

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. 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 homophobic God, and would refuse to go to a homophobic heaven.⁵

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 Megzie, 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 meanings.⁹

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 *Dia. tou/to pare,dwkenauvtou.j o` Qeo.j eivj pa,qh avtimi,aj, ai[te ga.r qh,leiaj auvtw/n meth,llaxan th.n fusikh.n crh/sin eivj th.n para.*

27 *fu,sin, o`moi,wj tekai. oi` a;rsenejavfe,ntej th.n fusikh.n crh/sin th/j qhlei,aj evxekau,qhsan evn th/| ovre,xei auvtw/n eivjavllh,louj(a;rsenej evn a;rsesin th.n avschmosu,nhn katergazo,menoi kai. th.n avntimisqi,an hjn e;dei th/j pla,nhj auvtw/n evn e`autoi/j avpolamba,nontej*

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 *Homoiōs 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

Dia. tou/to (because of that)

The Greek equivalent *dia. tou/to* (*dia touto*) “*dia, (dia)* is a preposition, an accusative meaning, ‘through,’ ‘by means of,’ ‘with,’ ‘during,’ ‘because of,’ ‘on account of,’ ‘for the sake of’¹³. “*tou/to (touto)* is a demonstrative pronoun and adjective meaning, “this,’ ‘this one’; ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘it’; e.g. *tou/t/ e;stin* refers to, ‘that is,’ ‘which means.’”¹⁴ Therefore, the Greek phrase *dia. tou/to (dia touto)* means “therefore,’ ‘for this reason,’ ‘because of this,’ ‘because of that.’” “*dia. tou/to* therefore “refer to the sin described in verse 25.”¹⁵

pare,dwkenauvtou.j o` Qeo.j eivj (God abandoned them into)

The Greek word, *o` qeo.j (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 (h qeo.j) '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. Here it means God, the Creator who caused all things into existence and made laws to govern what He created.

The Greek *pare,dwken* (*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 *ei,j* (*eis*) is a preposition which may be translated as, "into,' 'to,' 'in,' 'at,' 'on,' 'upon,' 'by,' 'near,' 'among,' 'against,' 'concerning,' 'as,' *ei,j* to, (*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

pa,qh avtimi,aj (dishonorable passion)

avtimi,aj (*atimias*) is a noun genitive feminine singular which may indicate, 'disgrace', 'dishonour', 'shame', 'humiliation.'²² "It is from *avtimo,j*, (*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, “*pa,qh (pathē)*, is a noun accusative neuter plural which means lustful passion. It is from *paqhma* “(*pathēma*), ‘an affection’, ‘a passion.’” It comes from *paqoj (pathos)* which means passion of a disease nature, also a disease lust or ‘suffering.’²⁵ Passion indicates intense or overpowering emotion such as love, joy, hatred, or anger. It can also mean strong sexual desire, lust and excitement.²⁶²⁷

qh,leiai (their females)

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

meth,llaxan th.n fusikh.n crh/sin (changed the natural use)

The Greek word *meth,llaxan (metēllaxan)* is a verb indicative aorist active third person plural meaning “exchange.” “It comes from the word “change” *metallasso (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, *meth, llaxan* could be the equivalent to the word ‘change’ in English.

The word, *crh/sin (chrēsin)* is a noun, an accusative feminine singular which can mean ‘use’, or ‘usage’.³² “It comes from *crh/sij (chrēsis)*, which functions as sexual intercourse. *crh/sij (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.

Para.fu,sin (contrary to nature)

The phrase *para φύσιν (para phusin)* is made up of two Greek words *para (para)* and *φύσιν (phusin)*. The word *para. (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 *para (para)* and *φύσιν (phusin)*, ‘beside’, ‘rather than’, ‘against’ or ‘contrary to’, make sense than the other alternatives. Therefore *para (para)* can mean “beside”, “rather than”, “against” or “contrary to”, that is the opposite of *kata (kata)* which is ‘according to’ or ‘in accord.’

fu,sin (phusin) is a noun accusative feminine singular common, from the word *fu,sij (phusis)*, meaning “nature” and can mean “natural condition.” “*fu,sin (phusin)* appeals to ‘nature’ in the sense of the order manifest in the created world. In I Corinthians 11:14 *h` fu,sij (hē phusis)* is translated ‘the very way God has made us.’³⁶ The form “*fusikh.n (phusikēn)*, is an adjective, accusative feminine singular from the word *fusiko,j (phusikos)*, meaning, ‘natural,’ ‘in accord with nature’³⁷” *fusij, “(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’ *kata. fu, sin* (*kata phusin*) and ‘unnatural’ *para. fu, sin* (*paraphysin*) was ‘often applied in distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual habits. Stott is thereby agreeing to *para φύσιν* (*para phusin*) as meaning unnatural. He however links the phrase with homosexuality as opposed to *kata 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’ *para φύσιν* (*para phusin*) and ‘unnatural’ *kata φύσιν* (*kata phusin*) was very frequently used as a way of distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual behavior⁴⁰.

te ga.r qh,leiai auvtw/n meth,llaxan th.n fusikh.n crh/sin eivj th.n para. fu, sin (*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 *fusikh.n* (*phusikēn*) (here used to describe that which is *kata. fu, sin* (*kata phusin*) and *para. fu, sin* (*para phusin*)). Paul clearly means in accordance with the intention of the Creator’ and ‘contrary to the intention of the Creator,’ respectively.⁴²

Ο`μοι, wj tekai. oi` a;rsenej (similarly their men)

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

a;rsenej (*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 *a;rsesin* (*arsesin*), therefore the expression, “*a;rsenej evn a;rsesin*” (*arsenes en arsesin*) literary means ‘male in male’, ‘male with male’, ‘male near male’, or ‘male within male’ and so on. Because the Greek *evn* (*en*) is a preposition which could mean, ‘with in,’ ‘on,’ ‘at,’ ‘near,’ ‘by,’ ‘before,’ ‘among,’ ‘within,’ ‘by,’ ‘with.’⁴⁶

avfe,ntej (neglect)

The Greek “*avfe,ntej* (*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 *avfi,hmi* (*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

exekau,qhsan (be inflamed)

The word, *evxekau,qhsan* (*exekauthēsan*) is a verb indicative aorist passive 3rd person plural which means, ‘be inflamed’ (of lust). “It comes from *evkkai,w* (*ekkaiō*) which means to burn out. The word *evk* (*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 natures.⁴⁹ The word also means “burn out” or “up”, a stronger word than *purousqai*, (*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 *evxekau,qhsan*.

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*.

ovre,xei (lust)

The Greek *ovre,xei* (*orexei*) is an noun dative feminine singular from *o;rexij* (*orexis*), “lustful passion.” Lust here is not the usual word used *eriquimia* (*epithumia*) “a passionate craving,” but *o;rexij* (*orexis*) “eager desire,” ‘lust’, ‘appetite.’⁵² The root word “*o;rego* (*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.

aúv/w/n eivjavllh,louj (one another)

The Greek word is preceded with *aúv/w/n eivj* (*autōn eis*). The Greek *aúv/w/n* (*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 *avllh,louj* (*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 *ovre,xeiaúv/w/n eivj avllh,louj* (*orexeiautōn eis allēlous*) indicates men who out of burning lust eagerly craved for each other sexually.

avschmosu,nhn (debasing in a reprehensible way)

The Greek word “*avschmosu,nhn* (*aschēmosunēn*)” a noun accusative feminine singular, which indicates shameless deed or shameless act, shame of nakedness.”⁵⁶ It is from *avschmosu, nh* (“*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.

katergazo,menoi kai. th.n avntimisqi,an (repercussion for their deeds)

Avntimisqi,an (*antimisthian*) from avntimisqi,a (*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 *katergazo,menoi* (*katergazomenoi*) is a verb participle present middle nominative masculine plural from *katerga,zomai* (*katergazomai*). It is made up of two words *kata(kata)* *andergazo,menoi* (*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 *katerga,zomai* (*katergazomai*) “to perform,’ ‘accomplish,’ ‘produce,’ ‘bring about,’ ‘work out;’ ‘prepare,’ ‘make ready,’ ‘overcome,’ ‘conquer.’”⁶² The phrase that follows throws more light on it *h]ne;deith/j pla,nhj* (*hēnedeitēsplanēs*) “an inevitability response of their wrong doing or error.” The reward for their *pla,nhj* (*planēs*) wandering from God is here which according to the text is same sex practices.

H]n e;dei th/j pla,nhj (necessary for their error)

e;dei (*edei*) is a verb indicative imperfect active 3rd person singular which comes from *dei/* (*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.

Pla,nhj (*planēs*) is a noun genitive feminine singular from pla,nh, (*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” is pla,nh (*planē*), “a wandering,” “roving,” thus “a deviation.”⁶⁵ Shedd notes that, the literal meaning of the word pla,nh (*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

evne`autoi/j avpolamba,nontej (receiving in themselves)

The Greek avpolamba,nontej (*apolambanontes*) is a verb participle present active nominative masculine plural from avpolamba,nw (*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 E`autoi/j (*heautois*) is a reflexive pronoun meaning, ‘himself’, ‘herself’, ‘itself’, ‘themselves’ and when acting as reciprocal pronoun, ‘one another,’ ‘each other’; to. e`autou/ (*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 meth, llaxan th.n fusikh.n crh/sin into what is contrary to nature para. fu, sin. 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 o`moi,wj likewise which linked the two verses together. In the verse 27 the text described sexual activities with the opposite sex as natural oi` a;rsenej avfe,ntej th.n fusikh.n crh/sin and men sleeping with men as unnatural and reproachful deed avschmosu,nhn. 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 e;dei (*edei*) and “avpolamba,nontej (*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)

²⁶ Yei nti Onyankop]n gyaa w]n maa aniwuo ak]nn]. Na w]n mmaa de honam fam ay]nkofa y[bea a [y[ne kwan so] no sesaa de[[mfa ne kwan so];

²⁷ Saa ara nso na mmariima gyaa w]ne]baa honam fam ay]nkofa y[bea a [y[ne kwan so] no ma w]n [mf[fo] mmariima] ho ak]nn] d[ree w]n mu, nammarima ne mmariima y[[adapaade[, na w]de nyaa akatua a [s[w]n nnaadaa w]n ankasa mu.

²⁶ [Because of this God abandoned them to dishonorable passion. Their women changed the orderly carnal relationship to what is not

²⁷ orderly; Likewise, 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 *para.fu,sin* as [mfa ne kwan so] “out of its order” by the Asante and Akuapem-Twi is ambiguous. *para. fu,sin* appeals to nature, therefore nature cannot be ignored in the translation of the phrase. *meth,llaxan th.n fusikh. ncrh/sin* is also translated as *honam fam ay]nkofa y[bea a [y] ne kwan so]* 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 *sarkh* in Greek, in Galatians 5:19 we have *th/j sarko,j* 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 *th/j sarko,j* is rendered *honam* meaning “flesh” which is sinful according to the passage.

However *fusikh.n “ab]de]*”, in Romans 1:26-27, is the right way but not sinful. It is rather *para. fu,sin* which corresponds to *th/j sarko,j* the flesh; sinful way.*crh/sin* translated as “use” also indicates “sexual use” is also translated as *ay]nkofa* “relationship” in the Asante Twi and Akuapem Twi Bibles. While *ay]nkofa* is broad, the use of *honam fam* to qualify it makes it even ambiguous. There are some *honam fam ay]nkofa* where there cannot be sexual contact while there are relationships where sexual contact is inevitable. *Honam fam ay]nkofa* 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 *crh/sin* is sexual use.

Another translation difficulty in the text is the rendition of the sentence *katergazo,menoi kai. th.n avntimisqi,an h]n e;dei th/j pla,nhj auvtw/n evne`autoi/j avpolamba,nontej* in the Twi Bibles. During the exegesis it came out that the words *kata* and *ergazo,menoi* 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. *avpolamba,nontej* 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 h]ne;deith/j pla,nhj “an inevitable response of their wrong doing or error.” The reward for their pla,nhj 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 dia. tou/to pare,dwken auvtou.j o` qeo.j eivj pa,qh avtimi,aj.

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 e;dei and avpolamba,nontej 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 worshipped, 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 Onyankop]n gyaa w]n maa aniwu ak]nn] a egu nnipa ho fi.. Eyi maa w]n mmaa danee s[de] ab]de] nhyehy[i mu no mmaa ne mmarima nya nhyiamu die na mmom mmaa ne mmaa dae[s[dea maa ne mmarima da no, nanso etia ab]de] nhyehy[so. 27Saa kwan no ara so na mmarima nso poo mmaa ne mmarima fam ay]nkofa w] ab]de] mmra kwan so, na emom w] nyaa ak]n] atenka denden maa w]n mf[fo] mmarima, na w]n mf[fo] mmarima ho ak]nn] deree s[ogya w] w]n akwaa mu ma w]sei w]n ho w] adapaade ne aniwude a [ne mmarima ne mmarima nna mu, [no ne w]n ndwuma [twe a w]twe firii Onyankop]ng ho] so akatua a [s] w]n.

²⁶ [Because 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. ²⁷ Similarly, 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 μετελλάξαν (*metēllaxan*) comes from the word “change” μεταλλάσσω (*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 φυσικῆς φύσεως. This was exchanged to what the text describes ἀπαρὰ 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 ἀφεέντες τὴν φυσικὴν φύσιν τῶν ἀλλήλων (*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 τῶν ἑαυτῶν 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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