

Q4
2019berita
NECFSense over Sexuality
(The LGBT Debate)

By Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng

Chairman's Message

As the debate on sexual orientation and gender identity rages on in the public sphere, the Christian circle, especially those engaged in pastoral ministry, should be cognizant that many arguments and assertions made over this issue lately have grown rather inconsistent with what the Bible teaches.

For the uninitiated, LGBT or in its latest form "LGBTQ", is the acronym representing those who sexually identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer / questioning.

First used in the 1990s, LGBT is still evolving as an umbrella term to include many new groups springing up in the "rainbow community."

Wikipedia acknowledges that "LGBT history dates back to the first recorded instances of same-sex love and sexuality of ancient civilizations, involving the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) peoples and cultures around the world."¹ To the Church, this fact certainly corresponds with the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as recorded in the book of Genesis.

Untangling a Knotty Subject

Authorities, whether government or institutional, have largely struggled in handling LGBT as it involves wading into moral, legal and constitutional waters.

In Malaysia, the legal and constitutional provisions are founded on the stand of the majority faith through the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 as well as the Penal Code.²

Although contemporary voices have called for the law on sodomy to be repealed in the name of human rights, some Christians believe this acrimonious law should be retained to prevent normalizing of same-sex relationships.

Then there are those who hold the view that the state should not discriminate against persons with same-sex attraction by criminalizing their sexual activity, but does not mete out similar penalties on heterosexual couples who commit sexual improprieties like premarital sex or adultery.

The Church's Plumb Line

To conservative, Scripture-based believers, the LGBT moral stand clearly contravenes God's intentions and admonitions on sexual relationships.

The Church considers the union of man and woman as part of the order of creation. God Himself is the Author of marriage. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself was unequivocal in saying that to understand marriage and sexual union, we must go back to the beginning and see how God created humanity and to what end

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Carrie Lim Suk Pei

Administrative Assistant

Machelle Kasumin

Amos Thanasegara

Artwork

Murphy Goh

**ADDRESS**32, Jalan SS2/103, 47300 Petaling Jaya,
Selangor, Malaysia

Tel: 603-7727 8227 Fax: 603-7729 1139

Email: enquiries@necf.org.my

Website: www.necf.org.my

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Batu 12, 47100 Puchong, Selangor.

(see Matthew 19³ and Mark 10⁴). Jesus holds up the creation story in Genesis as authoritative, reminding us that God created each of us male and female, each for the other. And the sexual union He ordained for husband and wife is a physical union where two become one flesh.

Marriage was intended for Adam and Eve; never Adam and Steve (pun intended). Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, exclaimed, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favour from the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22 - NKJV). Not he who finds a good man, nor "she who finds a good woman."

The Bible says sex is for procreation, although not solely. Children have a right to fathers and mothers because every individual can trace his or her conception from the union of a male and female. This will not be the case in the context of a homosexual relationship.

Homosexuality, according to the apostle Paul, is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:9-11).

In 1 Timothy 1:9-11, he said, "...knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is *contrary to sound doctrine* (anything else that contradicts the wholesome teaching - NLT), according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (NKJV).

To the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul said that those who indulge in carnal expression will suffer God's judgment, "Do you not know that *the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?* Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor 6:9-10).

Clearly, all *heterosexuals and homosexuals alike*, who do not observe propriety in sexual and moral matters are soundly admonished. The Church has never stood against homosexuality alone. Apostle Paul wants us to understand that homosexual desire and its bodily expression are a negative aspect of human experience and, if indulged, will expose us to final judgment, just like the other improprieties and sins mentioned.

The Imminent Dangers

As Scriptures cannot be compromised, the present challenges before the Church are clear.

The Church risks succumbing to the popular sentiments of the day when it does not contend against permeating uncleanness in so many of our believers' lives. The same old trick of the devil in the garden of Eden is being played out in today's Church: "Did God really say?"⁵ This danger of re-interpreting Scriptures and re-defining sin is ever-present.

The unwillingness to live out God's will. Paul reminds the Church at Thessalonica that "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality" 1 Thessalonians 4:3 (NKJV).

The passion to live a lifestyle of holiness is missing in our congregations. The gospel's offer of freedom to change comes with the challenge to become slaves of righteousness instead of being enslaved to sin (1 Cor 6:11, 18-20). Like an iceberg, many of us may be perching only at the tip of righteousness, while deep rot and uncleanness have set unseen beneath.

More and more are sadly dithering. In the days of Isaiah, God's people were found "calling evil, good."⁶ When the rainbow flag first appeared on Facebook,

many were quick to press "like" in support. In the effort to be perceived as inclusive, Christians sometimes are reluctant to call "sin" a "sin". Sadly, others choose to maintain their *elegant silence* in the face of uncleanness.

When confronted by the onslaught of sexual sin, God's people seem paralyzed akin to the silent response Elijah received when challenging the Israelites to make a stand on Mount Carmel.

The Church does not Discriminate

It is pertinent to state the Church regards everyone with equal respect, regardless of his or her sexual orientation.

All are worthy of God's love and mercy. The Church feels for and empathizes with those who struggle with homosexual inclinations. These individuals are equally unique and of infinite worth; loved by God as His children and in need of redemption like any other people.

The Church should not discriminate against the homosexual person. However, this does not mean that the Church consequently condones homosexual acts.

Although the Church is increasingly pressured to accept homosexuality in secular society, rewriting God's rules is never an option. One of the marks of a Christian is his or her desire to be obedient to Christ's teaching. Christianity is a demanding faith. The Scriptures define and change us, and not the other way around. A biblical sexual ethic does not, indeed cannot, change with the times.

I began by stating that homosexuality can be traced back to ancient times when the notoriously sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by God. Since then, nothing has changed — God is still God, and the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is still sin.

Nevertheless, just as God sent angels and Abraham to Sodom and Gomorrah to offer sinners redemption, the Church today must similarly preach the message of forgiveness, redemption and holiness so that everyone can live a truly sanctified and transformed life.

¹ Wikipedia - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_history

² The general position is that Malaysia does not have laws against homosexuality, but it does criminalise unnatural sex under the Penal Code (PC).

Relevant sections of the PC:

S.377A: Carnal intercourse against the order of nature.

S.377B: Punishment for committing carnal intercourse against the order of nature. (imprisonment for a term which may extend to 20 years, and shall also be punished with whipping)

S.377C: Committing carnal intercourse against the order of nature without consent, etc. (imprisonment for a term of not less than 5 years and not more than 20 years, and shall also be punished with whipping)

Further, s.25 and s.26 of the Syariah Criminal Offences (Federal Territories) Act 1997 provide the punishment for Muslim males (s.25) and females (s.26) who commit sexual relations between two individuals of the same sex. The respective states would have their equivalent in the respective state enactments.

³ Matthew 19:4-6 (NKJV) 4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female; 5 and said, For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? 6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate."

⁴ Mark 10:6-9 (NKJV) 6 But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female; 7 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

⁵ Genesis 3:1 NLT

⁶ Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV) Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

**NECF Events in 2020**

Month	Event	Commission (C)
January 14	Special Briefing to NECF Tamil Churches	Tamil C
March 5-6	Out of the Salt Shaker Conference	NECF
March 11-14	Roadshow in Peninsular Malaysia	Bahasa Malaysia C
May 10-12	Chinese Prayer Conference	Chinese C
May 11-14	Roadshow in Sabah	Bahasa Malaysia C
May 16	Biennial General Meeting of NECF	NECF
July 13-16	Roadshow in Sarawak	Bahasa Malaysia C
July 18	National Womens' Conference	Women C
August 7 - September 15	40-Day Fast & Prayer	Prayer C
September 8-10	Bahasa Malaysia Pastors' Retreat	Bahasa Malaysia C
September 16	Malaysia Day Prayer Rally	Prayer C
September 21-23	Chinese Pastoral Care Retreat	Chinese C

Launching Fast and Prayer for the Nation

By Tan Poh Kian, Rev Daniel Loh and Pastor Julidin Bin Lumanggong

The 40-Day Fast and Prayer 2019 was launched at a number of places, beginning at Immanuel Assembly of God Church, Karak, Pahang on 4 July and ending at Berean Assembly of God Church, Batu Pahat, Johor on 21 August.

This year's theme of Fast and Prayer is "A Lifestyle of Holiness." Prayer, as we know, is all about encountering God individually or corporately and seeking His holy will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. The exhortation of the Word in Hebrews 12:14 reads, "Strive for peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord."

God, in fact, instructed the Israelite community to first consecrate themselves before they crossed over the Jordan River. The "cross-over" experience indeed proceeded from the very beginning when the people were "being set apart" for God before their conquest of Canaan.

The Prayer Commission, in collaboration with churches, organised the launches at several places in the country as described below.

Klang Valley

The prayer launch was held at Hope Kuala Lumpur Church, Petaling Jaya on 4 August. Pastor Simon Eng. and Pastor Moses Wan made available their church premise as well as provided manpower support to host the evening's event. More than 200 people participated at the event that night and there was a flag parade session before praying for the different states.

Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, NECF Chairman in his devotional, spoke about the need to be aware of the possibility as well as it being mandatory to live a lifestyle of holiness as a community of faith. He reminded the participants that it is holiness that defines who we are, facilitates our progress and nurtures our fear of God. There will be no basic obedience or true worship without holiness.

Kampar, Perak

The launch in Kampar was held on the night of 2 August. Pastor Chong Ping Chin coordinated the launch at Calvary City Church which was held in conjunction with the monthly

combined prayer meeting of Kampar's churches. The 100 people who attended prayed and interceded fervently for the states and the nation.

Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu

The Kuala Terengganu Launch 2019 was held at Lifeline Assembly of God Church, Kuala Terengganu on 6 August, just a day before the 40-Day Fast and Prayer commenced.

Churches in Kuala Terengganu have been facing huge challenges, especially foreseeing losing the young generation in churches. Yet, a handful of about five to six pastors have gathered regularly to pray and intercede for the land. Though the number of people who turned up for the launch was not that many, they sincerely prayed and interceded for the nation and the states.

Sister Lucrece Loo of the Prayer Commission gave the word on "GREATNESS" as a word of encouragement to churches in Kuala Terengganu. She stressed that being "GREAT" is not about possessing a big building, a big congregation, or a big pool of resources, but it is about a people of God who can withstand pressures and challenges in the midst of dire darkness.

The Prayer Commission combined with the Chinese Commission also helped to organise several launches in the country. They have made use of the opportunities offered by these launches to spur churches and believers to live up to the imperative Word of the Lord found in 1 Peter 1:16, "You shall be holy, because I am holy", which echoes the command of God in Leviticus 11:44, "...Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy...." The launches at the various places in the country are as given below.

Mentakab, Pahang

The launch at Immanuel Assembly of God Church in Mentakab on 5 July witnessed a congregation of approximately 100 people from four different language speaking groups (Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese, English and Tamil).

Rev Miun Amat put in much effort to organize the launch, and together with Pastor Susan Wong and the respective Sidang Injil Borneo (SIB) churches, made the event possible. Shofars were blown and people were passionately praying

for the various states as different pastors led them in the prayer sessions.

Rev Looi Kok Kim, NECF's Prayer Commission Chairman briefed the congregation by going through the timeline of Malaysia, pointing to events that built up to the change of political climate on 9 May 2018. His message was translated into Chinese and Bahasa Malaysia languages.

The Federal Territory of Labuan

On 15 July 2019, the NECF team arrived in Labuan, the island where the first seed of the Gospel was sowed on the soil of East Malaysia. Pastor Johnny Basi of SIB was remarkable in being able to organise the launch within a short notice of two weeks' time, greatly aided by facilities provided by the Methodist Church in Labuan.

The worship was fantastic and it was encouraging to see young Bahasa Malaysia speaking pastors leading in prayer sessions. There were about 70 people at the launch followed by about 80 people coming for the second night's open meeting on the topic of nation building. It was indeed a refreshing moment for the Labuan churches because they had often felt that they had been long "forgotten" on an isolated island.

Segamat, Johor

Pastor Goo Siew Lai from Buloh Kasap Methodist Church extended his invitation to NECF's team and hence made it possible to have the launch on 30 July in Segamat. Pastor Goo is relatively new there after his posting from Kota Bahru. Nevertheless, he was a faithful supporter of the 40-Day Fast and Prayer for the nation and took the initiative to invite pastors and leaders from different churches to join this launch. To his surprise, there was a good turnout of about 50 people with representatives from about five to six churches.

It was indeed with faith that he had taken on the task to organise this combined meeting in a town where he was still trying to adjust to and to blend in with its environment. Pastor Yew Kuan Yee exhorted churches and believers to live a lifestyle of holiness that would bring significant and spiritual impact on their communities.

Kota Bharu, Kelantan

The launch in Kota Bharu was held concurrently with the launch in Kampar on the night of 2 August. It was held at Praise Christian Centre. Pastor Henderson Wee and pastors/leaders from Kota Bharu, Gua Musang and Kuala Krai came together united in purpose and heart for the nation to make the launch successful.

There were representatives from seven churches who attended the launch. A strong presence of God was felt during the time of worship as children blew shofars, welcoming and declaring the glory of God in jubilant celebration. Sister Ngeh Hoong Eng of NECF shared about how our nation and communities could be transformed eventually when the people of God seek to lead holy lifestyles.

Batu Pahat, Johor

The Batu Pahat Launch was a combined effort of nine churches and there were more than 150 people who attended. The bi-lingual night meeting was held on 21 August at Berean Assembly of God Church, Batu Pahat.

Rev Andy Chi, the Secretary-General of NECF, issued a challenge to churches in Batu Pahat, that they should "Walk in the Holiness" of God. Rev Teo Kwee Keng, on behalf of the congregation made a declaration of their statement of "A New Malaysia – Faces Without Races", and the meeting went on with powerful and spirit-filled sessions of prayer, intercession and worship led by the respective groups and churches.

The Chinese Commission helped to organise the Klang Valley Chinese Launch which was held at the New Life Restoration Church, Petaling Jaya on 7 August. It was indeed a grand time of celebration with exuberant worship, dances and a flag parade.

More than 500 people participated at the event and a powerful message was delivered by Pastor Hiew Yee Onn, the host of the event. Using Prophet Daniel and his three friends in the Bible as an example, he revealed the secret of spiritual influence and power. God uses His holy people as powerful vessels to bring about ripples of change and impact on their communities and nation.

The Bahasa Malaysia (BM) Commission, in collaboration with churches organised prayer launches concurrently at three different places in the country on 4 August.

The Klang Valley BM Launch for the Central Region was held at SIB City Life Church, Kuala Lumpur where more than 160 people attended. Rev. Jasme Dairis, a member of the BM Commission, in his devotional message spoke about Moses asking for his name to be removed from God's Book of Life if that was really important and needed to ensure the salvation of Israel.

The launch for the Southern Region was held at the Praise Light House Assembly of God Church in Johor Bahru, Johor. Pastor Andrew Jalung, a member of the BM Commission, gave the word on holiness to the more than 120 people who attended.

For the Northern Region, the launch was held at Bethany Church, Penang. Rev Samuel Surendran Krishnan, Bahasa Malaysia Chairman of NECF in his devotional talked about the power of Fasting and Prayer. About 150 people from seven churches attended the event.

The Tamil Commission prayer launches which were attended by pastors and church members were held at the following venues with the dates and turnout figures:

- Ebenezer Christian Centre, Kulim, Kedah on 18 July with 110 participants;
- Follow Jesus Assembly, Georgetown, Penang on 19 July with 60 participants;
- The Foursquare Church, Bukit Mertajam, Penang on 20 July with 50 participants;
- Ipoh Pastors Fellowship, Ipoh, Perak on 22 July with 90 participants;
- Emmanuel Evangelical Church, Johor Bahru, Johor on 25 July with 30 participants;
- Tamil Methodist Church Kuantan, Pahang on 5 July with 70 participants;
- Immanuel Assembly of God Church, Karak, Pahang on 4 July with 80 participants;

- Church of The Zion, Seremban, Negeri Sembilan on 13 July with 50 participants; and
- Peniel Church, Petaling Jaya, Selangor on 28 July with 100 participants.

There were overwhelming responses from the above churches who had invited NECF to conduct the launches and promote the theme of "Lifestyle of Holiness" compared to last year's launches.

Tamil Commission members led by its chairman, Rev Gabriel Jabanathan, and members Rev. Daniel Loh and Rev. Joshua Selvaraju did the sharing on the key points of the theme and led in the prayer sessions at all the prayer

launches. Overall, the feedback received from Tamil pastors and churches on the launches was good.



Tan Poh Kian is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Prayer Commission, NECF



Rev Daniel Loh is the Administrator and Executive Secretary of the Tamil Commission, NECF



Pastor Julidin Bin Lumanggong is the Executive Secretary of the Bahasa Malaysia (BM) Commission, NECF



Gathering Together to Pray for the Nation

By Tan Poh Kian, Rev Daniel Loh, Pastor Julidin Bin Lumanggong and Carrie Lim Suk Pei

The 40-Day Fast and Prayer 2019, an annual event of NECF's Prayer Commission, was brought to a closure at a number of Malaysia Day Prayer Rallies at several places in the country on 15 and 16 September.

The first one was the three-hour rally at Full Gospel Tabernacle (FGT) Subang Jaya where about 370 people attended. The rally began with an opening prayer by Elder Liew Hoi Foo of Full Gospel Assembly Kuala Lumpur. In addition to flag parades and singing of the national anthem as well as the exuberant worship led by FGT's worship team, three persons shared the pulpit. The speakers spoke on how **Renewal** will be brought about when God touches the heart of a single individual; **Revival** when God touches a community of faith; and **Reformation** before transformation could happen when the Church is aligned for impact.

The first speaker, Rev Elisha Satvinder, NECF Hon Secretary, used the example of David's mighty men, especially the three i.e. Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite and Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite to drive home the point that **Renewal** comes upon individuals when they are touched by God deeply in their hearts.

This was followed by a time of intercession led by Elder Lee Choong San of the Prayer Commission. He gave a timely reminder that there is a need to experience renewals by the Holy Spirit, both in our minds and in our hearts.

The second speaker, Rev Ong Sek Leang, NECF Vice-Chairman, talking about what constitutes Revival in the community of faith, referred to the Welsh **Revival** of 1904 as a defining moment in history. He quoted Dr Campbell Morgan, a famous Welsh minister and author who said about the Welsh Revival, "Here is Revival that comes from heaven; There is no preaching, no order, no hymn books, no choirs, no organs, no collections and finally no advertising!"

According to Dr Morgan, revival is a saturation of God in our church; it is the coming of the person and glory of God, not a manifestation of the gifts and anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Rev Ong added that when God touches the community of faith and revival sweeps through the city, the outcome would be "every shop becomes a pulpit, every heart an altar and every home a sanctuary." This statement is attributed to Rev Owen Murphy, author of the book, "When God Stepped Down From Heaven."

In the time of intercession that followed, Pastor Lee Yew Meng of the Prayer Commission stressed the important role played by the Church in transformation through revival. He led the congregation to pray for their love for God and their neighbours, and to anticipate our real impact on societies.

Rev Dr. Eu Hong Seng, the third speaker and NECF Chairman, emphasised the need for **Reformation** before transformation, and that it will only happen when the Church is aligned to make impact. In this regard, there is a great need for all believers to rise up as reformers and to make impact on the political, economic, social and religious spheres.

According to Rev Eu, there is a need for an alignment of believers to the plumb line (Amos 7:7 - 9) in the 7S areas in order for reformation to take place:

- Souls that need to be saved
- Soldiers i.e. disciples that need to be made
- Spirit-filled disciples
- Sons who do the work of the Lord
- Supernatural i.e. moving in signs and wonders
- Scripture alignment i.e. excited about the Word of God and
- Standing in the gap i.e. prayer of intercession for others and the nation.

Rev Looi Kok Kim, Prayer Commission Chairman, then led the congregation in intercession, specifically in a time of repentance for pastors and full-time workers who have been too busy to seek God in prayer. He issued a call for the Church to return to their first love for God and to carry out the mandate of the Great Commission.

The rally ended with a high note of expectation and hope for the nation with a bold declaration of "A New Malaysia" led by Pastor Khor Hoe Chai of the Hope of Glory Centre, Ampang, Selangor. Elder Kong Yeng Phooi of Petaling Jaya Gospel Hall then said the benediction.

The **Chinese Commission's** Malaysia Day Prayer Rally was held at Petaling Jaya Evangelical Free Church (PJEFC) on 16 September 2019. NECF Chairman, Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng, in his message to the nearly 350 participants emphasised the need for a lifestyle of holiness.

According to him, there are six important aspects to take note as follows:

- Holiness defines who we are in this world. It is not an option but both **mandatory** and a **possibility**.
- The Church needs to be reminded of godlessness in the last days. Thus, she needs to facilitate her members to live a lifestyle of holiness against the traits and signs of godlessness as stated in 2 Timothy 3: 3 - 4.
- Holiness nurtures the fear of God.
- There is no holiness without basic obedience.
- Without holiness, there is no true worship.
- Holiness will affect our shepherding.

This was followed by a time of intercession led by Pastor Grace Lee, Pastor Foo Moi Peng, Pastor Yew Kuan Yee and Pastor Jacob Wong. The rally ended with the congregation enthusiastically making a declaration of "A New Malaysia" and Chinese Commission Chairman Pastor Chomy Ching Choon

Mee saying the benediction. It is indeed noteworthy to see churches coming together to pray and intercede for the nation on a public holiday.

The Malaysia Day Prayer Rallies organised by the **Bahasa Malaysia Commission** were held on 15 August in Johor Bahru, Penang and the Klang Valley. The rally in the Klang Valley was held at Sijil Injil Borneo (SIB) City Life Church, Kuala Lumpur where 123 people attended.

Rev. Miun Amat, Deputy President of SIB Peninsular Malaysia, who was the speaker at the Klang Valley rally, spoke about the release of power when God's people prayed in unity as the Early Church did in Acts 12:2 - 7.

The passage in Acts tells about King Herod having the Apostle James killed and then arresting and imprisoning Peter. The night before Peter was executed, the church prayed very earnestly for him. As a result, an angel of the Lord helped him to miraculously escape from the prison. This was the result when the people of God gathered in unity to pray.

The rally witnessed the launch of the Prayer Shields for pastors and leaders, an initiative of NECF. Prayers were made for all the pastors and leaders present and everyone was encouraged by a palpable sense of the presence of God.

The Malaysia Day Prayer Rally of the **Tamil Commission** was held at Sion Shekinah Magimayin Aalayam Church, Kuala Lumpur on 16 September. Although not many pastors and members turned up, those who came more than made up for it by their fervent prayerful spirit.

Rev. Joshua Selvaraju of the Tamil Commission gave a short exhortation from James 5:16: "...The earnest prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." This speaks about the prayer of a righteous believer and the need for every believer to see the possible in the impossible.

The church was encouraged by the speaker to not only see the possible in the impossible but also to believe that God can remove all impossibilities when we activate our faith in Him. For this, every believer must step out in faith, even though it looks impossible. Thus, the church must start to believe in the possible things that God can do in times of impossibilities.

The rally also devoted time to declare and pray for "A New Malaysia" as well as to pray for Tamil pastors and churches.



Tan Poh Kian is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Prayer Commission, NECF



Rev Daniel Loh is the Administrator and Executive Secretary of the Tamil Commission, NECF



Pastor Julidin Bin Lumanggong is the Executive Secretary of the Bahasa Malaysia (BM) Commission, NECF



Carrie Lim Suk Pei is an Administrative Secretary at NECF Office

FAST AND PRAYER LAUNCHES IN THE NATION

CHURCHES GATHERED TOGETHER TO PRAY FOR THE NATION



Prayer Commission Launch in Petaling Jaya, Selangor



Petaling Jaya, Selangor



Batu Pahat, Johor



Chinese Commission Launch in Petaling Jaya, Selangor



Kuala Lumpur



Ipoh, Perak



Karak, Pahang



Penang



Johor Bahru, Johor



Subang Jaya, Selangor



The Rule of Law According to Divine Design

By Clement Tan and Jack Cheah

Introduction

On the 9th of May 2018, in the aftermath of the 14th general election and when the results were announced, there was great euphoria and jubilation among the majority of Malaysians. These were mainly those who had voted for a new government. We now have in place a new coalition to govern and administer the affairs of our nation. At the first press conference that our Prime Minister had, the very moment he was officially sworn-in, he made it clear that from now on, the affairs of our nation will be administered according to the Rule of Law.

The State of the Rule of Law in our Country

Adherence to the Rule of Law is crucial for the efficient management of the nation. Such an intention by our present Prime Minister could not have been conveyed at a much better time than immediately after the recent general election. At that time the country was faced with a period of uncertainty and fear of the future due to certain actions and policies of the previous government.

In the application of the Rule of Law, there are signs of improvement in the country based on the Rule of Law Index survey. Malaysia has an overall score of 0.55 out of a scale from 0 to 1 and a global ranking of 51 among the 126 countries indexed. Regionally, we are ranked seventh out of the 15 countries. As stated in the survey, we have gone up five places in global ranking. An area that the country has improved in is the constraint on government powers. The data of the survey is contained in pages 18 and 101 of the 2019 report of the World Justice Project, a non-profit organisation.

Scriptural Origin of the Concept of the Rule of Law

More important than the definition of the Rule of Law is the question of the origin of this concept. We need not look any further because its practice is stated in the Bible. An example of this is the period prior to entering the Promised Land. Israel being a covenant community, there were laws specifically given by God to Moses, which includes:

- The Mount Sinai encounter leading to the giving of the Ten Commandments
- Laws for the Tabernacle to be built
- Laws on offerings for the atonement of sins
- A Sabbatical system in place and how these laws were practised in those days

One will notice that for every breach of any of these laws, there will be repercussions or effects. This is where obedience to laws becomes necessary.

The Biblical Intent for the Rule of Law

God's intent was very clear when He gave laws to the people through Moses. He formed a nation (a people to Himself) that would be able to carry out the Great Commandment which is to love Him and to love their neighbours as themselves. In turn, the Golden Rule which is to "do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12) was to be practised, and examples of these deeds are strictly the contents of the laws then like in Leviticus 17-27 and Exodus 20:22 – 23:19.

This rule is further enforced under the Mosaic covenant where the ideals of justice and the many aspects of nationhood as a covenant community are clearly discernible

and promoted. They have a part to play in ensuring the nation remains conscious of God's presence.

Jesus, when commenting on the Law, said in Matthew 5:17 that He had come not to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil them. In fact, Hebrews 10:1 states clearly that the ceremonies, sacrifices, and other elements of the Old Covenant were "only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves."

In Matthew 22:36, Jesus also said all the Law and the Prophets hang on loving God and our neighbours as stated in the Great Commandment.

In terms of the practice of the rule of law, as can be gathered from Romans 13:1-7, God has delegated His authority to human rulers whom He has instituted as His servants in governing (v 1-2). However, the authority given is limited. Jesus said in Mark 12:17: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." This divine design is for the purpose of promoting good and restraining evil (v3-4 in Romans).

In line with historical development which is progressive revelation, participatory democracy is the new element as contrasted with the way the government was run in First Century Rome. This is consistent with the Biblical doctrine of man: everyone is created in the image of God and thus equal in dignity and worth before the Maker.

It is Biblical then to say that whilst authority comes from God, He delegates some to rulers, who are chosen by the people. That is why the mechanism of election through the ballot box is precious since it is a sacred trust.

The Importance of the Rule of Law and its Practice in our Country

Though the concept of the Rule of Law is nothing new, it has to be taken seriously. The institution of laws ensures better governance of every aspect or level of society for a nation from the family to the government.

In nation-building, laws need to be in place in order to prevent anarchy, the great evil which does not see the need for laws as all governments are considered bad. Without laws, there will not be any proper control over the citizens' conduct or that of the other governing institutions or mechanisms.

Our country functions as a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary democracy and there is a written constitution that safeguards the civil liberties of the people and governs the administration as well as the various institutions in the country. The supreme law of the Federation is indeed the Malaysian Constitution and in the event of conflict of any state law with it, the Malaysian Constitution shall prevail {Article 4(1)}.

Article 39 – 65, Part IX and Part X of the Constitution not only provides for but clearly defines the important institutions in the country. It also defines the role of the King and specifies the limits of his prerogatives in Article 32-37. Hence such provisions in our Constitution mirrors the Biblical model as mentioned in Deuteronomy 17: 14-20 where the king was not above the law and laws were in place to ensure that the rights of the people were looked into.

Parliamentary democracy with general elections every four to five years has been the norm in the country since independence. In the current practice of the Rule of Law,

democracy is, to a large extent, very much alive where every citizen has the right to choose the kind of government he or she wants.

Benefits of Practising the Rule of Law

One cannot overstate how important laws are in the proper functioning of society for they keep society running. Without laws, there would be chaos and disorder in the country.

Laws constitute a system of checks and controls on those who are in authority. When they are adhered to by the governing authorities entrusted to implement them, they will promote and provide for social good i.e. order and justice. This is what it should be, according to the divine design to promote good and restrain evil.

Anarchy, where no government exists, is definitely not God's will for human society. In fact, unjust or bad governments are to be preferred to it as there would then still be laws in the country. However, it is best to have good governments which are chosen by the people.

Living in a country where we have parliamentary democracy to practise the Rule of Law, we have the awesome privilege of choosing the kind of government to rule over us. The dignity of man who is created in God's image is thus promoted, not trampled upon under this system.

Conclusion

It is not just interesting but good to know that the root of the Rule of Law is actually divine in nature, from which stems public good and ethics which later brought about more constitutional principles. The Rule of Law is greatly needed to check the human weaknesses of corruption and tyranny.

In fact, it goes hand in hand with justice in a parliamentary democracy system, where the people have a say in choosing the kind of rulers over them. To get justice done then, the government that is chosen must be accountable to God and responsible to the people who elected them. This is only possible through its adherence to the Rule of Law.

It is the duty of every citizen to abide by the law. With the election of a new government in the land, each and every one is responsible to ensure that the laws enacted are for the welfare of the people as well as implemented in line with Micah 6:8 i.e. "...To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." If not adhered to, the people are to speak up through the proper channels, i.e. their Members of Parliament or State Assemblypersons.

The Church in Malaysia equally has an important part to play, not only in ensuring that its members abide by the Great Commandment but to live as law abiding citizens. As good citizens, they are to do what Jesus said i.e. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).



Clement Tan is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Research Commission, NECF



Jack Cheah is the Executive Secretary of the Business & Economy Commission and the Education Commission, NECF

OPINION: A Return to True Spirituality

By Dato' Dr Amar-Singh and Datin Dr Lim Swee-Im

Malaysia is facing many crises — politically, socially, and economically. But our greatest struggle is in the spiritual area.

Religion in Malaysia is in a state of decline. As organised religion grows and as religious authorities exert themselves in greater measure, the more they reveal how far they are from God.

More harm is now being done by religious authorities who, in the guise of representing God, focus on minute aspects of life rather than the major issues of loving God, helping the poor, supporting those who are struggling, extending mercy to others. The average person is made to follow dogmatic religious rules rather than assisted to find God for ourselves.

It is presumptuous for anyone to claim they can represent God or speak for Him or even defend Him. Who are we to assume to represent the will and desires of the Almighty? But many seem to know Him intimately and speak for Him all the time, and at great length. Even presuming to be able to defend Him; the folly of man knows no bounds.

While we may not know the will of God for others, we however can speak about and recognise the marks of a Godly man or woman, someone who is deeply spiritual. For example, when I went to meet Mother Theresa in 1978, I recognised immediately I was in the presence of a person who knew and loved God very deeply. Her character, demeanour and actions spoke loudly of this. She was gentle, attentive, kind, accepting, showed much love and grace and spent much energy and time supporting the poor and outcast.

So perhaps it is time to remind ourselves about the attributes of a religious person. We believe that some of the markers or traits of a deeply spiritual person are the following:

- One who is kind, forgiving, compassionate and keen to extend mercy and grace to others
- A person who recognises that a relationship with God is a private and deeply personal matter, and cannot be regulated or imposed upon by others.
- One who respects the belief systems of others, even if they differ from one's own.
- One who allows freedom of expression and of choice to others, not imposing one's beliefs and personal choices upon others.
- One who is willing to accept criticism and is prepared to engage in a two-way dialogue peacefully and rationally, not insisting on a one-way monologue which claims one's way is the only way.
- One who is prepared to admit 'I do not know' rather than claim to know everything about who God is and is not.
- One who knows that one's actions are as important, if not more important, than one's words.

- A deeply spiritual person will be less bothered with dressing style or appearance, but be focused on development of character and making sure that life expressions are consistent with belief in God.
- One who seeks to create and build all that is good, true and beautiful, to bring healing and wholeness to a broken world. Not one who seeks to destroy anything that does not agree with one's own world view.
- One who is more concerned about God's opinion of oneself rather than other people's opinions.

It is a shame that some of our religious leaders and institutions show so little true spirituality.

They are more interested in building religious buildings than helping the poor. More interested in external compliance to their interpretations of scripture than expressing the love of God in their lives. More concerned with punishment than extending mercy and grace.

If the founders of all the major religions were alive today, or if they returned, they would be appalled at how far the so-called followers and current religious leaders have strayed.

We firmly believe that religion is a private matter and no one should interfere in what and who we believe in as long as that does not harm anyone else. Religion has no place in government and legislation. To enforce any religion is not from God as He gives us free choice.

Finding God is a life-long journey that each of us will have to travel on our own.

It is time to read our own scriptures for ourselves to look for God, and not depend on religious leaders to tell us what truth is.

A time to return to a meaningful life that focuses on supporting the poor and vulnerable and to distance ourselves from the politics of religion.

A time to breathe life back into our beloved nation and offer our youth truth and reality and God.

The views expressed here are those of the authors/contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of Berita NECF



Dato' Dr HSS Amar-Singh is a senior Consultant Community Paediatrician, Head of the Paediatrics Department at Hospital Ipoh, and looks after paediatric services in Perak. Datin Dr Lim Swee-Im is married to Dato' Dr Amar-Singh. She is self-retired from conventional medical practice after 10 years of service with the Ministry of Health.

Inculcating Passion Among the Youth

By Rev Daniel Loh

The Tamil Commission's Youth Net seeks to inspire and motivate the Tamil youth in the nation to capture the vision and passion as well as to carry the burden to serve in the ministry and missions. With this purpose in mind, it organised the Tamil Youth "Passion" Conference on 17th August 2019 at Praise Emmanuel Assembly Church, Sunway, Petaling Jaya.

At the special invitation of NECF, Pastor John Titus from India was invited to be the speaker at the conference. Pastor John is an itinerant minister with a passion for God and people and he ministers widely among the young people in different parts of the world.

The response of the youths to attend the conference was simply overwhelming. Numbering about 500 persons, they came with much enthusiasm, excitement and expectation to be greatly blessed at the conference.

The preliminary session was conducted by Rev. Gabriel Jabanathan, NECF's Tamil Commission Chairman, who spoke on the need for the youth to press in and move on to serve the Lord with a great sense of passion.

Pastor John Titus, the conference speaker, started off by referring to the scripture in 2 Samuel 23:5 (New King James Version) which says, "Although my house is not so with God, Yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in all things and secure. For this is all my salvation and all my desire; Will He not make it increase? He emphasized that God's covenant with His people is everlasting and this means that every part and stage of the lives of the young people is



Worship session at the conference



Youth leaders in a group photo

secure. God has called them to be sons and daughters, and they need not worry as God has a great plan for their lives.

He added that every youth has a destiny and God will impart visions to them as each and every one of them draws near to God. Pastor John said that every one of them must desire and hunger for God. As they do so, He will surely impart to them the vision.

Several positive and encouraging testimonies were shared by youths from different churches at the conference. Indeed, it was greatly uplifting to witness signs and wonders: some participants were healed and revived and also at the same time challenged to do great exploits for God.



Rev Daniel Loh is the Administrator and Executive Secretary of the Tamil Commission, NECF

NECF welcomes new members

Church	Pastor	City / Town
Ordinary Members		
Appointed Church Berhad	Pr Ronnie Tan Kim Liew	Johor Bahru
Arise And Shine Fellowship	Rev Aaron David Tamilmany A/L	Shah Alam
Borneo Christian Centre	Rev Sam Yeoh Yong Chong	Sibu
C3 Tepi Sungai	Pr Silvadass A/L Subramaniam	Klang
Calvary Family Centre	Pr Adrian Ho Tsu Tsong	Kota Kinabalu
Canaan Promise Centre	Pr Mercy Thurgah Devi	Seremban 2
Eagles Lutheran Fellowship Kuala Lumpur	Dr Khoo Teng Hock	Kuala Lumpur
Full Gospel Tabernacle, Petaling Jaya	Rev Dr Eu Hong Seng	Petaling Jaya
Grace Global Prayer Association	Pr Grace David Raju	Seremban
New Life In Christ Church	Pr Banu Devan A/L Manickam	Rawang
RCCG Mercy Seat Sanctuary, Asia Region 2 HQ	Pr Olaade Joseph Kolawole	Petaling Jaya
World Mission Church	Elder Goh Wooi Beng	Butterworth

The Great Need for Prayer Shields for Pastors and Leaders

By Tan Poh Kian

The news of Jarrid Wilson who died by suicide on Monday evening, September 9, 2019 at age 30 came as a big astonishment to many in Christendom. Jarrid was a well-known US pastor who founded the faith-centred organisation called Anthem of Hope which is dedicated to amplifying hope for those battling brokenness, depression, anxiety, self-harm, addiction and suicide. The tragedy calls again for Christians to be acutely aware of the need to extend our care and prayer coverage over ministers who are at the forefront of ministries in His Kingdom.

Greg Laurie, his senior pastor, said in the wake of this incident, "Sometimes people may think that as pastors or spiritual leaders we are somehow above the pain and struggles of everyday people. We are the ones who are supposed to have all the answers. But we do not."

The tragedy highlights the fact that being a spiritual leader does not exempt him or her from having physical, spiritual and emotional struggles. Just like being a doctor does not exempt one from being plagued by sicknesses and diseases. When we have unrealistic expectations of our spiritual leaders, and regard them as almighty people who are supposed to have all the solutions and answers, we are indeed doing them an injustice. We must accept that they are people too with their vulnerabilities, and they are often hard pressed on all sides, as you and I are. In fact, sometimes even more so, besides their specific calling to be shepherds of God's flock.

Endless demands might have been placed on some of our pastors and leaders. The amount of pressures and challenges some have to face and overcome in their present contexts might far exceed what they are able to bear personally. For the health and well-being of the community of believers, including pastors and leaders, we are exhorted in Scripture to bear with one another's burdens so as to fulfil the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

It is our belief that the holistic health and growth of a pastor/leader is not just his/her personal concern, but it should also be the concern of the congregation. Church members are encouraged to collectively walk alongside their pastors/leaders and to consistently support them in prayers.



The month of October offers us a great opportunity to express our sincere love and appreciation of our spiritual leaders, i.e., church pastors and leaders who have dedicated themselves to be shepherds or overseers over God's flock. We, therefore, call churches to set apart the month of October 2019 to be a month to pray and intercede for their pastors and leaders. This would involve covering their families, ministries, health and finances in prayer in order for them to experience tremendous breakthroughs and growth in areas where they might encounter obstacles and struggles.

In line with this, posters and samples of commitment cards will be mailed-out to churches in order to encourage members to take up the prayer shields for their pastors and leaders in the month of October 2019. Videos in different languages can be downloaded from our website for publicity purposes. Templates of the commitment cards in different languages are also available on our website, should there be a need to print more for church members.

It is our prayer that as members begin to pray for their pastors and leaders, their love will indeed grow and abound, resulting in even greater good work for the family of God and His Kingdom!



Tan Poh Kian is the Assistant Executive Secretary of the Prayer Commission, NECF

My Brush with Death

A Personal Testimony by Rev Andy Chi

I will remember the month of July 2019 as the month when I had a near brush with death. It all began when I started to have a high fever on July 20. Despite taking fever tablets, my fever persisted. Just a day before, I had spent time cleaning the floor under my refrigerator to remove trash and the urine that was left behind by an unwelcomed rat. Fearing the possibility of some kind of infection, my wife and I decided to go to the hospital to do a blood test.

The blood test reported negative results for the rat urine infection and influenza. Instead, I tested positive for dengue. It was noted that my platelet count had dropped to 180. The hospital staff suggested that I return later in the morning for further blood tests. It was well past midnight when my wife and I left the hospital.

My condition became worse the following morning. My wife and I then immediately left for the hospital and a new blood sample was taken. Despite the blood test showing just a slight drop in my platelet count, I was immediately given drips and admitted into the hospital ward because of fears regarding my condition.

On July 22, my platelet count dropped to 68 in the morning and 38 in the afternoon. By evening it had gone down to 21. I was immediately transferred to the High Dependence Unit for close monitoring as I had entered the critical phase of the illness.

On July 23, my platelet count continued its drop to 13 in the morning and 7 in the evening. I had also purged a total of six times during the day due to the papaya leaf extract that I had taken the previous day. I felt completely stripped of all strength; every movement of my limbs needed great effort. I was also restricted to the bed to avoid any injury; my lips and gums started to bleed and red spots started to appear under my skin. My entire body also started to swell and fluid was detected in my lungs due to water retention.

By that time, news of my condition had gone viral. Many prayer groups and churches from all states were praying for me. I was told it had also gone international with foreign intercessory groups praying for me too.

Back in the hospital, I was given frog porridge, essential oil and crab soup as recommended supplements to assist me with my recovery. This probably contributed to the short-lived improvement the following day with the platelet count going up to 16 in the morning and then dropping down to 6 in the evening. I was also given two sachets of very bitter porcupine powder which I took.



Rev Andy warded in the hospital

On July 25, my platelet count continued to remain low. It made a slight increase to 9, dropped back to 7 and ended the day at 11. I had a worrying moment that day when I vomited for the first time since my admission after taking my lunch. Thankfully, it did not reoccur.

On July 26, my platelet count dropped to 9 and then recovered to 15. The following day, my platelet count continued to increase from 28 to 55. I was given the good news that I was on the road to recovery and was transferred back to the normal ward.

On July 28, my platelet count rose to 76 and on the day of my discharge i.e. July 29, it rose to 98. A week later when I came back for my follow-up appointment, my blood test result recorded 344 for my platelets. The doctor told me that I was healed and I no longer needed to see him. The very next day, I reported back to work.

Looking back on the whole episode, I would like firstly, to express my appreciation to all who prayed for me, both locally and abroad, when I was in the hospital. I believe it was their prayers that sustained my life as many felt that I was on the brink of death. When I was discharged, I was told of three other pastors who were younger than me who had suddenly passed away at around the same time of my illness. I realized that I was very fortunate indeed to have such prayer support that saved my life.

That episode reminded me of the importance of prayer covering for pastors and leaders. We are engaged in an intense spiritual battle with powerful spiritual forces and we cannot wage it without adequate protection. Every servant of God needs the prayer covering of the church to stay above all the wiles of the enemy. Let us support our pastors and leaders daily in prayers so that they can carry out their work without any hindrance and danger. In this regard, we can begin by participating in the NECF Prayer Shield for Pastors and Leaders this month of October.

I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to my family, my church members, the NECF Council, NECF staff, those who visited me and those who texted messages to me. Thank you for all the loving support and encouragement during my hospitalization.

Finally, I want to thank the Lord who is the ultimate giver and sustainer of my life. If not for Him, I would not be alive today. To God be the glory!



Rev Andy Chi is the Secretary-General of NECF.



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"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever"
(Psalm 119:160 ESV).

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NECF MALAYSIA



MERRY CHRISTMAS

NECF Council & Staff Wish All Readers
A Blessed Christmas & A Fruitful New Year