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Dante's *Inferno*, LGBT-Q, and Christianity: A Closer Reading on Medieval Christian Perspective Regarding Homosexuality

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Abstract

This paper is a qualitative theological research discussing Dante Alighieri's (d. 1321) account of LGBT-Q (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer) based on his major work, *Inferno*, with a particular reference to Medieval Christian tradition. Accordingly, this paper used content analysis to apprehend major literature on Dante and LGBT-Q. This paper concluded that the term Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities demolished due to homosexual violation, is apparent in his work. Furthermore, as several Biblical texts also suited the concrete image of those cities, Dante's *Inferno* also presented Medieval Christian position concerning homosexuality, which is condemn homosexuality as lust against the role of nature, so it is equated with committing violence against God.

Keywords: Dante Alighieri; homosexual; *Inferno*; LGBT-Q; Medieval Christianity

INTRODUCTION

Hell is theological in that its existence is either believed or rejected by the religious/irreligious community.¹ Certain individuals who adhere to religious beliefs maintain the conviction that individuals who engage in sin-ful behavior will face retribution in the form of eternal damnation in hell. However, there are differing opinions on this matter. Christianity espouses the concept of “eternal punishment,” which entails believing in divine retribution for transgressors while offering a promising reward for adherents who follow the correct path.²

Over time, however, this theory lost its authority.³ In this particular context, it is comprehensible that a certain demographic, encompassing individuals who commit both

significant and minor errors, may face consequences in the form of eternal punishment. Among those affected by this punitive measure are individuals who identify as LGBT-Q (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer). In many religions, LGBT is considered a sin as they violate the law of God as revealed in the scripture;⁴ while the debate considering the theological position of LGBT-Q is continually arising. Some groups claim that LGBT-Q has the right to express their sexual orientation, as religion never strictly forbids or allows any sexual or gender identity.⁵

This paper aims to comprehend Christian exposition on LGBT-Q based on Dante Alighieri’s (d.1321) major work, “*Inferno*,” the beginning part of the Divine Comedy. As one of the most significant works in the Medieval era,⁶ a proper read-

¹ Bambang Subandrijo, “Kehidupan Dari Sang Entah, Menuju Sang Entah,” *The New Perspective in Theology and Religious Studies* 1, no. 1 (2020): 69–90.

² Warseto Freddy Sihombing, “Konsep Keselamatan Universalisme,” *JURNAL PIONIR* 6, no. 2 (August 19, 2020): 7–22, <https://doi.org/10.36294/PIONIR.V7I3.1397>.

³ Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., “Hell Under Fire; Modern Scholarship Reinvents Eternal Punishment: Chapter 1,” in *Modern Theology: The Disappearance of Hell* (California: Zondervan, 2007).

⁴ Abdullah Muslich et al., “LGBTQ in Islam: Further Considerations on Nature and Nurture Theory, Radical Feminism, and HIV/AIDS,” *MUWAZAH: Jurnal Kajian Gender* 14, no. 2 (2022): 157–78, <https://doi.org/10.28918/MUWAZAH.V14I2.1086>; Dora R. Mbuwayesango, “Sex and Sexuality in Biblical Narrative,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (Oxford

University Press, 2016).; Robert K. Gnuse, “Seven Gay Texts: Biblical Passages Used to Condemn Homosexuality,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 45, no. 2 (April 22, 2015): 68–87, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146107915577097>; David Leeming, “Religion and Sexuality: The Perversion of a Natural Marriage,” *Journal of Religion and Health* 42, no. 2 (2003): 101–9, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1023621612061>.

⁵ Adnan Hossain, “The Paradox of Recognition: Hijra, Third Gender and Sexual Rights in Bangladesh,” *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 19, no. 12 (December 2, 2017): 1418–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2017.1317831>; Donald Boisvert and Jay E. Johnson, *Queer Religion [2 Volumes]* (ABC-CLIO, 2011).

⁶ Rodney J. Payton, *A Modern Reader’s Guide to Dante’s Inferno* (New York: Lang, Peter, Publishing Inc., 2012), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=1056655>.

ing of *Inferno* benefits current religious traditions on engaging particularly with LGBT-Q. Some works published shown that the issue of LGBT-Q did not occupy detail preference within the work. The closest one may be an article written by Pequigny (1991), who has paid particular attention to sodomy and claimed that The Divine Comedy's depiction of sodomy is more complicated, prosperous, profound, and significant than previous commentary revealed.⁷ Other works, however, are not truly related to Homosexuality or kinds. Chevigny's work (2001) regarding Dante pertains to examining present-day rationales for classifying offences, particularly the notion that the severity of criminal acts is based on the concept of "desert."⁸

On the other hand, Babor et al. (2017) emphasized that Dante's *Inferno* is beneficial because it can discover a clear picture of and harmful consequences of those sins.⁹ Last but not least, Riva et al (2015) focus on the theological element in Dante's perspective instead of enquiring

about neuroanatomy and neurophysiology in the *Inferno*.¹⁰ Regardless of the consideration behind those works, the discussion concerning LGBT-Q within Dante's *Inferno*'s content has not yet become the primary orientation. Regarding the importance of the topic, this paper will attempt to answer the following research question: "How did Dante's *Inferno* describe LGBT-Q, and how is it relevant to Christianity?"

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative theological research focuses on LGBT-Q in Dante's *Inferno*. According to Whaling (2002), theological studies can be categorized as a derivative phenomenon that arises from the notion of "faith" and encompasses the interpretation of this faith. Furthermore, the field of theology has often centered its focus on matters pertaining to doctrine, a subject highly relevant to this paper's objective.¹¹

Consequently, this presented work also uses the content analysis method. It is a method of textual analysis employed to

⁷ Joseph Pequigny, "Sodomy in Dante's *Inferno* and Purgatorio," *Representations* 36 (October 1, 1991): 22–42, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928630/82379>.

⁸ Paul G. Chevigny, "From Betrayal to Violence: Dante's *Inferno* and the Social Construction of Crime," *Law & Social Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2001): 787–818, <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1747-4469.2001.TB00324.X>.

⁹ Thomas F. Babor, Thomas McGovern, and Katherine Robaina, "Dante's *Inferno*: Seven Deadly Sins in Scientific Publishing and How to Avoid

Them," in *Publishing Addiction Science: A Guide for the Perplexed*, ed. Thomas F. Babor et al. (London: Ubiquity Press, 2017), 267–68, <https://doi.org/10.5334/bbd.n>.

¹⁰ Michele Augusto Riva et al., "The Neurologist in Dante's *Inferno*," *European Neurology* 73, no. 5–6 (June 1, 2015): 278–82, <https://doi.org/10.1159/000381541>.

¹¹ Frank Whaling, "Theological Approaches," in *Approaches to The Study of Religion*, ed. Peter Connolly, Reprinted (London: Continuum, 2002), 228–29.

delineate and elucidate attributes of messages ingrained within texts.¹² In this research context, content analysis is advantageous as a non-invasive approach that enables researchers to effectively handle and condense substantial amounts of data and furnish significant historical and cultural perspectives on a research issue available within the literature, providing required data related to the research question. The content analysis process involves the selection of texts, unitizing message units, generating content categories, coding the text, and explaining the results.¹³

This paper will be divided into three sequence sub-discussions: Defining *Inferno* according to Dante, reviewing the general perspective of Christianity concerning LGBT-Q, and then ending with the final analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To begin with, it is comprehensible that in its theological sense, the current LGBT-Q phenomenon is an interpretation of Sodom-like behavior in the past. Dante did not write down the error of sodomy clearly, but he used the names of the two cities concerned with this error, Sodom and

Cahors, in Canto XI.¹⁴ In Genesis 19:24, it is said that: “Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.” for their sexual wrongdoing. And Cahors, a town in southern France in the Middle Ages, was famous for usury mistakes. It represents the image of Sodom in Dante's *Inferno*.¹⁵

Dante's intention in referencing the behavior of Sodom was to highlight the prevalent practice of engaging in solitary and same-sex sexual relations, commonly referred to as homosexuality. In his perspective, this encompasses animal behavior deemed unsuitable for humans. Due to this rationale, Dante coined the term “Sodom” in reference to the city of Sodom, denoting deviant sexual practices. The error in question was not explicitly addressed, suggesting that Dante regarded it as a significant transgression to be concealed from the general populace.¹⁶ Dante elucidates the phenomenon of deviant sexual relationships by employing the term “bestial” which can be interpreted as analogous to contemporary human-animal sexual relationships. Subsequently, the aberrant sexual behaviors observed in Sodom progressed into the forma-

¹² Chad Nelson and Robert H. Woods Jr., “Content Analysis,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in The Study of Religion*, ed. Ichael Stausberg and Steven Engler (London & New York: Routledge, 2011), 109.

¹³ Nelson and Woods Jr., 228-29.

¹⁴ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy. Volume I, Inferno*, trans. Mark Musa (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 174.

¹⁵ Alighieri, 173.

¹⁶ Pequigney, “Sodomy in Dante's *Inferno* and Purgatorio.”

tion of LGBT-Q identities, encompassing individuals who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. Within Dante's renowned poem, *Divine Comedy*, the section dedicated to *Inferno* showcases various characters and the punitive measures they receive as consequences for their respective transgressions.¹⁷

***Inferno* as described by Dante Alighieri**

Dante emerged as a prominent figure in the realm of poetry following the period commonly referred to as the dark ages. During this time, he stood out as an exceptionally talented writer, garnering widespread acclaim for his literary contributions.¹⁸ Dante's major work, the *Divine Comedy*, has become a highly regarded work. Raised the sacred theme of glorifying God's way in sanctifying Him and as a sharp protest and deep thought over human behavior that can thwart divine plans.¹⁹ This is also the result of Dante's determination to fulfill the promise he had written at the end of the closing of the *Vita Nuova*.²⁰

The *Divine Comedy* describes Dante's fictitious trip through *Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Paradiso*. Examining three distinct yet interconnected steps describing the path a person takes to reach God, use Dante's holy pilgrimage as an example.²¹ Furthermore, the *Divine Comedy* can be characterized as a testament to the triumph of artistic expression over religious conviction. This endeavor will present a novel representation characterized by a sophisticated and refined framework, featuring a progression that ensures the perpetual evolution of the *Divine Comedy*, rendering it an inexhaustible literary work.²²

Written by meticulous writers, the *Divine Comedy* consists of three ballads, each containing the same number of lines. Moreover, each one ends with the word "star."²³ This is external evidence, but it should be remembered from a precise and powerful genius who can combine sublime inspiration with meditation through the finest craftsmanship. Considerably, *Divine*

¹⁷ Victoria Kirkham, "A Canon of Women in Dante's 'Commedia,'" *Annali d'Italianistica* 7 (1989): 16–41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24003857>; John E. Boswell, "Dante and the Sodomites," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 112 (1994): 63–76, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40166490>.

¹⁸ Dante Alighieri, *Dante's Inferno*, ed. Isabella White (New York: Maynard, Merrill, & Co, 1894), 5.

¹⁹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: The Inferno, The Purgatorio, and The Paradiso*, trans. John

Ciardi (New York: New American Library, 2003), xv, <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0718/2002037963-b.html>.

²⁰ Dante Alighieri, *The Portable Dante* (Penguin Books, 1995), 28.

²¹ Alighieri, 29.

²² Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy. Volume I, Inferno*, 19.

²³ Paul G. Ruggiers, ed., *Michelle Barbi's Life of Dante* (University of California Press, 1954), 73.

Comedy becomes a summary of medieval culture. Uniquely because it is a work of fiction, judging from the credibility problem, *Divine Comedy* has violated everything: politics, religion, and literature. Apart from this, Dante still has many other works known worldwide.

Inferno is one of the great works and is one of the topics of the *Divine Comedy*. According to him, it is an image of hell, composed of several parts that unite in different relationships, art, and ethics.²⁴ Dante's arrangement of hell consists of several mutually exclusive parts but forms a unified work in a dual relationship with the realms of ethics and art; Physical hell discusses other domains in the world, ethical hell is a picture of the human inner world, and aesthetic hell merging human and other realms.²⁵

Inferno is depicted as funnel-shaped into the core of the earth. It is divided into two large parts: the top and bottom, separated by a high wall. In more detail, Dante divided it into nine levels of circles, each guarded by terrible creatures as friends of sinners. Each sinner will be placed in a different circle according to the mistake committed, so the more significant the sin,

the deeper the trespasser will be.²⁶ The last circle is the closest to Satan, as the peak punishment.

The initial circle, commonly referred to as Limbo, serves as a realm designated for individuals who have not received the sacrament of baptism or do not adhere to the Christian faith. Dante asserted that salvation could solely be attained through the sacrament of baptism. Prior to advancing to the subsequent circle, individuals condemned for their transgressions will encounter the formidable entity known as *Minos*, the arbiter of the deceased. *Minos* assumes the responsibility of determining the appropriate circle in which each sinner shall be confined.²⁷ The second circle is populated by individuals classified as venial sinners, who are characterized by their inability to exercise self-control in the face of lustful desires. The subsequent circle is designated for individuals who exhibit avarice in all aspects of their lives. The fourth circle bears a striking resemblance to its predecessor, the Circle of Avarice, as it is primarily designated for individuals who exhibit an insatiable greed, leading them to excessively exploit their wealth and inflict harm upon social services. The fifth circle of hell is

²⁴ Guy P. Raffa, *The Complete Danteworlds: A Reader's Guide to the Divine Comedy* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

²⁵ Raffa, 55-56.

²⁶ Alighieri, *Dante's Inferno*, 11.

²⁷ Raymond A. Belliotti, *Dante's Deadly Sins: Moral Philosophy in Hell* (Chichester, West Sussex ; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 24.

characterized by the presence of intense anger and violence, specifically targeting individuals who inflict harm upon themselves and others. The subsequent four circles, ranging from the second to the fifth, are commonly referred to as the upper hell, while the subsequent four circles, spanning from the sixth to the ninth, are categorized as the Inner Circle.²⁸

The Inner Circle is designated for a grave and unforgivable transgression that Dante is unable to pardon. The present segment within the infernal realm commences with a circular domain teeming with individuals who subscribe to the belief system that engenders heretical notions. This error bears resemblance to a mistake made in Limbo, yet it possesses a greater degree of severity as it stems not from a lack of knowledge but rather from intellectual hubris.²⁹ The seventh circle of hell, known as the innermost region, distinguishes itself from other circles by its multi-layered composition, in contrast to the single-layer structure observed in the preceding circles. The seventh circle is designated as the abode for individuals who have perpetrated acts of violence.

The eighth circle is characterized by a multitude of layers featuring steep inclines adorned with stone sickles known as malegbole, commonly referred to as devil's trenches. The ten categories of individuals mentioned encompass various forms of social actors involved in morally questionable or deceptive practices. These include intermediaries facilitating prostitution and individuals employing seductive tactics, individuals who employ manipulative language to deceive others, individuals who exploit religious or sacred items for personal gain, individuals who claim to possess knowledge of future events such as fortune tellers and witches, individuals who engage in fraudulent activities, individuals who display hypocritical behavior, individuals involved in theft, individuals who provide counsel to individuals who engage in dishonesty, individuals who propagate rumors and scandals, and individuals who engage in deceptive practices. The final circle remains in the phase of deception, while the ninth circle distinguishes itself by incorporating betrayal, a characteristic absent in the other circles. This distinction can be likened to the contrast between fire and cold and the sensation of being pierced in the back.³⁰

²⁸ Alighieri, *Dante's Inferno*, 12.

²⁹ Belliotti, *Dante's Deadly Sins: Moral Philosophy in Hell*, 28.

³⁰ Belliotti, 34-40.

LGBT-Q in Christianity: A General Overview

LGBT-Q stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer. It is a term intended for people who deviate from customs and moral norms, especially regarding gender and appearance.³¹ This particular sexual orientation has historically been associated with the rise of Radical Feminism, which advocated for women's rights in areas such as education, social matters, and sexual autonomy. In contemporary society, it has been observed that sexual relationships are not exclusively limited to individuals of the opposite sex. Rather, it has become increasingly common for individuals to engage in intimate relationships with others of the same sex, a phenomenon commonly referred to as homosexuality for men and lesbianism for women.³²

LGBT-Q from a religious perspective, is defined as a disease because it includ-

es deviant behavior and sexual deviations arising from an aberration of sexual orientation.³³ In a comprehensive manner, the term “lesbian” refers to a woman who experiences physical, sexual, and spiritual attraction exclusively towards other women. In contrast, individuals who identify as “gay” are men exhibit attraction towards other men across various dimensions. In contrast, individuals who identify as “bisexual” deviate from the aforementioned explanation as they possess the capacity to experience attraction towards both males and females. “Transgender,” lastly, is delineated as the disparity between an individual's gender identity and their assigned gender at birth.³⁴ While the letter 'Q' stands for queer, a person who is still unclear and questions his sexual identity.³⁵

In Christianity, it is explained that sexual intercourse is a very human thing. Commonly, homosexuality is considered

³¹ Azman Ab Rahman, Mohamad Anwar Zakaria, and Amlin Ab Ghani, “Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual and Transgender According to the Perspective of Syariah and Civil Law in Malaysia: A Comparison Within Two Law,” *International Journal of Academic Research* 8, no. 1 (2020).

³² Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana, “Feminisme Sebagai Diskursus Pandangan Hidup,” *Kalimah : Jurnal Studi Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 11, no. 2 (2013): 271–86, <https://doi.org/10.21111/klm.v11i2.96>; Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana et al., “Liberal Feminism: From Biblical Tradition to the Emergence of CEDAW,” *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 5, no. 2 (2021): 243–54, <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v5i2.9521>.

³³ Roby Yansyah and Rahayu Rahayu, “Globalisasi Lesbian, Gay, Biseksual, Dan Transgender (LGBT): Perspektif Ham Dan Agama Dalam Lingkup Hukum Di Indonesia,” *LAW REFORM* 14, no. 1 (March 29, 2018): 132–46, <https://doi.org/10.14710/LR.V14I1.20242>.

³⁴ Gunawan Saleh and Muhammad Arif, “Fenomenologi Sosial LGBT Dalam Paradigma Agama,” *Jurnal Riset Komunikasi* 1, no. 1 (February 28, 2018): 88–98, <https://doi.org/10.24329/JURKOM.V1I1.16>.

³⁵ Abdul Malik Ghozali, “Fenomena LGBT Dalam Perspektif HAM Dan Doktrin Agama (Solusi Dan Pencegahan),” *Refleksi* 16, no. 1 (November 9, 2017): 29–66, <https://doi.org/10.15408/REF.V16I1.9729>.

something that deviates from ecclesiastical morals contrary to fundamental values and sexuality.³⁶ There is ongoing deliberation within the church regarding the classification of homosexuality as a malady or disorder that may be addressed through medical intervention or life support. The Church's perspectives on LGBT-Q matters are varied and exhibit a degree of inconsistency as it navigates multiple theological viewpoints in relation to homosexuality. The concept of Queer Theology exemplifies a specific inclination towards homosexuality within the context of Christianity. It pertains to a perspective that calls for the Church to actively demonstrate a willingness to listen to and engage in dialogue with individuals who identify as homosexuals. The topics of feminism, LGBTQ rights, and related issues are increasingly becoming subjects of discussion within the field of Christian Theology. This has led to a recent academic debate among scholars and priests, which presents a potential conflict with the traditional stance of Christianity on matters pertaining to sexual relationships.

Upon closer examination of the scriptural text, it becomes evident that the pre-

vailing argument predominantly supports the notion of severe sin being attributed to individuals identifying as homosexuals.³⁷ The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, as described in Leviticus 20:13 says, "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them" (NKJV). Proving that Christianity rejects this behavior and even calls it an abomination. The term Sodom or Gomorrah is widely used, taken from the events experienced by the two regions due to the mistakes of their inhabitants in channeling sexuality. Another verse, Genesis 19:24-25 also conforms to the name Sodom and Gomorrah, said "Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground" (NKJV).

The aforementioned texts explicitly express strong disapproval and condemnation of sexual intercourse between individuals of the same gender, deeming it highly contemptible. Accordingly, Christianity posits that individuals ought to experience at-

³⁶ Saleh And Arif, "Fenomenologi Sosial LGBT Dalam Paradigma Agama."

³⁷ Christian Bayu Prakoso, Yonatan Alex Arifianto, and Aji Suseno, "LGBT Dalam Perspektif Alkitab Sebagai Landasan Membentuk Paradigma Etika

Kristen Terhadap Pergaulan Orang Percaya," *Jurnal Teologi (JUTEOLOG)* 1, no. 1 (December 29, 2020): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.52489/JUTEOLOG.VIII.8>.

traction towards individuals of the opposite gender rather than the same gender. Furthermore, it was elucidated that this transgression had contravened the divine law, resulting in divine retribution wherein the individual was condemned to succumb to their carnal desires perpetually.³⁸ Similar to what is described in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament also explains it as a despicable and shameful evil for having followed sinful passions. As it is written in Romans 1:26-27, “For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against Nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (NKJV).

In General, homosexuality violates the Church's moral teachings because it contradicts the central teaching about

sexuality in the Bible. Most Christian theologians and Churches have considered homosexual activity immoral or wicked for the duration of Christian history;³⁹ Particularly in the medieval age, their sexual orientations were condemned as unnatural and violating God's Law.⁴⁰ Therein, Dante's *Inferno* may suit such a situation of LGBT-Q within the context of Medieval Christianity.

In contemporary times, however, diverse viewpoints regarding sexual orientation and homosexuality are evident within the realm of Christianity. It is worth noting that certain individuals and factions affiliated with a particular denomination may espouse contrasting beliefs compared to the official position of the Church. In addition, it is not a given that all members of a denomination will wholeheartedly adopt their Church's standpoint on homosexuality.⁴¹ Currently, there exists a significant division within the Church regarding the acceptance

³⁸ Syafi'In Mansur, “Homoseksual Dalam Perspektif Agama-Agama Di Indonesia,” *Aqlania* 8, no. 01 (2017): 21–60, <https://www.neliti.com/publications/273117/>.

³⁹ Gnuse, “Seven Gay Texts: Biblical Passages Used to Condemn Homosexuality.”; Armando R. Favazza, “The Bible: Relevant Issues for Clinicians,” in *Religion and Spirituality in Psychiatry*, ed. Hilippe Huguelet and Harold G. Koenig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 43, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511576843.004>.

⁴⁰ Jacqueline Murray, “Twice Marginal and Twice Invisible Lesbians in the Middle Ages,” in

Handbook of Medieval Sexuality, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James A. Brundage (Taylor & Francis, 2000).; John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).

⁴¹ Maria E. Doerfler, “Coming Apart at the Seams: Cross-Dressing, Masculinity, and the Social Body in Late Antiquity,” in *Dressing Judeans and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. Kristi Upson-Saia, Carly Daniel-Hughes, and Alicia J. Batten (Routledge, 2014), 37–51.

or rejection of the LGBT-Q community. Those who embrace acceptance tend to prioritize the Christian principle of love and view actions that promote conflict and aggression as sinful. Conversely, those who reject acceptance align themselves with the prevailing interpretation derived from the biblical narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁴²

LGBT-Q and *Inferno*: An Analysis with Reference to Christianity

Dante's *Inferno* appears to depict the punishment of individuals identifying as LGBT-Q within the seventh Circle. The Circle under discussion is designated for individuals who engage in abusive behavior, and it is organized into three distinct tiers, each representing a different category of fault. First, individuals who engage in acts of violence against their neighbors; second, those who perpetrate violence against themselves; and lastly, those who inflict violence upon their immediate environment. The circle in question is protected by a number of mythical creatures that serve as representations of aggression and hostility. These creatures include Centaurs, Minotaurs, as

well as Chiron, Pholus, and Nessus. Upon reaching the entrance, individuals deemed sinful will encounter *Phlegeton*, a river of blood in a state of fervent ebullition. Subsequently, they will traverse a somber woodland region resonating with anguished cries, accompanied by a torrential downpour of flames capable of incinerating all in its path. This location serves as a site of punishment for LGBT-Q. Dante elucidates the phenomenon of bad sexual relationships by employing the term “bestial,” which can be interpreted as analogous to contemporary human-animal sexual relationships. One particular conceptualization of sexual deviance has given rise to another perspective known as LGBT-Q in contemporary society.⁴³ From this one understanding of sexual deviance, another account developed in modern times into LGBT-Q.

In *Inferno*, Dante illustrates LGBT-Q perpetrators convicted in this circle: Brunetto Latini, who was his own teacher, Andrea Bertozzi, Priscianus Caesariensis, and Francesco d'Accorso.⁴⁴ Dante explained that the punishment for homosexuals is to wander in the desert under raining fire.

⁴² Helen Diana Subekti, Endah Triwijati, and Teguh Wijaya Mulya, “Penerimaan Dan Penolakan Homoseksual Berbasis Pengalaman Pribadi Teologi Kekristenan Dari Sisi Pendetaan Agama Kristen,” *Keluwih: Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora* 1, no. 1 (April 30, 2020): 30–40, <https://doi.org/10.24123/SOSHUM.VIII.2847>; Abdullah Muslich Rizal Maulana, Asep Awaludin,

and Saisatul Munawwaroh, “Irshad Manji On Hermeneutics: Reconsidering Her Method of Interpretation of LGBT-Q Verses in Al-Qur'an,” *At-Turas Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 8, no. 1 (2021): 74–98, <https://doi.org/10.33650/at-turas.v8i1.1662>.

⁴³ Alighieri, *Dante's Inferno*, 13.

⁴⁴ Alighieri, *The Portable Dante*, 145.

The wander symbolizes unforgivable eternal mistake, while raining fire means wrath, the burning sand symbolizes infertility, depicting an everlasting punishment for the violation.⁴⁵ Dante followed what was written in the Hebrew Bible by mentioning the city of Sodom and Gomorrah.⁴⁶ In Deuteronomy 29:21-23, the Hebrew Bible draws the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah:

21) And the LORD would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law, 22) “so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the LORD has laid on it: 23) The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and His wrath” (NKJV).

⁴⁵ Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy. Volume I, Inferno*, 127-28.

⁴⁶ Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy (Complete Edition): Illustrated & Annotated*, trans. Henry Francis Cary (e-artnow, 2020), 45.

⁴⁷ Robert Aldrich, “Homosexuality and the City: An Historical Overview,” *Urban Studies* 41, no. 9 (August 1, 2004): 1719–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098042000243129>; Samson O Olanisebe et al., “Re-Interpreting ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’ Passages in the Context of Homosexuality Controversy: A Nigerian Perspective,” *Ilorin Journal of Religious*

As the cities mentioned and described, their residents received terrible punishment, as their cities were annihilated for their wickedness, homosexuality.⁴⁷ In addition, further argumentation concerning how LGBTQ is put in *Inferno* is also available in his conception of Lust, as mentioned in the second and seventh circles. It looks the same because it follows the wrong passions,⁴⁸ but LGBT-Q lies in the seventh circle because it is a mortal sin.⁴⁹ Dante said it was heavy because it included sins or wrongs against nature, which were heavier than the faults of nature itself. Therefore, it becomes more severe than simply committing lust that does not harm God or nature.

It has been argued that deviating from the natural order by engaging in a sexual relationship that does not produce viable offspring is considered a violation of nature, as per prevailing beliefs.⁵⁰ The transmission of life is hindered and rendered ineffective due to its inability to facilitate the procreation of an individual's sexual capaci-

Studies 3, no. 2 (2013): 191–209, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijrs/article/view/99766>.

⁴⁸ Munadi, *Discourse on LGBT Law in Indonesia* (Lhokseumawe: Unimal Press, 2017), 35.

⁴⁹ Pequigney, “Sodomy in Dante’s *Inferno* and Purgatorio.”

⁵⁰ Charles E. Curran, “Homosexuality and Moral Theology: Methodological and Substantive Considerations,” *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 35, no. 3 (1971): 447–81, <https://doi.org/10.1353/THO.1971.0031>; Gnuse, “Seven Gay Texts: Biblical Passages Used to Condemn Homosexuality.”

ties because it is a sexual relationship that does not produce healthy offspring according to the beliefs it should have.⁵¹ Violence against nature also becomes violence against God.

Last but not least, the third part of the seventh circle in Dante's *Inferno* corresponds to the ideology of heteronormativity, a system of ideologies that hold that heterosexuality is the only correct sexual orientation and considers that heterosexuals are better and correct than homosexuals.⁵² Regarding this should be the case that people still fighting to give place and rights to LGBT-Q people be opposed and made aware that their actions are wrong, it is clear that LGBT-Q is forbidden. It is a grave mistake because it violates human nature which is only concerned with physical pleasure disgustingly and negatively affects both physically and spiritually, even for the future such as social crises and excessive worry.⁵³ Maintaining health is one of our responsibilities and a symbol of gratitude for this existence.

CONCLUSION

Through a closer reading of Dante's *Inferno*, it is coherent that LGBT-Q is inseparable from Dante's depiction in his hell, located in the seventh circle (abusers) in the middle of the second part, along with God's blasphemers and shark loans. Being unable to restrain lust is a great sin because lust belongs to the role of nature, so it is equated with committing violence against God. The depiction of LGBT-Q in Dante's *Inferno* suits and supports the Medieval Christian position concerning homosexuality, which is possibly applied and debated within the current context of academic-theological debate. Notably, Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* can be seen as containing a distinct allusion to sexuality within the context of the Christian tradition. The stance presented here starkly opposes the concept of Queer Theology, or other Christian position, which posits that gender nonconformity and queer sexuality have consistently existed throughout human history, encompassing religious traditions and their holy scriptures.

⁵¹ Gülden Yüksel, "Queering the Sphere in Brokeback Mountain: Homosexual Body in Nature," *İnönü University International Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 77, https://www.academia.edu/31525998/Queering_the_Sphere_in_Brokeback_Mountain_Homosexual_Body_in_Nature.

⁵² Katarina Anggita Rachmaputri, "Dis Empowering Discourses in Literature: Portraits of the Weak and the Marginalized throughout History:

Heteronormativity and Gay Erasure in Ocean Vuong's 'Seventh Circle of Earth,'" in *Proceeding Literary Studies Conference*, 2020, 64.

⁵³ Katherine Kortess-Miller et al., "Dying in Long-Term Care: Perspectives from Sexual and Gender Minority Older Adults about Their Fears and Hopes for End of Life," *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life & Palliative Care* 14, no. 2–3 (July 3, 2018): 209–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15524256.2018.1487364>.

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