I wake up, and God speaks to me: ‘Daughter, it’s war. It’s a fight. You’re in the army, and I’ve already won for you.’ And that gives me strength every day, I see something and think... [inhales deeply]... God... because Satan lays out banquets for you...

Priscila’s account frames religious conversion and sanctification as a continuous process of vigilance and struggle against homosexuality. This struggle is manifested through the perceived weakness of the body and is marked by the absence of Jesus Christ. The strength derived from the Holy Spirit is what makes it possible to win this “struggle” against Satan’s banquets. Here, the conversion of sexuality is depicted as a process inseparable from conversion to Christianity, with the testimony serving as a declaration of both transformation and martyrdom. We can explore how this narrative unfolds into evangelistic actions, starting with the initiatives of the Colours Movement headed by Priscila.

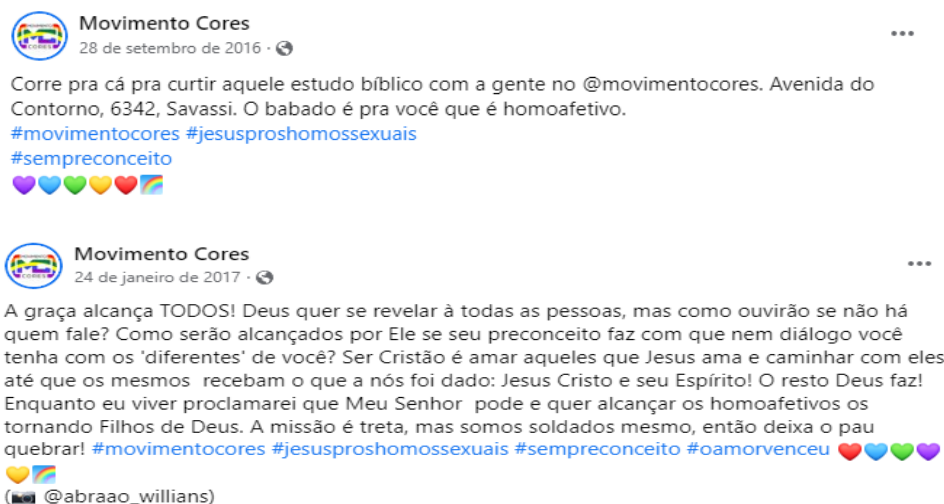
Despite her friendly stance towards LGBT people, the leader of the Colours Movement frequently reiterates the sinful nature of homosexuality, as exemplified by her earlier testimonies and preaching. The ministry, its leader and its relationship with the IBL have already been the subject of interest by other researchers. In the article “Singlehood and invisibilization: the relationship between religion and homosexuality in the LGBTQ+ evangelical ministry ‘Movimento Cores’” (Signates; Moura, 2019), the authors identified four conditions of invisibility present in the functioning of the ministry: (1) the invisibilization of the ministry, manifested in its physical separation and the lack of publicity on the part of the Mother Church and the nucleus where it was located; (2) confidential attendance, which refers to the option of several members of the church and the movement not to take part in public meetings; (3) singlehood and repressed contact: since any homosexual or homoaffective relationship is understood to be a sin, there are few moments of social interaction outside the context of the group’s meetings or activities; and (4) the invisibilization of the leader, in this case manifested in Priscila’s lack of participation in other ministries or activities unrelated to the Colours Movement. Despite the friendly atmosphere towards the use of cultural symbols associated with the LGBT community, such as clothing, music or linguistic expressions, this acceptance does not extend to sexual practices and affective relationships, nor are these people well accepted in other church spaces, such as the Lagoinha Mother Church.

The two recurrent activities publicized by the Colours Movement are the “Grupo Entendidos,” a weekly Bible study group, and “Grupo Alegria,” held on Mondays, with ministrations and moments of praise and worship. Unlike the Gilead Ministry, which, during the years of its operation, has kept its publicity restricted to short messages for “HOMOSEXUALS” in the *Atos Hoje* newsletter, the Colours Movement has an intense presence on social networks, especially Instagram and Facebook, where the ministry’s activities are publicized.



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023)⁴

The posts and messages on the Movement’s profile, as well as Priscila’s speeches, use slang or expressions from the “LGBT vocabulary,” referring to the people of the “frill,” as well as other symbols that refer to social movements and political agendas, such as the rainbow flag, and the hashtags #withoutprejudice and #lovewon. The texts have a friendly tone towards people who are not part of the “religious community” and reinforce the group’s welcoming stance and a loving representation of God.



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023).⁵

⁴ Another crazy Bible study today! And every day we realise how much we need God more and more. My dream for myself and my colour friends is one: that we can experience the love of GOD that totally invades us to the point that we abandon whatever is necessary for our love of Him (including ourselves). Despite us, God has done great things in our midst, and I can only thank Him. The worst of sinners, but it has pleased the Lord to use me to communicate his son Jesus to my homosexual folk. Thank you, we don’t deserve it, but He does. Pray for us! #coloursmovement #jesusforhomosexuals #withoutprejudice #lovewon

⁵ Come and enjoy a Bible study with us at @coloursmovement. Avenida do Contorno, 6342, Savassi. The frill is for those of you who are homoafective. #coloursmovement #jesusforhomosexuals #withoutprejudice

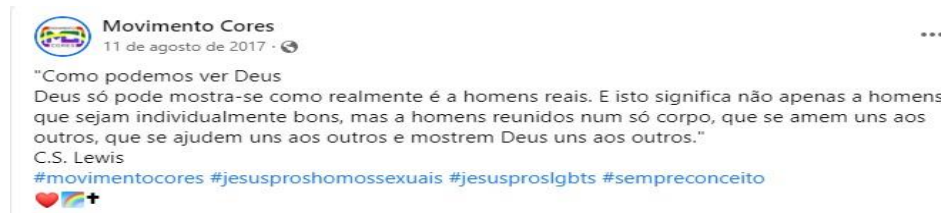


(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023).

One of the most frequent actions undertaken by the Movement is participation in the LGBT Pride Parade, where they approach participants and invite them to take part in the group's meetings. In addition, the messages are directed at the "homoaffective" public, without any distinction between terms like "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual" or "transgender." Among the photos recovered on Facebook, the invitation to take part in the 2016 edition stands out, accompanied by a photo from the previous year, where the phrase "Jesus Cures Homophobia" appears emblazoned on a pride banner while members of the movement pose in Praça da Estação, next to a black drag queen artist from Belo Horizonte in festive clothes.

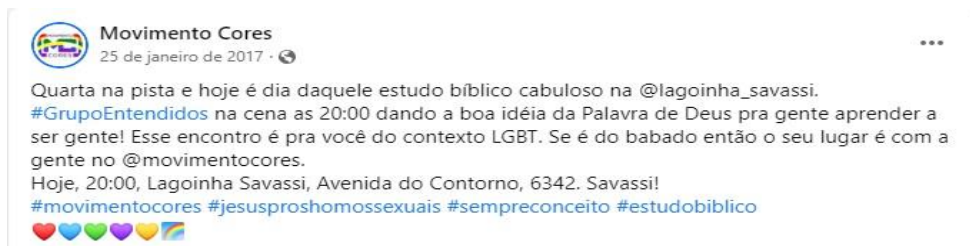
In the excerpts above, as well as in the photo published by the movement, "prejudice" and "homophobia" are terms used to refer to the failure to fulfil the evangelistic mission and missionary work and as a challenge to establish a dialogue with "difference." However, simply recognising this "difference" does not represent a stance against the moral condemnation of homosexuality as a sin. On the contrary, "equality" refers to the idea of "original sin" and the "grace" represented in God's love for sinners and in salvation, through the sacrifice on Calvary that "reaches EVERYONE!" The idea that "God does the rest!" reaffirms the theological interpretation that the process of transformation and change occur as a result of becoming a "Son of God," submitting to his judgement and abandoning a life "prior" to religious conversion. The term "difference," as opposed to an idea of recognizing diversity, refers to the expansion of the evangelical Church into secular life, as a form of exerting influence and expanding spiritual dominance, as Rosas (2015) has explored.

Grace reaches EVERYONE! God wants to reveal himself to everyone, but how will they hear if there is no one to speak? How will you be reached by Him if your prejudice means that you don't even have a dialogue with those 'different' from you? To be a Christian is to love those Jesus loves and to walk with them until they receive what has been given to us: Jesus Christ and his Spirit! God does the rest! As long as I live, I shall proclaim that My Lord can and wants to reach homoaffective folk, making them Children of God. The mission is a fight, but we're soldiers all the same, so let's get cracking!
[#coloursmovement](#) [#jesusforhomosexuals](#) [#withoutprejudice](#) [#lovewon](#)



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023)⁶

Just as in Priscila’s personal testimony and her speech at Confracjovem, the posts and messages about the Movement’s evangelization activities promote a notion of incomplete Christianity. The references to sin, demonic action and salvation take place through a form of loving communication, which reinforces ideals of solidarity between Christians, transformation through divine action, and are reflected in a continuous process of personal improvement. Biblical truth condemns sin and thus homosexuality, but we are all sinners, each with their own challenges and struggles against human nature and carnal desires. This is why the mission to bring #jesusforhomosexuals #withoutprejudice continues, based on the apostolic principle that “God does not show favouritism’ (Acts 10:34), which the leader has cited various times in her ministrations and public testimonies.



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023)⁷

The group also developed activities aimed at relatives of LGBT people. The aim of “Family Colours” was to introduce these family members to the “world” of “colourful people” from a perspective of love, care and interaction. Family support aims to strengthen relationships weakened by the intolerance of relatives concerning homosexuality and the resistance to the issue caused by an excessive “religiosity.” This “religiosity” is understood as an attachment to dogma. The constant accusation of sin and expulsion from the church are seen as ways of denying sin as human nature. It is like the Pharisee who beat his chest and claimed to be different from sinful men, becoming blind to his own sin and consequently losing God’s favour. There is recognition of the dynamics of family violence, but prejudice and homophobia are framed as threats to the evangelistic mission, rather than the violation of some right. It is curious to note that the images publicizing the meetings reaffirm the “family” as

⁶ God can show Himself as He really is only to real men. And that means not simply to men who are individually good, but to men who are united together in a body, loving one another, helping one another, showing Him to one another. For that is what God meant humanity to be like; like players in one band, or organs in one body. C.S. Lewis #coloursmovement #jesusforhomosexuals #jesusfoorlgbts #withoutprejudice

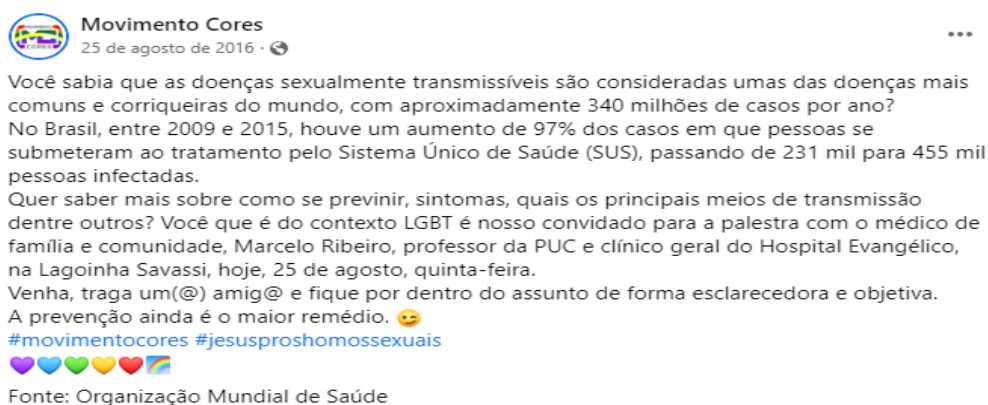
⁷ Wednesday on the dancefloor and today is the day of that crazy Bible study at @lagoinha_savvassi. #GruposEntendidos on stage at 20:00 giving us the good idea of God’s Word so we can learn to be people! This meeting is for you from the LGBT scene. If you’re into this frill, you can join us at @movimentocores. Tonight, 20:00, Lagoinha Savassi, Avenida do Contorno, 6342. Savassi! #coloursmovement #jesusforhomosexuals #withoutprejudice #biblestudy

something equivalent to heterosexual and reproductive relationships, even though the ministry develops its activities around “homoaffective” relationships. One of them shows a couple composed of a white man and woman, holding hands with children, strolling along a beach, superimposed by the group’s watermark painted in different colours, and a rainbow in the background. The exclusive use of these elements is striking given the contrast with the ministrations, as in other publicity materials, where there is an affirmation of the plurality of the ministry’s “public.”



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023)

Another action undertaken by the group was a talk on sexually transmitted infections. With the participation in one of the so-called “Parada Cores” (Colour Parade) encounters, film and documentary screenings by a doctor and professor from the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, the action was promoted as an educational activity on the transmission, symptoms and prevention of STIs. The event was accompanied by discussions with the movement’s leaders and other guests.



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023)⁸

⁸ Did you know that sexually transmitted diseases are considered among the most common diseases in the world, with approximately 340 million cases a year? In Brazil, between 2009 and 2015, there was a 97% increase in the number of cases in which people received treatment through the Unified Health System (SUS), rising from 231,000 to 455,000 infected people.

Do you want to know more about how to prevent these diseases, the symptoms, the main means of transmission and more? Those of you from the LGBT community are invited to a talk with family and

Articulation, Contradiction and Sexual Religious Politics

The discourse of acceptance of sexual diversity within the Colours Ministry overlaps elements that at first glance seem contradictory, but acquire internal coherence through the process of their articulation. The group promotes prevention initiatives in sexual health, highlighting the presence of a health professional and university professor and using visual resources that reference non-heterosexual sexual practices (a condom with packaging in the colours of the pride flag) and phrases used in HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns, “Prevention is still the best medicine.” However, the group simultaneously develops activities and ministrations that double down on homosexuality as a “promiscuous” way of life, spiritually condemned, to be combated through celibacy, resistance to carnal desires that oppose biblical truth and through divine mercy and grace.



(Colours Movement, Facebook page, accessed May 2023)

In Pastor Priscila’s ministrations, “unhappiness” and “sexually transmitted diseases” are framed as consequences of original sin, a lack of submission to Christ, and a “worldly” life. The discursive articulation of these elements takes place amid the use of ambiguous terms and abstract concepts of love and care. Messages like “#jesusforhomosexuals” or “#jesusforlgbts” equate “inclusion” and the fight against “prejudice” with “evangelization” and control over secular life. Simultaneously, the condemnation of homosexuality and the “fight against sin” through celibacy are tied to the notion of a “spiritual battle,” establishing a distinction between “sanctified” sinners and those still “enslaved” by sin. Over the years, the ministry’s promotional materials appear to respond to some of the demands presented by social movements and activist groups, such as the creation of “Negritude em Cores” (Blackness in Colours) as a new branch of the Movement in March 2023, aiming to confront racism within the religious space and expand representation within the church. We argue below that the inclusion

community doctor Marcelo Ribeiro, a professor at PUC and general practitioner at Hospital Evangélico, Lagoinha Savassi, today, Thursday 25 August.

Come along, bring a friend and find out more about the subject in an enlightening and objective way.

Prevention is still the best medicine [#coloursmovement](#) [#jesusforhomosexuals](#)

Source: World Health Organization

of *homosexuals* in religious discourse occurs through non-recognition – or rather, through the recognition of homosexuality within the discursive field as “abjection” or, in this case, an “aberration.” In our view, this process cannot be reduced to a mere “co-opting” of diversity – specifically, of homosexuality – by the religious field, but is rather one of the effects of the political reorganization of this discursive space.

The Lagoinha Baptist Church has undergone numerous ministerial and institutional changes since its founding in the 1960s, being identified as part of the “renewed Baptist” movement – churches that originated from Baptist traditions but adopted charismatic practices influenced by the expansion of Pentecostal churches. Pereira (2011) examines the church’s history through its “Pentecostalization,” as well as its technological, market-driven and communication-oriented expansion. This growth can also be observed in the emergence of the *Diante do Trono* Ministry within the “gospel” scene and the prominence of brands associated with its leadership (as identified in Rosas 2015). This is also evident in the church’s expansion during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, through the ‘cell church’ methodology, the establishment of additional units referred to as “nucleuses,” and the creation of more than 200 ministries.

The emergence of an evangelistic movement with a discourse configured towards LGBT people is one of the outcomes of these changes. The evangelistic efforts of the Youth Ministry, now part of Lagoinha Generations, have enabled the church to become more friendly to the cultural transformations of recent decades, making the presence of “alternative” congregations, including “homosexual individuals,” more acceptable within its space. As this research unfolded, it was often noted by colleagues, researchers or those interested in the topic that Lagoinha was perceived as a less conservative church, more youthful and open to diversity, compared to denominations such as the Assembly of God, God is Love, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Foursquare Church, or the Christian Congregation of Brazil.⁹ However, we argue that this more inclusive stance toward “diversity,” such as the creation of ministries dedicated to evangelizing LGBT individuals or the adoption of elements from “secular culture,” still retains at its core the same approach previously undertaken by its older ministries, such as Gileade, which presented religious conversion as an alternative to homosexuality. This occurs alongside the incorporation of elements taken as “secular,” such as the LGBT movement’s flag, slang or expressions used in “homosexual sociability,” scientific and legal vocabulary recognizing gender and sexual diversity, and the relaxation of aesthetic standards.

When we juxtapose the discourses of the Colours Movement and Pastor Priscila Coelho with those of other Church leaders, we can observe how the grammar of “inclusion” and “exclusion” acquires new contours within religious discourse. A consistent visual construction of imagery is evident, including the incorporation of the rainbow into the “evangelical” aesthetic through ministry “branding.” This process of symbolic transformation integrates distinct elements like the “cross,” the “covenant,” and the “rainbow,” extending theological interpretations of the “conversion” process. These interpretations are also present in symbols like the cross, in religious retreats such

⁹ This research was developed between 2020 and 2024. Some of the events discussed here occurred simultaneously with the development of the dissertation and do not correspond to the current context. Nevertheless, this information is considered relevant for understanding the relationship between sexuality and evangelical churches.

as *Encontro com Deus* (Encounter with God) (Rausch, 2024), and in religious testimonies. At the same time, other differences and equivalences are established that do not align with the recognition of gender and sexual diversity in other chains of meaning. “Combating prejudice” is one such new meaning, articulated as an evangelistic and ministerial practice. Despite these discursive proximities and continuities, this movement does not occur without resistance or “frictions.”

The repercussions of by the declarations made by André and Ana Paula were not always well-received by church members or other ministries. Other religious leaders within the church, such as former president Pastor Márcio Valadão and Pastor Flaviano Marques, are known for being more moderate and having less inflammatory discourses, exerting greater internal influence among pastors and ministry leaders. Furthermore, these public declarations also met with strong resistance in the media and political spheres. An example of this was in 2020 when Pastor André Valadão used his Instagram account to host a Q&A session with his audience. One anonymous follower asked the following: “Two young men who are church members are dating, do you expel them? Or let them stay in the church?” (*Gospel Minas*, October 16, 2020)

I understand. They are gay.

So, the church has a biblical principle. Homosexual practice is considered a sin.

They could go to a gay club or something like that. But in the church, it can't happen. This practice doesn't fit with the life of the Church. There are many places where gay people can live without any form of constraint. But the Church is a place for those who want to live by biblical principles.

It's not about the church expelling them. It's about understanding each person's place.

(*Gospel Minas*, 16 October 2020).

Shortly after, Pastor Priscila Coelho posted a video on her profile with a message countering André's remarks, inviting the “LGBT community” to join the meetings of the Colours Movement, which was still affiliated with Lagoinha Savassi.

Hey guys, we just had our Zoom meeting here at the Colours Movement with the LGBT community, and I'm here to tell you, those who are listening and are LGBT: your place is inside the church, yes. Your place is to relate inside the church with Christians, with genuine people who will love you, who will embrace you, and be with you through everything. Regardless of your emotional condition, financial status, class, gender identity, whoever you are, your place is inside the church. Right? Because Jesus is a loving God who accepts everyone. Jesus is a God who reached us when we still hated who He was, and this message never changes. This message is the biblical message.

So, know that here in our Lagoinha Savassi community, you are warmly welcomed, received, and loved. You can come as you are, being who you are – it's a privilege for us to have you. In fact, the privilege is Lagoinha Savassi's for having LGBT people here, ok? So, feel at home, stay with us. God is God. God is welcoming, a God who loves, a God who, in the Bible, said that in His son Jesus... He even

walked with people who others disliked, who society disliked, people who were seen as outcasts; and Jesus made a point, thanks be to God, of walking and loving these men and women.

Please, don't let anyone tell you otherwise. God loves you, and indeed, He is looking daily with His loving eyes on your life, ok? Feel free to be part of the movement with us, feel free to be part of the church with us, to be in the church with us. Lagoinha Savassi will continue to be a welcoming Lagoinha for all men and women, where all tribes are very welcome, regardless of anything, any guilt you may have, how you feel, your heart, everything. Feel welcomed, ok? That's our message for you today.

Kisses to the heart, and we're all in this. We always keep going, always resistant, we keep going. See you later. (*Gospel Minas*, 16 October 2020)

The episode quickly gained traction on social media and among evangelical online news outlets. The videos are no longer available on their profiles, but they were recovered on YouTube by a gospel news portal, which published a retrospective of the conflict. Some days later, Priscila spoke about the event, mentioning that she had spoken with Pastor André on the phone and emphasized that there was never any conflict between them and that he was aware of her ministry's activities. André was also questioned on his profile about a "lesbian pastor" through a message that said "Priscila isn't lesbian," referring to her conversion and the celibate stance she publicly adopts.

On 1 April 2023, TAB (one of UOL's online news outlets) published an article about Pastor Márcio Valadão's succession at the Lagoinha Baptist Church headquarters by Pastor Flaviano/Flavinho Marques, previously the leader of Lagoinha Savassi. The "new" pastor is presented in the report as a counterpoint to André Valadão due to his less frequent presence on social media, his more moderate discourse, and his lack of political involvement. The article also includes interviews with some members and former members, including individuals from the Colours Movement: "Flavinho is an incredible guy, calmer, more neutral, who treats everyone well and doesn't talk about politics," "The aggressiveness and intolerance of André don't shake my faith" and "There are many people in Lagoinha who think like I do – today, I wouldn't say we're a minority anymore" (Sayuri; Aguiar, 2023).

Some months later, in June 2023, the IBL profile published the video of the sermon "God Hates Pride" on its YouTube channel, which was also shared on other communication channels of the church. In the video, recorded in Orlando and later removed from the church's channels,¹⁰ the pastor criticizes the friendly stance of evangelical families and churches toward homosexuality. In the same video, he also states that God would have destroyed humanity because of its "sexual immorality" and claims that the Bible says "neither passive nor active homosexuals will inherit the kingdom of God."

At the church service held on 2 July 2023, also in Orlando, the pastor revisited the biblical passage of the flood and the commitment of the covenant as the reason why God had not destroyed humanity again due to its sexual immorality. He linked the legalization of same-sex marriage to the sexualization of children. These excerpts

¹⁰ The excerpts used in the text were transcribed on the date that the videos were published, but the original source could not be recovered. Some of them can be accessed in news articles and reports published on evangelical news sites.

generated a big impact on social media and in the press, with some interpreting them as incitement to murder, which led to complaints being filed with the Federal Public Ministry, particularly by federal deputy Erika Hilton.

Now is the time to take the ropes back and say: Stop, reset. Then God says: 'I can't do it anymore; I've already put this rainbow there. If I could, I'd destroy everything and start over. But I promised myself that I couldn't, so now it's up to you.'

A short time later, Pastor Priscila Coelho announced her disassociation from the Lagoinha Baptist Church (IBL) in a video posted on Instagram, recovered on the 'Portal do Trono' (Throne Portal) profile on the Dailymotion platform. The Colours Movement, of which she is still the leader, now operates autonomously, with meetings held in a bookstore in a shopping mall in central Belo Horizonte. In the video, Priscila recounts that she started at Lagoinha and remains grateful to it, where she converted and where she was a member for 15 years. She was ordained as a pastor by Pastor Márcio Valadão, whom she describes as someone "upright, honest, wonderful, gentle, kind," who always saw beyond her physical appearance, and who, like other pastors, always understood and respected her taking her own time, encouraging her to become "more like Jesus."

She tells that, after praying, seeking out and conversing with God, and after talking to "her boys and girls" from the Colours Movement, "Priscila" decided to leave the Lagoinha Baptist Church. She reaffirms that her choice was based on her personal conviction, her faith and the God she sees as a "God of love, tolerant, empathetic, merciful, patient, who treats people with affection, care, and respect." She states that these values have always been preached and lived within the Colours Movement and the "Denomination" (as she refers to the Lagoinha Baptist Church), but that she currently does not agree with or support the "series of things" happening in the preceding days.

She reaffirms the space of the Colours Movement as a place of tolerance for different perspectives on homosexuality, including theological viewpoints, with members who are married, celibate, who agree and disagree on its "sinful" nature, people questioning their own sexuality, inclusive and affirming people, and even those from other religions. She reiterates that this was a decision made by her and the Movement and that she received requests from Lagoinha to continue their association with the Church, but that, from that moment on, they would continue "in love," preaching the word of Jesus who "died for everyone" and saying, "let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Despite this, she describes how over recent months she has been through a grieving process and felt sadness about separating from Pastor Flaviano Marques and Pastor Márcio Valadão, whom she refers to as mentors. But she affirms that "gratitude is not a shackle" and that she had to learn to let go and move on, asking people not to speculate about her departure from the Lagoinha Movement, and reaffirmed her "pride" for her members and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Despite these actors claiming distinct positions, their relationship is not necessarily "antagonistic" or "conflictual." Instead, they appear to organize themselves around the religious discourse itself, as different parts of a single body, with each representing a distinct "function" of ministry, or a gift granted by the grace of God, as in the following biblical passage:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, **according to the grace** given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans, 12:4-8)

The “truth,” “will,” “grace,” or “word” of God (terms that are fairly imprecise but hold intense moral value) act as nodes articulating the differentiation between the members of the church, based on their ministerial functions, as well as between the “sanctified” sinners and the “slaves” of sin, with conversion seen as an act of mercy and redemption of “sinners” through the Cross. Similarly, “sin” is not defined by delimiting conduct contrary to a set of values and subject to an accusation. It is also an articulating node, this time of equivalence, between Christians and non-Christians, marking the boundary between the Church and the Secular World, to be conquered and redeemed. Amid these movements of differentiation and equivalence, the religious discourse does not merely “expel” or “exorcise” homosexuality from its midst. On the contrary, it is introjected as a regulated object, produced as a disturbance of nature, an aberration contrary to the “divine will,” or as “abjection” (Butler, 2015). As one of the effects of this prohibition, “homosexuals” become subjects recognized through their moral transformation, and the abjection of sin is isolated in a behaviour to be projected into the past. This operation, nonetheless, demands from the subject the daily effort of conversion, both in its religious and aesthetic sense, organizing the ways in which they will be recognized through relations of otherness, but also in the ways in which otherness will be internalized and experienced in their own body.

Final Remarks

The discursive production of “Lagoinha” on homosexuality articulates “elements” (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015) that at first seem contradictory. The declarations of the institution’s leaders constantly act on the limits of recognition, declaring homosexuality as a sin, while simultaneously producing “homosexual subjects” as people deserving of divine mercy or grace. By thinking about the prohibition of homosexuality from its productive dimension, we can understand how discourses around practices like celibacy or sexual conversion “repress” and attempt to “erase” it from social life, while also making regulated experiences of homosexuality emerge that can only be experienced as a prohibition. In other words, discourses promoting celibacy would not be a renunciation of homosexuality, but a particular way of experiencing it as a renunciation.

Regarding the performances of homosexuality within the religious context, these enunciations reveal that the inclusion of these practices and identities within churches does not necessarily imply a recognition of their legitimacy, or of the subjects who embody them. On the contrary, both the evangelistic ministries directed at LGBT identities and the inflamed discourses from the Mother Church operate a form of social

recognition of homosexualities that seems to locate them within an exterior field, constitutive of social legitimacy itself. This “boundary” that constitutes the frames of legitimacy operated within these religious discourses does not solely represent forms of “repression” or “exclusion” of homosexuality from the religious field, but rather a form of inclusion marked by precarious recognition, as “abjection” (Butler, 2015). It represents an articulation between elements of the discourses originating from social movements, contemporary conceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation, and biblical interpretations that position the divergence from cisheteronormative ideals as sinful and contrary to the moral principles of Christianity and the “will of God.” The performative effects of this operation transform homosexuality into an abject identity: while it may be a category that relates to the political identities adopted by LGBT people, it is situated within a field of negatively framed recognition, marked by violence and forms of power exerted on the body, which, while striving to keep it alive, expel the “waste” from its political contour.

The concept of articulation (Laclau; Mouffe, 2015) helps us to understand the formation of these chains of equivalence that make the meanings of homosexuality more closely aligned with those of eschatological representations, while these signifiers become less and less equivalent to the meanings they held prior to this process. The meanings of homosexuality are transformed in this process, but the meanings of suffering, promiscuity, or other signifiers present in the religious discourse are also transformed in new moments, new differences organized hierarchically, which are related to the history prior to their articulation, while also generating new meanings.

The “case” of the disaffiliation of the Colours Movement from the Lagoinha Baptist Church also shows how this process involves constant conflicts and tensions within the hegemonic field. A homogenizing conception of hegemony, seen as a stable field without contradictions, would fail to account for its complexity and transformations. While the discursive equivalences establish points of connection through nodes such as “sin” or “divine will,” which remain relatively stable, the stability of these meanings is disputed by the actors “on stage” through positions that are not necessarily antagonistic but differential. The conception of the Church as a “body,” with its “different members” and “different functions,” points to the reorganization of pastoral power into a new grammar, which not only addresses the complexity of the different “sheep,” their intimacy and desires, but also integrates them into the organic functioning of this social body. It is worth emphasizing that the emergence of new conservative evangelical discourses and the media prominence of religious leaders linked to the Lagoinha Baptist Church are still related to the networks of what we can call a transnational anti-gender politics (Prado; Corrêa, 2018).

Lagoinha, which intensified its political activities at regional and national levels during the first decades of the twenty-first century, maintains close ties with evangelical groups in the United States that promote actions against sexual and reproductive rights in the judicial sphere, as well as influencing medical and psychological categories to promote Sexual Conversion Therapies in the United States and around the world. This ideological and political alignment with groups like the now-defunct Exodus International and NARTH (National Association for Research & Therapy of Homosexuality) is reorganized in the current context of offensives and ideological policies against gender and sexual diversity within Brazilian state institutions at the local, regional and national levels (Corrêa; Prado, 2024). The actions of city councillors, deputies and senators linked

to the church, opposing sexual and reproductive rights, the recognition of transgender rights, same-sex marriage, and homoparental adoption, have attracted significant media attention. However, these discourses also extend into other institutional spheres, including the Judiciary and Executive branches, expanding the areas of influence and effectiveness of actions promoted by conservative religious groups.

The current political scenario, marked by the emergence of new forms of authoritarianism entering socially recognized democratic institutions, requires the social sciences and humanities to develop new epistemological and methodological frameworks to understand these phenomena. Contrary to the repression of homosexuality, what we are witnessing is, in fact, its expansion in social life as a socially regulated object. Michel Foucault's theories on the "repressive hypothesis," rearticulated in contemporary gender theories and in the concept of performativity (Butler, 2019; 2020), allow us to engage in the debate on religion and politics from its productive dimension, from what we actually "do" in terms of sexuality, and the performative processes of heterosexuality as an immutable and inevitable nature. These discourses, as forms of knowledge, operate within what we can term an "epistemological sexual politics" (Rausch, 2024), not only as contemplative entities but as forms of regulating and producing material reality, expanding their domain in public debate and the institutional sphere.

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*Minibio of the Authors:

Antônio Augusto Lemos Rausch. Master’s in Psychology from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (2024). Researcher at the LGBTQIA+ Human Rights and Citizenship Centre at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. Research funded by CAPES (Process n° 88887.653964/2021-00). E-mail: altoniolemos@gmail.com.

Marco Aurélio Máximo Prado. Doctor in Social Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (2000). Professor on the Postgraduate Program in Psychology at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. Research funded by CNPq (Process n° 313554/2021-8). E-mail: mamprado@gmail.com.

Reviewer 1: Homero Henrique de Souza, [Orcid](#);

Reviewer 2: Pedro Henrique Almeida Bezerra, [Orcid](#);

Section Editors: Bruno Bartel, [Orcid](#);

Emanuel Freitas da Silva, [Orcid](#).