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EDITORIAL

On behalf of the Managing Editor, I sincerely thank all the contributors to this issue. Our thanks also go to our in-house and external reviewers for their continued support. Papers submitted that are not in this issue will be published in the next issue.

We continue to encourage scholars in all biblical, religious and theological fields who are interested in academic publishing to send their papers to ERATS. Our capable internal and external reviewers are ready to work with you.

We are expecting your work.

Professor Prince S Conteh, ThD; PhD
Chief Editor

African Christology from an African Christian Theological Perspective

SAMUEL H DONKOR¹

ABSTRACT

African Christology is one of the trending theological issues in African Christian Theology (ACT). ACT views, presents and interprets Christianity through the perception, objectives, cosmologies of the African. African Christian theologians believe that Western theology does not properly interpret the Bible in the context of African religio-cultural understanding. As such, these theologians have been formulating their own theological views and understandings to address African religious, cultural and social concerns. African theologians believe that Christ is the saviour of the world who should be studied without being limited to a particular culture, nation, ethnicity or gender. In that regard, to a greater extent, African theologians are trying to answer questions that Africans are asking in their Christologies. Christ has been compared and contrasted using African symbols and familiar concepts. The results of African theologians responding to the challenge of constructing an African contextual Christology has been impressive and fruitful.

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Introduction

In general, African Christian Theology (ACT) is the views, presentation and specific interpretation of the Christianity in light with the needs, objectives, worldview, and intellect of the African. In that regard, African Christian theology has been in existence since the advent and enterprise of early Euro-American missionaries and colonial administrations. In particular, ACT is understood as the methodological and scientific perception, production, and propagation of the Christian faith in the context of the Africans' understandings, needs, objectives, and cosmologies.

However, it is believed that the Bible must be the standard by which these concerns and issues are to be interpreted and understood. The Bible I believe should speak to our culture. ACT must use the Bible as its basis in addressing the issues and traditions of Africa.

In ACT there are numerous trending issues all of which cannot be discussed in a paper of this scope. I will prefer to write on African Christology from an African Christian theological perspective.

Advent and Development of African Christology

Scholarly works detailing the development of Christology in Africa are numerous; however, some of the more prominent contributions, as well as those that shape the Christological discussion, are compiled in *Faces of Jesus in Africa*,² *Jesus in African Christianity*,³

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²Robert J. Schreiter, ed., *Faces of Jesus in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991). This work contains eleven essays which present some of the faces of Jesus and how Africans are responding to Christ who encounters their cultures.

³J. N. N. Mugambi and Laurenti Magesa, eds., *Jesus in African Christianity: Experimentation and Diversity in African Christology* (Nairobi: Initiative, 1989). This book looks into the personal experience and understanding of the encounter of Jesus by the African

Exploring Afro-Christology,⁴ *Towards African Theology*,⁵ *Jesus in African Culture*⁶ and "Christology from an African Perspective"⁷ and *Conversion and Contextual Conceptions of Christ*.⁸

African Christian theologians believe that Western theology does not properly interpret the Bible in context with African religio-cultural understanding. In that regard, these theologians have been formulating their own theological views and understandings to address African religious, cultural and social concerns.

In reference to the preaching of the missionaries, J.V. Taylor states:

Christ has been presented as the answer to the questions a white man would ask, the solution to the needs that Western man would feel, the Saviour of the world of the European world-view, the object of the adoration and prayer of historic Christendom. But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like?⁹

⁴ John Pobee, ed., *Exploring Afro-Christology* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992). This book contains essays portraying the African perspectives of Jesus.

⁵ John Pobee, *Towards an African Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979). The Africans have sufficient understanding to formulate their theologies that are devoid of Western influences.

⁶ Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective* (Accra: Asempa, 1990). How Jesus is understood and theologised in the African culture is the focus of this work.

⁷ Abraham Akrong, "Christology from an African Perspective," in *Exploring Afro-Christology*, edited by John Pobee, 119-36 (Frankfurt: Lang, 1992). Africans are capable of forming their own Christology influenced by their culture and predicaments.

⁸ Carl Sundberg, *Conversion and Contextual Conceptions of Christ: A Missiological Study among Young Converts in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo* (Lund, Sweden: Team Offset & Media, 2000). This work emanates from a desire to understand how young urban converts from the Evangelical Church of Congo conceive of Jesus Christ. As such it is a study of religious experiences and beliefs in a specific context. Sundberg presents result of a field research on conversion motifs and contextual statements about Jesus, carried out among young people in six urban parishes in Brazzaville, during two fieldwork periods.

⁹ J. V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision, Christian Presence amid African Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 16.

Taylor's question, "... if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like?" is to a greater extent what African Christian theologians are trying to answer in their Christologies. In that respect, scholars have compared and contrasted the ministry and work of Jesus with African traditional healers¹⁰. Jesus is referred to as "the great ancestor, our ancestor par excellence" and "an intermediary spirit between God and people;"¹¹ he is referred to as: "Ancestor/Proto Ancestor,"¹² he has also been referred to as "our 'brother - ancestor' in fullness,"¹³ an African "Priest",¹⁴ and "Chief."¹⁵

African Christian theologians believe that Christ is the saviour of the world who should be studied without being limited to a particular culture, nation, ethnicity or gender. B. Diane Stinton states that "at the heart of Christian faith is the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, the very core of Christian theology is Christology... in the ongoing development of Christian theology African accounts of Christology warrant careful consideration in view of Africa's prominent place in Christian history at the turn of the millennium."¹⁶

In Stinton's views, the seed of the gospel is planted in a completely different but fertile soil in Africa than in the West. African Religion, the place of ancestors, collective mentality, kinship and marriage, the challenge of sickness and death, poverty, slavery, and colonialism are the cultural contexts in which Jesus reveals himself to Africans. Hence, it is a different soil than the West. In contrast to what many Western theologians and mission experts thought, the indigenous African religion and the socio-economic context is a fertile soil for the gospel.

¹⁰ Aylward Shorter, *Jesus and the Witchdoctor: An Approach to Healing and Wholeness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985).

¹¹ Z. Nthamburi, *African Church at the Crossroads: Strategy for Indigenisation* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1991), 61-64.

¹² Kwame Bediako, "Jesus in African Culture: A Ghanaian Perspective," in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, edited by William A. Dryness, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 96-104.

¹³ Sundberg, *Conversion and Contextual Conceptions of Christ*), 14.

¹⁴ See Sundberg, *Conversion and Contextual Conceptions of Christ*, 22; Nthamburi, *African Church at the Crossroads*, 63.

¹⁵ Bediako, "Jesus in African Culture," 106-10.

Stinton gives us the portrait of Jesus Christ in an African cultural context. She states: “the All African Conference of Churches (AACC), constituted in Kampala in 1963 in hope of achieving selfhood for the African church and inspiring African theology, held an assembly in Abijan in 1969.”¹⁷ With regards to the "socio-political scene, African theology as an intellectual discipline arose during the 1950s, when the struggle against colonialism led to several newly independent states.”¹⁸ Christ began to appear as the answer to the question of Africans in their context. He was no longer a messiah of the white man. He was seen as one who truly loved Africans, as such, Africans wanted Christ to be involved in their activities and circumstances.

Clifton R. Clarke in his in-depth study of the Akan African Independent Churches (AICs), discusses the ongoing dialogue among Pentecostals from the global South, who desire a Christology shaped in their image and not in the image of western Christianity.¹⁹ He puts forward the fact that in the trending field of global Christian studies, personal experience and cultural environment are important in the interpretation of an authentic faith in the person of Jesus Christ. In the case of Akan AICs, Clarke shows how they retain aspects of their traditional religious worldviews while embracing the Christian faith.

The cultural and political revolutions that overtook Africa in the sixties were contributing factors to the development of African Christology. “To counter the disdain with local cultures had generally been held during colonial times. Africans made intensive efforts to reaffirm their identity and integrity in many spheres of life, including names, dress, music, dance forms, architecture, and indigenous expression affecting church life and practice.”²⁰

According to Westerners, to be truly Christian, Africans must take biblical or Western names, dress in Western style attires, and churches were built in Western architectural style. The transplanted gospel in Africa produced the

¹⁷ Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 69.

¹⁸ Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 7.

¹⁹ Clifton R. Clarke, *African Christology: Jesus in Post-Missionary African Christianity* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2011),

²⁰ Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 7.

Christ of the West who was not entrenched in African cosmologies. The missionaries were convinced it was a good way to plant Christianity by infusing European socio-cultural values in the minds of Africans under the influence of the colonialists. Unfortunately, the works of colonial masters and Western missionaries in Africa did not properly relay the biblical image of Christ as “a lamb slain for the sin of the world” (Rev 5:9-13), “the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep” (John 10:14-15), “the wonderful counselor” (Isa.9:6), “the prince of peace” (Isa 9:6), “a brother” (Matt 12:49), etc. As such, Africans thought that “Christ entered the African scene as a forceful, impatient and unfriendly tyrant. He was presented as invalidating the history and institutions of a people in order to impose his rule upon them.”²¹ It is no wonder then Nigerians were thinking of Christ for a long time as “merely a stranger,” “an illegal alien,” “a refugee, a dissident or a fugitive who in desperation has come to Africa for sanctuary,” or as “the most visible and publicized symbol of foreign domination ever.”²²

As African scholars vigorously began to critique Christianity and missionary influences of the African church, Christology in the form of apologetic theology began to be developed by Africans.²³ Preference was given to regenerating local cultures and to indigenizing mission churches within the wider context of African reformation in literature, philosophy, and history. African theologians like John Mbiti, Byang Kato, Kwame Bediako, Harry Sawyer, Fashole-Luke and others, argued that “Jesus Christ is not a stranger to [Africans’] heritage. Jesus is the *Universal* Savior and thus the Savior of the Africans. Through faith in Christ African believers now share in all promises made to the patriarchs and Israel, and the good news becomes ‘*our* story’.”²⁴ Through mother-tongue/vernacular scripture, contextualized theology, biblical teaching and preaching, and through indigenized worship, Christ has found home in Africa now.

From Christology to Christologies

Most African theologians argue that since Christ is formed in the lives of

21 Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 10.

22 Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 10.

23 Clarke, *African Christology*, 1-10.

24 Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 11; Clarke, *African Christology*, 1-2.

of Africans in various places, at different times, and in diverse human situations in Africa, we must consider a plurality of Christologies in Africa. The invariable dialogue between the biblical text and different contexts in Africa leads to different understandings and interpretations of Christ in the continent.²⁵ “A widespread methodological presupposition is that genuine Christological reflection cannot be separated from Africa’s socio-political, religio-cultural and economic contexts—this is the real and concrete everyday experience within which we Christologize.”²⁶

By intentionally deviating “from the approaches of the dominant theologies of the West, a theology that arises from and is accountable to African people”²⁷ is developed. This theology does not view Christ as an abstract construct. Christologies are formulated in order for the Christian faith to appropriately address the varied contextual situations. “For the gospel to preserve its vitality and wholeness, theology needs the reflection of the people committed to Christian practice in a particular cultural context. Orthodoxy should not be divorced from orthopraxis because it demonstrates the Christ who was “²⁸powerful in word and deed before God and all the people” (Luke 24:19).

Clarke constructs his Christology using source material specific to Akan AICs, including the Bible, hymns and songs, prayers, personal testimonies, and sermons. Through a methodology based on questionnaires, focus group sessions, and interviews with leaders and lay people, Clarke appropriates the primary mode of expressing religious sentiments - oral theology. He defines oral theology as the “encounter of God through the language that is heard and spoken by the visible and invisible participations of the African universe.”²⁹ The recognition of Akan oral theology by the Catholic Church is also an acknowledgement of the rich heritage and traditions of AICs.

In contrast to a formal propositional Christology, Clarke’s oral Christology is based on the African encounter with God through language.

²⁵ Clarke, *African Christology*, 9-10.

²⁶ Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 16.

²⁷ Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 16.

²⁸ Stinton, *Jesus of Africa*, 17.

²⁹ Clarke, *African Christology*, 132.

Theological reflections are interactive and dynamic, occurring within and outside of the Church. The voices of African proverbs, myths, names, songs, stories, folklore and biblical texts serve to express the activity of God, Jesus and humanity in the overarching realm of visible and invisible realities. Clarke's study reveals crucial areas of an Akan traditional religious ethos: *Onyame* ("God"), *Sunsum* ("Spirit"), *Abosom* ("lower spirits"), *Nananom* ("Ancestors"), and "symbolic power." The notion of Christ however, does not have a clear correlation with an Akan indigenous worldview. Without an adequate concept of Christ, what are the implications for the Christology of Akan AICs? Would the AICs seek to understand *Yesu Kristo* as *Sunsum*, a Spirit made flesh or incarnate, who is ultimately from *Onyame*?

Another area of concern addressed by Clarke is the connection between culture and religion. He argues that the Christology of Akan AICs maintains a vital, reciprocal relationship between an authentic Christian faith and traditional African culture. His analysis calls for the removal of western theological lenses so that the theology and praxis of the Church at large – and the African church in particular – can be heard in their various contexts. The term "inculturation," favored by Clarke and other theologians, means the "on-going creative and dynamic relationship between Jesus Christ and culture."³⁰

Conclusion

African Christologies are present and trending. The search and arguments on the issues will linger for a very long time. Missiological issues of culture and religion, inclusion and exclusion, universality and particularity will continue to be debated. The gospel proclaimed and received by people in varied contexts and situations, is understood and digested differently by different individuals, depending on the context of reception and their motivations for accepting the gospel.

The quest for relevant Christologies is to make the message of the gospel relevant and contextual to the African. African theologians are maintaining the view that Western theology does not adequately interpret the Bible in concepts and cosmologies that adequately address the African context.

³⁰ Clarke, *African Christology*, 10.

This precipitated and propelled African theologians to develop their own culture specific theology to enable them examine their theological quest in light of the African political, educational, religious and social factors. The results of African theologians responding to the challenge of constructing an African contextual Christology has been impressive and fruitful³¹.

Christ among Africans is viewed as “life-giver”, “mediator”, “loved one”, and “leader.”³² The Jesus of Africa is the Jesus of the poor and the rejected. By destroying various walls of partitions in Africa he can be a reconciler. In a continent that is prone to chaos, war and bloodshed, he can be a prince of peace.

³¹ Clarke, African Christology, 2.

³² Stinton, Jesus of Africa, 250-66.

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HIV/AIDS and Multiple Sexual Partners: An Examination of Psalms 38 & 51 and their Applications to the Christian Community in Ilorin, Nigeria.

C.O. OGUNKUNLE¹

ABSTRACT

HIV/AIDS scourge is a global problem that spares no age group, race or socio-economic status. HIV/AIDS is particularly worse in Africa where 70% of the world HIV/AIDS cases are recorded. The current challenges to effective control of HIV/AIDS require new prevention strategies, one of which is the discouragement of multiple sexual practices. Thus, the thrust of this paper is HIV/AIDS and multiple sexual partners with reference to the consequences of David's sexual promiscuity as depicted in Psalms 38 and 51. A multiple historical-exegetical-empirical method is adopted. It is discovered that David's involvement in multiple sexual practices had negative spiritual, physical and emotional effects on his life; multiple sexual practice is a sin; it has a very high risk of HIV/AIDS; and that one important way of fighting HIV/AIDS to a halt is to discourage multiple sexual practices. As David prayed and received forgiveness from God, so also there is hope for those that have been affected by the deadly disease. Therefore, Christians must shun lust and stop behaviours that tend to promote multiple sexual practices. Every married Christian must follow God's instruction for life by being faithful to his or her spouse.

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Introduction

The fact that Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is transmitted primarily through sexual intercourse in the whole world and especially in Africa must be seriously considered as we seek for solution to the spread of the deadly disease. Unfortunately, a significantly high number of people, young and old, married and unmarried, are still engaged in multiple sexual practices. Obviously, this act contributes significantly to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Therefore, the thrust of this paper is HIV/AIDS and multiple sexual partners with reference to the consequences of sexual promiscuity depicted in Psalms 38 and 51. In other words, the paper examines multiple sexual practices and tries to discourage it in an attempt to curtail the spread of the deadly disease. The paper proposes a preventive solution to the problem of HIV/AIDS scourge in the world in general and Africa in particular.

A multiple historical-exegetical-empirical method is adopted. The paper is historical as several literatures on HIV/AIDS and Psalms 38 and 51 are examined. It is also exegetical as key words and phrases in Psalms 38 and 51 are studied. This is corroborated with the empirical method whereby a questionnaire is administered with a view of understanding the extent of contemporary knowledge of the subject.

General Overview of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is an attack on human life. It has become a global crisis sparing no age group, race, gender or socio-economic status. The spread of this deadly disease is the most serious health problem facing our global community. HIV/AIDS presents an unprecedented challenge. It has been rightly noted that:

The spread of HIV/AIDS is the most serious health problem facing our global community. Despite the effectiveness of new medications, rates of new HIV infections continue to rise, and many strains of the virus are resistant to available medications. Now more than ever, there is a need for the whole community to cooperate in developing strategies both to halt the spread of HIV and to make effective treatments

available to those living with HIV, especially in populations with limited access to health care.²

The statistical data shows that more than 35 million people worldwide are living with HIV out of which 3.2 million are under the age of 15. In 2013, an estimated 2.1 million people were newly infected with HIV and 240,000 were under the age of 15. It was reported that every day, more than 5700 people contracted HIV, nearly 240 every hour. In addition, it was said that 1.5 million people died from AIDS in 2013.³

The scourge of HIV/AIDS is particularly felt in Africa where more than two-third, about 70% of all the people living with HIV live in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was reported that an estimated 1.5 million people in the region became newly infected in 2013. It was also reported that an estimated 1.1 million adults and children died of AIDS, accounting for 73% of the world's AIDS deaths in 2013.⁴

The Punch editorial of 15th June, 2014 was centred on Nigeria's high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate. The write-up started with the glooming picture by the experts that the HIV situation in Nigeria has worsened because the country is no longer taking reasonable precautions to protect the vulnerable members of the society against the spread of the disease.⁵

Further highlights of this dreaded disease in the Punch editorial include:

- That the people living with HIV AIDS in Nigeria has increased by almost 500,000 in three years, while the number of AIDS related deaths also witnessed a marginal rise to 217,148 within the same period.

² See the introductory page of the Programme of Events for HIV/AIDS Workshop for Medical and Religious Professionals at the University of Chicago. Saturday (February 5, 2005). It was a partnership between the Zygon Centre for Religion and Science, Midwest AIDS Training and Educational Centre, The Lutheran School of Theology of Chicago.

³ (amFAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research).

⁴ (amFAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research).

⁵ This was the view of the experts who met at the American conference on the treatment of HIV held in Denver, Colorado in the USA cf. editor@punchng.com.

- That a United Nation report described Nigeria as the country with the highest number of children living with the virus in the world-nearly 60,000 in 2012.
- That WHO figures put the number of people living with HIV/AIDS at between 32-38 million infected persons. It is even believed that between 50,000 and 100,000 children are born annually with HIV in Nigeria.
- That the UN had warned that Nigeria would not reach the Millennium Development Goal target of eliminating HIV in children and keeping their mothers safe by 2015 because the government is not serious in curbing HIV in children.⁶

The fact that young people, mostly girls, are affected has been established:

People between ages 15 and 24 years make up about one-quarter of all those infected worldwide. The number is on the increase daily. Each day, nearly 6,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 become infected with HIV. Young people are at centre of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. Today's youth have inherited a lethal legacy that is killing them and their friends, their brothers and sisters, parents, teachers and role models. An estimated 11.8 million young people aged 15 to 24 are living with HIV/AIDS, yet only a fraction of them know they are infected⁷

Speaking further on the alarming rate of the HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, it has been noted that:

Since 1986 when the first case of AIDS was reported in Nigeria, there has been a rapid increase in HIV sero-positivity from 1.8% in 1991 to 4.5% in 1996 and 5.4% in 1999 to 5.8% in 2001. The 5.0% of 2003 does not represent a real drop, since there are reports of explosive epidemics in several parts of the country. HIV prevalence by age is reported to be the highest among the 20-24 year-olds (5.6%), followed by 25-29 year-olds (5.4%) and 15-24 year-olds (5.2%)⁸

Furthermore, the technical report of the 2005 National HIV sero-prevalence sentinel survey shows that HIV is prevalent in every state in Nigeria.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See the draft copy of "University of Ilorin Policy of HIV/AIDS", 1.

⁸ See the draft copy of "University of Ilorin Policy of HIV/AIDS", 1

This prevalence ranges from 10% in Benue State, 8% in Akwa Ibom State, 6.7% in Nasarawa State to 1.6% in Ekiti State, being the lowest. Only Osun, Oyo, Ekiti and Jigawa States have prevalence rates not exceeding 2% while seven states recorded 5%.⁹ Speaking on the impact of HIV/AIDS on children, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria noted that not less than 13 million children had lost one or both parents to the dreadful disease in Africa and that the administration is working hard to tackle the problem.¹⁰

HIV/AIDS is not only a medical issue but an issue that affects every sphere of the life of man and of the society. Writing on the global nature of this epidemic, Eunice Sena Akua Kpikpi notes:

It is also a religious and economic issue. In fact, it affects every sphere of our lives. It is a global issue which needs to be tackled seriously by all. It is catastrophic.¹¹

The cause of HIV/AIDS is associated with a number of factors of which sexual contact stands at the top. In other words, indiscriminate sexual intercourse especially with an infected person exposes one to the infection. Over 80% cases of HIV infection occur this way.¹² Most sexual intercourse in Nigeria and Africa is heterosexual, that is, sex between a man and a woman. Hence, one can be infected with HIV virus by one's spouse who has multiple sexual partners. The cases of homosexuality, are relatively low in Africa compared to Western Europe and North America.¹³ It has been established that a single sexual encounter with an infected person is

⁹ Federal Ministry of Health, National HIV Sero-Prevalence Sentinel Survey, 2005, 23. cf. Lateef F. Oladimeji. "Health and Healing in Islam: A Case Study of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Nigeria". Being a paper presented at the Third African Association for the Religions at the University of Botswana, Gaborone, 8th -13th July 2007.

¹⁰ See *Saturday Punch* (May 27, 2006), 14.

¹¹ Eunice Sena Akua Kpikpi "HIV/AIDS Pandemic from Condemnation to compassion" *In people of Faith and the challenges of HIV/AIDS*. Edited by Mercy Oduoye and Elizabeth Amoah (Ibadan: Sefer Books, 2004), 78.

¹² C. Jean Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, (Bukuru: Africa Christian Textbooks, 3003), 40.

¹³ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 40.

sufficient for the transmission of HIV.¹⁴ Unfortunately, an infected person with HIV may not necessarily show any sign as the effects of infection are not immediately known. The initial signs of loss of weight, fever, cough, diarrhoea and weakness of the body are not enough to confirm that a person has been infected. The only means of ascertaining the status of any person is by medical test which may have to be repeated at an interval of about three months for confirmation.¹⁵

Also, HIV spreads from mother to baby. This accounts for about 10% of total HIV infections, that is, about 3 out of every 10 children born to infected mothers will become infected with HIV.¹⁶ The virus passes from the mother to the child in three different ways namely, in the womb before delivery; during the birth process; and during breast-feeding.¹⁷ However, the risk is minimized if the mother knows her HIV status early enough and takes advantage of medical services that are available to prevent the mother-to-child transmission of the virus.

Blood transfusion is another way by which HIV is passed by an infected person. This accounts for about 5%-7% of all HIV infections in Africa.¹⁸ In other words, if a person receives a transfusion of HIV-infected blood, he is sure to develop the infection. Unfortunately, it has been reported that:

Many Nigerian hospitals and clinics still do not have kits or supplies for testing blood for HIV. They do not have the money to buy the testing kits or maybe they do not have a trained technician to perform the tests.¹⁹

¹⁴ J. Chin, "Public Health Surveillance of HIV and AIDS Infection." *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 68/5 (1990); 529-536.

¹⁵ Lateef F. Oladimeji, "Health and Healing in Islam: A Case Study of HIV/AIDS Prevention in Nigeria." 11.

¹⁶ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 41.

¹⁷ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 41 – 42.

¹⁸ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*, 44.

¹⁹ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*.

Furthermore, speaking on the unsafe blood transfusion, Chinua Akukwe says:

Nigeria has one of the highest rates of unsafe blood transfusions in the world, at 14 percent. The HIV virus is easily transferred during blood transfusions. In some hospitals in Nigeria, 60 percent of blood transfusions may not undergo internationally acceptable screenings.²⁰

Another way of having contact with the blood of another person is by the use of unsterilized needles, syringes, and sharp objects like knives and razor blades which have been used by an infected person. Infection by non-sterile blades, sharp instruments and needles account for about 5% of the total of HIV infections.

Multiple Sexual Partners: A high risk for the spread of HIV/AIDS

Having established the fact that about 80% of HIV/AIDS cases occur through sexual contact, our focus at this point is to examine multiple sexual partners as a high risk factor for the spread of the killer disease. Multiple sexual partners is closely connected with polygamy or polyandry in the sense that the two deal with having more than one wife or husband at the same time. The words, ‘multiple sexual partners’ are not used in the Old Testament (OT) but it was a common practice. The word that connotes multiple sexual partners in the OT, apart from polygamy is שִׁלְמָה or שִׁלְמָה which is a feminine noun that means concubine.²² A concubine is a slave girl who belonged to a Hebrew family and bore children. Concubines were acquired by purchase from poor Hebrew families, or captured in war, or even taken in

²⁰ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*.

²¹ Garland, *AIDS is real and it's in our Church*.

²² Francis Brown; S.R. Driver & Charles A. Briggs. *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with An Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 811. (Henceforth referred to as BDB). Cf. Victor P. Hamilton, שִׁלְמָה in *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament* Edited by R. Laird Harris, et al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), II: 724.

payment of debts. A girl or woman in this classification achieved a certain status if she had sons (Gen 21:10; 22:24; 30:3; 31:33; Exod 23:12; 21:7, 10).²³

Speaking further on the role and position of concubines within the family setting, Baab says:

Her son might become a co-heir, her name was remembered because of her offspring; a barren wife might have a son through her and she had the right to food, clothing and sexual intercourse.²⁴

Incidentally, several men in the OT were either polygamists or men that had concubines which invariably exposed them to the act of multiple sexual practices. Some of the men who had concubines include Abraham whom Sarai, his wife, gave her Egyptian maidservant (Hagar) as a concubine. He slept with her and she conceived (Gen 16: 3-4). Nahor had Reumah as his concubine who gave birth to Tebah, Gaham, Tahash and Maacah (Gen 22:23-24). Eliphaz, the son of Esau, had a concubine named Timna who gave birth to Amalek (Gen 36:12). Even a Levite is said to have a concubine (Judg 19:1). Caleb had two concubines - Ephah and Maacah, and each one of them had children for him (1 Chro 2:46-48). Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah was the concubine of Saul (2 Sam 3:7). David, after he had left Hebron, took more concubines and wives in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:13). Solomon is said to have seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 11: 3). Rehoboam is said to have eighteen wives and sixty concubines (2 Chro 11:21). Besides, there are several polygamists in the Old Testament. Some of them include: Lamech (Gen 4:19-23), Esau (Gen 26:24; 28:9), Gideon (Jud 8:30), Elkanah (1 Sam 1:2), Ashur (1 Chro 4:5), Abijah (2 Chro 13:21), Jehoram (2 Chro 21:14), Joash (2 Chro 21:14), Ahab (2 Kgs 24:15) and Belshazzer (Dan 5:2).

Apart from the examples of several polygamous families in the OT, Moses, the lawgiver had two wives (Exod 2:21; Num 12:1). This means that polygamy or having a concubine was allowed in the Mosaic law. Exodus 21: 10, while making reference to a man who desires to have another wife says:

²³ O. J. Baab, "Concubine" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* Edited by G. A. Buttrick et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 1:666.

²⁴ Baab, "Concubine" in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:666.

If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first of her food, clothing and marital rights.

Furthermore, the Mosaic Law did not forbid a man to have sex with a virgin. All that is required of such a man is to pay a fine and then marry the woman (Exod 22:16; Deut 22:16).²⁵

There are several reasons for multiple sexual practices in the OT. Barrenness stands out among the reasons as demonstrated in the case of Sarah who initially did not have a child for Abraham. She then advised her husband to take Hagar as his concubine (Gen 16:2-3). Love for a particular woman is another reason for multiple sexual practices in the OT. An example is Jacob who loved Rachael and he decided to serve Laban for seven years. But at the end, he was given Leah whom he did not reject the night he was given. He decided to work for another seven years after which Rachael was given to him (Gen 29: 18, 25, 30). Furthermore, several kings in the OT had many wives and concubines for political reason as exemplified by Solomon, the wealthiest king who had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 11:3). Unfortunately, these women led to his spiritual downfall (1 Kgs 11: 3-5). The Samaritan woman whom Jesus had discussion with in John 4:7-26 is a good example of multiple sexual practices in the New Testament.

In spite of the so-called ‘pleasure’ which people attached to multiple sexual practices, the act should be discouraged. In other words, even though multiple sexual partners is not presented in the Bible as a great sin, yet the act does not receive the approval of God. Generally, there is a continuous domestic strife when two or three women are involved in sharing a husband both in the OT and in the African society. The Hebrew word for the second wife זָרָה literally means ‘rival wife’ as in 1 Samuel 1:6.²⁶ This means that bitterness and hostility usually exist between polygamous wives.²⁷

²⁵ Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro “Interpreting Old Testament Polygamy through African Eyes” in *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa*. Edited by Mercy Amba Oduoye & Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1992), 90.

²⁶ BDB 865.

²⁷ J. I. Packer; Merrill C Tenney; & William White, *Daily Life in Bible Times* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 14.

Writing on the bad effects of polygamy, O'Donovan notes:

The emotional pain, jealousy and competition among the wives and children of polygamous families clearly demonstrate the fact that this form of marriage is a matter of selfish convenience. Polygamy denies a woman the emotional fulfilment God intended her to have by enjoying the undivided love and attention of her husband.²⁸

Multiple sexual partners should be discouraged because it has a very high risk through which HIV/AIDS can be transmitted.²⁹ It is particularly risky as the men/women involved do not know one another and their HIV status. It has been noted that in several cases, especially in polygamous marriages, the wives do not live in the same house as apartments are rented for each one of them elsewhere by their rich husbands. And because the man does not come visiting all the time, there is a tendency for the women to have other sexual partners.³⁰ This means that the risk of contracting and spreading HIV/AIDS in polygamous marriages is very high. Labeodan presents a good hypothetical scenario as follows:

Mr. Tafa is married to Nonye, Binta and Titi. Titi who is his latest addition is favoured above the other two wives. Nonye and Binta are both neglected sexually and materially. They have to take care of their kids and their personal needs. Nonye told one of her friends that since their husband married his latest wife, he has not been paying any attention to her and Binta. This friend advised her to take a boyfriend. Nonye decided to follow her friends' advice. Unfortunately, the boyfriend she picked was HIV positive. She got infected without knowing. Titi took ill and during this period Mr. Tafa came back to his two senior wives. He got infected by Nonye and he passed it on first to Binta and later to Titi who then passed it on to the child in her womb.³¹

²⁸ Wilbur O'Donovan, *Biblical Christianity in African Perspective*: (Carlie: Paternoster Press, 1995), 290.

²⁹ Helen Adekunbi Labeodan, "Culture and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in *People of Faith and the Challenges of HIV/AIDS*. Edited by Mercy Amba Oduyoye & Elizabeth Amoah (Ibadan: Sefer Books, 2004), 211-12.

³⁰ Labeodan, "Culture and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in *People of Faith and the Challenges of HIV/AIDS*.

³¹ Labeodan, "Culture and HIV/AIDS Transmission in Nigeria: A Philosophical Appraisal" in *People of Faith and the Challenges of HIV/AIDS*, 212-12.

The above scenario clearly illustrates how multiple sexual practices can become a risk factor in HIV/AIDS transmission. For Christians, this risk is clearly expressed in the Bible as the following exegesis will show.

Exegesis of Psalms 38 and 51

David to whom Psalms 38 and 51 are ascribed was the youngest son of Jesse (1 Sam 16:10-11), and the great grandson of Ruth and Boaz.³² He took care of the sheep. He was skilful in music and stringed instruments right from his childhood (1 Sam 16:15-23; 17:15). He is called the author of Psalms (Mark 12:36-37; Rom 4:6-8; 11:9-10). He was a man of deep feelings and of imperial imagination. He organised cultic workshop in Israel (2 Chro 29:30; Ezra 3:10; Neh 12:24). He appointed singers and musicians and assigned them their roles in the worship of God (1 Chro 15:16-24; 16:7, 31). He was enlisted in the service of King Saul and ministered to him whenever he was tormented by evil spirits (1 Sam 16:22-23). David was the greatest of all the kings of Israel as recorded in chapters and books of the Old Testament – from 1 Sam 16, where God chose him to 1 Kings 2:11 where he died.

Psalms 38 and 51 are the third and fourth respectively of the so-called Penitential Psalms. Others are Psalms 6, 32, 102, 130 and 143. Psalm 38 on one hand is a song of sorrow and a prayer which is “evoked by the experience of sickness and the consequent sense of alienation from both God and fellow human beings.”³³ The three dominant themes of this Psalm are “illness, guilt and the hostility of enemies and former friends.”³⁴ Psalm 51 on the other hand is a powerful prayer of repentance. It demonstrates the essence of true penitence. Derek Kidner notes that the Psalm “comes from David’s blackest moment of self-knowledge, yet it explores not only the depth of his guilt but some of the farthest reaches of salvation.”³⁵

³² The phrase לְדָוִד (A Psalm of David) in the superscription of the Psalms is very instructive. The Hebrew preposition ל has various meanings such as ‘to’, ‘by’, ‘for’, ‘in honour of’, etc. This explains why seventy three of the one hundred and fifty Psalms are ascribed to David.

³³ Peter C. Craigie, Psalms 1-50, *The Word Biblical Commentary*. (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1983), 302.

³⁴ A.A. Anderson, Psalms 1-72 *Volume 1, The New Century Bible Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co. 1983), 301.

³⁵ Derek Kidner, Psalms 1-72: *An Introduction and Commentary*. (Leicester, England: Intervarsity Press, 1973), 189.

The central focus of the two Psalms (38 & 51) is the degree of physical, spiritual and emotional suffering which David experienced as a result of his involvement in multiple sexual acts/practices. The superscription of Psalm 51 is self explanatory as it gives information on both the authorship and historical context of the Psalm – “For the director of music. A Psalm of David when the Prophet Nathan came to him after he had committed adultery with Bathsheba.”³⁶

David had many wives. They include: Michal (1 Sam 18:27), Abigail (1 Sam 25:42), Ahinoam (1 Sam 25:43), Maacah (2 Sam 3:3; 1 Chro 3:2), Haggith (2 Sam 3:4; 1 Chro 3:3), Abital (2 Sam 3:4; 1 Chro 3:3), Eglah (2 Sam 3:5; 1 Chro 3:3), Bathsheba (2 Sam 11-12; 1 Chro 3:5), other wives and concubines (1 Chro 3:6-9; 14:3-4). The climax of David’s multiple sexual practices is recorded in 2 Sam 11-12, for it was the event that led to the strong rebuke by God through Prophet Nathan. Incidentally, David already had many wives and concubines before Bathsheba but then on that fateful afternoon, his stroll on the roof led him eventually to break half of the Ten Commandments (He killed, committed adultery, stole, bore false witness and coveted).³⁷ David’s multiple sexual practices in general and the adultery with Bathsheba had negative spiritual, physical and emotional effects on him as shown in Psalms 38 and 51.

David’s introductory prayer in Psalm 51:1-2 is very instructive. He appealed to God’s mercy, grace and steadfast love. The Hebrew word רַחֵם which means “to show favour or be gracious” can be used of man or God. In this context, David pleaded to God for his redemption from the sin of adultery which he had committed.³⁸ The Hebrew masculine noun רַחֲמֵי (goodness or kindness) can be used of man which speaks of the kindness of men towards men, in doing favours and benefits (1 Sam 20:15; 2 Sam 16:17). It can also be used of the loving-kindness of God in condescending to the needs of his creatures. It is specifically used of God in redemption

³⁶ It should be noted that some scholars argue against the Davidic authorship of the Psalm. One of them is E.R. Dalgish. For details, see Anderson, *Psalms 1-72*, 389-390.

³⁷ J. Clinton McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms: The Psalms as Torah*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 102.

³⁸ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 335-336.

(Gen 19:19; 39:21; Exod 15:13; Psa 21:8, etc); in preservation of life from death (Psa 6:5; 86:13; Job 10:12); in quickening of spiritual life (Psa 109:26; 119:76, 88, 124, 149, 159) or even still in redemption from sin as in Psalms 25:7 and 51:3).³⁹

It was on this note that he prayed that God should blot out his transgressions. He recognised that he had sinned against the Lord as indicated in the Hebrew masculine noun אָשָׁם (sin) which can mean sin against man (Gen 41:9; Ecc 10:4, etc) or sin against God (Isa 31:7; Hosea 12:9). In this case sin against God is meant and its effects have started to have negative impact upon him.⁴⁰ The gravity of the offence is made clear in Psalm 38 where the Psalmist lamented his suffering for the chastening of his sin. As a result of his sin he lost his health. He was made to bear his guilt which had overwhelmed him (Psa 38:4). He was crushed in body (Psa 38:3) and in spirit. There was no soundness in his flesh (Psa 38:3, 7). The Hebrew word בָּשָׂר is a masculine noun which means flesh. It can be the flesh of animals as in Gen 41:2-19 and Exodus 21:22 or the flesh of men as in Gen 14:19; Exod 4:7; Lev 12:3; Psalm 27:2; 38:4, 8; 79:2, etc.⁴¹ His loins are filled with a loathsome disease. The verb לָקַח means “to roast, parch, burn, consume”.⁴² This means that his body is being consumed or roasted with fire (Jer 29:22 & Psa 38:8). Apart from the flesh which has been crushed, his bones were also broken (Psa 51:8). The Hebrew word for bone is עֲצָם and it has a number of meanings: it speaks of the bone of a living person (Mic 3:2-3); it means body or bodily frame (Job 2:5; Jer 20:9); it means seat of diseases and pain (Job 30:17, 30; Psa 22:15; 21:11; 102:4, etc); and in the plural form it represents the entire person, that is, one’s whole being (Psa 6:3; 35:10, etc)⁴³

Unfortunately, as his health failed him, (Psa 38:10), his friends avoided him (Psa 38:11) and of course his enemies spoke evil of him (Psa 38:12). David’s acknowledgement and confession of his transgressions provide a permanent solution to his problem (Psa 51:3-4). Even though he waited for

³⁹ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 338-339.

⁴⁰ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 307-308.

⁴¹ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 142.

⁴² McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 885.

⁴³ McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*, 782-783

for about a year to rationalise his actions but when Prophet Nathan approached him, he submitted himself to the will of God.⁴⁴ Thereafter he offered a prayer of repentance and renewal (Psa 51:7-12) which is centred on God's creation of a new heart in him. The Hebrew verb מְקַרָּא means "to shape, create and fashion". It is always used of divine activities in the following contexts:

- Creation of heaven and earth (Gen 1:1; 2; 3; Isa 45:18)
- Creation of individual man (Mal 2:10)
- Creation of new conditions and circumstances (Isa 45:8)
- Transformation of a clean heart (Psa 51:12) and new heaven and earth (Isa 65:17).⁴⁵

In effect, David affirms that his life has been transformed and that "he has been reborn."⁴⁶ From the passages studied, some effects of sexual promiscuity comparable to the effects of HIV/AIDS today include loss of health, social stigma, feelings of guilt, hopelessness, etc. Obviously, David was aware of the possible consequences of multiple sexual partners, but like many Christians in Ilorin, Nigeria, David ignored his knowledge of the consequences and paid a price. To further draw a connection between the consequences of multiple sexual partners in Bible times and the same behaviour today, a survey was conducted in Ilorin, Nigeria, as shown below.

HIV/AIDS and Multiple Sexual Partners

In an attempt to understand the awareness, causes and possible solution to HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis multiple sexual partners in our contemporary society, a questionnaire was administered on the subject among 300 and 400 level degree students of United Missionary Church of Africa Theological College, Ilorin on the 19th-22nd April 2008. The choice of these classes of seminary students is premised on the fact that several of them are involved in Pastoral work within Ilorin metropolis and that they represent various denominations in the city.

⁴⁴ Allen P. Ross, "Psalms" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* by Dallas Seminary Faculty, Old Testament. Edited by John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985), 832.

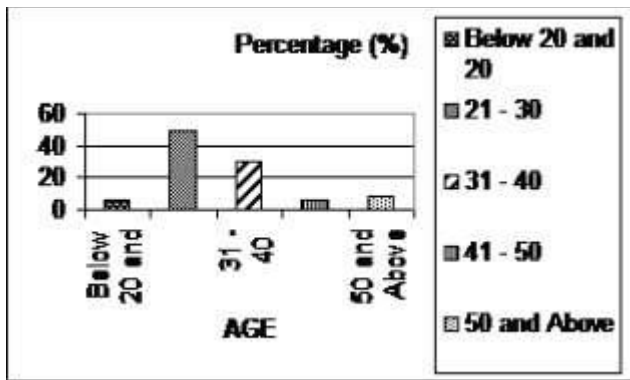
⁴⁵ BDB, 135.

⁴⁶ J. Clinton McCain, *A Theological Introduction to the Book of Psalms*. 104.

Twelve variables were prepared for the questionnaire. Questions 1-3 deal with demographic information from the respondents like age, sex and marital status. Questions 4-12 deal with issues relating to HIV/AIDS and multiple sexual partners. 120 Questionnaires were administered to 120 students and 97 respondents participated faithfully. The analysis of data was made by using simple percentage and pie chart as stated below:

Question 1: Age

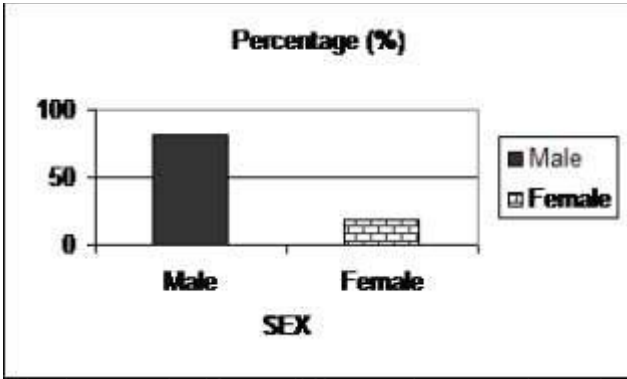
Age	Response	Percentage (%)
Below 20 and 20	6	6.2
21 – 30	48	49.5
31 – 40	29	30
41 – 50	6	6.1
50 and Above	8	8.2
	97	100



The above table shows that majority of the respondents were adults. The percentage of those whose age is 21 years and above is 93.8%. This indicates that they were matured and experienced and hence, their judgement on the subject can be regarded as valid and reliable.

Question 2: Sex

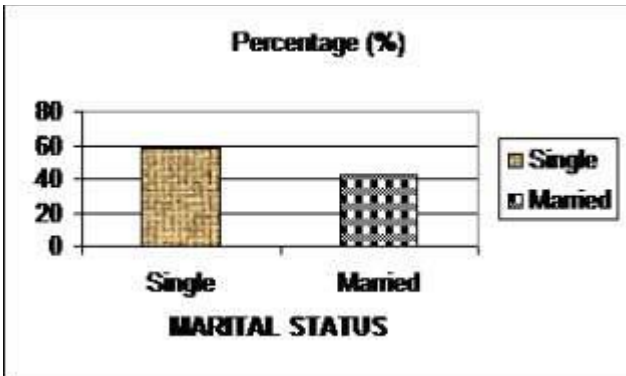
Sex	Response	Percentage (%)
Male	80	82
Female	17	18
	97	100



The analysis shows a significant difference between the male and female respondents, that is, 82% and 18% respectively. The wide difference can be explained on the ground that majority of the seminary students are male.

Question 3: Marital Status

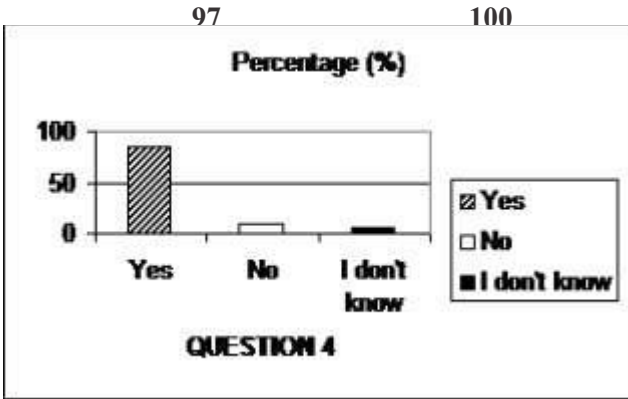
Marital Status	Response	Percentage (%)
Single	56	58
Married	41	42
	97	100



There is no significant difference between the single and the married respondents.

Question 4: Multiple sexual partners means to have more than one sexual partner at a time.

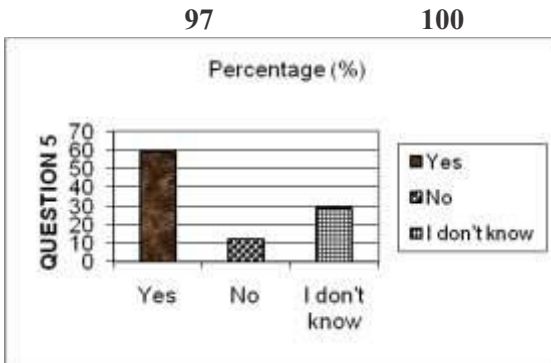
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	82	85
No	9	9
I don't know	6	6



Majority of the respondents, that is, 85% has an understanding of multiple sexual partners.

Question 5: Awareness that some so called Christians in Ilorin metropolis are involved in multiple sexual practices

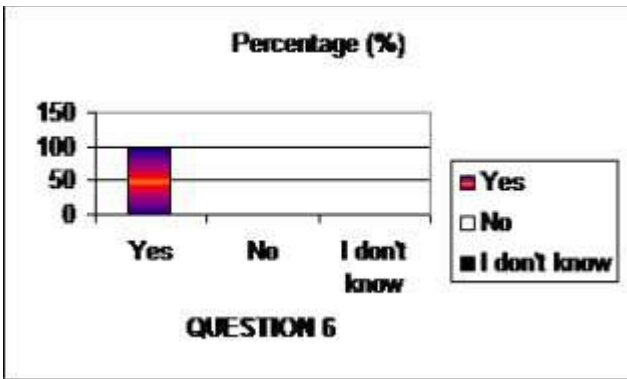
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	57	59
No	12	12
I don't know	28	29



The analysis shows that majority of the respondents are aware of the so-called Christians getting involved in multiple sexual practices. But then a significant percentage of the respondents had no knowledge of the fact that Christians in Ilorin metropolis are involved in multiple sexual practices.

Question 6: Multiple sexual practice is a sin

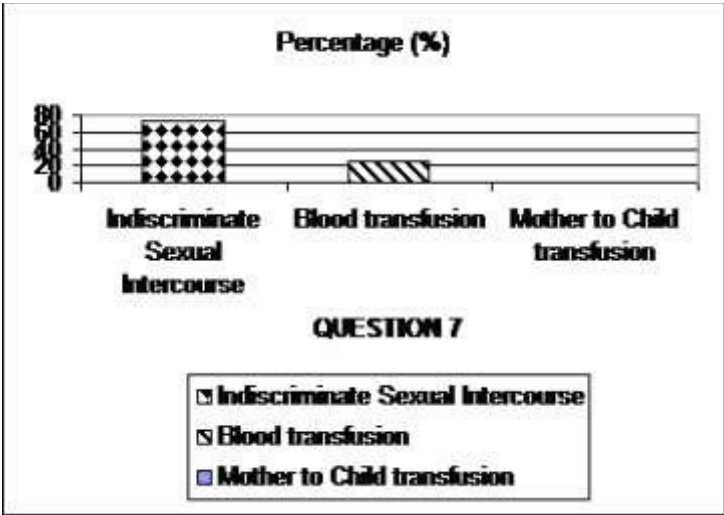
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	97	100
No	0	0
I don't know	0	0
	97	100



The report shows that all the respondents, 100% believe that multiple sexual practice is a sin.

Question 7: The main cause of HIV/AIDS

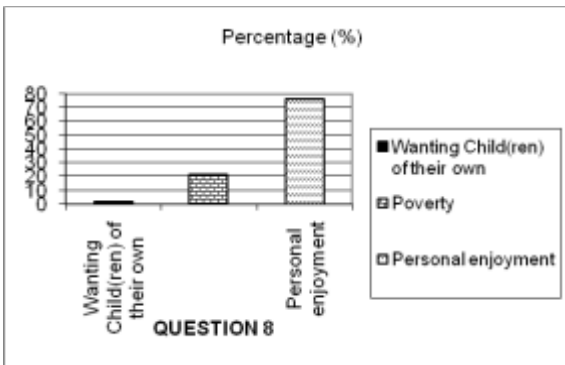
	Response	Percentage (%)
Indiscriminate Sexual Intercourse	71	73
Blood transfusion	25	26
Mother to Child transfusion	1	1
	97	100



The analysis indicates that a very high percentage of the respondents, 73% believe that indiscriminate sexual intercourse is the cause of HIV/AIDS. Also, a significant percentage, 26% believe that HIV/AIDS is caused by blood transfusion.

Question 8: Reason for opting for multiple sexual practices

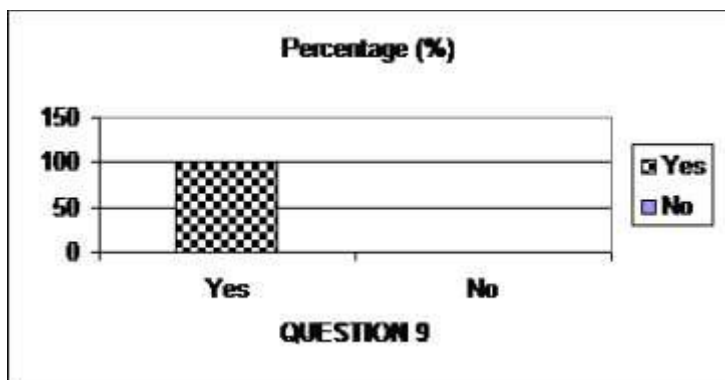
	Response	Percentage (%)
Wanting Child(ren) of their own	2	2
Poverty	21	22
Personal enjoyment	74	76
	97	100



The analysis indicates that majority of the respondents, 76% believe that people get involved in multiple sexual practices for personal enjoyment. Also, a significant percentage, 22% believe that poverty is the reason why people opt for multiple sexual practices.

Question 9: Multiple sexual practice has a risk of HIV/AIDS

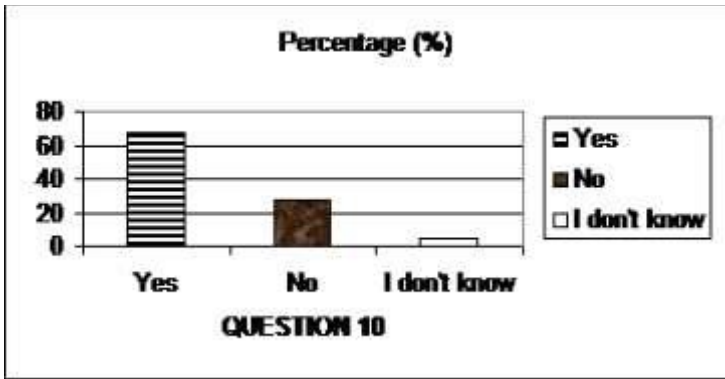
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	97	100
No	0	0
	97	100



The above table shows that all the respondents, 100% believe that multiple sexual practices have a very high risk of HIV/AIDS.

Question 10: Lack of understanding/communication is one major factor responsible for multiple sexual practices among Christian couples.

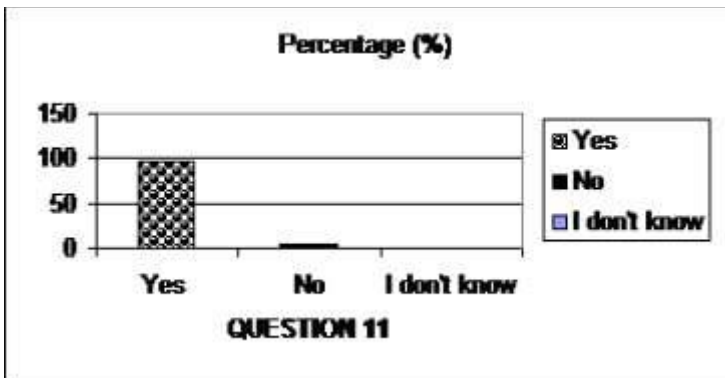
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	67
No	27	28
I don't know	5	5
	97	100



The analysis shows that a very high percentage of the respondents, 67% believe that lack of understanding/ communication is one of the major factors responsible for multiple sexual practices among Christian couples.

Question 11: Multiple sexual practices are a sign of infidelity and carnality

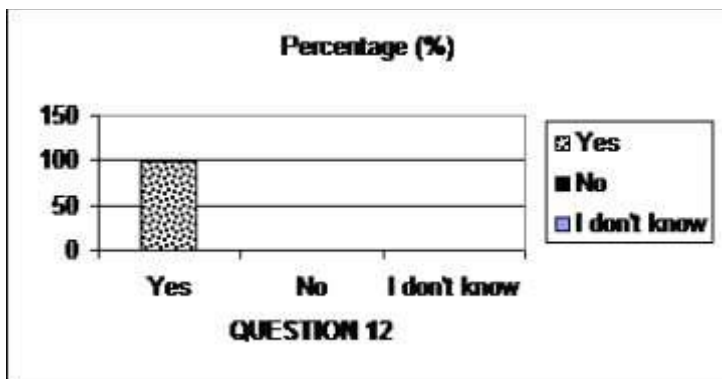
	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	93	96
No	4	4
I don't know	0	0
	97	100



The analysis shows that almost all respondents, 93% believe that multiple sexual practice is a sign of infidelity and carnality.

Question 12: One important way of fighting HIV/AIDS is to discourage multiple sexual practices.

	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	96	99
No	1	1
I don't know	0	0
	97	100



The analysis indicates that a very high percentage of the respondents, 99% believe that one important way of fighting HIV/AIDS is to discourage multiple sexual practices.

From the above survey, it is obvious that like David, many Christians in Ilorin, Nigeria are ignoring scriptural warnings against multiple sexual partners and are paying a high price.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that the current challenges to effective control of HIV/AIDS require new prevention strategies, one of which is the discouragement of multiple sexual practices. David's involvement in multiple sexual practices had negative spiritual, physical and emotional effects on his life. Also, the paper has shown the awareness, causes and possible solution to HIV/AIDS vis-à-vis multiple sexual partners in the analysis of the empirical research carried on the subject. Thus in view of the

fact that “Africa hosts the largest number of infected and affected people,”⁴⁷ African Christians must take up the challenge of fighting the HIV/AIDS to a halt.

Every married Christian must follow God’s instruction and pattern for life by being faithful to his or her spouse. Christians must shun lust and stop behaviours that tend to promote multiple sexual practices. Restricting sexual intercourse to one faithful partner will certainly reduce drastically the spread of HIV/AIDS which is a sin and a sign of infidelity and carnality. Finally, there is hope for those that have been affected by the deadly disease. David prayed and he received the forgiveness from God on the basis of His steadfast love. Therefore, there should be no discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.

⁴⁷ See Musa Wenkosi Dube, in her forward to HIV and AIDS Curriculum for Theological Institutions in Africa,(MAP International 2003), 4.

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The Christian Gospel in the Talensi Experience

SAMUEL ZUUL BAYETI ¹

ABSTRACT

This work, 'The Christian Gospel in the Talensi Experience' examines the encounter of the Talensi with the Christian Gospel and the response of the people to the gospel. The study contends that even though conflicts or challenges often crop up, indigenous Talensi Christianity is possible. The major finding of the research is that the proclamation of the Christian gospel among the Talensi often produces variant responses ranging from full embrace, to partial embrace as well as complete rejection. Whereas personal conversions sometimes result from personal convictions, tensions on the other hand result from lack of understanding of the Christian faith which sometimes opposes some of the religious practices of the people. The study recommends that the Talensi culture can be a preparation for the gospel through the adoption of its cultural forms which can enable the people to respond to Jesus as their tendana (chief priest), bakologdan (diviner or prophet) and nyaadan (healer) or tiimdan (medicine man).

Introduction

From the inception of Christianity, the issue of the engagement between the gospel and traditional cultures has been a continuous phenomenon. In as much as the issue was evident in the ministry of Jesus, and was also evident in the early Church period, the gospel which represents the mind of God, needed to be made relevant to people of every race as stipulated in the Great Commission. According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Ghanaians

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believed in God before the Good News about Jesus was brought to them, and they continue to believe in God. He contends that any translation of the Bible that has to do with belief in God should take into consideration the people inherent knowledge about God.² This is significant in the sense that the indigenous African possesses a belief about God which cannot be disputed. What remains is for the African to embrace Jesus meaningfully and relevantly within his or her socio-cultural environment. In this sense the meaning of the gospel as revealed in the scriptures can be much relevant to the understanding of the engagement between the Christian faith and culture if the right understanding is achieved.

In this engagement, it becomes very imperative that we understand that the gospel can become an interpretative tool for culture. Ernestina Afriyie posits that 'the gospel needs to engage the religious beliefs and practices of the people so that a Christian response can be given that meets their spiritual needs'. She contends that, 'the Christian gospel is not against the African or more specifically Akan religious ideas, Akan's religiosity and spirituality. On the contrary, it can be shown that they find their fulfilment in the gospel'.³ In the view of the author, the Christian gospel is not an enemy of African culture. Rather it answers the many questions that Africans seem to have. Therefore, we can come to a self realization of our identity as Africans in the light of the gospel. This is so because, it is the gospel which reveals our true identity, that is, where we are coming from as humans, where we are now, and where we are going to from this life. Against this background, the engagement of the gospel with Talensi religion can provide the needed answers to the many questions posed by the Talensi. Which chiefly centre on who Jesus is and the meaning of life.

Susan Campbell maintains that, the Apostle Paul, in addressing the people of Athens and recorded in Act 17:16-34, 'proclaims God as creator, sustainer, ruler, father and judge, thus grounding his Christology in theology.

² Jonathan E T Kuwornu Adjaottor. 'You Believe in God and Believe in God', *European Journal of Scientific Research* (Vol. No 9, Issue 19, July 12, 2014) 1.

³ Ernestina Afriyie, Christ Our Perfect Sacrifice: The Odwira Festival and Christianity in Contemporary Ghana. *Journal of African Christian Thought*, (vol 17 No 1 June 2014) 27

This perspective is comprehensive, holistic and lays a solid groundwork. In her view, contemporary people are uninterested in the gospel because they perceive it to be trivial, narrow and disconnected from their lives. They seek a gospel that integrates their worldview and life experiences'.⁴ Drawing lessons from Paul's message to the Athenians, the author seeks to justify the assertion that the gospel cannot be accepted by its targeted audience if it is disconnected from their worldview and experiences. The significance of worldview in shaping a people's understanding of the issues of life is very much crucial in the transmission of the Christian gospel. Thus, the gospel cannot make any meaningful impact if it fails to take cognisance of the people's culture and experiences. People need to perceive and respond to Jesus Christ in ways that are meaningful to their own understanding, and to enable them to encounter him in their own socio-cultural milieu. According to Ekram Lamie Hennawie and Emad Azmi,

when Christianity spread in the area now known as the Arab world, it encountered a variety of local cultures such as Coptic, Syriac and Berber as well as a widespread use of Greek in the east and Latin further west... the new faith was fairly successful in 'translating' and transporting itself across these and other cultural barriers.⁵

The views of the authors seek to underscore the fact that the Gospel, since its inception, has had to encounter diverse cultures. Even today it continues to encounter the different cultures of the world. Because the Gospel was revealed to humankind through culture, it presupposes that, the engagement of gospel and culture is a continuous phenomenon. Thus, no culture can 'imprison' the gospel.

In examining the position of Kwame Bediako on the significance of language in the early Christian enterprise in Africa, B. Y. Quarshie asserts,

⁴ Susan Campbell. 'Scratching the Itch: Paul's Athenian Speech, Shaping Mission Today'. *Evangelical Review of Theology*. (Vol. 35 No. 2, April 2011), 180-181

⁵ Ekram Lamie Hennawie and Emad Azmi Mikhail. 'The philosophy behind the Arabic Translation of the True meaning of the Gospel of the Messiah'. *Evangelical Review of Theology* (vol. 37, No 4 October 2013) 353

that through the mother –tongue scriptures, new truths are taught and learnt about Jesus Christ, as happened in the New Testament itself...mother-tongue scriptures do not only facilitate a meaningful participation in the world of the Bible, they also afford a communal study of the Bible. Those who do not speak any international language can nevertheless hear God speaking to them in their own languages as happened at Pentecost.(Acts 2:1-11) ⁶

The position of Quarshie seems to suggest that language is the medium that enables people to understand biblical truths. Thus, language is significant for indigenous people to name Jesus by themselves and to appropriate him in their own socio-cultural environment. As people hear God speak to them directly through their mother-tongue, they come to appreciate God in his dealings with them in their own socio-cultural environment.

In the view of Kuwornu –Adjoattor, Christ is one of the most familiar terms by which Jesus is known, both in the New Testament and in subsequent Christian tradition. All the canonical Gospels apply the term to Jesus, but each has its own interesting variation in the way Jesus is presented as Christ. In reference to the, the word “Kristo” which appears 531 times in the Greek New Testament has been translated as “Kristo”⁷. It can be noted that the title Christ as referring to Jesus in his salvific work is understood by the Dangbwe as the source of their salvation. Thus, it is possible for each people group to appropriate Jesus within their own understanding.

The Talensi People

The Talensi are a sub sect of the Frafra people group. They speak a dialect called Talni and Talen. A single person is referred to as Talenga, where as a group of such people is referred to as Tallis⁸. The people are made up

⁶ B Y Quarshie. ‘The Bible in African Christianity: Kwame Bediako and the Reshaping of an African Heritage’. *Journal of African Christian Thought*. (Vol. 14, No. 2 December 2011), 11.

⁷ Jonathan E T Kuwornu Adjoattor. ‘The Translation of *Kristos* as *Kristo* in the Dangme Mother –Tongue Translation of the New Testament Visited’. *Journal in Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, (Vol. 5, No. 8, 2014)203-208.

⁸ Peter Barker. *Peoples, Languages and Religion of Northern Ghana*. (Accra: Asempa Publishers / GEC. 1986) 119.

of different clans referred to as *yilzuk* who have a unique history and political structuring. These include the Nalerigu, the Tendana clans, and the Hill-Tallis. The Namoo clan is believed to have migrated from Nanlerigu, precisely from the Nayiri led by their great ancestor Musuol. When they arrived in Tongo, they found some groups of people already residing on the land. These people were the Zubeougu, Zuo, and Baare constituting the Tendana clans, as well as Wakii, Yindiriri, Gorogo, Sii and Tenzuk, constituting the Hill-Tallis.

According to Talensi tradition, Musuol is believed to have come along with the chieftancy institution from Nalerigu, and as far as chieftaincy in Tongo is concerned, only members of the Namoo clan, represented by the gates of Dikpieng, Gbeogo, Puhig, Pusunamong, Tongo-Biug, Shiega and Kuoreg can ascend to the Tongorana skin. Therefore the chief of Tongo referred to as the Tongorana, is the overlord of the Talensi Traditional area. The Talensi skin is of Paramountcy status which, when it becomes vacant upon the death of the sitting *Tongorana*, is subject to the powers of the Nayiri at Nalerigu to enskin a new *Tongorana*.

The people from Zubeougu, Zuo and Baare on the other hand are represented by their various *Tendandem* (landlords) or earth priests, who though are religious officials, who offer the required sacrifices on behalf of their clans of which they are the heads and are also the custodians of the lands. Thus, as far as farming is concerned, these areas headed by the *Tendana* are supposed to cultivate crops and donate some portions to the *nayir* or the *Tongorana* annually. In the Talensi tradition, the chief has no power over the land. Land is vested in the power of the *Tendana* to administer on behalf of the clan of which he is the head. Again the various *Tendandem*, apart from their religious functions, and their headship of their clans which they represent, they also preside over marriages, agreements, funerals and other social activities within their clans.

With Tongo gaining district assembly status, and with electricity connected to the township, many have taken advantage to set up business ventures which has improved the lives of the people. These business enterprises do not serve only the indigenes of the township but also people from other parts of the region and beyond who are workers of the decentralised departments of the district assembly, and who also reside in the township and its environs.

The Talensi are located at the east of the main Tamale - Bolgatanga trunk road. Their chief town is Tongo which is also is the capital of the Talensi District Assembly. The communities are characterised by lowlands and hilly sites, such as the notable Tongo hills which is a major tourist destination. Economically, the chief vocation of the people is farming, which is on subsistence basis. Crops such as millet, guinea corn, groundnuts, cowpeas, Frafra potatoes popularly called *pieha*, bambara nuts, rice and maize. Vegetable crops such as tomatoes, peppers and leafy vegetables mostly used for soups are cultivated. Other people are also engaged in hunting, fishing, and petty trading. The major marketing centre is the Tongo market called *Kaya Daa*. There are also small markets at Gorogo and Baare The chief staple is *saabu* which is prepared from millet flour and is eaten with vegetable or okro soups.

The Talensi Religion

The Talensi like all other traditional people in Africa are very religious. Samuel Atinga writing generally about the Frafra maintains that “the Frafra religion and religious practices fall within the general frame work of traditional religious practices all over Africa.”⁹ The religion of the Talensi is informed by their worldview which is defined by their belief in the Supreme Being referred to as *Naawun* or *Wunaam*. Like all other traditional societies in Africa, the Talensi believe that *Wunaam* is the Creator of the universe and all that is in it including man, and also holds all the power. However, they also believe that even though this Supreme Being is far removed from human existence, he superintends over all human affairs. This is why, the people believe that as far as ethical standards are concerned, God's eyes are everywhere observing every human activity on earth. According to Barker, *Naawun* is believed to be “above all other gods; he knows all, sees all, and is all powerful.”¹⁰ This belief in the Supreme Being is evident in some Talensi prayers of thanksgiving and petition expressed as *tete wun fara* (we give God praise), and *yin nan song te* (God will help us).

The belief of the Talensi in the existence of a Supreme Being *Wunaam*, is

⁹ Samuel A Atinga. ‘*Death and Dying: A study of the Mortuary Rites of the Frafra of Northern Ghana in the light of the Christian Funeral Liturgy. An Attempt at Inculturation.*’ Doctoral Thesis, Katholieke University, Leuven. (unpublished). 6

¹⁰ Peter Barker, *People, Languages and Religion of Northern Ghana*, 102

also underscored by the names they often give to their children as well as in their daily sayings. For instance, some children are named *Yinnbot* (God wills), *Yininteso* (whom God has given), *Yinmanna* (God has provided) and many others. Again, some day-to-day sayings such as *Wunaam nbot siem ka wotomit* (whatever God decides is what He performs), *Wunaam nan song* (God will help), *Wunaam te te biog* (God gives us tomorrow or another day).

Much as the Talensi believe in the Supreme Being, the belief in the spirits of the *Yabnam* (ancestors) forms the cardinal point of the Talensi society. This is because when a *Talenga* dies, he or she is said to have gone to the ancestors. Therefore, the ancestral cult determines every other socio-religious activity among the people such as marriages, funerals, child naming, festivals and chieftaincy. The *Yabnam* or *ancestors* are believed to be the custodians of the land and its people and their wishes determine the ethical standards and spirituality in the Talensi homeland. Compliance with their wishes and directives brings blessings such as fertility of the land, people and domestic animals, good health and peace. On the other hand, lack of compliance or disobedience incurs the wrath of the ancestors and can bring misfortune in the form of *toog* (disease), *wolog* (drought), *kom* (famine), barrenness, as well as miscarriages and death in humans and livestock.

The living descendants have some responsibilities by way of sacrifices and offerings towards their ancestors which bring *sumaahom* (peace) to them. Against this background, Fortes asserts that the ancestors “though dead and gone from the physical world of the living [are] invisible but effective, and are accessible through the special medium of religious rituals.”¹¹

These *Yabnam* are believed to be near their living descendants and the shrines dedicated to them are often situated within the homesteads. Sacrifices are offered to them periodically in the form of *zomkuom* (four mixed with water), *pito* (local beer brewed from guinea corn) and animals such as sheep, goats, dogs and fowls. The type of sacrifice to be offered to each ancestor is often ascertained through divination. Because of their significant place in the Talensi spiritual life and thought, one cannot embark

¹¹ Meyer Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person: Essays on the Talensi Religion*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). 195

upon any enterprise without first invoking their blessings. Embarking on a journey, before any farming, season, or constructing a room, one needs to consult the ancestors, in order to forestall any unforeseen misfortune of any kind.

Festivals

The celebration of festivals in the Talensi homeland is informed by two reasons. Firstly, historically the festivals commemorate the founding fathers or any significant event in their history. For instance, the celebration of the *Goleb* by the Hill-Talis is historical and commemorates their victories in ancient wars. Secondly, because the Talensi are agriculturally inclined, the celebration of the *Daa* festival by the Tongo-Nayir clans as well as Zubeougu, Zuo and Baare communities is a commemoration of the ancestors and serves as a form of thanksgiving to them for providing the people with a good farming season and good harvest. It also serves as a platform to solicit the blessings of the ancestors for the coming season. Other festivals celebrated in the Talensi area include *Boaram* and *Tenglebeg*, which also commemorate the ancestors just as the *Daa* festival.

The festivals stress the obligatory cooperation required for the rituals, their imperative necessity to ensure the well being of the land and its people. Most of all they stress the commemoration of the ancestors and the homage offered to them in prayers and in sacrifices in order to enlist their benevolence for the coming year.¹² Even though there are some social and economic benefits associated with Talensi festivals, the cardinal objective lies in the religious observance which are meant to cement the bond of relationship between the living descendants and their departed relatives who are their ancestors.

Child Naming

Because of the strong bond that exists between the living descendants and their departed relatives, and the strong belief in the return of the ancestors in the form of newly born babies, it is imperative for Talensi parents to consult the oracle to determine which ancestor of their family or clan has been reborn. This is necessary in order to determine the name that should be

¹² Fortes, *Religion, Morality and The Person*, 51

given to the child. For instance, a child maybe called *Mbalebna* which means my father has returned or *Mmalebna*, my mother has returned. Other names include, *Mbasongya* (my father has enabled or helped) or *Mbasaaya* (my father has agreed). These names, to a large extent underscore or tend to cement the relationship between the living descendants and their departed relatives.

The names that are given to the children serve as a mark of "ownership" in the sense that through the naming, the spirit of the child is dedicated to a patron ancestor who is expected to take care or protect the child's soul throughout his or her life. This is the reason why some sacrifices are often required of would be bridegrooms so as to pacify the patron ancestors of their would-be brides. Throughout the Talensi land, personal shrines dedicated to these ancestors popularly called *Shiar* can be found in every compound. Periodic offerings are made to these ancestors to ensure their continuous protection and blessing. Some Talensi, who reside outside the traditional homeland need to make time and travel home in order to offer these sacrifices and offerings to their *Shiar* (patron gods).

In the Talensi society which is a patriarchal one, the responsibility of offering the required sacrifices to the ancestors often falls on the head of the family. However, the male-child especially the firstborn also acts as priest in his family. This is because they are by tradition responsible for offering sacrifices and offerings to their late fathers and also to their *Shiar* (patron gods) to cement the bond between them. Again, it is the male children who are often initiated into the *bayaah* (sexton cult) to be responsible for all mortuary and burial rites in connection with the dead. Therefore the Talensi society places much premium on the male child who apart from his religious role, also perpetuates the family line by carrying the name and status of his father. Again, it is he who inherits the father's property when it becomes necessary, and this includes the ritual responsibilities. Against this background, the male child is given much ritual training right from infancy through participant observation and grows up to gain much experience in religious matters.

Death, Funeral, and Widowhood

The idea of *kum* (death) also goes to underscore the Talensi belief in the spirit of the ancestors. This is because it is believed that death is the channel

through which the elders can be translated to the land of the ancestors. Against this background, one is required to live a responsible life, by marrying and managing his family well. As noted earlier, the belief in the spirit of the ancestors determines how death is handled in the Talensi society. Special people called the (sextons), are spiritually trained to handle death issues including the mortuary rites, grave digging and burials. Three days after the burial, divination is carried out to determine the cause of the death, which is sometimes attributed to the ancestors because of a non-compliance with their wishes.

The final funeral rites, which are often carried out mostly in the dry season are held to usher the spirits of the dead finally to their ancestral homes. Divinations are carried out to determine the *buar* (right to inheritance) and the administration of the estate of the deceased. Because the Talensi society is a patriarchal one, it is only the women who are made to undergo widowhood rites upon the death of their husbands. These rites are believed to sever the marital bond that existed between the woman and her deceased husband. This is evidenced by the widow carrying what is referred to as *dakoul nwan* (widowhood calabash), for some time until the final funeral rites are held. It is often after the final funeral rites that the woman is free to remarry either within the family or outside the family.

The Christian Gospel and The Talensi

The Gospel, in the true meaning of the word, is about who Jesus Christ is, and what he means in his Person, his life as well as his work on earth and afterwards and how all these relate to humans in their various cultures. Evangelisation seeks to make Christ part of the peoples' culture (their worldview). The gospel seeks to appeal to human conscience demanding a response, therefore as individuals evaluate the options opened to them, conversion can result through a change of direction from a self life to a new life in Christ. A person who becomes converted changes his course of direction and action, and his total way of life including relationships.

The Christian Gospel as we have it today came to us within some cultural settings and it tends to encounter cultures wherever it goes. This is equally true of the Talensi, who have demonstrated varying responses since their encounter with Christianity. Christianity was first introduced into the Talensi land as far back as 1959 when the first Roman Catholic missionaries

set foot in Tongo. They made some converts, whom they baptised and administered the Eucharist to them. The missionaries took time to learn the *Talen* dialect, and they made a significant impact on the local people, causing the church to grow in numbers.

The Assemblies of God also established its presence in Tongo in 1986 when Rev. Job Tindanbil led what came to be known as the “Talensi homeland mission”. He and his team of missionaries held series of open air meetings at Baare and this resulted in the establishment of the first Assemblies of God church in the Talensi homeland. Today there are branches of the Assemblies of God Church at Gorogo, Tongo-Central and Duusi and Poose Namooogo.

With the grounds opened up for Christianity, other Churches such as the Apostolic Church, Church of Christ, and Salvation Army also came into the area. There are also, Churches of the Charismatic tradition such as the Fountain Gate Chapel, Amazing Power Church, God’s Chapel and others who have established their presence in Tongo and its environs. It is significant to note that some Talensi encountered the Christian faith with the emergence of these churches. Some others became converted outside their traditional homeland. Since it is a yearly ritual for some of the people to travel to the southern parts of the country to look for jobs, it seems to open doors of opportunity for some of them to come into contact with Christianity. It is on record that some Talensi have settled permanently in Southern Ghana and are very committed Christians and belonging to many Christian denominations.

In connection with the Talensi encounter with the Christian faith, it is significant to examine the nature of their response to the gospel. In the first place, it can be noted that, some of the people demonstrated a full embrace, abandoning their traditional religious ties and fully accepted the Christian faith. Such people can be found in the Churches today occupying leadership positions with some being pastors and other Christian workers. Examples include Rev. Tindanbil, Rev. Samuel Lawaaba, Rev Thomas Yin and others. Secondly some response could be a partial embrace whereby they accept the Christian faith but refuse to break with their traditional religious ties. This is what is often referred to in religious circles as syncretism. The reason often given by such people is that they cannot fully abandon their ancestral ties even though they desire to be Christians. The underlying reasons could be either for the fear of being disowned by their families or fear of ridicule from friends and close associates.

Thirdly, there are others who are totally opposed to the Christian faith either because of how it was presented to them or because of personal reasons which are often religious. The religious reason seems to be that some of the people, especially the youth, do not often see why they should abandon their ancestors who are their custodians and to accept an “unknown faith”. For such people, the ancestral cult is their security and they would not compromise with it.

Conflicts and Challenges

The issue of conflict often arises out of disagreement over some issues. This is true as far as religion is concerned. The Talensi are used to many gods and the proclamation of Jesus as the only Lord and Saviour poses a major challenge to them. The question many Talensi often ask is, ‘will I be secured if I accept the new faith?’ Their fear is that their strong ties with their ancestors could be affected if they become Christians on the grounds that, for instance, they might not be buried among their ancestors when they die. Ancestorhood is therefore an important element of the Talensi society and is very much cherished by the people especially the elderly. In Talensi understanding, conversion to Christianity is often considered as indoctrination and a betrayal of one’s ancestors. Those who convert are regarded as ‘lost’. For the older people, Christian conversion means alienation which should be avoided, for the reason that the Christian Faith seems to demand a complete break with one’s “past” which to them is a risky adventure.

Tension often develops when the Gospel is presented and obeyed in traditional areas. The forms and structures by which Christians in different cultures express their faith vary, and this incites misunderstanding, suspicion, and antagonism. Among the Talensi, some do not want to embrace the Christian faith fully because of the conflicts which they are likely to face. Some Talensi who decide to become Christians are always afraid to declare their Christian identity openly, especially in their traditional homeland due to the possible conflicts that they are likely to face from relatives and friends.

It has been found out that the ancestral cult has a strong impact on the Talensi as it occupies a central position in the Talensi society. The Talensi look to their ancestors for necessary help, guidance, protection and

blessing. The Talensi Christian however, may consider the dependence on the ancestors as an infringement of biblical principles. Conflict therefore arises when a Talensi who is a Christian is required to offer sacrifices to his late father or ancestor in his lineage. Failure to comply means, that person may forfeit his right of inheritance or even be banished from the family or clan. Again, during funeral rites, young men are required by tradition to have their hair shaved as part of the rituals which mark their sympathy for their late fathers.

When one decides not to involve himself or herself in the ancestral rites, it is regarded as a betrayal of the traditional norms. Others on the other hand will accept the Christian faith, but will regard it as ungratefulness if they attempt to renounce their patron idols or their ancestral links. Non-Christians are normally afraid to commit themselves to the Christian faith since they would be required to abandon the performance of sacrifices to their patron idols or ancestors. The crucial questions that require answers are; what would be the fate of a Talensi Christian convert who is a first-born male child? Can he be committed to the new-found faith (Christianity) and still remain loyal to his traditional religious ties?

Another issue worth noting is polygamy. The Talensi society gives men the right to marry as many wives they so desire provided they have the resources to cater for them. They do so for the reason, that they need the women as farm hands to help in their farming operations. The Church's teaching on marriage seems to run parallel with the Talensi practice of polygamy. People in polygamous marriages may find it difficult to join the church. Talensi women seem to be very vulnerable in the society as they are denied property rights and the power of personal decision making. Against this background, women who convert to Christianity may profess their faith secretly or face divorce. The Talensi are confronted with these questions and challenges, and any conversion to Christianity is bound to have conflicts with the traditional religious beliefs and practices.

Salvation in Talensi Understanding

For the Talensi, salvation refers to any form of deliverance from danger or calamity. This includes, healing from a deadly disease, deliverance from accident of any form and safety in times of childbirth. The understanding of the Talensi is based on the physical and this seems to run parallel with the

Christian understanding of a futurist event. According to K. Asamoah Gyadu, in the New Testament Jesus is the Saviour or deliverer from sin and its consequences as well as from Satan and his power. As he preached the arrival of the Kingdom of God those who repented and believed received salvation.¹³ If the Talensi regard salvation as an idea of a physical phenomenon, then it presupposes that they might not regard salvation in terms of human sin. Therefore, the sin question does not arise in Talensi understanding of salvation.

The Talensi Religion as *Prepraetio Evangelica* (“Preparation for the Gospel”)

John Mbiti has argued that African religious background is not a rotten heap of superstition, taboos and magic as has been the perception of the earth Christian missionaries to Africa. Rather, it has a great deal of value in it, and that this rich and valuable heritage, can enrich Christianity.¹⁴ Idowu also believes that African oral traditions “constitute the scriptures as well as breviaries of African Traditional Religion... they are valued authentic media of religious truths.”¹⁵

As far as the Talensi is concerned, we need to identify what constitutes the valuable preparation for the gospel and what is not. In line with this, Kwame Bediako has observed that, the positive evaluation of the pre-Christian tradition, and an attempt to derive insights from it for the declaration of Christian convictions, need not imply a theological syncretism.”¹⁶ Like all African societies, the Talensi religion and social life lay emphasis on communal welfare values, concerns and kingship. Based on this, the idea of the church as a community can become very relevant to the Talensi as a place of refuge and meeting their felt needs.

On the basis of this, Fortes, in examining the festivals of the Talensi observes that, ‘they serve to affirm the belonging together, the solidarity

¹³ K Asamoah-Gyadu. ‘Salvation in African Independent Churches and Charismatic Ministries in Ghana’. *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology*, (vol2, no.2 1992)84-90

¹⁴ John Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa* (London: SPCK, 1970). 432

¹⁵ E Bolaji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion: A Definition* (London: SCM Press, 1973). 85

¹⁶ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity* (Oxford: Reguum Books, 1992). 431

and unity of a community making its members aware of their dependence on one another... in their pursuit of common ends and values'¹⁷. In the light of this evangelisation need not present Christ on the individual level by making individual appeals. Rather, it should take cognisance of the people's sense of community and brotherhood, to make it relevant.

Again, the oral traditions of the Talensi can be a great asset in Christian evangelisation. These include, *magaha* (proverbs), *solema* (stories), and *wooma* (music) and many others which are embodiments of traditional wisdom. It is worthy to note that it is possible for the Christian gospel to enrich the Talensi culture, and it is also possible for the Talensi culture to provide an opportunity for dialogue with the Christian faith. Such opportunities can exist in other areas such as, sacrifices and priestly mediation. It has been found out that the Talensi society places much premium on the offering of sacrifices as a means of appeasing the ancestors and other deities. Therefore, sacrifices of whatever form, are meant to cement the relationship between the human society and the supernatural realms. The Talensi offer sacrifices as a means of supplication, or thanksgiving in order to maintain cordial relationship with the supernatural. There can be dialogue between the sacrifices offered by the Talensi and that of Christ on the cross for the salvation of lost sinners. It is evident from the Talensi culture that the idea of sacrifice involves the issues of appeasement, which conveys the notion of sin or deviation, and prayer, which means soliciting assistance from the supernatural.

With regards to priestly mediation, the idea of the Talensi traditional priest entering the traditional grove to offer sacrifices, and also family heads offering the required sacrifices and offerings on behalf of their families can become a preparation for dialogue with Christianity. Christ became our mediator or Chief priest who offered himself once for the salvation of the world.

With regards to priestly mediation, the idea of the Talensi traditional priest entering the traditional grove to offer sacrifices, and also family heads offering the required sacrifices and offerings on behalf of their families can become a preparation for dialogue with Christianity. With regards to Chief

¹⁷ Fortes, *Religion, Morality and the Person*, 65

priest who offered himself once for the salvation of the world.

Jesus in the Talensi Experience

Evangelisation involves the proclamation of the “good news”. As a ministry it assumes different forms in accordance with the circumstances of local situations. The proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of humankind has to be appropriated in different cultural contexts. Therefore, evangelisation is rooted in the Person of Jesus and His encounter with people in different cultural settings. Emmanuel Asante has noted that, a people’s encounter with the divine (experience) determines how they appropriate Jesus for themselves. In other words, one’s appropriation of Jesus is to a large extent informed by the social, cultural, economic and religious circumstances at the heart of one’s experience. To call Jesus Saviour is to do so in the face of social reality that calls for salvation. He concludes that “Christological reflections are born out of socio-cultural concerns.”¹⁸ In line with this, R. Shawyer writing about the Wolof of Senegal, points out that “the Wolof will not come to Christ in any numbers until they can see Christ in Wolof skin... worshipping God in a Wolof way.”¹⁹ Against this background, it can be asked who then is Jesus Christ to the Talensi? How can Jesus be presented to the indigenous Talensi?

Christ as *Tendana Par Excellence*

It has been noted that the *tendana* is a political figure in the Talensi land, administering the affairs of the clan of which he is the head. Most importantly is his role as the custodian and chief priest of the earth cult. The *tendana* therefore, is the high priest or chief priest of the land and performs the required sacrifices on behalf of the people. The epistle to the Hebrews presents Christ as the High Priest (Heb. 7:17). Therefore the Priesthood of Christ is the outstanding doctrine of the epistle to the Hebrews. In the same sense Jesus can become a *tendana* (high priest) of the Talensi who are very much accustomed with priestly functions.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Asante, *Jesus The Christ* (Kumasi: Wilas Press, 2009). 209

¹⁹ R Shawyer, “Indigenous Worship” *Evangelical Missionary Quarterly* (Vol38, no.3) 326-334

Christ as Bakologdan (“Diviner/Prophet”)

The *bakologdan* in the Talensi society is one who is specially gifted by the deities to reveal mysteries and to determine the will of the deities concerning particular situations for the benefit of the community. Whereas the *tendana* is a popular figure, the *bakologdanis* an uncommon person, who only appears on the scene when the situation calls for his services. He is specially invited to determine the will of the ancestors concerning particular situations such as the cause of death in a family or clan, the one to inherit the lineage *boagr* (headship), and the selection of the new *tendana*. He is somehow to be regarded as a prophet who reveals mysteries. It is significant to know how Jesus carryout his prophetic ministry by foretelling future events and praying for all believers (Matt. 24, John 17). In Christ, the Talensi Christian can be assured of his destiny and future, and is not to be considered as lost.

Christ as Nyaadan (“Healer”) or Tiimdan (“Medicineman”)

In Talensi understanding, the *nyaadan* is an embodiment of both biological and spiritual powers of the ancestors. He is capable of effecting about healing of some diseases, because the efficacy of whatever he does or says to his clients lies in the powers of the ancestors. Therefore, the *nyaadan* and the *tiimdan* are important religious personnel. The peoples’ belief in the spiritual causation of diseases and events underlines their resort to the services of the medicinemen, bonesetters, magicians, herbalists and diviners.

Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as healer who healed many people of diverse diseases. In Luke 4:18, God’s servant is prophetically spoken of as bringing healing to them that are sick. In the ministry of Jesus, we read of how Jesus healed people such as, Bartimaeus, the daughter of Jairus and many others. Also, Jesus set many free from spiritual bondage of evil spirits. In the early Church period, the apostles prayed for them that were sick, calling on the Name of Jesus and who were healed. Therefore, salvation in Jesus includes healing from diseases, curses and spiritual attacks. Today, the Talensi Christian can claim the healing power of Jesus and protection from every evil.

Conclusion

The Christian Gospel was presented to people of historical times within their socio-cultural settings. Their socio-religious environment provided a setting for the Christian Gospel to take roots. Among the Talensi, the Christian faith produced varying responses based on the people's perception of the message, and also on how the message was proclaimed. It is evident that the Gospel among the Talensi received a partial embrace, full embrace and complete rejection. But it is possible that the Talensi culture and religion, far from being opposed to the Christian faith, can be a preparation for the Gospel.

People do not need to stop being members of their tribes in order to be Christians. Rather they can establish a relationship with God through Jesus Christ and appropriate that relationship to all others within the human realm and the entire supernatural arena. As people become Christians, they need to be encouraged to integrate their beliefs and practices into a relevant worship of God. There is therefore, the need for the Talensi to perceive and respond to Jesus in ways that are meaningful to their own understanding and experience. Such an encounter is crucial for the people to name Jesus by themselves and to embrace him in their own socio-cultural and political environment as their *tendana*, *bakologdan* and *nyaadan* or *tiimdan*.

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The Church, a community of God's People for Mutualism and Positive Co-Existence: A Challenge to Christianity in the Twenty First Century.

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ABSTRACT

Christianity continues to be one of if not the fastest growing religions in Africa. Its growth has translated into an increase in the number of churches especially those that fit the description of Newer Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches. The main challenge with this well documented growth of the church is that it is increasingly becoming more and more difficult to understand what it is exactly that rallies the church together as a one united church in Africa. In conversation with a number of leading scholars in Africa and beyond of the Christian faith in Africa, this paper argues that at all times there are two crucial aspects around which the unity of the church should be centred. First it is commitment to spreading the Good News about a saving God through Christ (evangelism) and second, commitment to the others as members of a community that is united in diversity.

Introduction

An African proverb in the Krobo language of the Ghanaian people reads, Ke i he hia a, lee no ko hu he hia, ne ke e sa mi je mi hi mi lee no ko hu esa le. E ne o he jeo e sa wo tsuo kaa wa hi si sa mi nya yoo nge tue mi jo mi mi kaa nyemi me. Wo tsuo wa tsa bo nya ne wa; ejakaa Mawu bo wo tsuo nge e subai no ne wo tsuo wa so nge e he mi. Literally meaning, If I am important, others are also important, so if I should live, then let others also live, and if I must live, then, others must also live. We all should live together because God created us in His own image and we are all equal before Him.

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It is always good to belong and feel accepted among a people. Psalm 133 reads: “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessings, even life forevermore (Ps133:1-3. NIV) .” It is as though the Psalmist had the above African proverbs in mind when he penned this extract. The words of both wisdom sayings from the Psalms and those of the African Proverb contain the spirit of brotherliness and concern for the other person. That other person is equally important as I am and therefore I must treat him or her with love and dignity. The creation story in the book of Genesis reveals the God of the universe as a wonderful architect who was at work making all things, including humanity (male and female) in His image, full of life and strength. Adam, the first human being was called out (of all the created things) by God to make and unmake (Genesis 1: 26-31). God has a reason for calling out humanity - a people, a community or a generation; it is to tell the wonderful acts of God who gave humanity His love and grace to be what he or she is. The apostle Peter emphasised this better by saying: “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light: which in the time past were no people, but are now people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2: 9, 10 NIV).

Because the love of God has been distorted by sin in the world, God always call those who will obey him to rescue the world. According to Kung² and Henn,³ these called out people of God forms a new community. In the light of this, August,⁴ understands the church as the people called to participate in the (church) *ekklesia* that expresses the calling of people out from the broader community to become the community of God, for God’s redemptive purpose in the world. Thus, August⁵ understands the church as the people called to belong, because in the Greek word *ekklesia*, the church is the called out people from among the world who become God’s people

² Hans Kung. *The Church*. (London: Search Press. 1976), 84.

³ WHenn. “*Church the People of God*.” (New York: Burns & Oates. 2004), 24.

⁴ K Th August, *Equipping the Saints: God’s measure for Development*. (Bellville: The Print-Man. 2010), 44.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 44-45

meant for the proclamation of God's redemptive act in the world through Jesus Christ. The church as a community is made manifest when the members express concern about the life of the other person. Le Bruyns⁶ states that the otherness is that amount of care and concern showed to the other person not out of pity but out of sorrow. The Krobos of Ghana have another proverb which reads "I nge ejakaa wa nge ne wa nge ejakaa I nge", literally meaning, I am because we are and we are because I am.

The church as a community can best be described as a forest; though thick from a distance, many individual trees and shrubs grow together to make it what it is. Some of the trees are short others are tall, some big others small, some hard others yet soft, some straight others crooked or curved but they all form a thick forest. Still getting closer to an 'African forest' one will find out that even the creeping plants and shrubs get to the top for sunlight through the tall trees. In the same way also, the shrubs protect the soil from becoming dry with their cover leaves on the ground. In this case the moisture content is maintained for growth and eventually all members benefit because of their mutuality. Living as a community is living symbiotically and not independently on one's selfishness only. Living should not be a struggle for oneself alone only 'to be', but making it possible for the other also 'to be' and this is very important for the Church of God in Africa.

As the Krobo proverb says, tso kake pe we hwe tso literally, one tree cannot make a forest, or no man is an island of his own; or better still a person is a person through other persons. According to Ackermann drawing from the philosophy of Mbiti, he sees humanity as part of a vast inter-related web. This web he says is "boundless and I acquire my humanity through this web and it comes to me as a gift".⁷ In this regard therefore he says; "my humanity is found, shaped and nurtured in and through the humanity of others so I can exercise my humanity only by being in the relationship of others devoid of which there is no growth, happiness or fullness of life for me".⁸ That is to

⁶ C Le Bruyns "Religion and Economy? On Public Responsibility through Prophetic Intelligence Theology and Solidarity." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 142. March (2012): 95.

⁷ D MAckermann. "Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness". *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 118 March (1998): 17-18.

⁸ Ackermann. "Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness", 18.

say, I exist among a people and it is my people that give me my identity so if they are not there I cannot be there too. This means we are all mutual beings and we complement one another in so many ways. Mutuality or co-existence is important in any community life. For Ackermann,⁹ “Mutuality is the reciprocal interdependence of equals”. Here, he describes interdependence and equality as opposite to egocentrism which promotes the concern for the self at the expense of the other. He retorts that in community living, there is no self-promotion at the other’s expense, rather harmonious living and care for the other becomes a common practice in pursuit without fear or favour.¹⁰

Living in isolation or loneliness is a curse in the African cosmology. That is why in Africa, people who are not blessed (at all) with children in life are considered as having an evil spirit, (Krobo; *ogbanje* or *mami* water) or those who for reasons beyond their control who live alone are mostly feared and considered to be witches and wizards. For this reason according to Ackermann,¹¹ African leading theologians such as Mbiti¹² and Tutu¹³ all reiterated that one belong to a people who therefore give him the impetus (credentials) to be, or live. So in the African thought and wisdom, such lonely people are not allowed to hold leadership positions or titles in the community as leaders nor are they considered worthy of emulation by others, let alone to be considered as ancestors after death. The idea of oneness and idleness (selfishness or greed) becomes equivocal and should not be encouraged. Invariably, Ngong reiterated that the Cameroonian

⁹ Ackermann. “Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 19.

¹⁰ Ackermann. “Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 19.

¹¹ Ackermann. “Becoming fully human. An ethic of relationship in difference and otherness”, 18.

¹² Mbiti is the father of African Theology. He thought at the University of Uganda, Harvard Divinity School and Princeton Theological Seminary. He was the Director of Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

¹³ Tutu is described by many as the father of South African Liberation Theology. He together with Nelson Mandela, Allan Boesak, Luthuli and others fought strongly against the Apartheid Regime in South Africa for freedom and equal rights.

theologian Jean-Marc Ela¹⁴ envisaged a new community wherever mission is done theologically and so sees the church as a complete concrete community which could be alternated to the nation-state; where the church has the conscience of the nation-state.¹⁵ According to Ngong, Ela¹⁶ calls these communities faith communities, and sees them as those who are marginalised and dehumanised together and so they [these communities] must also strive together towards the journey of their freedom and liberation.¹⁷

The church according to a Kenyan theologian Kahindi,¹⁸ is defined as a community of believers with Jesus Christ as a role model. Therefore it must continue to be concerned with crucial issues in any human relationships for it to be relevant in society. Evidently, the church due to love for God and the other should share the problems and joys of the members together¹⁹. For this reason, in the book of Acts of the Apostles chapter 5, this new community of God's people shared their belongings together with the aim that no one should lack anything. The Bible mentions that they had all things (in common) together, and so, when Ananias and Sapphira decided to be greedy and became selfish on what they claimed to have belongs to them alone, the Holy Spirit of God destroyed them (Acts 5:1-11).

Boesak's²⁰ strong conviction of a community's wellbeing as expressed in

¹⁴ Ela is a renowned Cameroon Theologian who fought seriously on behalf of the poor, needy and oppressed by living a practically deprived life to demonstrate what true liberation theology should be like. Excommunicated by the then Cameroonian government, Ela lived in exile and wrote numerous books including 'African Cry' and 'My Faith as an African'.

¹⁵ D T Ngong. "The Theologian as a Missionary: The Legacy of Jean-Marc Ela." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* **136** March (2010), 10.

¹⁶ Jean Mark Ela. "Christianity and liberation in Africa." in *Paths of African theology*. ed. Gibellini, R. (Maryknoll New York: Orbis Books 1994).

¹⁷ Ngong. "The Theologian as a Missionary: The Legacy of Jean-Marc Ela," 10-2

¹⁸ L W Kahindi "The Role of African Churches in Democratization." In *Quest for Integrity in South Africa*, ed. G. Wamue and Mathew T (Kenya: African Publishers, 2003), 125-138.

¹⁹ Le Bruyns "Religion and Economy," 80-97.

²⁰ Allan A Boesak, *The Tenderness of Conscience: African Renaissance and the spirituality of Politics*. (Stellenbosch, South Africa: Sun Press 2005), 157-9.

the other person is clear on this. He states as we indicated earlier that, one is only human because of others, with others and for others. The other person is equally important as oneself and one must do everything to protect and (if for nothing at all) keep the dignity of the other, because the other person is equally important as one-self and so should not be ill-treated or dehumanised in any way. This understanding is also expressed in Le Bruyns as the “otherness” which is understood as the amount of love and concerns showed to the other person not out of pity but out of sorrow in which both joy or happiness and sorrow or pain are shared together.²¹ The church according to Boesak as a community of God must be faithful to the Gospel truth that calls for love and respect for [all] life, [all] humanity as an alternative community.²² Kahindi opines that the church which has often been challenged to practise basic Christian commands must love one another and be seriously and actively involved in all aspects of human life.²³ In this regard therefore Asante²⁴ challenges all Christians to have the mind of Christ, where he sees the mind of Christ as related to other-centeredness instead of self-centeredness. The Christian community according to him should be driven by love and this is very much inclusive of the other person or the other fellow human being.²⁵ Christians should endeavour to live with others and show them love because of the example of our Master Jesus.

It therefore means, the church as a community should live together in harmony in anticipation for his coming king and the New Jerusalem as promised by their Master and Lord. But this togetherness which is only expressed in love and care for the other person should move us to stand by him or her in times of need. Many scholars such as, Le Bruyns²⁶ call this solidarity because it makes one to stand with another person and is ready to go whichever mile with the other person until justice is done. Kahindi states “For the church to say and do nothing is tantamount to saying that the church is irrelevant in relation to the most important issue in human relationships”.²⁷ According to Bishop Desmond Tutu “a truly relevant

²¹ Le Bruyns, “Religion and Economy,” 85-90

²² Allan A Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence. A Social-Ethical Study of Black Theology and Black Power.* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1977), 119.

²³ Kahindi “The Role of African Churches in Democratization.” 125.

²⁴ E Asante, *Unity in Difference.* (Accra, Ghana. Methodist Book Depot. 2010), 55.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55-56.

²⁶ Le Bruyns, “Religion and Economy,” 93-7.

²⁷ Kahindi “The Role of African Churches in Democratization,” 127.

theology was the one that addressed the issues of a particular community”.²⁸ Since the church as a community (within the bigger community- the society) also has challenges, their theology must equally address [their] existential challenges otherwise the church is useless as Henn says.²⁹

The Mission Mandate of the Church and the beginning of the community of God

The church as a called out people of God must have an agenda by the one who initiated the call. There must be a reason why someone is called and this should definitely be the agenda of the caller to the called. As indicated above, the church is called out for the purpose of telling the wonderful acts of God and the church must not forget this. But what do we tell or proclaim? In 1 Peter 2:10, the church is called out to tell the world that God is good and perfect. Why? This is because God has made the “nobody” to become “somebody”, the “undeserved” to become “deserved” (receive mercy) and the “poor to be favoured”, the “unloved” to be “loved” and so on. This is the message and we must take it to the people wherever and whenever we find them. Okorocho states, “We can no longer sit and wait for them to come to the church; we must take the church to them in a way that meets their religious needs and aspirations. We must take a whole message to the whole people”.³⁰

Whenever the message of good news is taken to the people then evangelism takes place. The carrier of this good message becomes an ‘evangelist’ and the recipient of the good news becomes the ‘evangelised’. The whole process of doing this altogether is evangelism or evangelisation or mission. Mission therefore, becomes synonymous to evangelism because when the message of the good news is accepted then mission is said to have been accomplished but when the good news is rejected then mission is said not to have been accomplished. Okorocho³¹ views mission and evangelism as the supreme task given to the church by her risen Lord and the tool for this task he said is the Bible (the Good news of Jesus Christ) and the process is evangelism with the carrier of the good news as a missionary or evangelist.

²⁸ Desmond Tutu. “Dark Days: Episcopal Ministry in times of Repression, 1976-1996”. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 118 March (2004), 32.

²⁹ Henn, *The Church*, 20.

³⁰ Okorocho, Cyril C. *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century: A holistic Application* (Owerri, Nigeria: Transfiguration Press & Publishing House 2008), 4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

He provides a working definition for evangelism and mission as follows “evangelism is the making or spreading of the good news of Jesus Christ to people. Mission is taking the message of good news of Jesus Christ to the people where they are”.³² But ‘where they are’ can be at workplace, home, market, schools, meetings or any other place where people live.³³ In his view, it is very difficult to define mission and evangelism separately or bring distinction between the two. Both terms rather, could be used interchangeably such that the mission of the church becomes God’s vehicle of the salvific plan and process, so every action of the church becomes mission. This is because the presence of the church is mission and mission is the activity of God.³⁴

According to Koegelenberg,³⁵ the church has its mandate by vitalizing and placing premium on the holistic meaning of the Gospel of salvation and as a result proclaims that the Gospel message intend not only to change people’s lives, but also their relationships and circumstances. The gospel message should be strong enough to change structures and if possible to change the whole world. But Bloesch³⁶ also in his understanding argues that, the church has as its mandate to be a worshipping community as well as a nurturing community, and this worshipping community is nurtured into maturity by doing mission work. In this view therefore, the church is seen as a teacher as well as a mother and at the same time it is given the charge to be a witnessing herald and channel of God’s grace accordingly.³⁷ In confirmation³⁸ it is affirmed that Bosch was also more critical and argued about the way mission was and is currently done. Like Bosch, there was a suggestion of a paradigm shift from the old method because mission should rather be “a pluriverse of missiology in a universe of mission”. In this

³² Ibid., 4,6.

³³ Ibid., 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵ For a discussion see R Koegelenberg, *The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The role of Church, Civil Society and NGO’s*, a Report of the Third Church Development Conference.(Cape Town: EFSA.)3.

³⁶ D G Bloesch,*The Church. Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission.* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2002), 63.

³⁷ Bloesch, *The Church*, 57.

³⁸ J N J Kritzinger,&Saayman, W. (2011).*David Bosch Prophetic Intehrity, Cruciform Praxis.* (Dorpspruit, South Africa: Cluster Publications 2011), 112.

understanding, since mission is complex, it calls for diverse approaches so as to fulfil the intension of God for the whole of human race. For this reason Kritzinger and Saayman³⁹ suggests that the church also has to work in and with a “pluriverse of missiology”, which is a more plural and universal approach to mission. We have to recognize that we are dealing today with ‘a pluriverse of missiology in a universe of mission’ and Mission is still one, still *Missio Dei*, still the eternal outreach of Creator, Liberator and Sustained to the created cosmos in which we can participate - therefore ‘a universe of mission’. But missiology is so complexly incarnated in such diverse contexts, calling for such diverse approaches, that we can only work in and with ‘a pluriverse of missiology’.⁴⁰ According to them we must do mission which liberates the whole inhabited earth but within a context as Bosch advocates for an ecumenical paradigm, which is a mission as of the church-with-others and a mission as *Missio Dei*. According to Bosch:

It has become impossible to talking about the church without at the same time talking about mission....Because church and mission belongs together from the beginning, a church without a mission or a mission without a church is both contradictions; Such things do exist, but only as pseudo-structures.⁴¹

For him it is not the church which undertakes mission; it is the *missio-Dei* which constitutes the church. Therefore the mission of the church needs to be renewed and re-conceived.⁴² Thus, to do mission is not anything we can do better than God Himself, rather, it is always God who does mission through us, as a mandate because, God Himself is so actively involved in and with this mission activity being done through the following channels. Thus, the church⁴³ is not itself the kingdom of God but a poignant sign and witness in breaking of the kingdom into human history. But Croft⁴⁴ stresses the fact that in the New Testament, when referring to “church” it is never about buildings but about a particular group of people. For this reason

³⁹ Ibid., 112.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 112.

⁴¹ David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shift in Theology of Missions*. (Maryknol, New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 372.

⁴² Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 519.

⁴³ Bloesch, *The Church*, 32.

⁴⁴ S Croft, *Transforming Communities: Re-imagining the Church for the 21st Century*. (Darton, London: Longman and Todd Ltd, 2002), 109.

Croft argues that the church is not simply a human organization or a society invented by the early Christians, but that it was God who called the church into being with a purpose and a mandate.⁴⁵

This purpose of God's calling,⁴⁶ from the very beginning, is clearly not just for the blessing of Abraham's descendants, but in order for the called ones to be a community such that all the people on earth will be blessed through them. God says I will bless your descendants and the generations yet unborn (Genesis 22:17-18). Scholars like Boesak⁴⁷ and Bloesch⁴⁸ argue that part of the mandate of the church is to seek justice for the victims, to seek liberation for the oppressed, to seek reconciliation as her Lord has done and to be involved in works of mercy.

According to James,⁴⁹ the church, if properly functioning should be a carrier of information and values that would help stabilise and build the society in which she find herself. In other words, the church is basically "a life support system not only enabling its members to survive in a cruel and hostile world but also empowering them to prevail over the principalities and powers of this world".⁵⁰ Essentially, Villa-Vicencio⁵¹ sees the church playing a role that transcends seemingly impregnable barriers to enable people to reach towards what some regard as impossible dreams. The church in mission therefore is to fight on behalf of the people to bring them meaningful life which all in their lifetime has eluded them. According to Rieger,⁵² it is often overlooked that God is the one who locates Godself alongside the oppressed and against the oppressor and that God always take a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised as reiterated Boesak⁵³.

⁴⁹ M M James, "The Church as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) in Development". In *Church and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach. Perspectives from Southern Africa and Europe*, ed. Koegelenberg, N. (Bellville: EFSA, 1992), 81.

⁵⁰ Bloesch, *The Church*, 64.

⁵¹ Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction Nation-building and human rights*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992,) 31.

⁵² J Rieger, *No Rising Tide: Theology, Economics and the Future*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 160.

⁵³ Boesak, *If this is treason, I am guilty*, 53.

So, according to Kameeta,⁵⁴ the main mandate and obligation of the church is that of being there for the poor, the needy, the oppressed and the marginalised in society as Jesus taught us in the gospel about the day of judgement:

I was hungry you gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and you took me not in: naked, and you clothed me not: sick and imprison, and you visited me not. Then they shall also answer him, saying Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison and did not minister unto thee.... I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these; you did not do for me (Mathew 25:42, 45).

To be precise, Jesus stood for justice and dignity on behalf of the poor and this should remain the yardstick for any human system, and the Church has no excuse than to act according to God's will and Jesus' example to bring about justice and dignity for God's creation and within the human society. According to Croft,⁵⁵ to participate in this 'God's mission' is an outworking of God's commandment of love to our neighbour as ourselves as well as to be good stewards of the whole of creation. In this God's mission and evangelism is the church called to be loyal and obedient and also a participant, otherwise the church becomes a disobedient church and does not qualify or have any reason to exist as the Archbishop of Canterbury sees it.⁵⁶

The Church and Salvation: A Visible Sign of God's saving Act

The church according to Bloesch, exists for others as the visible sign of God's saving work and so it is the visible sign of the presence of the Lord in a redemptive community.⁵⁷ Therefore, for some scholars the

⁵⁴ Z Kameeta, Church-State-Relations as an Ecumenical Issue. A contribution from Africa. (This was a paper presented to the 41st International Ecumenical Seminar at The Institute for Ecumenical Research at Strasbourg from July 4th-11th 2007. p3).

⁵⁵ S Croft, *Transforming Communities: Re-imagining the Church for the 21st Century*. (Darton, London: Longman and Todd Ltd. 2002), 138.

⁵⁶ Okorochoa, *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century*, 6.

⁵⁷ Bloesch, *The Church*, 58.

church has no option than to aspire for liberation in any struggle for a more humane and just society as well as to testify in this world in order to make the saving work of God visible.⁵⁸ The best way for the church to demonstrate its salvific role and so as sign of God's presence, according to Webber,⁵⁹ is to cast its lot with the oppressed and the exploited in their struggle for a just society, even if it means being critical of itself and of its own economic security.

In the view of Bloesch⁶⁰ the church plays an important role in directing sinners to Christ. But, Heyns argues that the church has a mission to spread the Gospel as spreading the Gospel does not mean merely to save people's souls, but also, to make it possible for the mercy of the God of creation to re-creatively permeate the whole of creation and leaven it or cause it spread to every part of human society.⁶¹ Bloesch in this respect argues that the church is the mouthpiece of Christ and by so doing communicates the salvific effects to its own people and to the world.⁶² The church should be seen as the carrier of the good news of Jesus Christ so whenever and wherever the church comes, the good news should follow. In that regard therefore,⁶³ the church becomes "the custodian as well as the instrument of God's salvific work in the world". Veling therefore argues in favour of practical theology and so sees theory and practice as partners that belong together, and this gives meaning to Heyns' view as indicated above where the leaven affects all the others within the society,⁶⁴ and this should be the evidence of mutuality as oneness. For Okorochoa, those who claim to believe must learn to behave Christianity to show goodness as it will be the proof of goodness in the good news. The cry of those who suffer, need to be heard and if they are not heard by others, [Christians] then we are not able to grasp the work of God in the world as observed by the Catholic theologian Jung Mo Sung in Rieger's argument.⁶⁵ those who claim to believe must learn to behave

⁵⁸ R E Webber, *The Church in the World. Opposition, Tension, or Transformation?*(Grand Rapids: Zonervan Publishing House, 1986), 201.

⁵⁹ Ibid.,201.

⁶⁰ Bloesch, *The Church*, 58.

⁶¹ J A Heyns, *The Church*. (Goodwood: National Book Printers, 1980), 103.

⁶² Bloesch, *The Church*, 59.

⁶³ Okorochoa, *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century*, 6-7.

⁶⁴ T A Veling, (2005). *Practical Theology. On Earth as it is in Heaven*. (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 142.

⁶⁵ Okorochoa, *The Mission of the Church in the 21st Century*, 8.

behave Christianity to show goodness as it will be the proof of goodness in the good news. The cry of those who suffer, need to be heard and if they are not heard by others,[Christians] then we are not able to grasp the work of God in the world as observed by the Catholic theologian Jung Mo Sung in Rieger's argument.⁶⁶

For this reason, Webber⁶⁷ clearly understands the role of the church to be in terms of Gods visible saving act, which is a force that can resolve the conflict of the oppressed and the oppressor as the church naturally participates in the class struggle (in South Africa), seeking in the name of Jesus to release the poor and the oppressed, since this will bring hope to harmonize the human situation and move towards brotherhood and sisterhood and not Lord- hood and servant hood, nor master and slave relationship. People must be brought under the liberating rule of God, and liberate everything around them as liberated people knowing that the church is inclusive in this mission activity. In this regard therefore, then mission is the church's task according to Heyns.⁶⁸ Invariably, Tamez reiterates that the narratives of the Old Testament attributes every act of liberation to Yahweh and then the intervention of Yahweh is strongly described as so overpowering that it eliminates human evil and then makes the victory completely miraculous.⁶⁹ It could be therefore deduced from the views of scholars that in any given circumstance, the economic development or transformation of people should also be seen as part of God's saving act and this is facilitated by the church alone as it does mission with God. The church should remind us that the total development of a person is inclusive in salvation and any attempt to remove it from the mission mandate renders mission purposeless. Emphasis should rather be placed on the wholeness of the person rather than the 'part person'; the undignified, oppressed, poor, vulnerable and marginalised as it is today. The church must therefore stand for the unification of its members for this new community of the Lord. The church should eschew division of any kind and its members come together to live in harmony with one another as brethren sharing and complementing each other and living in peace by practising mutual co-existence. By so doing the idea of mutualisation becomes real and authentic.

⁶⁶ Rieger, *No Rising Tide*, 160.

⁶⁷ Webber, *The Church in the World*, 160.

⁶⁸ Heyns, *The Church*, 104.

⁶⁹ E Tamez, *Bible of the Oppressed*.(New York: Orbis Books, 1983), 61.

Conclusion

Division in the church among members is the main cause of splits from parent churches in Africa, resulting in the planting of many newer churches which have come to stay. There is the need for unity and oneness among the members of church as a people of God to bring to light the benefits of living together. The church should place emphasis on the promotion of mutuality for co-existence among Christians through love dignity and respect for the other. Mutualism is that quality that could be found in the expression of the other person which forms part of the [whole] body of Christ without which the [whole] body is never complete as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:4-30, Ephesians 4:2-8,11-13. Mission as a mandate to the people of God can only be achieved through mutualism irrespective of differences such as strengths and weaknesses, traditions, ethnicity etcetera of the other person.

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Spiritual Gifts, Spiritual Persons, Spiritually-Gifted Persons or Spiritual Things or Spiritual Matters? A Comparative Study of the Translation of τῶν Πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1a in Some Ghanaian Translations of the New Testament

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ABSTRACT

The exact meaning of τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1a has given cause to much unabated debate among scholars. Many translations and commentaries view it as “spiritual gifts”, “spiritual people”, “spiritual gifted people” and “spirituality.” This paper argues that τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1a may be translated creatively as “spiritual matters or spiritual things.” This translation is based on the grammar, syntax and content of 1 Corinthians 12:1 where τῶν πνευματικῶν is rendering it as spiritual matters or spiritual things; and is supported by the Akuapem-Twi Full Bible (BFBS 1871 and fully revised by UBS 1964), and the Asante-Twi Full Bible (UBS 1964) rendition of , τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘that pertaining to the spirit/spiritual matters’, with ‘gifts’ in square brackets within the text.

Introduction

Scholars have unanimously agreed that τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 is either the neuter or masculine gender of the adjective spiritual and so could be translated “spiritual things”, “spiritual people”, or “spiritual gifted people.” In 14:1 it is definitely neuter, but “things” may include both “people” and “spiritual gifts.” The term probably reflects the

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prideful way the Corinthians leaders referred to themselves (10:1).² This is so because in Greek grammar, the three genders have the ending w/n in the genitive plural. This is always constant. Perhaps that may account for the reason why there are variations in the translation of τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1a. In this paper, consideration is given to some scholars' views on τῶν πνευματικῶν an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:1-3; and since the author is an Asante, the translation of the phrase in the Asante-Twi Bible also compared with that of the Akuapem-Twi and other Ghanaian mother tongue translations of the text; and a suggestion made as to how τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 should be rendered in Asante tongue Bible. The paper also discusses the theological implication of translating τῶν πνευματικῶν as spiritual matters or spiritual things, and makes gives some concluding remarks.

1. Some scholars views on τῶν πνευματικῶν

Some scholars say τῶν πνευματικῶν means 'spiritual gifts'.³ Those who have discussed τῶν πνευματικῶν as 'spiritual gifts' have as their basis, Paul's use of the neutral plural τα πνευματικᾶ in chapter 14:1, where it refers primarily to prophecy and tongues and to the general argument that deals basically with the manifestation of gifts in the church and not with individual spirituality. Those proponents have joined τῶν πνευματικῶν to its parallels carismavtwn 'gifts of grace' in 1 Corinthians 12:4, and τα πνευματικᾶ in chapter 14:1. Thus, their view is based on clues from the entire context of 1 Corinthians 12-14.

Many scholars argue, then, that the corresponding genitive plural τῶν πνευματικῶν should be taken in a neuter rather than masculine sense as a reference to "spiritual gifts". They draw attention to 1 Corinthians 14:1 where the accusative neuter τα πνευματικᾶ is employed with reference to those spiritual things (in addition to love) which Paul's addressees are being exhorted to desire earnestly (ζηλουτε). The ability to prophesy should thereby be of high priority: δε ινα προφητητηε "especially that you may prophesy". It is further argued in relation to the immediate context of

² Graig Blomberg, *The NIV Application Commentary of 1 Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 243.

³ H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary Hermenia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 910.

1 Corinthians 12 that *πνευματικῶν* (1Cor 12:1) and *χαρισμῶν* (1Co 12:4) are being used interchangeably to refer to one and the same phenomena, namely: “spiritual gifts”.⁴ Metz has accordingly commented that even if *χάρισμα* which is the common New Testament term for “gifts” does not feature in 1 Corinthians 12:1, *πνευματικῶν* can be correctly interpreted to mean “spiritual gifts” since the entire context of 1 Corinthians deals with subject.⁵

Metz along with many other scholars unfortunately overlooked the dynamic rhetoric of 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 which is actually focused on persons rather than “gifts” parse.⁶ According to Ekem, in considering the logical flow of Paul’s argumentation, it is more convincing to picture 1Cor 12:1-3 as rhetorical block focusing on an elitist group of self-styled *πνευματικοί* whose claims and behavior Paul alludes to, in order to establish a case in 1 Corinthians 12:4ff.

Others including John David Kwamena Ekem is of the view that *τῶν πνευματικῶν* should be rendered as ‘spiritual persons.’⁷ His position is based on the problem in the Corinthian church where the conflict with Paul is not simply over spiritual gifts as such but over the significance of the gift of tongues for ‘spiritual life’. He supports his claim with an exegesis of the concept in First Corinthians. In chapter 2, Paul contrasts the *φυσικοῦ ἀνθρώπου* ‘natural/unspiritual person’ (2:14) with the *πνευματικὸς* ‘spiritual person’ (2:15). He says, whereas the *φυσικὸς ἀνθρώπος* neither receives or understands the endowments of the Spirit of God because they are *πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνονται* ‘spiritually discerned’ (2:14), the *πνευματικὸς* ‘spiritual person’ (2:15) is able to discern all things. In chapter 3:1 he laments that he could not address members of the Corinthian church as *πνευματικὸς* ‘spiritual’ ‘because of their immaturity. In chapter 14 he discusses the subject of orderliness/propriety in Christian worship, and

⁴ R. F. Collins, *Showing the Spirit. A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 447.

⁵ D. S. Metz, 1968. *1 Corinthians: Beacon Bible Commentary*. Missouri: Beacon Hill Press, 1968), 423.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ John David Kwamena Ekem, “Spiritual Gifts or Spiritual persons? 1 Corinthians 12:1a,” Revisited. *Neotestamentica: Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa*. Vol 38 (2004): 54-74.

challenges his readers that the *πνευματικός* ‘spiritual person’ will acknowledge that what he is writing is a command of the Lord.

It is important to state the contribution of Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor in this discussion. If *τῶν πνευματικῶν* can be translated as ‘spiritual gifts’ (neuter), ‘spiritual men’(masculine), ‘spiritual women’ (feminine), ‘spiritual persons’ (inclusive language), and give reasons to justify the translations, then it is possible to do a creative translation of 1 Corinthians 12:1, interpreting *τῶν πνευματικῶν* as both ‘spiritual gifts’ and ‘spiritual persons’. This double but creative translation reads: ‘Now concerning spiritually-gifted persons, brethren...’ According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor, this translation is possible because, spiritual gifts are meaningless unless they manifest in the lives of persons. On the other hand, a person cannot be addressed as spiritual unless he or she possesses and manifests spiritual gifts. The translation is supported by the content of 1Corinthians 12:1-3 where Paul is alluding to the claims of an elitist group of self-styled *οἱ πνευματικοί* ‘spiritual persons’ in order to establish a case for 1 Corinthians 12:4ff which is on *χάρισματα* ‘gifts of grace’.⁸

Other scholars’ including Olagunju believes that *πνευματικός* in this chapter is used with more restricted reference to spiritual gifts and it is synonymous to *χάρισματα*. *Πνευματικός* is a favourite term for many of the Corinthian believers but Paul brought in *χάρισματα* in this context to educate the *πνευματικός* on the need to understand the operations of the Spirit. However, some scholars think that Paul brought in *χάρισματα* as an apostolic corrective to replace an already misused word (*πνευματικοί*).⁹ Paul wants the *πνευματικοί* to realize that the manifestations of God’s presence on an individual members of the community of faith is unmerited gifts of God’s grace; it is God who works in the individuals, the treasure is God’s not his, therefore, believers should not remain unaware of this operation or remain ignorant about these manifestations.

⁸ Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Spiritual Gifts, Spiritual persons, or Spiritually-Gifted Persons”? A Creative Translation of *τῶν πνευματικῶν* in 1Corinthians 12:1a, *Neotestamentica Journal of the New Testament Society of South Africa*.: 46. 2 (2012):260-273.

⁹ Olugbenga Olagunju, “Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.” *America Journal of Biblical Theology*. Vol 12 no 43 (2011):6.

Most interpreters believe that the term τῶν πνευματικῶν denotes spiritual gifts (from Tertullian, Novatian, and Cyril of Jerusalem to Conzelmann, Senft, and Lang).¹⁰ Scrage notes that the masculine may embrace the Corinthians' meaning, while the neuter reflects Paul's preference to substitute χαρισμάτων¹¹ What favours the translation of the verse is the usage in 1 Corinthians 14:1 where Paul used the word with an imperatival force be zealous for “τα πνευματικὰ”¹² On the contrary, the usage in 1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1 and 14:37 favours the masculine noun where Paul referred to persons as spiritual people. Ben Witherington III observes that this rendering in 1 Corinthians 14:37 “If anyone thinks he or she is πνευματικός” that is spiritual may reflect the problems in Corinthian church since the conflict is not over spiritual manifestations parse but over the significance of tongue speaking for spiritual life.¹³ But from the context of 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, the issue of tongue does not arise; the spiritual people (πνευματικοί) need to be educated about the operations of the Spirit that is manifested during worship.¹⁴

Ervin is of the view that since τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 agrees in grammar, syntax and content with χαρισμάτων ‘gifts’ (12:4), διακονιῶν ‘ministries/services’ (12:5) and ἐνεργημάτων (‘workings’ (12:6), and since ‘gifts’ and ‘services’ are all ‘manifestations’ of the Spirit, “manifestation represent a viable solution to the problem of 1 Corinthians 12:1. What Ervin means here is that τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 should be translated ‘spiritual manifestations’. His view is not only based on Greek grammar and syntax, but also on a contextual hermeneutics of the pericope.¹⁵

¹⁰ H. Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary Hermenia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 910.

¹¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 910.

¹² R. S. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Saint Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1937), 490.

¹³ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: The Paternoster Press, 1975), 257

¹⁴ Olagunju, “Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:1-11,”(2011): 12.

¹⁵ H. M. Ervin, *Spirit Baptism: A Biblical Investigation*. (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 96.

Paul's use of τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 should then be regarded as a rhetorical tool aimed precisely at those who presumed to have been so spiritual (being given over to excessive ecstasy) that they deviated from the true framework in which spiritual gifts should be exercised in the Church.¹⁶ Paul uses the word πνευματικός and χάρισμα interchangeably and at times used it synonymously. When the translation follows the root word "pneuma" it stresses the spiritual nature or sources of a particular ability hence, the translation "now concerning the spiritual things" which refers primarily to the manifestation of the Spirit. But when it follows the root χάρις the emphasis shifted to the gift of grace and the translation now concerns the spiritual gifts."¹⁷

Fee has also come out with another interesting proposal that instead of debating the gender of τινυματικῶν, attention should rather be devoted to Paul's immediate and overall concern, namely the determination of the Holy Spirit's activity. Fee suggests accordingly that, Paul "uses charismata for the specific manifestations of the Spirit's activity... When the emphasis is on the manifestation, the "gift" as such, Paul speaks of *charismata*; when the emphasis is on the Spirit, he speaks of πνευματικά."¹⁸

According to Collins, if the genitive plural τινυματικῶν in 12:1 is to be understood as a reference to "the things of the Spirit" and linked to its accusative plural counterpart in 1 Corinthians 14:1, it would also be quite plausible to argue for an inclusive reference to persons in whom these spiritual manifestations are actively at work. This would be more in keeping with the rhetorics of 1 Cor 12:1-3 which appears to be a "double-edged sword" aimed at human channels of spiritual phenomena.¹⁹

Orr and Walther have interestingly conceded, in their Anchor Bible translation notes on 1 Cor 12 that is possible to interpret τῶν πνευματικῶν

¹⁶ Ekem, "Spiritual Gifts or Spiritual persons? 1 Corinthians 12:1a," Revisited. *Neotestamenica*: 65.

¹⁷ Eduard Schweitzer, "The Spirit of Power: The Uniformity and Diversity of the Concept of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament," *Interpretation* 64 (July 1952): 259-278.

¹⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 576.

¹⁹ Collins, *Showing the Spirit. A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*, 447.

(12:1) as a reference to “persons” rather than “gifts”, since the “discussion that follows is concerned with persons as much as the gifts they received”²⁰ Although the rendering, “Now with reference to the spiritual gifts”, appears in their main text, this concession is undoubtedly a pointer to the ambiguity characterizing τῶν πνευματικῶν, which can be taken as an ambiguous phrase with a grammatically indeterminate gender.²¹ If 1Cor 12:4 and 14:1 would seem to zero in on spiritual gifts, it could also be argued that 12:1-3, 7-30 as well as the entire chapters 13 and 14 affirm the comportment/ character expected of groups and individuals in whom such gifts are manifested.

3. An exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:1-3

1. Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.

2. You know that when *you were* pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.

3. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

As we have seen, Paul hardly flatters the Corinthians when he indicates in verse 1 that he is writing to remedy their ignorance on the matter of spirituality. The word *gifts* has been supplied by the translators, as indicated by the fact that “*gifts*” is in italics. Literally, Paul is writing, “**Now concerning spirituals, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.**” In other words, οἱ πνευματικοί “spirituals” should not be ignorant about spiritual matters or spiritual things. The word rendered “spiritual gifts” here is not the same word which is rendered “gifts” in verse 4.

The word “**spirituals**” in verse 1 is a rendering of a word whose root (*pneuma*) refers to the spiritual realm. The problem is that the particular term found in verse 1 represents both the neuter and the masculine genders. If the term is understood as masculine in gender, Paul is referring to “spiritual people.” If the term is really neuter, Paul is referring to “spiritual”

²⁰ F. William Orr and James Arthur Walther, *The Anchor Bible 1 Corinthians: A New Translation Introduction with a Study of the Life of Paul, Notes, and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1979), 276.

²¹ *ibid*

things” or “spiritual *gifts*.” In 1 Corinthians 2:15; 3:1, and 14:37, Paul uses the term in the masculine gender, and thus we understand “spiritual” to describe people. In 1 Corinthians 14:1, the term is used as a neuter and thus is rendered “spiritual *gifts*.”

It would seem we are being forced to decide between one or the other, the masculine gender or the neuter gender. I am not alone in contending that the two senses may be combined and that we are not being forced to choose one and reject the other.²² In First Corinthians pneumatikoi is used fifteen times in adjectival or substantival form²³ and in 1 Corinthians 12:1 it is used as parallel usage introducing the issue of the spiritual ones within the Corinthian church who were gifted. Paul’s use of τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 should then be regarded as a rhetorical tool aimed precisely at those who presumed to have been so spiritual being given over to excessive ecstasy that they deviated from the true spiritual matters.

Πνευματικός is a favourite term for many of the Corinthian believers but Paul brought in χάρισματα in this context to educate the Πνευματικός on the need to understand the operations of the Spirit, however, some scholars think that Paul brought in χάρισματα as an apostolic corrective to replace an already misused word (πνευματικοί). Paul’s desire is to educate the pneumatic in Corinthian church on how to properly handle the things of the spirit, knowing their background and need for him to properly educate them on spiritual matters.²⁴

Paul is introducing the subject of spiritual gifts. The term “spirituals” emphasizes the source of the spiritual gifts given to Christians. The root word *charisma*, employed in verses 4 and following, emphasizes the fact that gifts are manifestations of divine grace, sovereignly bestowed and not obtained on the basis of merit. The Corinthians supposed that certain spiritual gifts are the evidence of superior spirituality, while the absence of these gifts is a proof of spiritual inferiority.

²² Deffinbaugh, Bob. “Spirituality and Spiritual Gifts - Part 1 (1 Cor. 12:1-3)” Accessed 19/12/12.

²³ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peacebody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 153.

²⁴ Olagunju “Exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:1-11,” (2011): 12.

In verse 2, Paul reminds those relatively new believers in Corinth who think they are so spiritual that in the past, they had been led astray to dumb idols. In saying that the Corinthians had been “led astray to dumb idols,” Paul implies that the Corinthians had experienced the effects of evil spirits in their former pagan worship.²⁵

Verse 3 is necessary in the light of verses 1 and 2. Since the Corinthians are naive, ignorant of all that they should know concerning spiritual matters, Paul must “make known” to them a test by which the Holy Spirit is distinguished from all other “spirits.” This led to the next verse where Christological test for manifestation of the spirit is the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The burning desire of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus is Paul’s overall criterion of genuineness in this matter of spirituality.²⁶ It is important to notice that Paul’s emphasis here is upon “speech.” He has already referred to the idols of the Corinthians’ past as “*dumb idols*” (verse 2). Now he speaks about speech, the speech of worshipers. Ordinary speech is not primarily in view here, but inspired utterance, speech made under the controlling influence of a spirit. This is specifically indicated in the case of one who speaks “by (or in—note the marginal note in verse 3 of the NASB) the Spirit of God.” In other words, it is the Spirit of God, speaking through a person, who is incapable of saying, “Jesus is accursed.” On the other hand, Bob believes Paul says that, a person speaking under demonic control is incapable of saying, “Jesus is Lord.” Nowhere in the gospels does a demon-possessed person say this. The demons reluctantly acknowledge that Jesus is the “Son of God,” or the “Holy One of God,” but not that He is Lord. Even when commanded to come out of a possessed person, the demons seem to resist and rebel to the last moment (see Mark 1:23-26).

Ekem on the other hand says “Paul avoids, to a very large extent, the terminology of the pneumatics and rather employs the concept of “gifts of grace” of the Spirit. This is in order to draw the Corinthians away from their extremist views on spiritual manifestations, and to clearly show the divine-gift character of the Spirit’s operations in the Church, which are so

²⁵ Frank E. Gabelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version: Romans through Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 261.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 194.

diverse that they cannot be confined merely to glossolalia and prophecy. It is for this very reason that the confession of Jesus as Lord is clearly spelt out as essential vehicle through which the Spirit operates.²⁷

3. The translation of 1 Corinthians 12:1 in some Ghanaian mother-tongue Bibles²⁸

In this section, we shall look at some translations of 1 Corinthians 12:1 – the focus of the tw'n pneumatikw'n debate – in the Ghanaian context, through various translations. I am an Ashanti so I will start from the translations in my mother-tongue, before looking at the other Ghanaian mother-tongues I can understand.

*TwerεKronkron (Asante-Twi Full Bible)*²⁹

Na deε εfa honhom fam[akyedeε] ho deε, anuanum, mempeε se mede

²⁷ (Ekem, 2004, 62).

²⁸ The term, mother-tongue Bibles means the translation of the Bible into such languages into which people are born and nurtured. Mother-tongue Bibles give Ghanaians/Africans the opportunity to interpret Scripture from their own worldview. The Bible translation agencies in Ghana are the Bible Society of Ghana (BSG), The International Bible Society (IBS), and The Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT). The Bible Society of Ghana (BSG) has translated and published the full Bible in eight (8) Ghanaian mother-tongues – Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi, Gā, Mfante, Ewe, Dangme, Dagbanli, and Nzema. The New Testament has been translated into Esahie and Dagaare. The Old Testament translation projects in these languages are ongoing. Revision projects on some of the older versions are underway. The Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) has translated and published the Bible in five (5) Northern Ghanaian mother-tongues – Konkomba, Tampulma, Bimboba, Farefare and Chumburung – and the New Testament in twenty-five (25) languages. The International Bible Society (IBS) has also translated and published the full Bible in one (1) Ghanaian language -Ewe, and the New Testament in three languages –Akuapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, and Dangme. (J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “The Practice of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics in Some Ghanaian Communities: A Case Study of the Phrase bny ysr’l (Deut. 32:8)” *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutic, Volume 1 No. 1* (2015), 136.).

²⁹ Twerε Kronkron, Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies, 1964.

biribiara mesie mo. [And regarding that which pertains to the spiritual [gifts]”brothers, I do not want to hide anything from you].
TwerɛKronkron [Asante-Twi NT&Psalms]³⁰

Me nuanom, merebekyerɛ mo nsem a ɛfa Honhom Kronkron akyɛdɛɛ no mu.
Anuanom, mepɛ sɛ mohunu mu nokorɛ [My brothers and sisters, I am going to teach you matters concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, I want you to know the truth in regard to this very issue].³¹

Kyerɛw Kronkron [Akuapem-Twi Full Bible]³²

Na nea ɛfa honhon fam[akyɛdɛɛ] ho de, anuanum, mempeɛ me kora mo so.
[And regarding that which pertains to the spiritual [gifts], brethren, I do not want to hide the facts from you].
Nkwa Asem [Akuapem-Twi New Testament and Psalms]

Me nuanom, merebɛ kyɛrɛmo nsem a ɛfa Honhom Kronkron akyɛdɛɛ no mu.
anuanum, mepɛsɛ mohunu mu nokorɛ..[My brothers and sisters, I am going to teach you matters concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Brothers and sisters, I want you to know the truth in regard to this very issue].³³

Nwoma Kronkron [Fante Full Bible]³⁴

Na sunsum mu akyɛdze ho dze, enuanon, mempeɛde homyɛ ho atam. [And in regard to gifts that are spiritual, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant].

Ahyâmu Fofor No Mu Nwoma [Fanti New Testament Interconfessional Rev. Ed.]³⁵

Na, enuanom, mennkâpâ dâ sunsum mu akyâdze ho asâm yâ biribi a hom nnyim. [So, brothers and sisters, things concerning spiritual gifts are things you know].

³⁰ *Twerɛ Kronkron*, 1964.

³¹ *Apam Fofro Ne Nwom* (Asante-Twi New Testament and Psalms), Accra: International Bible Society, 1998.

³² *Kyerɛw Kronkron*, 1964.

³³ *Kyerɛw Kronkron*, 2012.

³⁴ *Nwoma Kronkron*, Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies.

³⁵ *Ahyâmu Fofor No Mu Nwoma*, Bungay, Suffolk: United Bible Societies, 1982.

4. How is τῶν πνευματικῶν rendered in the Ghanaian mother-tongue translations?

A closer look at the Ghanaian mother tongue translations of the text quoted above reveal four different ways in which τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 has been translated. The Ewe Full Bible (UBS 1931), the Ewe New Testament (BSG 1990), the Fante Bible (UBS *Nwoma Kronkron*, Accra: Bible Society of Ghana/United Bible Societies. *Ahyâmu Fofor No Mu Nwoma*, Bungay, Suffolk: United Bible Societies, 1982.1948), and the Fante New Testament (UBS 1982, Interconfessional Revised Edition) render τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘spiritual gifts’, following some of the English translations such as the *King James Version*, *Revised Standard Version*, *New Revised Standard Version*, and *NewInternational Version*. The Asante-Twi New Testament and Psalms (IBS 1988), the Akuapem-Twi New Testament and Psalms (IBS 1997), the Dangme Full Bible (BSG/UBS 1999), translate τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’. This rendering is in line with some English paraphrases such as the *Good News Bible* and *Living Bible*. The Gã Full Bible (BFBS 1907), the Gã New Testament with orthographic changes (BSG/UBS1977), the Dangme New Testament (BSG/UBS 1977), and the Gã Full Bible (BSG, 2006 Revised Edition) translate τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘spiritual things/phenomena’, in line with the Greek text (Kuwarnu-Adjaottor 2012), taking τῶν πνευματικῶν as neuter noun, thus, ‘broadening the scope of interpretation’ (Ekem 2004,71). The Akuapem-Twi Full Bible (BFBS 1871 and fully revised by UBS 1964), and the Asante-Twi Full Bible (UBS 1964), τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘that pertaining to the spirit/spiritual matters’, with ‘gifts’ in square brackets within the text. With this rendition, one can say that the first translators/revisers recognised the difficulty posed by the Greek text. Also, it can be deduced that the ‘gifts’ [*akyede/akyedeɛ*] have been put in square brackets to show that the issue was not completely resolved at the time of revision.

5. A creative translation of 1 Corinthians 12:1

If τῶν πνευματικῶν can be translated as ‘spiritual gifts’ (neuter), ‘spiritual men’ (masculine), ‘spiritual women’ (feminine), ‘spiritual persons’ (inclusive language), and give reasons to justify the translations, then it is possible to do a creative translation of 1 Corinthians 12:1, interpreting τῶν

πνευματικῶν as spiritual matters or spiritual things. This double but creative translation reads: ‘And regarding that which pertains to the spiritual matters, brothers...’. This translation is based on the grammar, syntax and content of 1 Corinthians 12:1 where τῶν πνευματικῶν is rendering as spiritual matters or spiritual things.

Again, this translation is supported by The Akuapem-Twi Full Bible (BFBS 1871 and fully revised by UBS 1964), and the Asante-Twi Full Bible (UBS 1964), render τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘that pertaining to the spirit/spiritual matters’, with ‘gifts’ in square brackets within the text.

6. How should τῶν πνευματικῶν be rendered in the Asante mother-tongue translations of 1 Corinthians 12:1a?

In the light of the discussion above, I translate 1 Corinthians 12:1 into Asante -Twi, my mother tongue as follows: *Na dee efa honhom fam nnoama ho dee, anuanum, mempeɛ se monnya ho nimdee.* {And regarding that which pertains to the spiritual matters, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant}.

7. Theological implication of translating τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘spiritual matters or spiritual things’ for Asante Christians

Translating τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1 Corinthians 12:1 as *honhom fam nnoama* “spiritual matters or spiritual things” will shape perspective of Asante Christians who have been indoctrinated to believe that τῶν πνευματικῶν is restricted to only “spiritual gifts’ (neuter), “spiritual people’ (masculine), “spiritually gifted person’ (inclusive language). Since a person’s life is shaped by whatever information he receives, majority of the Ashanti Christians have given much attention only to the charismata. Meanwhile τῶν πνευματικῶν as spiritual matters or spiritual things seems to denote the whole range of activities, attitudes, experiences, etc, which ultimately depend on and derive from the Spirit and which draw their significance from the Spirit – in contrast to the merely material, or to those activities, attitudes, etc, which derive from the flesh and draw their significance from the merely physical world (Dunn 1986, 707). This usage is attested to once in Romans; six times in 1 Corinthians; once in Ephesians; and once in Galatians.

This translation will broaden the horizon of Ashanti Christians to pay attention to matters of great concern to God in their endeavours.

Conclusion

This paper has have argued that τῶν πνευματικῶν in 1Corinthians 12:1a may be translated as spiritual things or spiritual matters. The reasons for such creative translation are firstly, the phrase “τῶν πνευματικῶν” in verse 1 is either the neuter or masculine gender of the adjective spiritual and so could be translated “spiritual things”, “spiritual people”, or “spiritual gifted people.” In 14:1 it is definitely neuter, but “things” may include both “people” and “spiritual gifts.” This translation is based on the grammar, syntax and content of 1 Corinthians 12:1 where τῶν πνευματικῶν is rendering as spiritual matters or spiritual things. Secondly, Paul hardly flatters the Corinthians when he indicates in verse 1 that he is writing to remedy their ignorance on the matter of spirituality. The word *gifts* has been supplied by the translators, as indicated by the fact that “*gifts*” is in italics. Literally, Paul is writing, “Now concerning spirituals, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.” The word rendered “spiritual *gifts*” here is not the same word which is rendered “**gifts**” in verse 4. Paul’s desire in the context is to educate the Corinthian church on how to properly handle the things of the spirit, knowing their background and need for him to properly educate them on spiritual matters. This translation is vehemently supported by The Akuapem-Twi Full Bible (BFBS 1871 and fully revised by UBS 1964), and the Asante-Twi Full Bible (UBS 1964), render τῶν πνευματικῶν as ‘that pertaining to the spirit/spiritual matters’, with ‘gifts’ in square brackets within the text.

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Homosexual Partnerships and the Socio-economic Implications on the Kingdom of God

DAVID KWADWO OKAI¹ AND SOLOMON ARHIN²

ABSTRACT

This article delineates homosexual-partnerships and the socio-economic implications on the Kingdom of God. The alarming lust in activists and advocates of homosexual partnerships has myriads of destructive effects on themselves as well as the entire human race. Through homosexual partnerships, people contract sexually transmitted diseases like deadly HIV/AIDS and other terminal conditions that are the root causes of premature death, deficiency in procreation, bouts of hyper depression, and drug addiction among other hazardous socio-economic issues. The Creator of humanity, and initiator of marriage sticks to His divine counsel and pattern of marital partnerships as consisting of relationships between a man and a woman (Gen. 1:26-27, 2:24, Matt. 19:5). Regrettably, divine procreation through heterosexual monogamous partnership (husband - man) and (wife - woman) is philosophized by practitioners and advocates of homosexual partnerships as inhumane infringement on their human rights. Obsessed with excruciating lust and vainglory, homosexual activists and their campaigners are a menace to the society and aggressive assailants of the Kingdom of God.

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Introduction

The alarming rate of socio-economic devastation meted on the Kingdom of God by homosexual partnerships is unprecedented. Globalization of this depraved phenomenon calls on the Church, politicians, the academy, other corporate bodies as well as individuals to stand against the spread of homosexuality in the quest to restore sanity and sanctity to heterosexuality as ordained by God.

Homosexual partnerships are sexual relationships between same sex—thus, either male and his male counterpart, a female and her female counterpart and other immoral sexual orientations. Homosexuality is the initiator of the term LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender).

L- Lesbianism is the sexual partnership between two females...lesbianism which is less common than male homosexuality reaches orgasm through masturbation, oral sex, and mutual rubbing of clitoris. Practitioners are known as lesbians.³ *G- Gay* is homosexual relationship between two males. Gay couples “achieve orgasm in various ways, including oral sex, mutual masturbation and penetration. Each partner may adopt particular roles in the partnership (either active or passive) but more often the roles are interchangeable”⁴ *B-Bisexualism* refers to people who experience sexual attraction to members of either sex⁵ *T-Transsexualism* is a rare disorder in which a person feels persistently uncomfortable about his or her anatomical sex, and wishes to live as a member of the opposite sex....Features associated with transsexualism include personality disorder, alcohol dependence, anxiety, depression, and work problems. In many transsexuals, sexual drive is quite low”⁶ “The fact that some homosexuals have multiple partners and high rates of sexual activity has placed them at high risk of sexual transmitted diseases; it was in homosexual men that the virus responsible for AIDS was first identified”⁷ AIDS is “a deficiency of the immune system due to infection with HIV (human immunodeficiency

³ Peter Morgan, *The Canadian Medical Association: Home Medical Encyclopedia*. (Westmouth: The Reader’s Digest Association (Canada) Ltd., 1992). 635.

⁴ Morgan, “The Canadian,” 544.

⁵ Morgan, “The Canadian,” 902.

⁶ Morgan, “The Canadian,” 1009.

⁷ Morgan, “The Canadian,” 544.

virus”⁸ Methods of transmission – HIV has been isolated from blood, semen, saliva, tears, nervous system, tissue, breast milk, and female genital tract secretions. However, only semen and blood have been proven to transmit infections. Transmission is by sexual contact (penis to anus, vagina, or mouth), blood to blood (through transfusions or needle sharing in drug users), and from woman to fetus”⁹

In view of the foregoing, the researchers of this article deem it very paramount to create the awareness so governments of Ghana and other nations, churches and other religious organizations, academic institutions (kindergarten to tertiary), traditional leaders and other stake holders are adequately informed about the extent of jeopardy homosexual partnerships have on the Kingdom of God and on society to finally seek global remedies to annihilate homosexuality from the human race.

Though there are some articles and books on homosexual partnerships, there are few on the magnitude of damage and implementable suggestions to minimize if not eradicate this detestable phenomenon from the lives of humanity and reverse God’s judgment on homosexual activists and advocates. Also, this article seeks to explore the gravity of implications homosexual partnerships have on the Kingdom of God, and make Bible based recommendations that will obstruct the alarming rate of recruiting new activists into this heinous lustful activity. Finally, this article will serve as an informational podium for research by the government of Ghana, and other nations, Churches, other religious bodies, the academy and other corporate bodies to educate all rational beings to abstain from homosexuality.

The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is God’s rule or reign over the universe. Hence, every kingdom throne, power, authority, dominion and name are subject to God and His Kingdom. Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament the term "kingdom" (*malkut*) and (*basilei*) is understood as dynamic in nature

8 Morgan, “The Canadian,” 76.

9 Morgan, “The Canadian,” 76.

and refers primarily to the rule or reign of a king. It is seldom used in a static sense to refer to a territory. As a result, in the vast majority of instances it would be better to translate the expression "kingdom of God" as the "rule of God"¹⁰ Though the phrase the Kingdom of God is not spelt out in the Old Testament, the concept of God as King and His kingly rule are very obvious.

The sovereign rule of God involves ownership and authority of His own universe. As King of God's Kingdom His kingship transcends all ages, times [and seasons], all nations including Israel creation, and all events according to His sovereignty. His kingdom has no boundaries, nor limitations to space and time.¹¹ The Old Testament describes God as an eternal King: "The Lord is King forever" (Ps. 10:16)... "The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his sovereignty rules over all"¹² for "the earth is the LORD'S and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1 NKJV).

It is worth emphasizing that the term "the Kingdom of God" is synonymous to "the Kingdom of Heaven". G. Ladd asserts that the two terms have linguistic variations within the same idea. In a more elaborative way. He further narrates that "the Kingdom of God" occurs four times in Matthew (12:28; 19:24; 21:31; 21:43), fourteen times in Mark, thirty-two times in Luke, twice in John (3:3, 5), six times in Acts, eight times in Paul, once in Revelation (12:10). Thus, the term the Kingdom of God appears seventy-seven times in the New Testament Canon.¹³ Christians [born again believers in Christ Jesus] believe that a personal being [Being] existed before time and space. This unique Being spoke the words "Let there be..." and by the power of His will all that exists came into being (Genesis 1:3).¹⁴ Hence, God is the unique Designer of all that exists within the

¹⁰ G R Beasley-Murray, The Kingdom Of God In The Teaching Of Jesus, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 35/1, (1992):19-30.

¹¹ David Kwadwo Okai, "The Kingdom of God is Spiritual Warfare: A Win War of God and Believers In His Son Jesus Christ" (PhD diss., Louisiana Baptist University, 2013), 3-4.

¹² Rick Love, *Muslims, Magic, and the Kingdom of God*. (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2000), 40.

¹³ G Ladd, "Kingdom of Christ, God, Heaven," in: W A Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 607

¹⁴ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *The Unshakable Truth: How You Can Experience The 12 Essentials Of A Relevant Faith* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2010), 54.

universe. In God’s perfect plan, He designed procreation through heterosexual monogamous partnerships as the sole premise to populate the earth with humanity who would in turn advance the Kingdom of God. Regrettably, homosexual partnerships are aggressively opposed to multiplication of the human race by procreation through heterosexual partnerships. Undoubtedly, these and other unforeseen setbacks pose as serious threat against the plan of God for humanity. It is pertinent to state that whatever goes on contrary in the universe is violation of God’s will - implications on the Kingdom of God.

Satan—the initiator and inventor of homosexual partnerships

Satan is an ancient and extremely treacherous foe.¹⁵ The word Satan is used about fifty-five times in the New Testament.¹⁶ The devil [another name of Satan] is many-sided and versatile demagogue. To the psychologist he says, “I will give you new knowledge and understanding.” He confronts the religionist and the moralist with a mask of integrity and promises them the very best from heaven. And finally to the rationalist and the liberalist he says, “I am not there. I do not exist...”¹⁷ Satan is not a tribal idol, but a global god. Jesus calls him the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31, NKJV), and Paul calls him “the god of this age” (II Corinthians 4:4, NKJV).

John Piper advocates that the supernatural monster who orchestrates the kidnapping, enslaving, and thousand-fold drugging, selling, raping, and killing of girls around the globe is the same one who has masterminded the murderous cultural delusion — from the highest court to the lowest porn-flick — that the practice of sodomy [and all sorts of abhorring sexual partnerships] is delightful, not deadly.¹⁸ As a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44c, NKJV), Satan entices his victims through deception, tempts them with sugar-coated lies, and prompts his captors to compromise the infallible Word of God.

¹⁵ Francis Frangipane, *The Three Battlegrounds: An In-depth View of Three Arenas In Spiritual Warfare: The Mind, the Church, and Heavenly Places* (Cedar Rapids: Arrow Publications, 2012), 7.

¹⁶ Tony Evans, *The Battle is the Lord's: Waging Victorious Spiritual Warfare* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1998), 157.

¹⁷ K. Kosh, *The Devil's Alphabet* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1971), 7.

¹⁸ John Piper, *Satan and Sodomy, Understated And Inflammatory Words*, (2013) <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/satan-and-sodomy> (accessed 15/5/2016).

Satan uses his subjects to defend his wicked deeds against themselves and others [humanity]. Even some members of the clergy as well as their adherents are activists and advocates of this cancerous practice of homosexuality.¹⁹ Lyle Dorsett classifies such act of religious jargon as “Christianity-and-water” He further states that the view of Christianity-and-water simply says there is a good God in Heaven and everything is all right—leaving out all the difficult and terrible doctrines about sin and hell and the devil.²⁰ This fallacy is orchestrated by Satan—the initiator and inventor of homosexual infidelity.

Sexual partnerships as practised by irrational beings

It is not abnormal to deduce that there is not a single specie among irrational beings (beasts) that practices homosexuality. Therefore, the authors of this article advocate firmly that animals that have sexual organs procreate through heterosexuality. If irrational beings do not practice same-sex copulation, then it is not appropriate in the eyes of God that some rational beings (humanity) sink deep into homosexual infidelity (activists and advocates).

Biblical hermeneutics of sexual partnership—heterosexual partnership

Biblical marriage [sexual partnership] is between a biological male and a biological female...God created “male and female” (Gen. 1:27, NKJV) and commanded them to “be fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:28, NKJV). Natural production [prescribed divine plan for procreation] is possible only through male and female union.²¹ Therefore, it is incumbent to advocate that sexual intercourse is prohibited, abnormal, and sinful beyond the confines of a husband (man) and wife (woman).

¹⁹ David Kwadwo Okai, *The Kingdom of God Is Spiritual Warfare: You Cannot Escape This Battle, But You Can Triumph Through Faith In Christ Jesus* (Maitland: Xulon Press, 2014), 60.

²⁰ Lyle Dorsett, *The Essential C. S. Lewis: The Most Representative And Complete Anthology Of One Of This Century's Most Renowned Theologians, Novelist, And Literary Critics* (New York: Collier Books Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 312.

²¹ Norman Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 299-300.

The act of marriage is that beautiful and intimate relationship shared uniquely by a husband [man] and wife [woman] in the privacy of their love—and it is sacred. In a real sense God designed them for that relationship.²² A vivid and rampant illustration will help in this instance. An atmosphere of mockery and naivety surface whenever a toddler wears a left shoe with the right leg and vice versa. Anyone who sees the particular toddler coming with such scornful posture coupled with very uncomfortable steps deduces the lightmindedness of the “poor” toddler. But blessed is the toddler who takes the parent’s counsel and wears the shoes appropriately. The blessedness and appropriateness of sex in heterosexual partnership is noteworthy;

Additional evidence of God’s blessing on this sacred relationship appears in the charming expression used to describe the act of marriage between Adam and Eve in Genesis 4:1:

[“And Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain, She said, “With the help of the LORD, I have brought forth a man (NIV)]. What better way is there to describe this sublime, intimate interlocking of mind, heart, emotions, and body in a passionately eruptive climax that engulfs the participants in a wave of innocence relaxation that thoroughly express their love? The experience is a mutual “knowledge” of each other that is sacred, personal, and intimate. Such encounters were designed by God for mutual blessing and enjoyment.²³

Timothy Keller cleverly portrays a vivid picture on sexual partnership;

First, sex was given to men and women to enable whole *life covenant bonding*. God made sex to be a commitment-deepener—a way to say to someone else “I belong completely to you.” Therefore it is only for use inside marriage, where it is designed to operate as a way to constantly renew, remake and re-energize your covenant with love and joy so it does not grow old or cold. Second, the purpose of sex and marriage is

²² Tim LaHaye and Beverly LaHaye, *The Act Of Marriage: The Beauty Of Sexual Love* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 11.

²³ LaHaye and LaHaye, “The Act of Marriage,” 15.

the reunion of the complementary but separate genders. Men and women each have distinct glories and we need one another. Marriage is the primary (though not only) place where those glories are blended and we are profoundly enriched. The third purpose of sex is the participation in life creation....the biblical vision for the union of the different genders in marriage is one of its main themes. It is everywhere. The book of Genesis (1-3) along with Jesus' teaching on marriage and divorce (e.g. Matthew 19:3-9) presents marriage between a man and a woman as the only divinely designed place for sexual relations. And throughout the Bible heterosexual marriage is the human construct most often used to reveal truths about God's relationship to his people (As in Ephesians 5:23-32). The Bible begins with a wedding between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:22-25) and ends with one (Revelation 19:9; 21:1-9).²⁴

behave Christianity to show goodness as it will be the proof of goodness in the good news. The cry of those who suffer, need to be heard and if they are The Christian Holy Bible is the inspired written revelation of the God of creation—the God of His Kingdom. This biblical truth makes the Christian Holy Bible a dominant resource for research on every discipline or topic about the Kingdom of God. Heterosexual partnership is; companionship (Gen.2:18), love and pleasure (Eccl. 9:9), bond of unity (Gen. 2:24), an antidote to curb fornication and adultery (I Cor. 7:1-2), and ultimate premise to procreate (Gen. 1:28).

Socio-economic implications on the Kingdom of God

Abhorrent to God, invites divine judgment upon practitioners and advocates

God the Creator of the universe has standards that humanity must obey and enjoy the divine blessing. Violation of God's precepts invites His judgment upon violators. One of the numerous abhorrent practices is homosexuality. Ed Murphy says; homosexuality is categorically prohibited by God in the

²⁴ Timothy Keller, (2016),

<http://www.timothykeller.com/blog/2013/10/4/christianity-and-homosexuality-a-review-of-books> (accessed 15/5/2016).

Old Testament laws governing the sexual life of his [His] people (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:18). It is called “abomination” five times in Leviticus 18 (22, 26, 27, 29, 30). In Leviticus 20:13 it is called “a detestable act...It was so detestable a sin in the eyes of God that death by stoning was the punishment inflicted on its practitioners” (Lev. 20:13).²⁵ Contrary to God’s plan to fill the earth with people through heterosexual partnerships (Gen. 2:27-28, Geisler 2010, 289) some men in Sodom unashamedly practiced homosexuality (Gen. 19). Other biblical events that condemn homosexual infidelity are Lev. 18:22-23, Deut. 23:17-18, Judges 19:22-25, I Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46, 2 Kings 23:7.

Jesus Christ preached and taught about the abhorrence and prohibition of homosexuality (Lk. 10:12). Other New Testament passages that condemn homosexuality are; Rom. 1:18-32, I Cor. 6:9-19, I Tim. 1:8-11, Jude 7-8. The impure and indecent practices of homosexuality invite God’s judgment on all practitioners and advocates (Matt. 11:23-24, Rev. 21:8).²⁶

Deprivation of the sanctity of sexual relationship

God intended the acts of heterosexual partnership to be the most sublime adventure a husband (biologically male) and a wife (biologically female) would enjoy on the planet earth. It is prudent to mention that men and women are complimentary in myriads of ways to each other, and that these complimentary variations are the basis for heterosexual marriage. Adam complimented God’s gift to him (his wife Eve) with a warm hearted affirmation; “This is now bone of my bones. And flesh of my flesh, She shall be called Woman. Because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:23, NKJV).²⁷ Homosexual partners deprive themselves of such affection, reciprocal love from each partner, and sanctity in sexual relationships. God deems it very appropriate for heterosexual partners to have sex with uniquely designed joy. On the contrary, homosexual practitioners do not enjoy that exceptional communion of warmth

²⁵ Ed Murphy, *A Handbook For Spiritual Warfare*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2003), 51.

²⁶ Geisler, “Christian Ethics,” 298.

²⁷ Deborah Newman, *Then God Created Woman: Finding Fulfilment As The Woman God Intended You To Be* (Colorado Springs: Focus On The Family Publishing, 1997), 47.

through sex. The question of how homosexual activists genuinely make and experience bond sexual love is ridiculous and above human mind to comprehend. The best they can do is to camouflage their burning sensational lust. Thus, they exaggerate and pretend to attain satisfaction. Ignorantly on their part, they are being recruited to promote the escalating longing of theirs and Satan “who does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10a NKJV).

Health hazard of practitioners

Various kinds of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are contracted through homosexual partnerships. Bacterial STDs include chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. Viral STDs include HIV, genital herpes, genital warts (HPV), and hepatitis B... The germs that cause STDs hide in semen, blood, vaginal secretions. Others are; syphilis, shigella, salmonella, amoebiasis, giardiasis, chlamydia, campylobacter.²⁸ God designed the vagina and the muscles within a woman’s pelvis for sexual intercourse, and because homosexuals do practice sex through the anus and rectum myriads of health hazard are experienced by practitioners. Sex through homosexuality leads to ulcers, inflammation, tearing of the muscles around the anus, and disruption in the rectum.

**Depopulation of the human race*

In the plan of God, procreation of humanity is through heterosexuality. “And Adam knew his wife, and she became pregnant and bore him Cain, and she said, I have gotten and gained a man with the help of the Lord” (Gen. 4:1, AB). Thus, in the plan God procreation is divinely ordained through sexual intercourse between a husband (man) and his wife (woman)—heterosexuality.

In view of the foregoing, heterosexuality is very indispensable to the continuance of the human race. Multiplication or reproduction of human beings as instructed by God (Gen. 1:28) cannot be realized through same-sex partnership. Homosexual partnerships deny paramount purpose of heterosexual partnerships—perpetuation of human race as prescribed by the Creator of humanity (Gen. 1:27-28).

²⁸ Types of STD’S, <https://www.google.com.gh/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=types+of+stds> (accessed 24/5//2016).

**Rejection from the society*

A vast majority of members of the society do not put homosexuality and heterosexuality on the same status. There is always a huge disparity of respect, dignity, and belongingness between homosexuality and heterosexuality. In many countries like Ghana where majority of the people recognize homosexual partnerships as taboo, shameful and uncivilized, activists and advocates are not welcome and integrated into the society.

The emergence and acceptability of homosexual partnerships accelerate disorientation of practitioners from schools, homes, recreational grounds, market places, shopping malls, churches, mosques, temples, and other human gatherings.

**Homosexuality and drug abuse*

The usage of drugs among homosexuals is very high as compared to that among heterosexuals. It is estimated that between 20 percent to 30 percent of gay and transgender people abuse substances, compared to about 9 percent of the general population.²⁹ Drug abuse leads to lunatic and other abhorring lifestyles that have serious implications on the Kingdom of God.

Financial drain on activists, advocates, the state, communities and families
Economically, huge sums of money are spent annually to treat victims of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases caused by homosexual partnerships. The financial drain on the society due to the medical cost of HIV is huge. The greater the impact, the more damage it does to the social economy of the Kingdom of God.

According to Tumwikirize, Torpey, Adedokun, and Badru, antiretroviral treatment of AIDS adherence may be measured in various ways, for example through self-reports, pharmacy refill logs, pill counting, or a combination of these measures. Researchers believe that as much as \$1600 per patient could be spent on an intervention to improve adherence to ideal levels and the incremental cost-effectiveness would remain less than \$50,000 annually to spend on one HIV patient.³⁰

²⁹ J Hunt, (2012), Why gay and transgender population experiences high rates of substance use, <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/> (accessed 7/3/2016)

³⁰ S Tumwikirize, K Torpey, A Adedokun, and T Badru “The Value of Support Group Participation in Influencing Adherence to Antiretroviral Treatment among People Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).” *World Journal of AIDS*, no.5 [2015]: 189-198.

Bryceson says, most of the children and HIV patients are economically affected and they rely on the donor companies to provide these services. Today, most of the donor organizations use the funds obtained from the president's Emergency plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to reach majority of the affected youth population and provide care and treatment for AIDS infected adults on the African continent and other parts of the world. These services include HIV clinic start-ups, community wide HIV awareness and youth prevention programmes to develop comprehensive HIV strategies, public messaging, counseling and testing initiatives.³¹

Recommendations

The findings of this research reveal the hefty socio-economic implications on the Kingdom of God. Hence, the immediate attention of humanity is drawn to this degrading episode for all inclusive effort to impede future spread of homosexuality and its wretched consequence globally. The researchers highly recommend that mass education on cancerous implications on the Kingdom of God through homosexual partnerships should be done through television, radio, flyers, bill-boards, and other means of communication. All-inclusive participation by churches, other religious organizations, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, schools, hospitals, palaces, markets, communities, and all stakeholders is encouraged for effective combating of this nefarious attack against the blessedness of rational beings and the Kingdom of God.

The Church

The Church is entrusted with the "ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18, NKJV), with the mandate to demonstrate the love of God through His Son Jesus Christ to all humanity including those who are webbed in detestable practices such as homosexuality (Matt. 28:19, Acts 1:8, I Pet. 2:9-10). The paramount responsibility in the ministry of reconciliation is to go to the kingdom of Satan, bind all powers and authorities, loose his captives from the kingdom of death including homosexuals (Lk. 11:21-22 paraphrased), and bring them into the Kingdom of God.

Clothed with the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), having

³¹ D. F. Bryceson, "Risking death for survival: peasant responses to hunger and HIV/AIDS in Malawi." *World Development*, vol. 34 Issue 9, (2006):1654-1666.

the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:15), and moved with the passionate love for all sinners including homosexuals, born again believers in Christ Jesus must make it their primary and compelling biblical assignment to go to practitioners and advocates of homosexual infidelity as God's bridges (not barriers) for humanity to have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ for the Sovereign Lord does not take "pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that they turn from their wicked ways and live" (Ezek. 33:11, NIV).

Sound biblical teaching about the deadly consequences of homosexual partnerships must be one of the core subjects of the teachings of the Church.

In the Church's quest to fulfill the apostolic mandate, it cannot isolate homosexual partners in its outreach programmes and claim fulfillment of its existence and mandate. Though God frowns on the sin of homosexuality, He loves homosexuals. In like manner, the Church hates homosexuality but should genuinely love activists and advocates. The vivid illustration to love homosexuals is to witness Christ Jesus to them for "He [Christ Jesus] was delivered over to death for our [including homosexuals] sins and was raised to life for our [including homosexuals] justification" (Rom. 4:25 NIV).

Conclusion

In His matchless wisdom God designed that sex should be enjoyed in the context and confines of a monogamous heterosexual partnership to perpetuate procreation among other mutual satisfactions from both parties (husband and wife). As King of His Kingdom the Word of God (the Christian Holy Bible) is the final authority for life and living. Hence, every rational being must obey God and His Word by putting the content into perpetual practice to avert divine judgment upon those who choose to violate the statutes imprinted in the Christian Holy Bible.

Homosexual infidelity is initiated by the devil (I John 3:8) and being practiced and supported by those who give themselves to satanic lust and enticement (Rom. 6:16). This deliberate disobedience to God and His Word has enormous implications on the Kingdom of God as narrated extensively in this article. The deadly endemic of HIV AIDS is dwindling national and global economy through exorbitant expenditure on HIV AIDS patients, non-procreation for posterity, and drug abuse among other conditions meted upon homosexual activists and their advocates are all facets of the socio-economic implication the Kingdom of God by homosexuality.

Homosexual practices are abnormal, impure, reprehensible, indecent, awkward, and abominable. Homosexuality is not only psychologically and socially dangerous, it assumes a serious epidemic threat to humanity. The researchers call on all concerned citizens to protect their people against the infecting influences of this sexually divergent practice.

The researchers add the response of two God's Kingdom-minded people (a woman and a man) in this instance and urge others to emulate their unwavering and unashamed stand for God's divine standards for humanity.

After serving as a circuit court in Grenada County in Mississippi USA, Linda Barnette proved her stand as "God's Kingdom-minded woman"³² opposed to homosexuality. In her resignation letter to the board of supervisors, she wrote; "The Supreme Court's decision violates my core values as a Christian. My final authority is the Bible. I cannot in all good conscience issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples under my name because the Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is contrary to God's plan and purpose for marriage and family. I choose to obey God rather than man."³³ Pat Robertson a televangelist and host of the 700 Club TV show in the US proclaimed that "such people are sinning against God and will lead to the ultimate destruction of the family...I will unalterably oppose such things, and will do everything I can to restrict the freedom of the people to spread their contagious infections to the youth of our nation."³⁴

The researchers have deduced that HIV AIDS is contracted through homosexual partnerships, and there is no curative treatment and no vaccine for AIDS. Then abstinence from homosexuality is the best option. HIV/AIDS is a preventable disease so to end the suffering of HIV impacted children and their families, educating people to desist from joining homosexual infidelity, and advising HIV AIDS patients to stop spreading this deadly disease to others through sexual contact, is the key.

³² For a thorough discussion see David Kwadwo Okai, *God's Kingdom-Minded Women: Divine Diplomats For Unique Assignments* (Kumasi: Vantage Solution, 2015).

³³ Linda Barnette, (2015),

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/06/30/mississippi-circuit-clerk-same-sex-marriage/29520689/> (accessed 30/6/2015).

³⁴ Pat Robertson, The 700 Club TV Show, 24/5/1994 edition

Homosexuality is a global phenomenon that needs global attention and global effort to combat it and minimize its deadly socio-economic implications on the Kingdom of God.

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Christian “Grace” and Muslim “Dīn Al- FiṬra”: Implications for Christian-Muslim Dialogue in Ghana

COSMAS EBO SARBAH¹

ABSTRACT

Christian-Muslim dialogue has been taking place in Ghana under various his-torical, theological and philosophical underpinnings. The Christian “Grace” and Muslim “Dīn al-ḥiṭrah” are inclusivist theological positions which attempt not only to grant some level of authenticity to other religious traditions but also to include their adherents in matters of salvation. It is argued in this paper that these much criticised Christian and Muslim inclusive positions, though respect-ively offer partial or secondary authenticity to the other religious traditions, are necessary steps in the right direction which offer critical implications for Chris-tian-Muslims exchanges in Ghana.

Introduction

The general claim that Christianity and Islam are exclusivist religions have some merits because some verses of the Bible and the Qur’ān have clear exclusivist tendencies which present Chris-tianity or Islam as the only means to salvation. In the Christian Bible, especially the New Tes-tament, there are fundamental verses whose interpretations buttress this assertion. For instance, in John 3:16-18 reads:

God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son,
so that eve-ryone who believes in him might not perish but
might have eternal life...For God did not send his son into

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into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God.

The belief in Jesus as the only son of God is depicted in above verse as necessary for salvation. This verse is reinforced by Jesus in his declaration to apostle Thomas in John 14:6: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father.” As Jesus is the only way and truth, salvation then can be achieved through no one else, and no other name under heaven is given to the human race by which they are to be saved (Acts 4:12). These verses and their theological interpretations claim fundamentally that Jesus and so Christianity is the only path to the ultimate goal of salvation. Based on these verses, theologians and biblical scholars, Catholic and Protestant alike have argued extensively to the effect that salvation (or being accepted by God) is realised only through belief in Christ Jesus and membership of the Christian community.²

At the Second Vatican Council³, the fathers also made two statements which together reinforce Christian exclusivist claim. First, the council fathers reaffirmed the centrality of the Catholic Church in God’s plan of salvation: “The Church...is necessary for salvation. For Christ, made present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and unique Way of salvation” (*Lumen Gen-tium 14*). The Church is the Catholic Church and all in communion with it. Second, the Council clearly established the possibility of salvation outside the Catholic Church and recognises other Christian denominations such as the Orthodox and the Protestant churches as members of the people of God: “The Church...is linked with those who, being baptised, are honoured with the name of Christian, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety or do not preserve unity of communion with the successor of Peter” (*Lumen Gentium*

² Karl Barth. “Christianity and non-Christian religions”, in *Theological Reflections*, 5 (London: Darton, Long-man& Todd, and Baltimore: Helicon Press), 1966.

³ The Second Vatican Council was one of the most important mission conferences of the twentieth century for the Roman Catholic Church.

15). The two statements reiterated the Christianity's unique position both in matters of authenticity of its deposit of faith and salvation.

The Muslim scripture, the Qur'ān, also contains verses which depict a significant leaning to exclusivity both explicitly and implicitly. For instance, the Qur'ān condemns explicitly polytheism and so calls it "*shirk*" meaning, "associationism" (the act of attributing associates to Allah). Polytheists are referred to *asmushrikūn*, meaning "associationists". The error of the polytheists is that they associate other deities with Allah, which is the worst sin any human being could commit. Allah is One and has no partners (Sūrah 4:48; 4:116). Thus, the Qur'ān does not accept Polytheism as a true religion; it is the complete opposite of the true religion. And so, the Qur'ānic verses consistently call polytheists to repentance and to embrace the right path as it teaches. Polytheists have completely erred and must come to the absolutely true message of its prophet (Sūrah 9:33; Sūrah 41:34). Explaining the exclusivist tendencies of these verses, Jacques Waardenburg contends that the Qur'ān accuses polytheists on two main grounds in which cases idols are the objects of worshipped: first, of attributing a child to God (Sūrah 17:111); second, of worshipping man-made gods (Sūrah 25:3)⁴. Allah is the true and only God who deserves worship and not idols.

Arguing in the same line of Waardenburg, W. Montgomery Watt observes that the Qur'ān, in some cases, seems implicitly to make no distinction between Polytheism, Christianity and Juda-ism. All these traditions according to Waardenburg and Montgomery Watt have committed the same error of assigning partners with God. In line with this thought, Christians commit the sin of "associationism" just like the polytheists by believing in the doctrines of the Trinity and the In-carnation⁵.

⁴ Jacques Waardenburg. *Muslim Perspective of Other Religions* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 56.

⁵ W. Montgomery Watt, *The Christianity criticized in the Qur'ān*, *Muslim World*, 57 (1967),197-201.

The Qur'ān condemns the Trinity (Three in one God): “And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah?” (Sūrah 5:116). Here, Mary, the mother of Jesus is considered, probably, the third person of the Trinity. The Incarnation is also seen in the same light: “It befitteth not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son” (Sūrah 19:35). Allah has no son and so Jesus is not the Son of God. He is a mere human being (Sūrah 3:52) and a servant or prophet of God (Sūrah 43:59). The Jews are also accused at times of associationism: “And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouth. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old. Allah (himself) fighteth against them. How perverse are they!” (Sūrah 9:30). Agreeing with Waardenburg and Montgomery Watt, Iqbal S. Hussain regards the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation as being incompatible with the Divine Unity.⁶ By adopting these doctrines the religious communities are associating partners with God and so could be placed at the same level with or are comparable with the polytheists.

These exclusivist verses and their theological interpretations notwithstanding, describing Christianity and Islam wholly in terms which completely exclude the other religion is restrictive because there are certainly other important historical and theological points of view which depict these traditions also as inclusivist. For the purpose of this work Christian “Grace” and Muslim “*Dīn al-ḥiṭrah*” are respectively highlighted in support of that claim that the “Non adherents” of Christianity and Islam also could have a place in matter of salvation.

CHRISTIAN “GRACE”

Catholic Union of all People

The Second Vatican Council aimed among others at opening the doors and windows of the Church for fresh wind to blow through the Vatican. In line with this objective the council fathers to a critical reflection of other religions. The Council toned down the Church's earlier exclusivist position and spelt out an inclusivist stance on the Church and its relations

⁶ Iqbal Hussain, *Beyond Science & Philosophy: The Qur'ān and Modernism* (Lahore: Adabistan, 2000), 124.

with other religious traditions in some of its documents: *Lumen Gentium* and *Nostra Aetate*. In these documents, the council fathers also took a giant step towards acknowledgement in, general, of non-Christians as capable of salvation and affirms its high respect, in particular, for Muslims. In the first place, the Council asserts that non-Christians, and in particular Muslims, are connected in various ways to the Church:

But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place among whom are the Muslims: these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day. (*Lumen Gentium*, 16)

Those also can attain to everlasting who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. (*Lumen Gentium*, 16)

Underlining these two statements of Vatican II is the Church's belief that Christ Jesus calls all people to Catholic (universal) union as a family with one creator God. Two implications could be drawn from this position of catholic union. First, the catholic union of all people stems from notion of the Supreme Deity as the source, creator and ruler of all. Second, this Catholic union of family is not available to only catholic faithful or even only Christians. The union is also available to non-Christians and in particular Muslims.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

The catholic union of all people under one creator and ruler notwithstanding, John Paul II, in his Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, keenly observes the human obstacles which have prevented certain people from direct embrace of Paschal Mystery of Christ Jesus:

But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions. (*Redemptoris Missio*, 10)

However, these human obstacles in other religious traditions cannot be a lasting blockage for such people. For, salvation reaches the non-Christians by virtue of grace. This grace which emanates from Christ Jesus through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit engages the non-Christian in "...a non-formal, mysterious relationship to the Church." Grace enlightens the non-Christian in accordance with their spiritual and material circumstances while offering them the possibility of sharing in this Paschal Mystery of Jesus in a manner known to God alone (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22; *Redemptoris Missio*, 10). The World Council of Churches in its landmark document "Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct" affirms to Christians that while it is their responsibility to witness to Christ, conversion is ultimately the work of Grace through the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-9; Acts 10:44-47). The document recognises that the Holy Spirit blows and operates where the Spirit wills in ways over which no human being has control (cf. John 3:8)⁷.

Acknowledgement of Positive Values of Other Tradition

Thus, in spite of the social and cultural impediments of other traditions, the Vatican Council II recognises other religions cannot be entirely or wholly wrong. They, certainly, have some values which have made positive contributions to human development in general. In view of these positive values *Ad Gentes* acknowledges the presence of "seeds of the word" and points to "...the riches which a generous God has distributed among the other nations" (*Ad Gentes*, 11). Again, *Lumen Gentium* makes reference to the good which is "found sown" not only "in minds and hearts" but also "in the riches and customs of other people" (*Lumen Gentium*, 17). Making its own the vision and terminology of some early Church Fathers, *Nostra Aetate* apart from recognising the presence in these traditions of "...a ray of

⁷ Aware of the tensions between people and communities of different religious convictions and the varied interpretations of Christian witness, the Pontifical Council for Inter religious Dialogue (PCID), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and, at the invitation of the WCC, the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), met during a period of 5 years to reflect and produce this document to serve as a set of recommendations for conduct on Christian witness around the world. This document does not intend to be a theological statement on mission but to address practical issues associated with Christian witness in a multi-religious world. The participants of the third (inter-Christian) consultation met in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25-28, January, 2011 and finalised this document.

that Truth which enlightens all”, goes further to enumerate some of the positive elements of Islamic tradition:

The church has a high regard for Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God’s plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet, his Virgin Mother they also honour, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgement and reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting. (*Nostra Aetate*, 2)

Pope Benedict reiterates, in his post synodal letter, *Africae Munus*⁹² that Christians witness to their own faith and way of life, and acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, together with their life and culture.”⁸ He further calls upon the Church, in every situation, to persist in esteem for Muslims.⁹ These few references suffice to show that the church openly acknowledges the presence of positive values not only in the religious life of individual believers of other religious traditions, but also in the religious traditions to which they belong. The document attributes these positive values to the active presence of God through his Word, pointing also to the universal action of the Holy Spirit: “Without doubt,” *Ad Gentes* affirms, “the Holy Spirit was at work in the world before Christ was glorified” (*Ad Gentes*, 4). These elements, viewed as a preparation for the Gospel (*Lumen Gentium*, 16), have played and do still play a providential role in the divine economy of salvation. It is this recognition which propels the Church to enter into “dialogue and collaboration” (*Nostra Aetate*, 2; *Gaudium et Spes*, 92-93).

The statements issued on Islam by the Second Vatican Council and the

⁸ Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 2; cf. *Propositiones* 3 and 13.

⁹ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* of his Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, 95.

World Council of Churches which highlighted the role of the Holy Spirit by grace though con-sistent with their traditions are signs of real change of attitudes. These statements espouse a new inclusive attitude towards other religions particularly Muslims and Islam. They counteract the Christian attitude, which fitted Islam into the Jewish-Christian frame of reference and so classified Muslims as Christian heretics. Islam, then, is considered a religion in its own right. But the Vatican Council II's refusal to use the term "Islam" in these statements raises eye brow. Its failure to refer to Muslims by the name of their religion could be seen as its unpreparedness to acknowledge Islam as a religion. But, the Vatican Documents would be much more appreciated when analysed in terms of the spirit be-hind the words which accords due respect to non-Christians and provides a really good begin-ning along the difficult but necessary path to inter-religious relations.

MUSLIM "DĪN AL-FIṬRAH"

Islam as the Original Religion

Muslims have two main notions of the term "religion" whose critical comprehension could help to espouse the religion's inclusivist claim. These notions are: the original religion and the histor-ical religion. The original religion, the *Dīn al-fiṭrah* (*religio naturalis*), is religion understood in the generic sense, which every one (both Muslims and non-Muslims) possesses by birth. It is this original religion:

God hath ordained for you that religion which he commanded unto Noah, and that which he inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commanded unto Abraham, Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion and be not divided therein. (Sūrah, 42: 13)¹⁰

behave Christianity to show goodness as it will be the proof of goodness in the good news. The cry of those who suffer, need to be heard and if they are In the light of the original religion, Muslims believe that each human being is born a Muslim.¹¹ The historical religion, however, refers to the religious traditions of history, which are products of the original religion and

¹⁰ This and all Qur'ānic verses are from the Pickthall translation.

¹¹ It is the parents and the environment which make the person a non-Muslim.

traditions of history, which are products of the original religion and containing within them var-ying degrees of *dīn al-ḥaqq* (*Sūrah*, 2:135; *Sūrah*, 4:123). According to Isma‘il Al-Faruqi, Muslim assertion that every human being is born a member of the original religion is based on the belief that what Allah has implanted in human nature, namely the recognition of His transcend-ence, unity, holiness and ultimate goodness, is prior to any religious tradition and significantly remains with the person for life.¹² The possession of the original religion by every human being, regardless of the religious tradi-tion or culture in which he or she was born or nursed, defines his or her humanity and casts up-on him or her very special dignity. It also entitles each human being to full membership in the religious community of humanity and the universal brotherhood under Allāh.¹³ By this explanation, according to Al-Faruqi, a person will always have with him or her or be included in the original religion irrespective of religious traditions.

This inclusivist understanding of religions attributes religious differences from *dīn al-ḥaqq* to historical circumstances, which include place of birth, time, culture, leadership and other particular conditions. In other words, Islam therefore accepts that religious traditions par-ticularly Christianity are religions of God, issuing from and based upon *dīn al-ḥaqq*, and representing differing degrees of acculturation with history.¹⁴ As a result, the people of other religions (especially Jews and Christians) have either gone astray or have angered Allah as the first *sūrah* indicates: “Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help. Show us the straight path. The path of those whom Thou hast favoured; Not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor those who go astray” (*Sūrah*, 1:5-7). “Those who thou hast favoured,” refers to the new Muslim community. “Those who earn Thine anger,” and “Those who go astray,” would be the people of other religions. The original religion approach offers some level of authenticity to other religions particularly Christianity and Judaism.

Consequently, the Muslim community of today is not a new religion; it is

¹² Isma‘il Al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1998), 139.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Dammen McAuliffe. *Qur'anic Christians: An Analysis of Classical and Modern exegesis* (New York: Cam-bridge University Press, 1991).

one and the same original religion. The Muslim community is the true religion (*dīn al-ḥaqq*). It identifies itself completely with it, subjecting itself totally to its principles and dictates.¹⁵ The Muslim community is the pure monotheistic community that is in line with the religion of Abraham: “Say (unto them, O Muhammad): Nay, but (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright, and he was not of the idolaters” (*Sūrah*, 2:135). Thus, Abraham, widely considered as the father of the three monotheistic religions, was neither a Jew nor a Christian.¹⁶ He was a monotheist (*hanīf*)¹⁷ who submitted to God/Allah. The Qur’ānic verses call on Jews and Christians to revert to the true monotheistic faith: “And if they believe in the like of that which ye believe, then are they rightly guided. But if they turn away, then are they in schism and Allah will suffice thee (for defence) against them” (*Sūrah*, 2:2-4). This is what Waardenburg refers to as “...returning to the pure monotheistic religion of Abraham which now takes shape among the faithful Muslims”.¹⁸ In the light of this, one wonders what this “...returning to the pure monotheistic religion” actual-ly means. Is this call an invitation particularly to the people of the book (*ahl al-kitāb*) to leave and join the Muslim community of today or to merely concentrate on the traces of the original religion already embedded in their traditions? This question is critical especially when the new community is commanded not only to be a model for humankind but also ensure that good pre-vaills: “And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness, and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful” (*Sūrah*, 3:104)

Prophethood in Islam

Muslim tradition also presents a rather unique inclusivist approach to other

¹⁵ The new community is different from the communities of the people of the Book (Christians and Jews) though they still have some significant traces of the original. Thus, new religion, because of its originality, is superior to all previous religious communities. Within this Muslim community, the fullness of revelation subsists.

¹⁶ McAuliffe, *Qur’anic Christians*, 54

¹⁷ *Hanīf* (pl. *hunaḥā*) refers to a group of Arabs whom Muslims believe had abandoned polytheism even before the advent of Islam. These seemed to have followed a monotheism which differed from the monotheistic religions which were present in Arabia, notably Christianity and Judaism (Hoyland, 2001:54).

¹⁸ Waardenburg *Muslim Perspective of Other Religions*, 7.

religions which preceded it in its understanding of the concept of Prophethood. It considers its prophet, Muḥammad, as one of a line of biblical prophets which dates back to Adam and reaches forward through Abraham and Moses, David and Solomon, until it reaches Jesus (*Sūrah*, 19:30). Some of these prophets received messages: Prophet Mūsā (Moses) received *at-Tawrāt* (the Pentateuch), Dāwūd (David) received *az-Zabūr* (the Psalms) and ‘Isā (Jesus), *al-Injīl* (the gospel) and finally Muḥammad received *al-Qur’ān*.¹⁹ In line with this, the Qur’ānic verses laud the messengers of the Christian and Jewish communities and their message. However, Prophet Muḥammad had predecessors but will have no successor. He is the seal of the prophets: “Muhammad is not the rather of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets; and Allah is ever aware of all things” (*Sūrah*, 33:40) Muḥammad is not just a messenger of God but also the last of the prophets.

The advent of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Qur’ān were necessitated by the inability of previous religious communities to keep to the covenant God made with them through their prophets (*Sūrah*, 5:13). The previous religious communities are “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitāb*) which consists, specifically, of the Jews and Christians who according to the Qur’ānic verses, received revealed Scriptures just as the Muslims received the Qur’ān. Their error was their inability to keep the revelations they received intact. They partly corrupted the revelations and fabricated new doctrines which denied the complete truth of the right path to the Supreme Deity.²⁰ Thus, the Qur’ān came as the final and perfect expression of God’s will: “And this Qur’ān is not such as could ever be invented in spite of Allah; but it is a confirmation of that which are before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind-Therein is no doubt-from the Lord of the Worlds” (*Sūrah*, 10:37).

In the light of *Dīn al-ḥiṭrah* the Muslim concept of prophethood all previous revelations are not completely wrong. They certainly contain within them some elements which are true. Thus, any verse in the revelations through previous prophets which are incompatible with the Qur’ān pre-scription is

¹⁹ Ahmad Galwash, *The Religion of Islam I* (Doha, Qatar: Modern Printing, 1973), 179-181.

²⁰ Ahmad Galwash, *The Religion of Islam I*, 179-181

untrue. In other words, the Qur'ān corrects the portions of other scriptures which contradict it. The communities of other religions such as Jews and Christians are therefore re-ferred to and treated as the *ḍimmi*, people who were variously protected.

Thus, all the portions of the Word of God, which were distorted, deliberately or not, are believed to have been safeguarded in the Qur'ān and Islamic religion.²¹ The content of the Qur'ān is the ultimate, complete, eternal and immutable revelation. The Qur'ān itself attests to this: "Say: Verily, though mankind and the *jinn* should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce thereof though they were helpers one of another" (*Sūrah*, 17:88). The superiority of the Qur'ān to previous scriptures is herein indicated. So through the Prophet Muḥammad God's guidance to humankind has reached completion and perfection. It is in support of this that Rahman writes: "...there has been an evolution in religion, of which Islam is the final form".²² The Prophet Muḥammad is the seal of the prophets and the revelation he received is the only straight path and the community he has formed (the community of Muslims) is the fully and rightly guided.

Implication for Christians and Muslims in Ghana

Christian "Grace" and Muslim "Dīn al-Fiṭrah": As Obstacles to Dialogue?

Though the positions of Christian "Grace" and Muslim "*Dīn al-fiṭrah*" are largely seen as inclusive and bold initiative, many are those who continue to view them as only steps in the right direction which still fall short of expectation in the contemporary environment. Thus, these bold steps are still considered inherently discriminative, presenting one religious tradition as authentic and its community the sacrosanct religious community. The one religion and its scripture become the measure of true religion and scripture of which all other religious traditions are deviations of the original religion. Consequently, the claims of Christian "Grace" and Muslim "*Dīn al-fiṭrah*" are positions which could themselves be obstacles

²¹ McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians*, 68.

²² Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 81.

which could themselves be obstacles to dialogue in that they still contain some negative attitude to other religions. Among the critics of the Christian and Muslim positions is John Hick. In his article 'The Non-Absoluteness of God' John Hick argues that all religious traditions must rather be put on the same pedestal for proper dialogue to take place. He contends that none of them should consider itself superior arguing that every religious tradition contains within it what he calls "valuable and harmful elements".²³ The internally highly diverse nature of these religions contain aspects which promote human good and others damaging the human family. In the face of these complexities, Hick asserts that no religious tradition has contributed a more favourable balance of good and evil, than others. Hick finds unacceptable the various explanations given to defend the roles of Grace and the original religion in inter-religious dialogue by both Christianity and Islam respectively.

Despite the rather negative reception by scholars and religious commentators the inclusive models offered by Muslims and Christians have positive implications for the Ghanaian Muslims and Christians as they dialogue with each other.

The Supreme Deity as the Focal Point of Deliberations of Dialogue

All the three major religions in Ghana-Indigenous religion, Christianity and Islam-have a common understanding of the Supreme Deity as the only One, the Creator and the Ruler of the uni-verse. This belief puts the Supreme Deity at the source of all activity and the initiator, the potent force behind religiosity and the catholic union of all people. In view of this, deliberations re-garding issues of Christian-Muslim relations in Ghana cannot be adequately handled without the fundamental belief in the Supreme Deity as the source, creator and ruler of the universe. The vertical relationship thus established between the Supreme Deity and His human creatures, Muslim and Christian alike, calls for a horizontal relationship of a catholic or universal union of all people.²⁴ As human creatures of one

²³ John Hick. "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity", in John Hick & Paul F. Knitter (eds). *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (Maryknoll:Orbis Books, 1987), 17.

²⁴ The concept of the Supreme Deity remains a central belief among the African people and the Muslim Akan and Christian Akan of Ghana for that matter.

Supreme Deity, all people are closely related to each other irrespective of their cultural and religious backgrounds and are called upon to deepen and strengthen the relationship.²⁵ Since the Supreme Deity created the universe, it is subsequently dependent on Him for its continuity and harmony. In view of this, the Supreme Deity is the ruler of the universe and His plans covers non-Christians as well.

That there is only one God for all Ghanaians is indisputable. For instance, the oneness of God is depicted in a religious and social environment of the Akan people of Ghana where Christians and Muslims use the same indigenous names and attributes of the Supreme Deity such as *Nyame*, *Nyankopon* and *Odomankoma* for God and Allāh respectively. Akan proverbs and symbols about *Nyame* and his other names are used by Christians and Muslims in their speeches, wax prints, “High-Life” songs and indigenous art works. By the use of these names Christians and Muslims are acknowledging, in no uncertain terms, that the *Nyame* of their ancestors is the same God or Allāh they are worshipping now as Christians and Muslims, a fact that has been crucial in efforts at ensuring a harmonious co-existence and relations between the two great traditions. Since the use of the indigenous names is not a problem for Christian Akan it should not be for Muslim Akan even as the Qur’ān encourages Muslims to “... Call upon Allāh or call upon Ar-Rahmān: by whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well) For to Him belong The Most Beautiful Names” (*Sūrah*, 17:110; *Sūrah*, 59:23; *Sūrah*, 2:255). The utilisation of indigenous names and attributes for the Supreme Deity, however, is not new in Christian and Islamic traditions. Arabs of pre-Islamic era used the name “Allāh”, the Islamic name of essence for their Supreme Deity. In view of this, Christian Arab use the term “Allāh” for the ‘Christian God’ to the extent that God is even translated Allāh in the Arabic version of the Bible. The reason, Christian Arab argue, is simply that the term is not originally Islamic but Arab.

The Need to Place Due Prominence on Core Values

The inclusivist positions spelt out in the Christian “Grace” and Muslim

²⁵ Robert Fisher, *West African Religious Traditions: Focus on the Akan of Ghana* (New York: Orbis Book, 1998). Also see Abdul Kalam M. Azad, *Basic Concepts of the Qur’ān*, Syed Abdul Latif (ed.). (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2003).

"*Dīn al-ḥaqq*" indicate that both Christian and Muslim traditions have core and periphery values. The core values of these traditions are believed to be supernatural and are often referred to as the revealed aspects of the belief systems. They are unalterable, universal and so indicate permanence. The periphery values are ephemeral aspects of religious and moral principles which are temporary. In other words, periphery values are of human origin and so are subjective. In line with this, Kwesi Wiredu classifies the tenets of every society particularly Akan religious and moral values into cultural universals and cultural particulars. In Wiredu's view, cultural universals are intransigent, common norms and moral imperatives on the bases of which intercultural communication and dialogue are always feasible.²⁶ These intransigent beliefs relate to the core values of every society. Cultural universals are predicated on common biological identity of human beings as "a species of bipeds" and also as social animals.²⁷ In other words, cultural universals are norms that are absolutely essential to human communities. The core values are essential values which enhance communal interests and promote welfare of the individuals. They include societal treasures such as love, truth, mercy, humility, forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, peace, cooperation, etc. The periphery values are not so essential values such as dress code, eating habits, rites of rituals and other acts and concepts which exhibit or tend, invariably, to promote disrespect towards other religions. Acknowledgement of core and periphery virtues of communities and indeed every society has decisive implications for Christian-Muslim encounters and exchanges. It proposes to people of all cultures unique way to inter religious and cultural exchanges which dwell on core, essential codes of societies. The individuals and societies become highly praised as human communities as they lay due emphasis on the mainstay values that build them into better people and society. Thus, it demonstrates that the replacement of core values with ephemeral ones by adherents of various religious traditions do takes place and often leads to social anarchy and chaos which ultimately hinders intercultural and religious encounters. For instance, there are many instances when in missionary endeavours of Islam and Christianity periphery values are unfortunately packaged and presented as the core

²⁶ Kwesi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 1.

²⁷ Ibid

message to the mission-ary target. When these periphery, non-essential values and the cultural particulars are wrongfully and sadly adopted and made to function as core, central, essential values and as such “cultural universals” society and individuals eventually plunge into chaos because these superficialities tend to rob society of peace and continual survival. Hence, the need for Muslims and Christians to major on majors and minor on minor values of their religions for peaceful social and religious environment.

The Acknowledgement of Differences

The Christian call for a universal union of all people irrespective of religious traditions and the Muslim belief in a common union even from birth demonstrate that all human beings are not only wired to Allah/God but also to one another. Despite the obvious commonalities of union between the two traditions, Christians and Muslims of Ghana should note that both Christian “Grace” and Muslim “*Dīn al-ḥiṭrah*” approaches also acknowledge striking differences between the traditions which have to be respected. These differences are not only noted in their historical origins and developments but also in the contents of their moral, legal and religious values. For instance, the dissimilarity between the Muslim belief in Jesus as a prophet and the Christian claim of him as God is not superficial. While the Muslim Jesus is not worthy of worship the Christian Jesus is the subject of worship. Thus, in many ways, the differences are real. However, the obvious variations thus acknowledged between Christianity and Islam ought not only be seen solely a liability but also an asset. The differences between the two religions are not meant to generate competition amongst them but to foster cooperation for human advancement. The two concepts, in their own ways, suggest the possibility of a common platform for engaging each other for mutual benefit/enrichment.

Salvation “Possible” for Non adherents too

The Christian “Grace” and Muslim “*Dīn al-ḥiṭrah*” also leave salvation in the hands of God/Allāh and so offer non-adherents of their respective traditions the possibility of salvation. Christians and Muslims ought to eschew all forms of extreme interpretation of their religious beliefs which apart from limiting salvation to members of their particular tradition also entirely demonise the membership of others. These theological positions

also depict that religious traditions do not only have exclusivist stance but they also have inclusivist ones. This means that the adoption of either exclusivist or inclusivist attitude by Muslims and Christians is more a matter of personal temperament or choice than the only acceptable religious position or interpretation of their traditions. This calls for a certain restraint in wild characterisation of the other religion as lacking authenticity and so incapable of bring about salvation to their adherents.

Conclusion

The Christian “Grace” and Muslim “*Dīn al-ḥaqq*” are inclusivist theological positions which attempt to include the “non adherents” and their religious traditions in matters of salvation. Inclusivist position is one of the several approaches to the understanding of the relationship between religions, which asserts that while one set of beliefs is absolutely true, other sets of beliefs are at least partially true. It holds that salvation is made available through only one religious tradition and that this should be understood inclusively, so that members of other religious communities may be saved. This stance has become all the more important because on the whole missionary endeavours have achieved little positive outcomes in the light of the fact that the great majority of people still hold on to the religion into which they were born. Between Christianity and Islam there have been little more than rather rare individual conversions. Even in Africa where both Christianity and Islam seem to be making inroads the greater part of the conversions have been from the adherents of traditional religion. Conversion from Christianity to Islam and Islam to Christianity has been insignificant despite the huge effort and time invested in the project. It is argued in this paper that these inclusive Christian and Muslim positions on inter religious relations though respectively offer partial or secondary authenticity to the other religious tradition are required steps in the right direction which have practical ramifications for Christian-Muslims encounters in Ghana.

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Perceptions of Homosexuality in Romans 1:26-27 in the Ghanaian Bible Reading Communities: What Does the Text Say?

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ABSTRACT

Romans 1:26-27 is one of the texts quoted extensively by both proponents of homosexuality and those who think homosexuality is unbiblical. This text which is the most descriptive on homosexual act has been subjected to various translations in order to justify or condemn the practice. There are even theologians who posit that the text does not talk about homosexuality at all. The Exegesis of the text however reveals that all translations in favour of homosexual practice are not in tune with the text because they are contrary to the Greek text of Romans 1:26-27 which describes homosexuality as unnatural and dishonorable. An exegesis of the text reveals that, those who practice homosexuality are under the influence of a strange lust which compels them to destroy their bodies in unnatural passion.

Introduction

According to Geisler L Norman, the most descriptive passage on homosexual act in the Bible is recorded in Romans 1:26-27, the descriptions of the sin of homosexuality is virtually unrivaled anywhere in scripture.² The Romans 1:26-27 text appears to be against same sex activities otherwise called homosexuality or gay, but pro-gay theologians have advanced a number of translations of the text to excuse homosexuals.

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² L N Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options*, Second Edition (Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 291.

In this study, we are looking at the Greek text exegetically to bring out the closest meaning in English and Asante/Akuapem Twi equivalence to the Greek text as compared to the translation in the Asante/Akuapem Twi Bible in an attempt to find out if the text concerns itself with homosexuality or not. The second is to find out if Romans 1:26-27 is against homosexuality or not.

The Homosexual Issue in Africa

The traditional African shy away from sexual discussions be it heterosexual or homosexual, and even just mentioning sexual parts in public. Many frown on the thought of a woman having sex with another woman not imagining peno-anal intercourse between two males. Gay-right groups are speaking out in Africa like the rest of the world and are seeking legislation to protect homosexuals.³

In response, the governments of countries like Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Rwanda have voiced their repugnance and anger against the idea that same sex attraction should be legalized. Over the past decade, a discussion of homosexuality has moved from being a taboo topic to a center stage, far from being against religious teachings in general and Christian doctrine in particular. A precipitation factor was the election in 2003 of an openly gay bishop, Gene Robinson by the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. As a result many Anglican Church leaders in Africa threatened to break away from the Anglican Communion.⁴

However the Nobel Peace laurel, the Anglican Archbishop who was the former head of both the Anglican Church and Christian Council of South Africa on 29th July 2013 declared he would not worship a homophobic⁵ God, and would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven.⁶

³ F Adjeley, Is the Homosexual my Neighbour? *Life Journal*, vol. 138, (Accra : F & G Publications, 2012), 17.

⁴ D Conkin, Christian Church and Homosexuality. *Bay Area Reporter*, Vol. 2490 (San Francisco: 2009), 14.

⁵ Unsubstantiated and Irrational fears or hostility toward homosexuals.

⁶ N Mezgie, Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu says he would choose Hell over Homophobic Heaven [online] [2013] available at: <http://CP World.goggle.com>. Accessed on 14 September 2013.

The Presbyterian Church of the United States of America in 2011 General Assembly took a decision to ordain gays and lesbians as pastors and on March 2015, the presbyteries voted to change the definition of marriage in the church's constitution from "between a man and a woman" to "between two people". This is to pave the way for same-sex marriage in the church.⁷ However, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana during their 11th General Assembly took a decision to sever ties with all churches who ordain homosexuals as ministers and accepts same sex marriage.⁸ Ironically both pro and anti-gay proponents use Romans 1:26-27 as their bases for accepting or rejecting homosexuality.

Bible Translation Methods

According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Bible translation and interpretation over the past few centuries have been categorized into three broad areas. First, there are those that locate the meaning of the text in the world behind the text; second, those that locate the meaning of the text in the world within the text; and third, those that locate the meaning of the given text in world in front of the text. The first group 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 suggest that authentic meaning is derived from the text and not outside the text. The third category which is the newest 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 meanings⁹.

It is obvious the pro-gay translation relied heavily on the third and ended up with different meaning from the original text. This methodology which is reader-centered is based on the presupposition that "once the text leaves the

⁷ L Goodstein, Largest Presbyterian Denomination Gives Final Approval for Same-Sex Marriage [online] [2015] available at: <http://goggle.com>. Accessed on 9th April 2015.

⁸ Osei, Homosexuality: Different Perspective, 19.

⁹ J E T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana, *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, Vol. 3. 4 (2012): 3.

hands of the author, the author's intention and entire matrix of originating circumstances lose any claim of being constitutive of meaning. It runs contrary to the position of formalist critics, who claim that a text itself has autonomy, and provides the objective standard of meaning.

Based on the third method, a number of arguments have been advanced by gay right theologians. The following are some of the postulations:

- It was pederasty in the Greco-Roman society which Paul was addressing. According to this argument, Paul was portraying the reckless, shameless, profligate, promiscuous behavior of people whom God has judiciary 'given up' therefore it has nothing to do with committed, loving homosexual partners and Paul's cultural barriers make his teaching on homosexuality irrelevant.
- Furthermore Paul was not addressing himself to our question (modern day homosexuals), for he knew nothing of the homosexual conditions of post Freudian psychology but knew a practice. The apostle did not know that two males or two females could fall in love and develop deeply loving, stable relationship comparable to marriage.¹⁰
- According to a similar argument, Paul was not aware of the distinction between 'inverts', people with homosexual disposition and 'perverts', heterosexuals who indulge in homosexual practices. Paul was therefore condemning the heterosexuals who out of lust indulged in homosexuality and not those who are born homosexuals. That is why Paul states that 'they abandoned natural relations with women and it is obvious invert homosexual males do not ever have such relationship with women and the same applies to their females.'¹¹
- There is the other argument that Paul spoke about what was "unnatural" in Romans 1:26-27, he was not declaring that homosexuality was morally wrong but that heterosexual activity was unnatural for homosexuals so "unnatural" was used in the sociological sense rather than biological. Therefore the passage approves homosexual sex for homosexuals which is natural for them but against heterosexuals who acts like homosexuals.¹²

¹⁰ J Stott, Romans: God's Good News to the World. Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1994, 77.

¹¹ Stott, Romans, 77.

¹² L N Geisler, Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues & Options. 2nd Ed. (Michigan: Baker Academic 2010), 282.

The New Testament Text and Translation of Romans 1:26-27 Nestle-Aland Greek-English New Testament Text for Romans 1:26-27

26 Διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεναὐτοὺς ὁ Θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας αἷ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν²⁷ ὁμοίως τεκαὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες.

Transliteration of Romans 1:26-27

26 *Dia touto paredōkenautous ho Theos eis pathē atimias, hai te gar thēleiai autōn metēllaxan tēn physikēn krēsin eis tēn para physin.*
27 *Homoioīs tekai hoi arsenesaphentes tēn physikēn chrēsin tēs thēleias exekauthēsan en tē orexei autōn eisallēlous, arsenes en arsesin tēn aschēmosunen katergazomenoi kai tēn antimisthian hēn edei tēs planēs autōn en heautois apolambanontes.*

Exegesis of Romans 1:26-27

Διὰ τοῦτο (**because of that**)

The Greek equivalent διὰ τοῦτο (*dia touto*) “διὰ (*dia*) is a preposition, an accusative meaning, ‘through,’ ‘by means of,’ ‘with,’ ‘during,’ ‘because of,’ ‘on account of,’ ‘for the sake of’¹³. “τοῦτο (*touto*) is a demonstrative pronoun and adjective meaning, “this,’ ‘this one’; ‘he,’ ‘she,’ ‘it’; e.g. τοῦτ ἔστιν refers to, ‘that is,’ ‘which means.’”¹⁴ Therefore, the Greek phrase διὰ τοῦτο (*dia touto*) means “therefore,’ ‘for this reason,’ ‘because of this,’ ‘because of that.’” “διὰ τοῦτο therefore “refer to the sin described in verse 25.”¹⁵

παρέδωκεναὐτοὺς ὁ Θεὸς εἰς (**God abandoned them into**)

The Greek word, ὁ θεός (*hotheos*) is a noun, nominative masculine singular

¹³ J P Louw, & E A Nida, (ed.) *The Greek Lexicon*, (London: Bagster & Sons Ltd, 1971), 90.

¹⁴ Louw & Nida (ed.) *The Greek Lexicon*, 407.

¹⁵ W G T Shed, *Commentary on Romans*, (Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1980), 27.

referring to, ‘a deity’, ‘an idol,’ ‘the true God’, a god and in the feminine form ,η θεός. ‘goddess.’¹⁶ The word is also used for the true God in Matthew Gospel chapter 3: 9, and refers to God who possesses the true Godhead in John 1:1.¹⁷ Here it means God, the Creator who caused all things into existence and made laws to govern what He created.

The Greek παρέδωκεν (*paredōken*) is a verb indicative aorist active 3rd person singular which means, ‘to hand or give over,’ ‘deliver up,’ ‘betray,’ ‘deliver’ (to death), ‘entrust,’ ‘commit,’ ‘give,’ ‘hand down,’ ‘pass on,’ ‘commend,’ ‘risk,’ ‘permit’. Man’s punishment is to be abandoned by God.”¹⁸ The word εἰς (eis) is a preposition which may be translated as, ‘into,’ ‘to,’ ‘in,’ ‘at,’ ‘on,’ ‘upon,’ ‘by,’ ‘near;’ ‘among,’ ‘against,’ ‘concerning,’ ‘as,’ εἰς το, (*eis to*) denotes purpose and sometimes result.”¹⁹

“Abandonment is therefore a sign of one of the forms God’s wrath takes when He allows us free reign to continue in our abuse of creation and our abuse of one another as creatures.”²⁰ F F Bruce commenting on verse 26 states that because they worshipped the creature rather than the Creator, God gave them up to corrupt affections.²¹

πάθη ἀτιμίας (**dishonorable passion**)

ἀτιμίας (*atimias*) is a noun genitive feminine singular which may indicate, ‘disgrace’, ‘dishonour’, ‘shame’, ‘humiliation.’²² “It is from ἀτιμος, (*atimos*) ‘without honour’, ‘ignoble.’²³”

¹⁶ Louw&Nida (ed.) *The Greek Lexicon*, 193.

¹⁷ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon: consisting of an Alphabetical Arrangement of every occurring inflection of every word contained in the Greek New Testament Scriptures with Grammatical Analysis of each word, a complete series of paradigms*, (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Ltd), 193.

¹⁸ J M Boice, *Romans 1* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1991), 178.

¹⁹ A H Boice, *Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapid, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 512.

²⁰ Mounce, *The New American Commentary*, 83.

²¹ F F Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans an Introduction and Commentary*, (Grand Rapid, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 41.

²² S Kubo, *A Reader’s Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament*, IV (Michigan: Andrews University Press and Zondervan, 1975), 134.

²³ Louw&Nida (ed.) *The Greek Lexicon*, 58.

The word *atimia* as compared to the Greek for honour, *timē* comes from the Greek *tio* the verbal form to estimate honour. To dishonour a person is to put an incorrect appraisal upon his worth and treat him accordingly or having properly evaluated his character, to refuse to treat him with respect and deference which is his due. The passions controlling these of whom Paul is speaking caused them to put an incorrect estimate upon the sacredness, dignity, and purity of the physical body and thus to use it in a way which dishonours it.²⁴

The Greek, “πάθη (*pathē*), is a noun accusative neuter plural which means lustful passion. It is from παθημα “(*pathēma*), ‘an affection’, ‘a passion.’”²⁵ It comes from παθος (*pathos*) which means passion of a disease nature, also a disease lust or ‘suffering.’²⁶ Passion indicates intense or overpowering emotion such as love, joy, hatred, or anger. It can also mean strong sexual desire, lust and excitement.²⁷

θήλειαι (their females)

The Greek word θήλειαι (*thēleiai*) which is an adjective, nominative feminine plural meaning female and sometimes woman from the word θήλυς (*thēlus*)²⁸. “However the word for “women” is not the word used as in John 4:9, γενε (*genē*), but θήλυς (*thēlus*) a “female.”²⁹ γυναικες (*gunaikes*) “woman” was not used because the notion of sex is the point of view.”³⁰

μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν (changed the natural use)

The Greek word μετήλλαξαν (*metēllaxan*) is a verb indicative aorist active third person plural meaning “exchange.” “It comes from the word “change” μεταλασσο (*metallasso*), to exchange one thing for another.”³¹ Their females exchange natural intercourse for that which is contrary to nature. In

²⁴ K S Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, (London: Pickering & Inglis Ltd., 1947), 35.

²⁵ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 35.

²⁶ Kubo, *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon*, 135.

²⁷ *Encarta Dictionary*.

²⁸ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 194.

²⁹ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 35.

³⁰ Shed, *Commentary on Romans*, 27.

³¹ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 35.

English “change” could indicate alteration, variation, or modification, or the result of the above. From the exegesis, μετέλλαξαν could be the equivalent to the word ‘change’ in English.

The word, χρῆσιν (*chrēsin*) is a noun, an accusative feminine singular which can mean ‘use’, or ‘usage.’³² “It comes from χρῆσις (*chrēsis*), which functions as sexual intercourse. χρῆσις (*chrēsis*) is the sexual use of women”³³. It is usually translated ‘use’ and also means to employ. It connotes getting benefit or satisfaction from something³⁴.

Παράφύσιν (contrary to nature)

The phrase παρα φύσιν (*para phusin*) is made up of two Greek words παρα (*para*) and φύσιν (*phusin*). The word παρα. (*para*) is a preposition, accusative which means, ‘in the presence of’, ‘before’, ‘near’, ‘beside’, ‘for’, ‘on’, ‘along’, ‘more than’, ‘above’, ‘rather than’, ‘against or contrary to.’³⁵ In the context of παρα (*para*) and φύσιν (*phusin*), ‘beside’, ‘rather than’, ‘against’ or ‘contrary to’, make sense than the other alternatives. Therefore παρα (*para*) can mean “beside”, “rather than”, “against” or “contrary to”, that is the opposite of κατά (*kata*) which is ‘according to’ or ‘in accord.’

φύσιν (*phusin*) is a noun accusative feminine singular common, from the word φύσις (*phusis*), meaning “nature” and can mean “natural condition.” “φύσιν (*phusin*) appeals to ‘nature’ in the sense of the order manifest in the created world. In I Corinthians 11:14 ἡ φύσις (*hē phusis*) is translated ‘the very way God has made us.’³⁶ The form “φυσικῆν (*phusikēn*), is an adjective, accusative feminine singular from the word φυσικός (*phusikos*), meaning, ‘natural,’ ‘in accord with nature’³⁷ φυσικῆν (*phusis*) is natural, that is ‘the nature of things’, ‘the force’, ‘laws’, ‘order of nature as opposed to that which is monstrous’, ‘abnormal’, ‘perverse.’³⁸”

³² Kubo, *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon*, 134.

³³ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 35.

³⁴ *Encarta Dictionary*.

³⁵ Shed, *Commentary on Romans*, 27.

³⁶ Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 125, 126.

³⁷ Kubo, *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon*, 134.

³⁸ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 35, 36

Therefore, παραφύσιν (*para phusin*) is closer to “beside nature”, “rather than natural”, “against nature”, “contrary to nature”. According to Stott, there is enough proof that the opposite of ‘natural’ κατὰ φύσιν (*kata phusin*) and ‘unnatural’ παρα. φύσιν (*paraphusin*) was ‘often applied in distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual habits. Stott is thereby agreeing τοπαρα φύσιν (*para phusin*) as meaning unnatural. He however links the phrase with homosexuality as opposed to κατα φύσιν (*kata phusin*) referring to heterosexual behavior. By so doing, he is supporting Richard B Hays who provides ample contemporary evidence that opposition of ‘natural’ παρα φύσιν (*para phusin*) and ‘unnatural’κατα φύσιν (*kata phusin*) was very frequently used as a way of distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual behavior⁴⁰.

τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν παρὰ φύσιν (*te gar thēleiai autōn metēllaxan tēn phusikēn krēsīn eis tēn para phusin*) therefore indicates, ‘their females (women) exchanged the natural sexual relation (which is in line with nature) into that which is against (contrary to) nature.’⁴¹ By φυσικὴν (*phusikēn*) (here used to describe that which is κατὰ φύσιν (*kata phusin*) and παρὰ φύσιν (*para phusin*). Paul clearly means in accordance with the intention of the Creator’ and ‘contrary to the intention of the Creator,’ respectively.⁴²

Ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες (similarly their men)

The Greek ὁμοίως (*homoiōs*) is an adverb meaning, ‘similarly’ “in the same way’, ‘in a similar manner,’ ‘likewise,’ ‘too’, ‘so.’⁴³ “It is from the root word ὁμός (*homos*) ‘like’, (*homos*) ‘like’, ‘similar’, ‘resembling,’ ‘like of similar drift and force.’ “It is similar to τε καὶ (*tekai*) which means, ‘not only,’ ‘but also.’⁴⁴

ἄρσενες (*arsenes*) is an adjective nominative masculine plural which means “male.” However being plural it could be translated into English as

³⁹ Stott, *Romans*, 78.

⁴⁰ Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, (Michigan: Zondervan, 1999), 399.

⁴¹ Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 46.

⁴² Cranfield, *The International Critical Commentary*, 125, 126.

⁴³ Kubo, *A Reader’s Greek-English Lexicon*, 134.

⁴⁴ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 288.

“males”. Men indicate adult human males’ and also particular type of men, adult males with a particular occupation, responsibility, background, or nationality.⁴⁵ The dative is ἄρσεσιν (*arsesin*), therefore the expression, “ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν” (*arsenes en arsesin*) literary means ‘male in male’, ‘male with male’, ‘male near male’, or ‘male within male’ and so on. Because the Greek ἐν (*en*) is a preposition which could mean, ‘with in,’ ‘on,’ ‘at,’ ‘near,’ ‘by,’ ‘before,’ ‘among,’ ‘within,’ ‘by,’ ‘with.’⁴⁶

ἀφέντες (neglect)

The Greek “ἀφέντες (*aphentes*) a verb participle aorist active nominative masculine plural meaning, ‘cancel,’ ‘forgive,’ ‘abandon,’ ‘remit’ (of sin or debts), ‘allow,’ ‘let be,’ ‘tolerate,’ ‘neglect,’ ‘let go,’ ‘dismiss,’ ‘divorce.’ It is from ἀφίημι (*aphiēmi*), ‘to emit,’ ‘to permit,’ ‘forbid not,’ ‘pardon,’ ‘expire,’ ‘to leave behind, which is to neglect.’⁴⁷ The English word “neglect” indicates failing to provide the required attention and care to something or a person. It also indicates inability to perform mostly out of negligence or indifference.⁴⁸

ἐξεκαύθησαν (be inflamed)

The word, ἐξεκαύθησαν (*exekauthēsan*) is a verb indicative aorist passive 3rd person plural which means, ‘be inflamed’ (of lust). “It comes from ἐκκαίω (*ekkaīō*) which means to burn out. The word ἐκ (*ek*) prefixed to the verb intensifies its meaning, indicating that their lust was satiated. It was an all-out endeavor to satisfy their totally depraved natures⁴⁹ The word also means “burn out” or “up”, a stronger word than πυρουσθαί, (*purousthai*) in 1 Corinthians 7: 9. The intensity of the appetite inflamed by unnatural instruments is denoted.⁵⁰ It gives a sense of intoxication, hence intoxicatingly consuming lust. The word “inflamed” is a past participle meaning to provoke a powerful response in somebody, to excite an intense emotion, especially anger or jealousy. It also indicates making an emotion such as anger or jealousy become more intense. Consuming intoxication is closer to the Greek ἐξεκαύθησαν

⁴⁵ *Encarta Dictionary*.

⁴⁶ Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 48.

⁴⁷ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 62.

⁴⁸ *Encarta Dictionary*.

⁴⁹ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 36.

⁵⁰ Shed, *Commentary on Romans*, 28.

⁵¹ *Encarta Dictionary*.

ὀρέξει (lust)

The Greek ὀρέξειQ(*orexei*) is a noun dative feminine singular from ὄρεξις (*orexis*), “lustful passion.” Lust here is not the usual word used ἐπιθυμία (*epithumia*) “a passionate craving,” but ὄρεξις (*orexis*) “eager desire,” ‘lust’, ‘appetite.’⁵² The root word “ὄρεγο (*orego*) means ‘to extend,’ ‘stretch out,’ ‘to desire earnestly,’ ‘long after’ (1Tim. 3:1, Heb. 11:16), by implication ‘to indulge in,’ ‘be devoted to’, (1Ti 6:10).”⁵³ The men out of passion to have fellow men stretched themselves with lust and eagerly desired for each other. It appears like great thirst for same sex which is uncontrollable in the men.

αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους (one another)

The Greek word is preceded with αὐτῶν εἰς (*autōn eis*). The Greek αὐτῶν (*autōn*) is a pronoun, personal genitive masculine plural therefore it could be translated “man himself.” We can therefore get “man himself into one another.” Because the Greek ἀλλήλους (*allēlous*) is a pronoun reciprocal accusative masculine plural meaning, “of one another.” “One another” indicates several members of a group, to the others. The traditional rule is that each other refer to two items and one another refer to more than two.⁵⁴ Burn in their lust one toward another of the same sex. The intensity of the passion is indicated by the word ‘burned.’⁵⁵ The phrase ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους (*orexei autōn eis allēlous*) indicates men who out of burning lust eagerly craved for each other sexually.

ἀσχημοσύνην (debasement in a reprehensible way)

The Greek word “ἀσχημοσύνην (*aschēmosunēn*) a noun accusative feminine singular, which indicates shameless deed or shameless act, shame of nakedness.”⁵⁶ It is from ἀσχημοσύνη (“*aschēmosunē*), “want of form, ‘disfigurement,’ ‘deformed,’ ‘one’s nakedness,’ ‘shame.’” The word refers here to that which is unseemly in that it is immodest, degrading, shameful.”⁵⁷ To “debase” is to reduce in status, significance, or moral

⁵² Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 36.

⁵³ The *Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 291.

⁵⁴ *Encarta Dictionary*.

⁵⁵ Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 48.

⁵⁶ Kubo, *A Reader’s Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament*, 134.

⁵⁷ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 36.

worth. It also means to reduce in rank, to reduce somebody in status, significance, or moral worth. The word ‘reprehensible’ means highly unacceptable and deserving censure.⁵⁸ Therefore, debasing in reprehensible ways indicates a situation or an act which is highly unacceptable and offensive requiring instant condemnation and censorship. It means reducing a quality into a disgraceful value which is reproachful.

κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν (repercussion for their deeds)

Ἀντιμισθίαν (*antimisthian*) from ἀντιμισθία (*antimisthia*), a noun accusative feminine singular meaning, ‘response,’ ‘repercussion,’ ‘penalty,’ ‘punishment’⁵⁹. “A reward given in compensation,’ ‘requital,’ ‘recompense.’ The word here refers to the natural results of their deed which pays them back for what they have done, as a person who contemplates doing something wrong says, “I suppose I shall pay for this.”⁶⁰

The Greek word κατεργαζόμενοι (*katergazomenoi*) is a verb participle present middle nominative masculine plural from κατεργάζομαι (*katergazomai*). It is made up of two words κατα(*kata*) ἀδεργαζόμενοι (*ergazomenoi*) meaning “to work out,’ ‘to effect,’ ‘to produce’ ‘bring out as a result;’ ‘to work,’ ‘practice,’ ‘realize in practice;’ ‘to work or ‘mold into fitness.”⁶¹ “Working” is κατεργάζομαι (*katergazomai*) “to perform,’ ‘accomplish,’ ‘produce,’ ‘bring about,’ ‘work out;’ ‘prepare,’ ‘make ready,’ ‘overcome,’ ‘conquer.”⁶² The phrase that follows throws more light on it ἡν᾽δεῖται τῆς πλάνης (*hēnedeitēsplanēs*) “an inevitability response of their wrong doing or error.” The reward for their πλάνης (*planēs*) wandering from God is here which according to the text is same sex practices.

Ἦν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης (necessary for their error)

ἔδει (*edei*) is a verb indicative imperfect active 3rd person singular which comes from δεῖ (*dei*), ‘be necessary,’ ‘must,’ ‘should,’ ‘ought,’ ‘be proper,’

⁵⁸ *Encarta Dictionary*.

⁵⁹ Kubo, *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon*, 134.

⁶⁰ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 36.

⁶¹ *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, 223.

⁶² Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 36.

‘had to,’ ‘should have.’ “The necessity fixed and made certain by the divine appointment.”⁶³ The evil consequences were necessary as ordained by divine law. “Necessary” means an inevitability given what has happened previously or important response in order to achieve a specific result.⁶⁴ When one violates the laws of nature, one must pay the price.

Πλάνης (*planēs*) is a noun genitive feminine singular from πλάνη (*planē*), “error, ‘deceit,’ ‘deception,’ ‘delusion.” The word “error” indicates something unintentionally done wrong as a result of poor judgment or lack of care. Also a belief or opinion that is contrary to established fact or to established doctrine. “Error” ἰσπλάνη (*planē*), “a wandering,” “roving,” thus “a deviation.”⁶⁵ Shedd notes that, the literal meaning of the word πλάνη (*planē*) must be kept in mind; they had wandered away from the true God, in the manner described. The evil consequences are internal in their own souls and bodies; and mutually communicated to one another and received from one another.⁶⁶

ἐνέαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες (receiving in themselves)

The Greek ἀπολαμβάνοντες (*apolambanontes*) is a verb participle present active nominative masculine plural from ἀπολαμβάνω (*apolambanō*), meaning ‘receive,’ ‘get back,’ ‘recover,’ ‘take aside.’⁶⁷ The word ‘receiving’ in English is third person present singular of the word “receive,” which is ‘taking’ or ‘accepting’ something given.⁶⁸ Ἐαυτοῖς (*heautois*) is a reflexive pronoun meaning, ‘himself’, ‘herself’, ‘itself’, ‘themselves’ and when acting as reciprocal pronoun, ‘one another,’ ‘each other’; τοῦ ἐαυτοῦ (*to heautou*) one's own interest or advantage.

Meaning Derived from Exegesis of Romans 1: 26-27

According to the exegesis, the females exchanged (changed) natural sexual relationship μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν into what is contrary to nature παρὰ φύσιν. The verse 26 neither specifies what the unnatural sex was nor

⁶³ Shed, *Commentary on Romans*, 29.

⁶⁴ *Encarta Dictionary*.

⁶⁵ Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, 36.

⁶⁶ Shed, *Commentary on Romans*, 29.

⁶⁷ Kubo, *A Reader's Greek-English Lexicon*, 134.

⁶⁸ *Encarta Dictionary*.

what the natural sex was. However, the verse 27 started with ὁμοίως likewise which linked the two verses together. In the verse 27 the text described sexual activities with the opposite sex as natural οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν and men sleeping with men as unnatural and reproachful deed ἀσχημοσύνην Romans 1:26-27 is describing how women and men changed what is natural sexual relationship for unnatural sexual relationships. The text identifies the unnatural sex practice as homosexuality. According to the text, homosexual practice is not just shameful but degrades the very humanity of perpetrators because it is contrary to nature. “God gave them over to shameful lusts, which Paul specifies as lesbian practices (26) and male homosexual relationships (27). The use of ἔδει (*edei*) and “ἀπολαμβάνοντες (*apolambanontes*) indicates a punishment which is received from the worship of the creature and here as a result of what had been done against the order of nature they are destroying their bodies by unnatural sex. The sexual perversion in verse 26-27 is the consequence for what happened in verses 18-25 as a result of God’s wrath.

Translation of Romans 1:26-27 into Asante-Twi

Twere Kronkron Akan Kasa mu(Asante-Twi, 2008)

²⁶Yei nti Onyankopɔn gyaa wɔn maa aniwuo akɔnnɔ. Na wɔn mmaa de honam fam ayɔnkofa yɛbea a eyɛ ne kwan sɔɔ no sesaa deɛ emfa ne kwan sɔɔ; ²⁷Saa ara nso na mmarima gyaa wɔne ɔbaa honam fam ayɔnkofa yɛbea a eyɛ ne kwan sɔɔ no ma wɔn [mfɛfoɔ mmarima] ho akɔnnɔ dɛree wɔn mu, nammarima ne mmarima yɛɛ adapaadeɛ, na wɔde nyaa akatua a eɛɛ wɔn nnaadaa wɔn ankasa mu.

[²⁶Because of this God abandoned them to dishonorable passion. Their women changed the orderly carnal relationship to what is not orderly; ²⁷Likewise, their men abandoned the carnal relationship between women which is right; rather they allowed themselves to be inflamed by lust for fellow men; therefore men and men committed despicable act, and received in themselves a deserving reward according to their deception.]

Short Falls in the Akuapem/Asante Twi Bible Translation of Romans 1:26-27

Translation of the Bible into a new language should be closer to the source text as much possible while the text must be sensitive to the terminologies

used in the recipient community. This helps the readers to acquaint and identify themselves with the text. The rendering of the Greek phrase *παρὰ φύσιν* as *emfa ne kwan soo* “out of its order” by the Asante and Akuapem-Twi is ambiguous. *παρὰ φύσιν* appeals to nature, therefore nature cannot be ignored in the translation of the phrase. *μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴ νυχῆσιν* is also translated as *honam fam ayonkofa yebea a eye ne kwan soo no* which means, “the right relationship according to the flesh.” *Honam* in the Akan language is used chiefly in reference to the “flesh” almost all the time rather than nature. *Flesh* is *σαρκη* in Greek, in Galatians 5:19 we have *τῆς σαρκός* which is noun genitive feminine singular meaning “the flesh”. According to the text, the flesh manifests a host of sin indicating that flesh produces sin. The Asante Twi Bible renders the Galatians 5:19 as, “Na honam nnwuma no da adi pefee... Therefore *τῆς σαρκός* is rendered *honam* meaning “flesh” which is sinful according to the passage.

However *φυσικὴν* “*abodee*”, in Romans 1:26-27, is the right way but not sinful. It is rather *παρὰ φύσιν* which corresponds to *τῆς σαρκός* the flesh; sinful *ωψυχρῆσιν* translated as “use” also indicates “sexual use” is also translated as *ayonkofa* “relationship” in the Asante Twi and Akuapem Twi Bibles. While *ayonkofa* is broad, the use of *honam fam* to qualify it makes it even ambiguous. There are some *honam fam ayonkofa* where there cannot be sexual contact while there are relationships where sexual contact is inevitable. *Honam fam ayonkofa* can exist between two females or males as well as between the opposite sex without sexual considerations. It can even be between blood relations hence, the sexual aspect is eradicated but *χρῆσιν* is sexual use.

Another translation difficulty in the text is the rendition of the sentence *κατεργαζόμενοι καὶ τὴν ἀντιμισθίαν ἣν ἔδει τῆς πλάνης αὐτῶν ἐνέαυτοῖς ἀπολαμβάνοντες* in the Twi Bibles. During the exegesis it came out that the words *κατα* and *εργαζόμενοι* mean “to work out”, “to effect”, “to produce” “bring out as a result.” There is the indication that those who were practising same sex were into something which was creating homosexual lust in them. *ἀπολαμβάνοντες* being verb participle present middle nominative active indicates an activity which has been done and still going on. Therefore the worship of the creature instead of the Creator is ongoing and producing effects.

The phrase that follows throws more light on it ἡ ἔδει τῆς πλάνης “an inevitable response of their wrong doing or error.” The reward for their πλάνης is here with them themselves according to the text, it is same sex practices. It therefore refers to the apostasy; the worship of creation recorded in verse 25 but not the same sex practices. The opening of the verse 26 states that they were abandoned to dishonourable passion because of an earlier wrong doing διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας

Paul was not warning them about a repercussion for their homosexuality as the Asante and Akuapem Twi Bible translations seek to indicate. The use of ἔδει and ἀπολαμβάνοντες indicates a punishment which is inevitable from creature worship and here as a result of what had been done against the order of nature. Naturally the Creator rather than the created should be worshiped, they did otherwise, and by so doing destroyed their bodies by unnatural sex. The sexual perversion in verses 26-27 are the punishment for what happened in verses 18-25.

Translation of Romans 1:26-27 into Asante Twi

For better understanding of the above text by the Akuapem and Asante reading communities, and a better representation of the Greek text, it should be translated thus:

26Ne saa nti Onyankopɔn gyaa wɔn maa aniwu akɔnnɔ a egu nnipa ho fi.. Eyi maa wɔn mmaa danee sɛdɛɛ abɔdɛɛ nhyehyei mu no mmaa ne mmarima nya nhyiamu die na mmom mmaa ne mmaa daeɛ sɛ dea maa ne mmarima da no, nanso etia abɔdɛɛ nhyehye so. 27Saa kwan no ara so na mmarima nso poo mmaa ne mmarima fam ayɔnkofa wɔ abɔdɛɛ mmra kwan so, na emom wɔ nyaa akɔnnɔ atenka denden maa wɔn mfɛfoɔ mmarima, na wɔn mfɛfoɔ mmarima ho akɔnnɔ deree sɛ ogya wɔ wɔn akwaa mu ma wɔsei wɔn ho wɔ adapaade ne aniwude a ene mmarima ne mmarima nna mu, εno ne wɔn ndwuma εtwe a wɔtwe firii Onyankopɔng hoɔ so akatua a εsɛ wɔn.

[²⁶Because of that, God gave them up into dishonorable passion. Indeed their females changed natural sexual relationship with men into female and female sexual relationship which is contrary to nature. ²⁷Similarly, the males abandoned what is natural, which is sexual relationship with females and rather got inflamed with intoxicating lust for one another, males towards males debasing themselves in a reprehensible and reproachful way

by males having sexual relationship with fellow males which is the inevitable repercussion of their wandering from God].

Meaning of Romans 1:26-27

From the exegesis, it is clear that Paul in Romans 1:26-27 was talking about homosexuality in general as a practice which is ignoble of the highest order. He refers to it as παραφύσιν (*paraphusin*) against nature or unnatural and dishonorable. According to the text, the right and natural form of sexual intimacy is between members of the opposite sex. The Greek word μετήλλαξαν (*metēllaxan*) comes from the word “change” metallasso (*metallasso*), to exchange one thing for another which means there was something which was being changed, that was natural sexual practice between males and females φυσικὴν χρῆσιν. This was exchanged to what the text describes ἀσπαρὰ φύσιν (*paraphusin*), contrary to nature. The text then explains in the verse 27 that sex between men and women is the natural sexual practice which the men had abandoned ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας (*aphentes tēn physikēn chrēsintēs thēleias*). They had been intoxicated in thirsty lust which moved them to crave for fellow men. They therefore enter into themselves. The text can be applied to masturbation where the individual stimulates himself or herself for sexual pleasure, due to the use of τῆ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους (*tē orexeiautōn eisallēlous*). Filled with strong devouring lust, one with oneself, or people of the same sex themselves.

Conclusion

From the exegesis, it is clear that Paul was referring to homosexuality in general as a practice which is unnatural needing censorship. He refers to it as παραφύσιν (*paraphusin*) against nature, therefore is the practice which is unnatural. This means anyone who practise it, whether they are invert homosexuals or prevents are degrading themselves with unnatural sexual practice. According to the text, the right and natural form of sexual intimacy is between members of the opposite sex. Therefore so far as Romans 1:26-27 is concerned, homosexual acts are wrong hence Christians who trust the Bible as the word of God in a written form should not indulge in any form of homosexuality, either as masturbation with self or people of the same sex.

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