

Homosexuality in Ghana: Controversies in Science, The Law, and Religious Responses

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Abstract

The paper discusses homosexuality in Ghana and the uncertainties in science and the Ghanaian criminal law on the subject. The study also provides a religious assessment on the phenomenon. Study statistics demonstrate that the phenomenon is spreading in Ghana. For example, in 2010, an estimated 8,000 gay persons were living in the Western and Central regions; and over 30,000 men slept with men in Ghana in 2011 alone. In 2014 there were over 200,000 gays in the country, forming about one percent of the total population. Today with Ghana's population over 26, 000, 000, these statistics might increase. The study involves a qualitative case studies and a survey of a selected cross-section of homosexual prone communities, and educational institutions in Ghana; and is framed by social learning theory. The study has realized that homosexuality in Ghana is a learned behavior. This present study calls for an urgent development policy discussion leading to a positive practical intervention by government and religious bodies. The study is important because it highlights the state of homosexuality in Ghana and suggests ways of dealing with it. It also contributes to the existing local and global theory on the phenomenon.

Keywords: Homosexuality, heterosexual, Culture, Biblical stance, scientific view, law.

Introduction

One of the topical issues in the 21st century that has gained substantial academic and popular attention and debates in the fields of religion and development is homosexuality. Homosexuality, in the context of this study, is the 'sexual interest in and attraction' to persons of one's own same sex¹ leading to penetrative anal sex². This definition includes sexual activities of lesbians. Homosexuality by Ghanaian law is criminalized.³ Whilst some claim homosexuality is inborn or genetically caused, others insist that it is a learned behavior⁴. The social learning theory would interpret homosexuality as a learned behavior. As such it is a psychological functioning that can be best understood in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between behavior and its controlling conditions⁵. This subject matter is significant because it is a religious/development issue that seems to topple and reconfigure the traditional Christian and Islamic notion of sexual relationship and the family. Moreover, Biblically and 'Islamicly', homosexuality appears to upset God's blessing and command to the first man and woman to procreate or multiply for the sustainability of the human race on earth⁶; stressing marriage as naturally between a male and a female⁷.

Homosexuality seems to be cross-cultural; and spreading like a bushfire in the harmattan. Judeo-Christian and Muslim cultures have generally seen this sexual behavior as deviant and sinful. Many Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders, on the other hand, proscribe the acts, but not the "inclination" or "orientation", and the people involved in this practice.⁸ It is interesting to note that while many Western societies appear tolerant and have condescended to the phenomenon, African societies like Ghana frown on it. The global debate, including that of Ghana is whether this practice should be accepted or censored. As an ongoing debate on the subject matter, this present paper is therefore confronted with the following questions: What is the situation of homosexuality in Ghana? How do homosexuals feel about this same sex relationship? What is the scientific basis for the practice? What are the Christian and the Islamic responses to the practice in Ghana? The study would try to find answers to the questions, evaluate the findings and conclude. The study is important because it has

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Homosexuality", (2017): 1

Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/homosexuality>. Accessed 20 Jan. 2017.

² Bonsu, Nana Ama, "Homosexuality and the Law in Ghana", 22nd June, 2011. Available at:

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Homosexuality-and-the-Law-in-Ghana-211710>. Accessed 5th April, 2017.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Robert, Knight, "Born or Bred? Science Does not Support the Claim that Homosexuality is Genetic." (2004): 1

Available at: <http://concernedwomen.org/born-or-bredscience-does-not-support-the-claim-that-homosexuality-is-genetic/>. Accessed 3rd March, 2017.

⁵ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*. (New York: General Learning Press, 1971).

⁶ Gen 1:27-28

⁷ Math 19: 4-5; Quran 7: 80-81.

⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Homosexuality", (2017)

Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/homosexuality>. Accessed 20 Jan. 2017

exposed the situation of homosexuality in Ghana and suggested positive practical intervention.

The opening chapter of the letter to the Romans 1:26-27 and Quran 7: 80-81 have more often been evoked as traditional Christian and Islamic responses against homosexual practices. But other Christians, notably from factions within mainstream Protestantism to organizations of Reform rabbis have argued on theological as well as social grounds that the practice should be accepted¹. Contrary to the traditional Christian interpretation, new translations of Romans (1:26-27) have been made by pro-homosexual groups. This new text is tolerant to the practice and is used as ground for ordaining homosexuals as bishops. Another attempt to justify the practice is based on the assumption that certain people are genetically homosexual. This situation has threatened to cause outright intra and inter schisms in some churches².

It is a common perception that homosexuality is an alien practice imported into Ghana by tourists and other foreigners. According to this perception, tourists, international workers and even missionaries introduced the homosexual practice into Ghana in the 70s. Those within the group who were homosexuals invited innocent boys to their houses; flushed them with gifts and money and promised to send them to rich countries. This way they had continuous anal intercourse with them. Most of the boys were believed to get addicted to the practice. Alternatively, certain Ghanaians who travelled abroad learnt the practice and returned as homosexuals.³

Preceding the arrest of John Macleod, a British national in 2007 for homosexual acts with a 19 year old Ghanaian teenage boy, there had been similar reports in the 90s by newspapers such as foreign nationals 'sodomizing' Ghanaian boys.⁴ Some also claim that convicts who could not have access to the opposite sex, indulged in homosexual sex and this became habitual practice for them after prison.⁵ As indicated, some claim the homosexual tendency is inborn and environment also contributes to it. During the 90s students began to confess when a Peace Corp volunteer was deported from Ghana for wounding the anal cavity of a young student. Since then homosexuals have been under severe social pressure because the practice is seen as culturally a taboo in Ghana. From 2004, the practice took a new dimension when the media started reporting news incidents on it.⁶

Developments in learning theory have shifted the centering of causal analysis from the so-called "inner determinants to detailed examination of external influences on responsiveness"⁷. In other words, "human behavior was extensively analyzed in terms of the stimulus events that evoke it and the reinforcing consequences that alter it"⁸. In the social learning view, however, humans are "neither driven by inner forces nor buffeted by environmental influences. Rather, psychological functioning is best understood in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction between behavior and its controlling conditions."⁹ In other words, homosexuality is a learned behavior, which involves some processes. Thus the main objective of this paper is to find out about the state of homosexuality in Ghana and how science on one hand, and the letter to Romans 1: 26-27 of the New Testament and Islam, on the other, have responded to it.

Methodology

The approach of the study is the mixed methods. Interview has been conducted with key respondents comprising 7 male and 3 female homosexuals in Accra; 12 male and 7 female homosexuals in Kumasi; and 1 male homosexual (undergoing counseling) at Atebubu. In addition, 3 Senior High School females who are practicing *supi*¹⁰; and 2 male homosexuals; and a tutor (who counsels homosexuals) have been interviewed. Three caregivers working for an NGO on health awareness for homosexuals, and one homosexual peer educator as well as 3 medical practitioners have also been interviewed. Access to informants has been arranged by a homosexual Bishop who is one of the key informants.

The selection of informant is through strategic sampling. The qualitative approach is appropriate because it has allowed free interaction with the researcher and the respondents. It also helps in dealing with the sensitive and emotional issues at stake where respondents pour out their feelings about their homosexual behavior.

A survey has also been conducted among 200 respondents. These respondents were randomly picked

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Homosexuality", (2017)
Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/homosexuality>. Accessed 20 Jan. 2017

² Ibid

³ William Yao Owusu, "Homosexuality in Ghana: A right or an aberration?" 2011. Available at: <http://www.dailyguideghana.com>. Accessed 10 September 2014.

⁴ I. Karikari, Homosexuality in Ghana: Senior High Schools - The Real Hotspots? [online] [9th June 2011]
Available at: <http://ghanaweb.com/>. Accessed December, 2014.

⁵ William Yao Owusu, 'Homosexuality in Ghana: A right or an aberration?'

⁶ Refer to footnote 9.

⁷ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*. (New York: General Learning Press, 1971): 2

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ A local name given to lesbians in Senior High Schools in Ghana.

from places known to be homosexual prone areas with the following disaggregation: (80) in Kumasi, 50 in Teshie, 40 in James Town; and 30 in Atebubu respectively located within the Ashanti, Greater Accra, and the Brong Ahafo regions of Ghana. Respondents have answered questions in the presence of some research assistants but their names have been held in anonymity.

The primary data is supplemented by relevant secondary materials, majority of which are found online on the subject matter. Scientific literature sharing perspectives on homosexuality has also been accessed. In addition, the letter to the Romans 1:26-27 in the original Greek text and Quran 7: 80-81 and 26:167 have been used to explain the traditional Christian and Muslim responses to the homosexual practice. The study has decided to use these particular texts because they are the most frequently used by both Christians and Muslims and therefore churches and Mosques in their appraisal of the phenomenon. The combination of the different methods, techniques and sources of data has provided a holistic picture of the research object¹. Finally, because of the sensitive nature of the subject matter pseudonyms were applied to the names of informants; and names of institutions involved in the study have not been mentioned.

Results and Discussion

The debate over homosexuality is whether the phenomenon is a genetic trait or a learned behavior.² Some scientists indicate that sexual orientation is not a choice, but a complex interplay of biological and environmental factors. This school of thought argues that homosexuality is an ordinary and normal occurrence in nature as found with other animal species.³ The American Psychological Association (APA), for example, first regarded homosexuality as a mental disorder but later indicated that it is the result of nature and therefore it is neither a mental illness nor a moral depravity” leading to removal of the phenomenon from its list of diagnoses and disorders.⁴ The National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) debunk the APA’s claims.⁵

Experiments in the biological study of the phenomenon date back to the late 1930’s, beginning with the pioneering research of Alfred Kinsey on human sexuality. D.F. Swaab also conducted an experiment in 1990 which became the first to document a physiological difference in the anatomical structure of a gay man’s brain.⁶ At the same time, Laura S. Allen claimed a similar discovery in the hypothalamus. She found that the anterior commissure (AC) of the hypothalamus was also significantly larger in the homosexual subjects than that of the heterosexuals. Simon LeVay conducted a similar experiment regarding the hypothalamus of the human brain in 1991. LeVay concluded that “homosexual and heterosexual men differ in the central neuronal mechanisms that control sexual behavior,” and like Allen and Swaab, agreed that this difference in anatomy was no product of upbringing or environment, but rather prenatal cerebral development and structural differentiation.⁷

There is also neuroendocrine⁸ viewpoint’s basic hypothesis which postulates that sexual orientation is determined by the early levels of androgen⁹ on relevant neural¹⁰ structures. If highly exposed to these androgens, the fetus will become ‘masculinized’, or attracted to females. In simplification, if the person’s genetic code is heterozygotic (one homosexual gene and one heterosexual gene), if the homosexual allele¹¹ (half of the genetic code) is the allele passed on to the next generation, it will become the phenotype.¹² Heterozygotes are only capable of being passed through to the next generation by mothers (as the Y-chromosome is incapable of

¹ This study emerges from a Master of Philosophy project of Kwakye Siaw Ahenkora, Department of Religious Studies, KNUST, 2015. The study was based on extensive case studies conducted in 2014, 2015 and which we updated in 2016 and in 2017.

² Robert, Knight, “Born or Bred? Science Does not Support the Claim that Homosexuality is Genetic.” (2004): 1
Available at: <http://concernedwomen.org/born-or-bredscience-does-not-support-the-claim-that-homosexuality-is-genetic/>. Accessed 3rd March, 2017.

³ Nimisha Kaushik, The Difference between Homosexuality and Gay [online] [2013], September, 27, 2011. Available at: <http://www.differencebetween.net/science/nature/difference-between-homosexual-and-gay/>. Accessed 14 December 2013.

⁴ . Christopher Heffner, “Homosexuality: Nature or Nurture”, [online] [30th April 2003] available at: <http://All Psych Journal.com> accessed on 21st December 2014.

⁵ J.E. Phelan and others, NARTH’s Response to the APA Claims on Homosexuality p.8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hormones and nervous system: relating to or involving a nerve cell that releases a chemical messenger, especially a neurohormone, directly into the bloodstream.

⁹ Artificial or natural male sex hormone responsible for the development of male sexual characteristics. Testosterone and androsterone are androgens.

¹⁰ Relating to or located in a nerve or the nervous system.

¹¹ One of two or more alternative forms of a gene, occupying the same position locus on paired chromosomes and controlling the same inherited characteristic.

¹² The visible characteristics of an organism resulting from the interaction between its genetic makeup and the environment.

heterozygosis). This again links homosexuality to X-linkage.¹

But there are others who argue, among other things, that there is no scientific finding that has emphatically established the causal correlation between genes and homosexuality.² This makes the above scientific claims as hypothetical since no concrete biological or neural differences have been established between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Moreover, other scientific enquiries into these findings have produced differing results. But scientific results must be verifiable and replicable. The above scientific findings are therefore not reliable to determining the causes of homosexuality.³ According to Osei and his colleague medical experts,⁴ there is nothing physiological about homosexuality.

The attribution of homosexual behavior to inner forces (genes or biological make up) and later to environmental forces are early explanatory schemes, which are neither adequate nor has the demonstrable predictive power.⁵ Insight from social learning theory, however, seems to indicate that homosexuality is a learned behavior. Majority of homosexual informants in the field explained that their desire began in teen years. They admitted they were introduced to the homosexual practice (i.e., had their first gay sex) when they needed financial help from some gay benefactors. Some of the benefactors were tutors in Senior High Schools they attended. But allurements to the homosexual activity is not only economic but also through adventure or curiosity.

Second cycle institutions seem to be hot-beds of homosexuality and where many students practice it for the first time. The main mode of spreading the practice in educational institutions is socialization of fresh students through overt orientations; show of care and charity to win over the unsuspecting new comers by continuing gay students. Continuing gay students assign to themselves fatherhood and motherhood to the fresh students. This way, they are able to orientate the fresh students to homosexuality.

In single sex boarding schools student girls practice homosexuality either because they are afraid of getting pregnant or have no access to male partners. The phenomenon is also prevalent in single sex boys' boarding schools. There are also gay rape incidents. However, in addressing such cases school authorities have often resorted to domestic rather than criminal processes. A lot of young people get propositioned, and in some cases coerced into these acts but find it difficult informing school authorities and their parents.⁶ If their sexuality is called into question during tenure at school, gay or lesbian students face expulsion.⁷ For example, fifty three students (19 boys and 34 girls) from two of the leading Senior High Schools in Ashanti region were expelled because they were involved in gay activities.⁸ According to a media report⁹, such students have formed societies on campuses and regularly meet to discuss how to convince more students to join their group. In the male school, there is a gay prefect who is referred to as "GP". All students expelled as a result of the homosexual practice were however called back through the intervention of a powerful traditional leader whose relation was believed to be involved. The Herald Newspaper in 'a month long investigations' has come out with a report that students in the female Senior High School were indulging in lesbianism.¹⁰

In another development, two students from a male Senior High School in the Volta region are also assisting police investigation about circumstances that resulted in a chaotic scene leading to the death of a student. A police strayed bullet is said to cause the death of the students who wanted to attack two alleged homosexuals in the school. There was ensuing chaos and violence when angry students turned their fury on some teachers alleged to be shielding the homosexuals.¹¹ It is a common knowledge that in schools, homosexual activities are not tolerated and students are often severely sanctioned when identified, but such acts are still clandestinely common. The Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service also indicated how more teenage boys in the country's Junior High Schools are becoming victims of homosexual abuse.

Similarly, the practice is found in some of the tertiary institutions in Ghana. For example, recently authorities in a particular tertiary institution in Accra expelled some male students because they were involved in

¹ Christopher Heffner, "Homosexuality: Nature or Nurture".

² Robert, Knight, "Born or Bred? Science Does not Support the Claim that Homosexuality is Genetic." (2004):

Available at: <http://concernedwomen.org/born-or-bredscience-does-not-support-the-claim-that-homosexuality-is-genetic/>. Accessed 3rd March, 2017.

³ Interview, on 28th January 2015.

⁴ Interview, on 13th March 2014.

⁵ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*. (New York: General Learning Press, 1971):2.

⁶ The Statesman, "Why Should Kufuor Peep into Our Bedrooms". 7 September 2006

Available at: <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/SportsArchive/artikel.php?ID=110178>. Accessed 15 April, 2014.

⁷ Mark S. Luckie, "Ghana: Somewhere over the Rainbow". (n.d.). Available at:

<https://journalism.berkeley.edu/projects/mm/luckie/rainbow.html>. Accessed, July 2014.

⁸ Interview, 16th April 2015.

⁹ Dan Littauer, Two Ghana schools expel 53 students for being gay [online] [19th April 2013] [http:// Gaystar News; LGBTI global news 24-7/](http://Gaystar News; LGBTI global news 24-7/). Accessed 12 March, 2014.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Myjoyonline, "Two male senior high students arrested". Available at: <http://.omgGhana.com>. Accessed, 19 February 2015.

homosexual activities. This has caused police detectives to be on the alert during the night in that institution.¹

Reports of such incident are considered something temporary and private and so do not attract serious public discussion.² But some students who are involved in the practice continue with the homosexual relationship into adult life. A medical expert, Dr. Edmund, a key informant confirmed the argument that homosexuality is a learned behavior. According to the medical informant, when heterosexuals start practicing homosexuality, the practice seems to possess a form of addiction; the person soon prefers homosexual sex to that of heterosexual. He illustrated his argument with a narrative of a colleague who went for further studies in a Western country and involved himself with homosexuality for financial rewards. This colleague who used to be a faithful husband to his wife came back from studies and developed a strong sexual urge for males. He now sleeps regularly with males. In order to be able to make love to his wife, the latter would have to put on male outfits to be able to attract her husband into having anal sex with her. According to the medical expert, in trying to look for the solution to the problem, his colleague has resorted to fasting and prayers for the past two years; and this has helped him come out of it. The informant indicated that over 70% of homosexuals who received treatment with him and other colleague medical experts were heterosexuals before converting to homosexuals. He indicated how economic factors have led many to become homosexuals.³

A liberated *trokosi*⁴ from a village in the Volta region of Ghana corroborated how *trokosi* women in traditional religious shrines satisfied themselves sexually with each other when they need a man and shrine priests showed no interest in them.⁵

Furthermore, during the fieldwork in a homosexual prone community, a Ghanaian veteran army officer who used to be a homosexual narrated how male members of a group in the colonial army, especially during the 2nd world war satisfied each other sexually. The key informant maintained that the group existed in the army before he was recruited. So it was difficult to tell how it started.⁶ He explained that his lover, a senior army officer initiated him into homosexuality. According to the informant, the senior officer lavished him with so much love that it led him to the same sex relationship. The key informant was then introduced to other members of the group and he had to go through a “welcoming rite”. According to him, he felt encouraged realizing that there were so many senior officers in the group who were ready to defend him in time of trouble.⁷

“In the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others. The more rudimentary form of learning, rooted in direct experience, is largely governed by the rewarding and punishing consequences that follow any given action”⁸. This explains why mentoring of fresh students by the continuing homosexual students and teachers or ranking persons in various institutions are likely to spread more incidents of homosexuality in Ghana. This is precisely because human beings have anticipatory capacity and “conditions of reinforcement” turn to have “strong incentive-motivational effects” on them.⁹ Thus in any given human institution, “subordinates” are more likely to be influenced by modeling behavior of models. In the context of this research, continuing homosexual students or teachers in educational institutions, a homosexual pastor or a high ranking homosexual military officer can have a profound homosexual influence on the lives of their subordinates and those around them. This observational learning requires that people “attend to, or recognize, the essential features of the model’s behavior.”¹⁰ Learning homosexual behavior through the homosexual characters is extremely significant because the “people with whom one regularly associates delimit the types of behavior that one will repeatedly observe and learn most thoroughly.”¹¹ But One may ask why not all but only some numbers of the population within a particular institution become homosexuals. The reality is that:

Within any social group some members are likely to command greater attention than others. The functional value of the behaviors displayed by different models is highly influential in determining which models will closely be observed and which will be ignored. Attention to models is also channeled by their interpersonal attraction¹².

Moreover, “models who possess interesting and winsome qualities are sought out, whereas those who lack

¹ Material obtained from fieldwork in Accra on 20th November, 2016. The university’s name is held in anonymity.

² Ibid.

³ Interview, on 13th March 2014.

⁴ It is a practice where innocent virgin girls and women are kept in religious bondage in shrines dedicated to deities for alleged crimes committed by relatives. For more of this read: Gedzi, V. S., Dumbe, Y. and Eshun, G., (2016) “Field of Power: A Religio-Cultural Analysis of Trokosi in Ghana.” Political Science Journal. Volume 1.01: 122 – 142.

⁵ F. Adjeley, “Is the Homosexual my Neighbor? *Life Journal*, Vol. 138, 2012 p. 19.

⁶ Interview, 11th September 2014.

⁷ General Okai, Ahenkora Kwakye.

⁸ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*. (New York: General Learning Press, 1971): 5.

⁹ Ibid: 2-5.

¹⁰ Ibid: 6

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*. (New York: General Learning Press, 1971) : 6 -7.

pleasing characteristics tend to be ignored or rejected, even though they may excel in other ways."¹

Furthermore, one may not be much influenced by "observation of a model's behavior if one has no memory of what is observed. One therefore needs long term retention of activities that have been modeled. This is why homosexuals in the research units continuously organize overt parties, orientation and hospitality or philanthropic programs for sexual interactions. In educational institutions as indicated, retention of modeled events is verbally coded such as *homo*, *supi*, *ashetu*, *lottosa*, *muski* and other related terms. Thus through retention and practice, homosexual tendencies are learnt and developed. It is also identified that a "person can acquire, retain, and possess the capabilities of execution of modeled behavior" but such "learning may rarely be activated into over performance if it is negatively sanctioned."² This may explain why homosexuals in Ghana are clandestine in their activities because of the frequent police crackdown.

As indicated, some of these homosexuals are active church members. A number of them, for example, are not only influential Gospel singers but also active group leaders in their churches. One of them was arrested by the Atebubu police when he was making love advances to a young man through the Facebook. According to this homosexual informant, the homosexual desire was already awoken in him at the age of thirteen. Others had their first penetrative anal sex at the age of twelve. Prior to that, they had had non-penetrative sexual contacts boys³.

A few informants agreed having slept with the opposite sex on one or three occasions but later regretted the act and decided to have a total abstinence from heterosexual sex. Many informants also attempted having sex with females, but in several cases they could not achieve erection. In other times they kept postponing meeting the women even though the latter were willing to sexually relate with them. They explained that every feminine feature turned them off. On the other hand, any time they saw a masculine feature such as a bare chest, they are unable to control their sexual urge. They maintained that most times, after such scenes they found places to masturbate in order to regain their composure. One recounted how he had added sedatives to meals and drinks of a number of male relations and friends in order to have anal sex with them while they were asleep.⁴ Some of the homosexuals also indicated they cherished hugging other males and touching their bodies because of the pleasure they derived from it. Majority indicated that "male body odor" turns them on. But some others prefer males who use "good masculine perfume". Some confessed having sensations in their manhood as soon as they set eyes on certain types of males and admitted that most time they indulge in masturbation when there is no "homosexual community" nearby. They also have sexual fantasy of attractive men they might have met or seen in pictures. This act drives them to reach orgasm.

As a top ranking church leader explains:

Invert gays cannot have sex with the opposite sex. I am one of such homosexuals. My ex-girlfriend was doing everything she could to make his man happy. But for two years in the relationship, I slept with her just twice; and even that I had to rely on alcohol and fantasy. I was imagining myself making love to my former 'wife' who was a male. It was not easy for me at all.⁵

The informants sustained preference to having sex with teenagers even though they are aware of the consequences associated with this. For them, "teenagers are much more attractive and pleasurable".⁶ Some of the informants were introduced to the homosexual practice when they needed financial help from some gay benefactors. Three of these benefactors were their tutors in Senior High Schools they attended. Some of informants were in teenage years when they experienced their first gay sex. According to one of them, I was the one "who always penetrated my elder friend until I turned seventeen. It was on my birthday that for the first time the elder friend slept with me through my anus". Majority of the respondents maintained they had excruciating pain the first and a few other times during homosexual sex. An informant summed up the first experience of majority of homosexuals: "I bled for over a week and was shy. Instead of going to a hospital, I resorted to the use of herbs and hot water therapy."⁷

According to Sam who is a bisexual, homosexual intercourse has a special "pleasant flavor" that is absent in heterosexual sex experience. He maintained that after the homosexual sex, it is very difficult for him to sleep with a woman.⁸

In addition, 13 female homosexuals were also interviewed. Three of them were identified at Teshie in Accra and 7 at Kumasi. Three of the interviewees were lesbians; 7 bisexuals and 3 Senior High School girls.

¹ Ibid

² Ibid: 8.

³ Interview, 9th September 2014

⁴ Interview, 11th September 2014.

⁵ Interview, 14th January 2015.

⁶ Interview, 20th June 2015.

⁷ Interview, 11th September 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

One bisexual is a sex worker who attends to both sexes. Four of the bisexuals are married to male husbands, but one still maintains her lesbian partner as a friend while one hires a sexual partner when she needs her. One has homosexual sex occasionally with any of her friends available especially when she is alone in the house. The other one visits her female partner known to the husband as her class mates. Two of the bisexuals use homosexuality as a trade while one of them who is a busy executive of a reputable company visits the club ones in a month to hang out with her lesbian partner; and spending the night together with her in a hotel. At 37, this executive is not married and not planning to marry even though she also sleeps with men. These women homosexuals also use objects such as vibrators, candles, carrots, plantain and banana as sexual tools to satisfy their sexual urge. They also masturbate.

Ama is the chairperson of the Elegant Women's Association. This association has a membership of 53 women and is made up of young widows. According to Ama, she had never slept with a man in her life. She was 16 years old when her father died. Her step mother married her off to a wealthy man.¹ According to Ama, her husband was 51 years old at the time. This man did not sleep with her but sent her to school. The man rather treated her as a daughter and made her very happy, providing all her needs and wants. It was when he was about to die that her husband revealed to her that he became impotent after an accident that claimed the life of his wife. According to Ama:

I turned down all male suitors who came along after his death but realized I was attracted to other females, especially the slim ones. I started proposing to them and with my financial background, it was difficult for women to turn me down. Sometimes they would call on me for financial help and they also helped satisfy my sexual needs. I am 44 years now but still a virgin because although they insert their fingers into me, my hymen is still intact. But I use vibrators and other objects on others but apart from fingers, nothing enters my womanhood. I want to take my virginity back to my maker.²

Supplementing the individual interviews was a survey conducted among 200 respondents in homosexual-prone areas. Out of the number, 104 (52%) were males while 96 (48%) were females. The survey was conducted in Kumasi, Atebubu, Teshie and James Town on the 15th, 19th and 22nd of February, 2015 and updated on the 10th and 11th of December, 2016.

Of the 104 male respondents sampled, 19 (18.3%) identified themselves as gay, and 15 (83.3%) out of the 19 gay respondents indicated they were Christians; 2 (10.5%) Muslims; and 2 people (10.5%) did not identify with any religious persuasion. One of the two people, however, indicated that he was a "free thinker". All the 19 persons identified with a gay right group. They indicated their involvement in regular sex with other males. Five of the 104 males identified themselves as bisexuals. Four of the 5 bisexuals belong to a gay right group. Eight of the remaining respondents have experienced homosexual sex before but are no more practicing it. Therefore, a total number of male respondents who are practicing homosexuals are 24 (23.1%). According to the research, each of the practicing homosexuals sleeps with 90 to 170 different men per year. Of the 19 male homosexuals and 5 bisexuals, 8 play various leadership roles in their churches. On the question of how they felt the first time after having sex with someone of the same sex, 3 out of the 32 respondents said "it was exciting." Five indicated it was fulfilling; 10 confessed they felt bad while 14 said they regretted it. One respondent indicated "I was really confused."

Six female respondents identified themselves as lesbians and 7 as bisexuals meaning the rest, 13 (13.5%) female respondents, were homosexuals. The lesbians and 3 of the bisexuals indicated they were not married to men, but engaged in lesbian sex frequently. Four bisexuals indicated they were married to men. Three lesbians and all 7 bisexuals indicated they were Christians while one lesbian was a Muslim. One also indicated she was not practicing any faith, while one did not say anything. Out of the 7 bisexuals and 3 lesbians who were Christians, four were in leadership positions in a church. Twenty two (22.9%) of the remaining female respondents had experienced same-sex before but were no longer practicing it. Therefore a total of 35 (36%) female respondents experienced homosexuality but 62.9% of the 35 were no more into the practice. All the 13 female homosexual respondents belong to at least one gay right group.

All homosexuals, both males and females, as indicated, kept their sexual orientation secret from their family members. The table below shows the survey distribution:

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

The **Table 1** below shows the representation of questionnaire distribution. **Source:** Fieldwork, 2015

Total number of questionnaire distributed	200	Gender Breakdown	
Total number of questionnaire completed and returned	200	Male	Female
Total number of respondents between the ages of 15 and 29	72	39	33
Total number of respondents between the ages of 30 – 40	70	33	39
Total number of respondents in age 40 and above	58	32	24
Total number of people who have experienced homosexuality	67	32	35
Total number of homosexual and bisexual respondents	37	24	13

The **picture** below also shows a 25 year old male homosexual in Accra who claims to be 8 months pregnant.



Source: A homosexual community at Danyame, Kumasi during fieldwork on 11th September, 2014.

Anne Bolin also argues that:

Woman to woman marriage is an institutionalized African practiceWoman-marriage is a predominantly African institution where one woman marries another.¹

The Nankani² socio-cultural group in the north of Ghana, for example, practice time immemorial same sex marriage as part of its cultural heritage.³ While Bolin’s analysis to a large extent appears plausible, her presentation appears an over-estimation. This observation is made in the sense that the homosexual practice is sub-culturally related and not the involvement of the entire cultures of African. But it is also incontrovertibly clear that homosexuality has been in Ghana before the formation of the nation state. Thus, it might not be wholly accurate to attribute the origin of the practice to foreigners. The fact that homosexuality was first criminalized

¹ R.M. Amenga-Etego, Marriage without Sex? Same-Sex Marriages and Female Identity Among the Nankani of Northern Ghana, *Ghana Bulletin of Theology*, Vol.4: 2012.

² The Nankani are one of the ethnic groups that share linguistic, cultural and geographical characteristics with the Gurnne or Frafra and Tallensis.

³Refer to footnote 40.

during the British colonial rule seems to suggest that the practice pre-dated colonization.¹ The Ghanaian traditional societies like many others in Africa, frown on the practice, but that does not mean that the practice does not exist sub culturally.

In June 2010 more than 1,000 protesters in Takoradi in the Western region of Ghana, participated in a peaceful rally against reports of homosexual activities in this city. In the prior month (May, 2010), an HIV/AIDS training workshop was held in the same city for health-care workers. After the workshop, the Daily Graphic announced that 8,000 gay persons had been registered in the Western and Central regions of Ghana alone.² According to a 2004 study of gay men in Ghana commissioned by the West Africa Project to Combat AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections, gay life is mostly private; and most gay people meet at house parties organized by friends all around the country. Thus gay men and women often do not arouse suspicion at all. They blend with their heterosexual counterparts.³ The Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance (IBBS) Survey, which was commissioned by the Ghana AIDS Commission in 2011, also estimated 30,000 men who slept with men (MSM) in Ghana in 2011⁴. In 2014, according to gayghana.com (a website for Ghanaian homosexuals), there were about 200,000 gays in Ghana, forming about one percent of the total population.⁵ Of the 150 gay respondents cited in the report, 43 claimed to have one regular male sex partner while 82 had between two and four regular partners with a few having five or more regular partners.⁶

Prince Kwaku MacDonald, the executive president of Gay and Lesbians Association of Ghana (GALAG), insists that homosexuality is not alien to Ghanaian culture. He indicated that the practice was not introduced by the Westerners into Ghana as claim by many. Thus:

When you go deep into the villages, at dusk, there are men having sex with men; and I have never met a white man before. If you go to James Town and Bukom, there are gay men who have never been with whites.⁷

It has therefore, become crystal clear that homosexual activities are not only found in all the levels of education but also in traditional religious shrines and in communities in Ghana.⁸ It is in this light that Foreman⁹ contends that each society has about 5 to 10% of its population engaging in same sex relations. If this holds true, then in Ghana with even a conservative estimate of 1%, same sex relations may have increased over the years. With Ghana's population over 26 million, the gays' number could be over 260,000. A study report published in March 2004 by the late Dela Attipoe, the then Greater Accra Research Coordinator for HIV/AIDS, showed that the phenomenon of 'men who have sex with men (MSM), in medical parlance, is real in Ghana. According to the report, people engage in homosexuality for pleasure, curiosity, adventure and economic reasons; while some claim biological make-up for it.

Ghana Criminal Code and Efforts to Stop Homosexuality

Under the Ghana criminal law, homosexual activity among males is illegal. It is uncertain whether this law also applies to lesbians. According to Section 104 on unnatural carnal knowledge of the Chapter 6 of the Criminal Code, 1960 as amended by the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2003¹⁰,

(1) Whoever indulges in unnatural carnal knowledge:

(a) with any person of the age of sixteen years or over without his consent is guilty of a first degree felony and is liable for conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than twenty-five years; or (b) with any person of sixteen years or over with his consent is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(2) Unnatural carnal knowledge is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal. Moreover, under Section 99, "unnatural carnal knowledge shall be deemed complete upon proof of the least degree of penetration"¹¹.

According to Section 296 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which applies because of Section 1 of the

¹ Anthony Mawuli Salla, "My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana".

² The Statesman, "Why Should Kufuor Peep into Our Bedrooms" [online] [7th September 2006] available at <http://ghanaweb.com>/accessed on 10th December 2014.

³ P. Macdonald, Gay in Ghana: From gay-bashings to AIDS, The Gully online Magazine 24-7[online] [24th June 2004] available at <http://google.com>/accessed on 21st October 2014.

⁴ This statistics involved all the ten regions of Ghana.

⁵ William Yao Owusu, "Homosexuality in Ghana".

⁶ William Yao Owusu, "Homosexuality in Ghana".

⁷ P.K Macdonald, Another gay man, called Prince, [online] [7th Feb 2011] Available at: <http://www.Gay and Lesbians Association Ghana.com>/Accessed 10th December, 2014.

⁸ Interview, 16 April 2015.

⁹ Anthony Mawuli Salla, "My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana".

¹⁰ [Acts of Ghana, First Republic, Criminal Code, 1960 \(ACT 29\); "Ghana Country Survey", International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.](#)

¹¹ Ibid.

Criminal Code, a misdemeanor is punishable by imprisonment for not more than three years. Whilst the law may not be actively enforced, there are instances of crackdown.¹

Due to the Ghana criminal code which makes unnatural carnal knowledge a legal offense, institutions such as schools, the law enforcement agency and the courts within Ghana treat homosexuality as a crime. Two men discovered with gay pornography, for example, were sentenced to four years of hard labor in prison even though the law stipulated 3 years of imprisonment for such infringements²; and a bail for a woman arrested for lesbianism was set at \$1,000 (U.S. dollars). In another development, four gay men were each jailed for two years for “indecent exposure” and “unlawful carnal knowledge” in 2003. The men were arrested while picking up a package in which customs officers found their photographs in a “compromising homosexual posture”.³

According to Prince Kwaku Macdonald, the president of Gay and Lesbians Association of Ghana, some gay men have taken advantage of the law to blackmail and extort money from their fellow gays. Most of the cases of blackmail are in Accra. It is believed that young guys who engaged in this act are un-employed and so rely on the “unnatural law” in the country’s criminal code to extort moneys from gays after sexual encounters with them. Foreigners especially are forced to cash huge sums of money in payment in order to avoid being reported to the police.⁴ On 21 of July, 2011, Paul Evans Aidoo, the then Western Regional Minister, ordered all gay people in the Western region of the country to be arrested. He called on landlords and tenants to provide information on people they suspected of being gay. Furthermore, in 2003, Chester Osei Koranteng, 18 years of age, was assaulted by a crowd and handed over to the police after his would-be suitor discovered his “breasts were unusually soft”.⁵

In addition, Sulley Ali-Gabass, a senior medical doctor at Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital in Takoradi, appeared in court on 24th October 2014 to face two counts of defilement and having unnatural carnal knowledge of a 16 year-old boy. The boy suffered serious injuries in his anal region and had to undergo surgery. Besides, he was diagnosed with HIV.⁶ Moreover, on 10th September 2013, a 50 year-old traditional priest was also arrested by the Prampram Police for sodomizing a 14 year-old Junior High School student at Prampram in the Greater Accra region. In addition, a 32 year gay Pastor, Marvin Brown was sentenced by Tema Circuit Court ‘A’ to 25 years of imprisonment for sodomizing and infesting a 14 year old boy with HIV. This shows the magnitude at which the Ghanaian society abhors and sanctions homosexuality.

Furthermore, on 1st September 2006, the British Broadcasting Corporation reported Ghana government’s ban of a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT) conference that was to take place on 4th September, at Accra International Conference Centre, and at Koforidua in the Eastern region. In an interview Kwamena Bartels, the then minister of communications, indicated, among other things, that the government of Ghana stopped the conference because homosexuality offends the culture and the moral heritage of Ghana.⁷ This attitude of the Minister seems to reflect the general perception of majority of Ghanaians who see homosexuality as a foreign cultural practice that is offensive to the Ghanaian culture and norms.⁸

Following the ban of the LGBT conference in Ghana, the RAELIAN Movement in Burkina Faso, a pseudo-religious movement with Jewish links, indicated its intention to ask all gays and lesbians all over the world (as well as those who champion the cause of human rights and wish to see fundamental human rights respected) to boycott every “Made in Ghana” goods and wipe off Ghana completely from their map of tourist destinations.”⁹

The group saw the ban of the Gays and Lesbians Conference as discriminatory and unacceptable. However, the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACC) in Ghana lauded the government’s stance. The chairman of the NACC used Romans 1:26-27 to condemn the homosexuality in

¹ The Free Encyclopedia, “LGBT Rights in Ghana.” Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Ghana. Accessed 9th April, 2017.

² Nana Ama Bonsu, “Homosexuality and the Law in Ghana”, 22 June, 2011. Available at: <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Homosexuality-and-the-Law-in-Ghana-211710>. Accessed 3rd April 2017.

³ Mark, S. Luckie, “Ghana: Somewhere over the Rainbow”.

⁴ P.K. Macdonald, Blackmail and Extortion in the Increase in the gay community in Ghana, [online] [7th Feb 2011]. Available at <http://www.GayandLesbiansAssociationGhana.com/>. Accessed 10th December 2014.

⁵ Luckie, “Ghana: Somewhere over the Rainbow”.

⁶ “Gay doctor remanded; charged with defilement”, [online] [24th October 2014]. Available at: <http://www.m.myjoyonline.com/marticles/news/gay-doctor-remanded-charged-with-defilement> accessed on 28th October 2014.

⁷ J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of *arsenokoitai* in 1Corinthians 6:9-10 in some Ghanaian Mother Tongue Bibles, Journal of African Biblical Studies vol. 5, Accra: GABES Publications, p. 65, 66.

⁸ A. Mawuli Salla, “My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana”.

⁹ Daily Guide, Gays Demonstrate Against Ghana, Accra: Western Publications Limited [online] [5th October 2006] available at <http://ghanaweb.com>, accessed on 10th December 2014.

Ghana.¹ The Christian Council of Ghana, which is the umbrella organization of many Christian denominations in Ghana, on 4th September 2006, also unequivocally condemned the operations of gays and lesbians.² Similarly, the National Chief Imam, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu, approved the ban by government. Drawing attention to the Koran and the Bible, the Sheikh implores both Muslims and Christians to demonstrate their abhorrence by rejecting the “alien practice”.

In February 2012, the late President of Ghana, John Evans Atta Mills, among other things, insisted:

We have made our position well known. The Ghanaian society frowns on homosexuality; therefore if the people’s interest is that we do not legalize homosexuality, I don’t see how any responsible leader will decide to go against the wishes of the people.³

Despite the social abhorrence and the crackdown by the law enforcement agency, homosexual activities are on the increase. For example, Joy Online in 2011 reported on same sex wedding held in Kumasi; and Ghanaian Observer in 2008 reported the rise in “sodomy cases” in prisons. According to a local daily news paper, Gye Nyame Concord, Adabraka, Tesano, Paloma and Osu are gay hot-spots in Accra and that gay sex is a lucrative business gaining ground in Ghana. According to the paper, fees charged are based on the type of sex – oral or anal or both.⁴ A recent study conducted in Tema and certain parts of the Eastern region of Ghana has corroborated the fast spread of homosexuality in the nation. The finding, as indicated, shows that while some engage in it for pleasure, others do it as a trade; and that some homosexuals charge as much as \$200 (US dollars) for a three-minute sex.⁵

Religious Responses to Homosexuality

The traditional Christian and Islamic responses in Ghana to homosexuality are respectively based on Romans 1:26-27 of the New Testament and Quran 7:80-81; 26:165.

The Biblical text in particular has been subjected to intense debates on the subject matter. While the traditional interpretation of the text condemns homosexuality, there have been various contemporary interpretations and translations of the same Biblical text that are tolerant of this sexual behavior and consequently call for its social acceptance. For instance the Queen James Bible renders the translation of the Romans text as follows:

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature by defiling themselves in idolatry. 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 in pagan temples, and receiving in themselves the penalty for their idolatry which was due.⁶

Al Dobras, Oxford’s New Pro-Homosexual Bible translates the texts thus:

While Torah forbids a male “lying with a male as with a woman,” Paul’s Jewish contemporaries criticized a range of sexual behaviors common in the pagan world. Although widely read today as a reference to homosexuality, the language of unnatural intercourse was more often used in Paul’s days to denote not the orientation of sexual desire, but its immoderate indulgence, which was believed to weaken the body.⁷

The words in the original text have been eloquently summarized in both versions. Both translations appear more like an attempt to use both *Skopos theorie* which is a purpose based translation theory that looks at the translation process holistically so that majority of the readers can have a voice in the processes that are meant to serve them.⁸ Here translations can even be made for a particular program or to speak to a particular situation with a chosen text. There is also Justin Ukpong’s enculturation hermeneutics translation theory which is used to expand the original meaning.⁹ However, over stretching of these two theories (which is the case with the above translations) could render the translation into something else. This is because the intended message can lose its

¹ A. Mawuli Salla, “My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana”.

² Ibid.

³ J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of *arsenokoitai* in 1Corinthians 6:9-10 in some Ghanaian Mother Tongue Bibles, p. 67.

⁴ Anthony Mawuli Salla, “My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana, perspectives from public health”, December, 2011. Available at: https://www.google.com.gh/?gfe_rd=cr&ei=pif_WOjhFLL38AcCy7v4Bw&gws_rd=ssl#q=Mawuli+My+Turn:+The+homosexuality+debate+in+Ghana. Accessed 14 January, 2015.

⁵ Ghanaian Chronicle, Study Shows Homosexuality Hits High in Tema, Eastern Regions [online] [2nd July 2003] available at <http://ghanaweb.com>/accessed on 10th July 2014.

⁶ The Queen James Bible [online] [10 Nov. 2013] available at: <http://goggle.com/> accessed on 20th January 2014.

⁷ Al Dobras, Oxford’s New Pro-Homosexual Bible, 3rd Edition, available at: <http://goggle.com/>. Accessed 21st June 2014.

⁸ Esala, *Skopostheorie: a Functional Approach for the Future of Bible Translation in Africa?* p. 26.

⁹ J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of *arsenokoitai* in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 in some Ghanaian Mother Tongue Bibles, *Journal of African Biblical Studies* vol. 5, Accra: GABES Publications, p. 65, 66.

relevance entirely. In translation, there are key words which cannot be changed because doing so changes the message of the text. But in the above translations such rules have been ignored.

The text in Al Dobras, Oxford's New Pro-Homosexual Bible and the Queen James Bible are entirely different from the Greek New Testament text. This is an indication that the two translations are other people's statements other than that of the author of the letter to the Romans.

According to the editors of the Queen James Bible, it is the homosexual practices in a form of idol worship which the text is against and not a loving relationship between people of the same sex.

Steve Golden in disagreement with the gay translation argues that:

The idolatry position of the Queen James Bible editors still does not fit with the whole of Romans 1. Sexual perversion and excess were common in the Roman Empire during the Apostle Paul's day, making his words in Romans 1 fitting for his audience. Once again, the clearest interpretation of this passage is one that takes hold of the plain meaning of the words: homosexual behavior is sinful in the eyes of God.¹

One would corroborate Steve Golden's stance because there is nothing like idolatry in the original Romans 1:26-27 text. A close examination of the original text reveals that the idea of idolatry could not be fixed in even remotely. According to the rules governing Bible translation and interpretation, a meaning of a text can be located in the world behind the text; in the world within the text; and in the world in front of the text.² The first, which is the oldest and most dominant, focuses on issues of history which is the writer's intended meaning, the historical authenticity and the historical circumstances of the text. The second category concentrates on the text in a way that suggests authentic meaning is derived from the text and not outside the text; while the third category is oriented towards the reader(s) or reading community and the part they play in the communication process. The readers bring their own points of view and concerns to the text and so may end up with different meanings. It is obvious the pro-gay translation relied heavily on the third translation and interpretative rule and ended up with a different meaning from the original text. This methodology which is reader-centered is based on the presupposition that "once the text leaves the hands of the author, the author's intention and entire matrix of originating circumstances lose any claim of being constitutive of meaning. This runs contrary to the position of formalist critics, who claim that a text itself has autonomy, and provides the objective standard of meaning."³

For a high-ranking pro-homosexual church leader (Bishop), who is the chaplain general of *Petit Club International*,⁴ the Romans text has nothing to do with homosexuality in any age. It is the misrepresentation of the text which makes it appear homophobic. For him just as it is immoral and even illegal for an adult to have sex with underage girls, so also Paul was addressing the pederasty⁵ which was prevalent in the Roman society. Paul saw the practice as unnatural and immoral because it was harmful to the minors. Men were abusing boys sexually in the name of love and culture.⁶ Norman Pittenger also argues that a homosexual person is not an 'abnormal' person with 'unnatural' desires and habits, because he acts naturally when he acts homosexually just as a heterosexual acts naturally when he has heterosexual sex. These arguments reflect the position of gay right theologians. Their central thesis is that Paul addressed the reckless, shameless, profligate, promiscuous pederasty in the Greco-Roman society and not homosexuality per se.⁷ Such arguments have their bases in the ideology of Derrick Sherwin Bailey, a Christian theologian, whose 1955 work, "Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition" paved the way for the production of the 1957 Wolfenden Report; and for the Parliament of the United Kingdom's decriminalization of homosexuality in England and Wales a decade later.⁸

Contrary to the pro-homosexual arguments, Geisler L. Norman sees Romans 1:26-27 as "the most descriptive passage on homosexual act in the entire Bible" and that the "descriptions of the sin of homosexuality are virtually unrivaled anywhere in scripture."⁹ Even a cursory look at the text reveals that it is on homosexuality. The use of the Greek *αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν*, sustains this fact.

Translated as:

Indeed their females changed natural sexual relationship with men into female and female sexual relationship which is against nature.

This clearly indicates homosexual practices. Paul made the picture even more vivid with *οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν*

¹ Steve Golden, Pro-Gay Theology: Does the Bible Approve of Homosexuality? [online] [29th January 2013] Available at: <http://goggle.com/>. Accessed on 1st September 2014.

² W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation: An Integrated Approach*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013): 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ A gay pride organization for privileged gays around the world.

⁵ It is the term given to sexual relationships between adult males with boys between the ages of 12 to 17.

⁶ Interviewed on 14th January 2015.

⁷ J. Stott, *Romans: God's Good News to the World*. Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1994, p. 77.

⁸ Ibid p. 398.

⁹ L.N. Geisler, *Christian Ethics*. p. 291.

φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι. This is translated as:

Males abandoned sexual relationship with females which is natural and rather burned with lust for one another, males towards males debasing themselves in a reprehensible and reproachful way by males having sexual relationship with fellow males.

Paul then links the two passages together with the use of *ὁμοίως* 'likewise.' This indicates that the women and the men were practicing a similar unnatural sex. The women driven by strange passion and lust just like the men abandoned sexual relationship with the opposite sex which is natural and were rather having sex with people of the same sex. The passage describes it as *ἀσχημοσύνην* 'reprehensible' and 'reproachful', similar to the shame of nakedness. According to Stott,¹ there is an ample evidence that the opposition of 'natural' (*κατὰ φύσιν*) and 'unnatural' (*παρὰ φύσιν*) was 'very frequently used as a way of distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual behavior. The pro-homosexual arguments such as that of the high-ranking church leader (a Bishop) are therefore faulty so far as the letter to the Romans is concerned. Furthermore, the text is neither isolating pederasty nor heterosexuality from immorality. It is simply measuring sexual behavior by 'nature' – that is, what is natural, to indicate that pederasty as well as all homosexual practice is part of the *παρὰ φύσιν* contrary to nature and classified as *πάθη ἀτιμίας* passion of dishonor or disgraceful passion.

On the pederasty argument, the text simply narrates how women were having sexual intercourse with other women and describes it as 'unnatural.' Paul indicates that the natural way of having sexual relationship is between a woman and a man. Here there could be no ambiguity as to how they were changing sexual practices from natural into 'unnatural.' It is clear there are neither boys nor men but women were having 'unnatural' sex. Therefore, the original Romans 1:26 text has nothing to do with boys or girls but only women doing the unnatural. They had abandoned what could be described as natural sexual practices and were involved in unnatural sexual practice.

The verse 27 however explains what the unnatural sex was. An influence which is a 'strong but strange sexual lust' had driven the men to lust after one another and to move them to have sexual intercourse with fellow men. There was no mention of boys or girls in that verse too but men with men, *αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν* - the same sexes themselves, men with men. To avoid ambiguity and in order not to restrict the text to pederasty Paul specifically uses *ἄρσην*. "Men with men or men themselves doing the unthinkable with fellow men after abandoning sexual relationship with women". The Greek word *ἄρσην* which is an adjective normal accusative neuter singular has been used in the Greek Bible 37 times but all in reference to men; *ἄρσεσιν* is a noun (dative) feminine plural. It has also been used twice in the Greek Bible both in reference to men. The word in the noun and adjective forms could not be used to represent boys therefore the issue of pederasty cannot be alluded to so far as the Roman 1:26-27 text is concerned. This is because pederasty is a sexual relationship between an adult man and a boy. There is nowhere in scripture where homosexuality is sinful only when it involves a juvenile.

The word of God does not have to change to conform to the changing trend of the world. Rather, it is the world that must be affected by the word of God so that it can conform to the word of God. It is evidently clear that the argument which seeks to limit the text with time and culture is invalid. The text is indicating a divine revelation which is universally applicable. It was applicable in the cultural situation in both the Ancient Near East and the first-century Greco-Roman world just as it is equally applicable to the contemporary sexual question of which the ancients were ignorant. The reason for the Biblical prohibition is the same reasons why contemporary homosexual relationship must be condemned. This is because the homosexual act is incompatible with God's created order. That order is heterosexual monogamy² which was established by creation and not culture making its validity both permanent and universal.³

Another scriptural text⁴ supports this argument against homosexuality. In the beginning, God created human beings, both a man and a woman in his own image and likeness. As indicated, the first man and woman were blessed to multiply and fill the earth. The Lord Jesus on the question of marriage reiterated the intentions of God on marriage stressing that marriage is natural between a male and a woman. When it comes to homosexuality, families in particular and the human race in general is in danger of being extinct. Homosexual practice takes the power to multiply and rule the earth from the man and the woman. It also reduces humans to a substandard product so far as marital union is concerned. This is because humans fall short of the image of God in that it is man and woman who together form the image of God, with the power to procreate. Leviticus 20:13 also describes the homosexual practice as an abomination (*תּוֹעֵבָה*) and prescribes a capital punishment for it. This is to serve as a deterrent of spreading the practice among God's people. Due to this, homosexuality cannot be natural. The Christian response in Ghana, therefore, is that homosexuality goes against the divine law and will

¹J. Stott, *Romans God's Good News for the World*. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1994): 78.

² Refer to Matthew 19:4-5

³Ibid: 398.

⁴ Refer to Genesis 1: 27-28.

and must therefore be stopped. Discontinuing of this does not mean persecution or crackdown on people who practice it. But as the act is condemned, the people involved must be treated with Christian magnanimity and mercy and not ostracism or killing, but helped in every necessary way, including prayer and fast to stop the homosexual practice.

On the other hand, the Islamic position on homosexuality is unequivocal. Quranic texts which forbid this practice have been given unanimous commentaries. Quran 7:80-81, for example sustains:

We also sent Lut: He said to his people: Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practice lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds.

In his commentary on this verse, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, compares this narration to 19th chapter in the Biblical Genesis. This establishes consensus between the Bible's and the Quran's proscription of act of homosexuality. Again, Quran 26:165 maintains that "What of all creatures do ye come unto the males, and leave the wives your lord created for you? Nay, but ye are forward folk." Similarly, several recorded traditions of the prophet empower Muslim leadership to punish people engage in homosexuality. Muslim jurists equally forbid the practice of homosexuality; though differ on the nature of sanction.

Conclusion

The paper has analyzed homosexuality in Ghana and the uncertainties in science, the Ghanaian criminal law; and the religious response to the practice. It has shown that homosexuality is a social fact. For example, in 2010, an estimated 8,000 gay persons were living in the Western and Central regions. In 2011 alone over 30,000 men slept with men (MSM) in Ghana. In 2014 there were over 200,000 gays in the country, forming about one percent of the total population.

This study shows the alarming rate at which the phenomenon is spreading. The general perception of majority of Ghanaians is that homosexuality is a foreign cultural practice that is offensive to the Ghanaian culture and norms and therefore must be stopped. But the study has made it incontrovertibly clear that homosexuality is practiced in Ghana by subcultures before the formation of the nation state. The case of the Nankani speaks volumes. Thus, it might not be wholly accurate to attribute the origin of the practice to foreigners. The fact that homosexuality was first criminalized during the British colonial rule seems to suggest that the practice pre-dated colonization. The Ghanaian traditional societies like many others in Africa, frown on the practice, but that does not mean that the practice does not exist. Neither does it make the practice good nor retainable. It must be seen as a deviation.

Moreover, according to the finding of the study, science does not support the claim that homosexuality is genetic and therefore inborn. The claim is only hypothetical because no concrete biological or neural differences have been established between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Other scientific enquiries about the cause of the phenomenon have produced differing results. But scientific results must be verifiable and replicable. The scientific findings are therefore not reliable to determining the causes of homosexuality. Besides, there is nothing physiological about homosexuality. But one thing that is observed is that when a heterosexual starts practicing homosexuality, the practice seems to possess a form of addiction; the person soon prefers homosexual sex to that of heterosexual. Therefore, homosexuality is a learned behavior.

The Christian and Islamic response in Ghana is that homosexuality is evil and against the divine law and will; and must therefore be stopped. However, discontinuing this does not mean persecution or crackdown on homosexuals. As the sexual act is condemned, the people involved must be treated with Christian magnanimity and mercy and not ostracism or killing. They must be helped in every necessary way, including with prayer and fast to stop the homosexual practice. This also calls for an urgent development policy discussion leading to a positive practical intervention by government and religious bodies. The study is important because it highlights the state of homosexuality in Ghana and suggests ways of dealing with the phenomenon. It also contributes to the existing global knowledge on the phenomenon.

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