


Homosexuality in Ghana Today: The Role of the Church in Mission



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ABSTRACT

There has been growing evidence of rejection and condemnation of homosexuality by the church and society in Ghana. Homosexuality is one of the critical challenges facing the church in Ghana. Some of the reasons assigned for the rejection of homosexuality are deeply embedded in religio-cultural world views of Ghanaian communities. The church's response to homosexuality is conservative and rejection. The attempts to have a mission approach to homosexuals have not been seriously considered. This paper examines the spade of homosexuality in Ghana and proposes a researched-based transformational urban mission to homosexuals. Narrative historical analysis is engaged for the study. The results are that Ghanaians are increasingly aware of the homosexual phenomenon in some spots in urban cities. Economic challenges are drawing the unemployed youth into the phenomenon. The church in Ghana needs to have trained pastors and laypeople for urban missions since urbanization is a global phenomenon and many of Ghana's population live in urban cities.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Philip Jenkins, gender and sexuality have become an issue in missions and ecclesiology over the last forty years in Africa.¹ The world view of African societies and the church has allowed homosexuality to take a whip on the church. Many African nations and Churches have adopted ways of dealing with the homosexual phenomena. Some scholars see it as a Western culture that has been imported into Africa.² However, there have been publications to indicate that homosexuality has since been part of African and Ghanaian societies in ancient times. For example, Justice Sarpong reported anthropological studies that showed the existence of men who have sex with men (MSM) in Africa. He added that it was common but practiced in secret in Sudan; Kikuyu in Kenya; among the Hausa people in Nigeria; mine workers from a variety of groups in South Africa; prisoners in Zambia and Nigeria; and among the Wolof community in Senegal.³

¹ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: the Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 231.

² Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 234.

³ Anthony Mawuli Sallar, 'My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana' Feature Article of Wednesday, 21 December 2011. Accessed January 24, 2014. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/My-Turn-The-homosexuality-debate-in-Ghana-226077>

“Homosexuality was also acknowledged among the Itiso, the Bahima and Banyoro in Uganda.”⁴ To add to this, homosexuality has also been practiced as a cultural phenomenon in Ghana. Amenga-Atego asserts that there used to be “Woman to Woman Marriage among the Nankani” people of Northern Ghana. It was an ancient practice that can hardly be traced in today’s cultural life of the people. It was a temporal activity and its adherents never took to the streets for homosexuality to be legalized.⁵

From the above discussion, it could be said that homosexuality has existed in Africa in private since time immemorial yet it did not threaten African society and the church until recent times. It must be mentioned that the woman-to-woman marriage among the ancient people of the Nankani in the Northern Region of Ghana was not practiced in secret because it was a cultural proviso that was known by all members of the community and was perceived as honorable. It resonates with homosexuality in ancient Greco-Roman culture where it was a prestige.⁶ Hence, homosexuality in ancient times in the traditional context was not regarded as a form of deviant human sexuality.

The church in Ghana has made some attempts at curbing the spread of homosexuality in the country. The most vocal and influential is the Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church in 2013 condemned homosexuality based on the doctrine of the Church. They did not accept the human rights view propounded by proponents of homosexuality.⁷ When the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021 was submitted in Parliament, many church denominations in Ghana submitted memoranda in support of the bill.⁸ However, besides condemning homosexuality and supporting the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021, there is the need for the church to have a mission towards homosexuals

A narrative historical analysis was engaged for the study. The narrative historical method relies on narratives concerning individuals or a particular issue for research.⁹ It is a qualitative methodology that is mainly focused on library and archival research, and interviews. A survey design was used in which respondents were selected with simple random sampling procedures. A total of 362 respondents were drawn for the study. The data for the research was collected in 2014. It has since been updated for publication due to recent happenings in Ghana concerning homosexuality.

Description of Research Areas

The research focused on two urban settlements: Old Fadama and Chorkor as a microcosm for urban cities in Ghana. The rationale for the selection of these urban communities was due to news of alleged homosexual activities in these areas. Old Fadama is the largest illegal settlement in Ghana with a population of between 79,000 and 80,000 people in 2009 and occupying a space of 31.3 hectares of urban space. Old Fadama is located along the banks of the Odaw River, and the Korley Lagoon, near Christ Temple of the International Central Gospel Church (ICGC), and the Agbogbloshie Market in Accra. Old Fadama started in 1979 as a small unapproved settlement for some migrant youths from northern Ghana in search of jobs.¹⁰ The community was formerly called Sodom and Gomorrah. According to the Chief of the Wala ethnic group and

⁴ Martin Oteng-Ababio and Charlotte Wrigley-Asante, “Globalization and Male Sex Trade in Ghana: Modernity or Immorality?” in Institute of African Studies University of Ghana, *Contemporary Journal of African Studies* Vol. 1 No. 1 (2013): 82.

⁵ Rose Mary Amenga-Atego, “Marriage without Sex? Same-Sex Marriages and Female Identity Among the Nankani of Northern Ghana,” *Ghana Bulletin of Theology, New Series* Volume 4, (2012): 14-37.

⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, (U. K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 121-122.

⁷ Joseph Osei Bonsu, “The Position of the Catholic Church on Homosexuality,” *Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference* (February 2013), 1.

⁸ OHCHR, “Draft bill on “Proper Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021” - An analysis by UN Independent Human Rights Experts, August 12, 2021, Accessed December 30, 2021. <https://ghana.un.org/en/139914-draft-bill-proper-sexual-rights-and-ghanaian-family-values-bill-2021-analysis-un-independent>; Dheeraj Diwakar, Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021. Accessed December 30, 2021. <https://cdn.modernghana.com/files/722202192224-0h830n4ayt-lgbt-bill.pdf>

⁹ Narrative Analysis and Research, Accessed September 14, 2019. <https://atlasti.com/narrative-research/>

¹⁰ Chris Benjamin, “ The Relocation and Reinvention of Old Fadama,” Accessed May 4, 2014. <http://www.modernghana.com/news/121729/1/the-relocation-and-reinvention-of-old-fadama.html>.

Public Relations Officer (PRO) for Chiefs of Old Fadama, Mamuda Halidu, the name was changed in 2013 due to the bad connotations associated with Sodom and Gomorrah as a place for sinners and homosexuals.¹¹ 156 respondents were sampled in Old Fadama.

Chorkor is also a suburb of Accra with a voter population of 32,000 people as of 2012.¹² It shares boundaries with Dansoman, Mamprobi, Sukura, and the Atlantic Ocean. The main occupation of the people is fishing. Chorkor is widely known for the numerous cases of teenage pregnancy¹³ due to the cultural belief in early childbirth as a pride to the family even if the parents of the child are not economically prepared to take care of the child. This suggests that there are a lot of early sexual activities among the people of Chorkor, especially the youth. In the period that the research was conducted, "The Mirror" newspaper reported a planned gay homecoming event that was stopped by the residents of Chorkor.¹⁴ 206 respondents were also sampled in Chorkor.

A History of Homosexual Debate in Ghana

The issue of homosexuality before 2006, in Ghana, was not of much concern and the outcry against the phenomenon was private and did not attract much media attention. Public and massive reaction to homosexuality in Ghana started in 2006, when Joy F. M, an Accra-based radio station interviewed Prince Kweku McDonald, President of the Gay and Lesbians Association of Ghana (GALAG). McDonald, during the interview, confirmed the organization of a conference of gays and lesbians in Accra and other undisclosed venues in Ghana. President John Agyekum Kufuor's government, led by the Minister of information, Kwamena Bartels responded that the government will not allow such a conference to take place in Ghana.¹⁵ Many Christian denominations and the National Chief Imam of Ghana, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu applauded the government for its stance against the supposed conference.¹⁶

Ghana's Criminal Code of 1960, Act 29, Chapter 6, Sexual Offences, Article 105 as amended in 2003 states: "Whoever is guilty of unnatural carnal knowledge: (a) of any person without his consent, is guilty of a first-degree felony; (b) of any person with his consent, or any animal, is guilty of a misdemeanor" with a penalty of a minimum of 5 years imprisonment and not more than 25 years. The action of the government and religious leaders in Ghana against the supposed conference of homosexual persons was in agreement with the general African response to homosexuality, although there are "cultural and traditional practices that demonstrate their existence for centuries."¹⁷

The public debate concerning homosexuality in Ghana became very intense due to the fact that South Africa legalized same-sex marriage in 2006.¹⁸ In 2011, the late former Ghanaian President, John Evans Atta Mills was also reported to have reacted to the UK Prime Minister, David Cameron's proposition that, aid will be withdrawn from African countries that do not support gays and lesbians' rights. Former President Mills indicated that Ghana will respect the rights of gays and lesbians and that homosexuals will not be discriminated against in any way, but he was quick to add that homosexuality will not be legalized in Ghana since it frowns on Ghanaian culture. However, as indicated in the introduction, Amenga-Atego, Capo-Chichi and Kassegné, show that homosexuality has been part of some African and Ghanaian cultures for a long while, dating back to ancient times.¹⁹ Probably, President Mills' assertion that homosexuality is not part of

¹¹ Mamuda Halidu, Interviewed by author, Old Fadama 12th April 2014.

¹² Derick Addotey Myers, interviewed by the author (Chorkor 22nd February, 2014)

¹³ Charles Gyan, "The Effects of Teenage Pregnancy on the Educational Attainment of Girls at Chorkor, a suburb of Accra," *Journal of Educational and Social Research MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy*, Vol. 3 No. 3 (September 2013): 53-60.

¹⁴ Hadiza Nuhhu-Billa Quansah, 'Gays still in 'Exile,' *The Mirror*; Friday, January 17, 2014, 30.

¹⁵ Kwame Essien, Saheed Aderinto, "Cutting the Head of the Roaring Monster": Homosexuality and Repression in Africa'. *African Study Monographs*, Volume 30(3), (2009): 121-135.

¹⁶ Sallar, 'My Turn: The homosexuality debate in Ghana'

¹⁷ Virgile Capo-Chichi and Sethson Kassegné, Homosexuality in Africa: Myth or Reality? An Ethnographic Exploration in Togo, West Africa", Presented at 5th African Population Conference Arusha, Tanzania (December 10-14, 2007). Paragraph 1.

¹⁸ Canadian Broadcasting Centre (CBC) News. "South Africa Passes Same-Sex Marriage Bill". Accessed June 28, 2019. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/south-africa-passes-same-sex-marriage-bill-1.616073>

¹⁹ Amenga-Atego, "Marriage without Sex? Same-Sex Marriages and Female Identity Among the Nankani of Northern Ghana"; Capo-Chichi and Kassegné, Homosexuality in Africa, 1.

Ghanaian culture is a reference to contemporary times.

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) former member of Parliament for Adenta constituency, Kojo Adu Asare in 2012 also pointed out that Andrews Solomon's (a renowned author, and gay activist), contribution to President John Dramani Mahama's book: *My First Coup D'état* and his subsequent invitation to the launch of the book, did not speak well for the fight against homosexuality in Ghana at the time.²⁰ It is significant to note that, one can engage the professional expertise of a homosexual without necessarily endorsing the sexual preference of the person. The rights of homosexuals to work must be respected as indicated by the late President Mills. However, many Ghanaian communities do not dichotomize between morality and professional expertise. Probably, President Mahama used Solomon as God used Rahab (a prostitute to accommodate the spies for a night in order to capture the land of Jericho in Joshua 2:1-2) to illustrate that homosexuals have human rights that need to be respected.

Many Ghanaians believe that the appointment of Nana Oye Lithur, a Human Rights Advocate, as Minister for Gender, Children, and Social Protection by President John Dramani Mahama in January 2013 was a step in advancing gays and lesbian advocacy in Ghana. Because she was reported to have said publicly that "the rights of everybody, including homosexuals, should be protected".²¹ Her appointment attracted a lot of criticisms from different sections of Ghanaian society, including the media and the clergy. Since Nana Oye Lithur is a Catholic, the church had to state its official position and suggest ways of handling this social canker both within the church and the Ghanaian society as a whole.

The Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference in Ghana led by the then president, Most Rev. Dr. Joseph Osei Bonsu on February 11, 2013, stated the position of the Church on homosexuality in six points communiqué that: (i) The Bible is against homosexuality; (ii) the Church dichotomizes between "homosexual condition or tendency" and "individual homosexual actions"; (iii) homosexual inclination is not a sin, it could be "an intrinsic moral evil"; (iv) the Church objects to the notion that homosexuals should not be blamed for their actions because they find themselves under compulsion²² to commit homosexuality; (v) practitioners of homosexuality, candidates with "deep-seated homosexual tendencies" and those who give support to "gay culture" will not be ordained into the priesthood; and (vi) though the Church condemns homosexual acts by lay and clergy, it posits that their fundamental rights such as the right to life, liberty, religion, free expression, free movement, language, sex, free from discrimination, employment and education must be protected since they are created in the image of God like heterosexuals.²³ This position agrees with the view of former President Mills that homosexuals should not be discriminated against. However, the prohibition of not ordaining homosexuals into the priesthood is a form of discrimination as a result of one's sexual preference. It suggests that a homosexual person cannot perform a priestly duty yet the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference's definition acknowledges the fact that homosexual persons are created in the image of God. It is like that the prohibition of not allowing homosexuals into the priesthood may be due to the fear that they may gradually advocate for homosexual marriage.

In his response to the appointment of Nana Oye Lithur and other homosexual reports in the media, the then Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) Right Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey on June 30, 2013, was reported to have said that, homosexuality is "satan's deadly agenda" to destroy Ghana. For that reason, many homosexuals in the world are making attempts to get close to the government of Ghana in order to infiltrate the Ghanaian social fiber with homosexuality because satan knows the religio-cultural uniqueness of Ghana.²⁴ Martey's assertion that "homosexuality" is aimed at destroying Ghana may be hinged on an understanding that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of homosexuality.

²⁰ Peacefmonline, "Andrew Solomon is doing more harm to Mahama." Accessed December 30, 2021. <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=264724>

²¹ Bonsu, "The Position of the Catholic Church on Homosexuality," 1.

²² They are being controlled by external forces, probably demonic forces which make them act against their wish.

²³ Bonsu, 'The Position of the Catholic Church', 3, 4.

²⁴ Gayism Is "Satanic" – Presby Moderator. Accessed April 30, 2014.

<https://233livenews.wordpress.com/2013/07/01/gayism-is-satanic-presby-moderator/>

Commenting on the statement that: “homosexuality should be accepted because some men and women are born with hormonal and other deficiencies and that the same applies to lesbians.”²⁵ Professor Mike Ocquaye, then First Deputy Speaker, and the immediate past speaker of Parliament responded that these homosexuals are “sick” people who need “psychotic” treatment. He added that gays must, therefore “stop fighting for their ‘deviant behavior to be accepted in society as normal.’”²⁶ The resistance Ghanaians have put up against homosexuality has increased over the years. In 2014, “a gay community association” attempted to organize a grand homecoming meeting in Chorkor. The residents of the community drove them out and the supposed home-coming meeting could not materialize.²⁷ According to the Assemblyman of the area at the time, Hon. Derick Addotey Myers, the gays had been a thorn in the moral life of the youth in the community, they have tried luring the youth of the area into their gay folds with expensive attires, laptop computers, smartphones among others.²⁸ Various moves have been made by several civil society groups and religious bodies to curb the rising trend of homosexuality in Ghana. However recent global recognition of gay rights seems to hinder the effort of these groups.

Despite these seeming setbacks, homosexuality has been condemned by both clergy and politicians and various societies in Ghana. However, there has not been a very pragmatic laid out mission policy by the Church and governments as to how to identify practicing homosexuals, help them overcome their homosexual preference, and appreciate the heterosexual norm of human sexuality in the Ghanaian society. It is worthy of mention that even though it is becoming a challenge to curb the practice due to the acceptance of gay rights in various countries across the globe, some groups have taken it upon themselves to establish laws that would criminalize homosexuality and all its attendant practices in Ghana. In 2021, eight (8) members of parliament led by Hon. Samuel Nartey George, member of parliament for the Ningo-Prampram constituency sponsored a private members bill to make homosexuality and its related issues criminal, where offenders can serve a prison term. This bill was titled “Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021.”²⁹ It suggests that homosexuality is not the acceptable sexual norm in Ghana today. The bill attracted responses from many homosexual communities. Some human rights lawyers argue that if the bill is adopted in its current form or any other form, it would be against the fundamental human rights of homosexuals.³⁰ However, in the Ghanaian context, it is not a discussion about human rights but cultural norms. The bill, currently being debated in parliament, is widely supported in Ghana, where President Nana Akufo-Addo has publicly said gay marriage will never be allowed while he is in power. One looks forward to the outcome.

DISCUSSION

Public knowledge of homosexual behaviors in urban areas in Ghana is overwhelmingly high as the data gathered revealed. The media in Ghana, civil societies, the church, and governments, in their reaction to the influence of foreign governments, have played informative and defensive roles in making Ghanaians aware of the rising trend of homosexuality trying to penetrate the Ghanaian society. Many of these institutions rejected homosexuality on the grounds of culture and religion.

In Chorkor, for example, many respondents and the Assemblyman of the area, Myers said that there were more lesbians in Chorkor than gays. Some feminine-looking men are sometimes labeled gays but they are not. In an interview with Myers, he said he had to painfully divorce his wife in 2011 because she was engaged in lesbianism with other ladies in the area; he added that many marriages are experiencing challenges due to lesbianism being practised in the area. He attributed the booming lesbian phenomenon in the area to beauty and economic power.³¹ Myers asserted that firstly, the ladies in the town are beautifully attractive

²⁵ Peacefmonline, “Andrew Solomon is doing more harm to Mahama.”

²⁶ Peacefmonline, “Andrew Solomon is doing more harm to Mahama.”

²⁷ Quansah, ‘Gays still in ‘Exile’’, 30.

²⁸ Quansah, ‘Gays still in ‘Exile’’, 30.

²⁹ Diwakar, Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021.

³⁰ OHCHR, Draft bill on “Proper Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021”; Diwakar, “Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill 2021.

³¹ Derick Addotey Myers, interviewed by the author (Chorkor 22nd February, 2014).

and unfortunately, they are attracted to other ladies who are in the practice of lesbianism. Secondly, since many of the ladies in Chorkor were unemployed, some of them were lured with money, designer clothes, and electronic gadgets into lesbianism. It seems that the main actors of lesbianism (masculine lesbians who are supposedly rich) do not live in the Chorkor Township, but come to some particular spots in the town in order to engage potential lesbians (feminine lesbians) into the act. Be as it may, that homosexuals are also involved in heterosexual relationships, they are promoting universal bisexuality,³² which does not promote faithfulness in many marriages. It supports Lau's theory that lesbian relationships stay longer than male gay relationships.³³

In Old Fadama, the traditional leaders of the town were not aware of the phenomenon in the area. In an interview with the Wala Chief and PRO of the Chiefs of the area, he related that they had no reports of homosexuality in the community.³⁴ Contrarily, this research reveals that there are gays (feminine gays) in the community. They often go out to meet their partners (masculine gays) at some spots in Accra. There are, therefore, lesbians in Chorkor and gays in Old Fadama.

Deacon Kwame Ghartey who spoke on behalf of the local assembly of the Church of Pentecost (CoP) in Chorkor said in an interview that, there are rumors of homosexual behaviors in some spots in Chorkor. He added that the Church condemns homosexuality and always mentions it during preaching but the CoP is yet to develop missionary strategies towards homosexual behaved persons in the community.³⁵ The context in which the Church functions is key to church growth, the external factors that bring growth lie in the level of knowledge of the community. The church can only make its message relevant to the people when it addresses issues of interest in the community. The CoP Chorkor assembly was yet to research into the rumor of homosexuals in the area at the time. This has changed and people currently practise homosexuality openly.

The Ghanaian worldview considers heterosexuality as the norm in marriage or any sexual relationship. In Ghana, cultural and ethnic identity is very important to human existence. Lifestyles can be used to determine the ethnicity of a particular group of people or individuals. This unique way of life distinguishes a group or individuals from others. Therefore it can be argued that in Ghana, the majority culture or lifestyle does not impose its cultural practices and beliefs on the minority culture. The majority culture refers to very popular cultural practices and minority culture refers to not too popular cultural practices. Both the majority and minority cultures usually guard against unparalleled infiltration, not only for a good moral life but also to avoid being punished by the ancestors, because one is expected to continue and if possible, improve on what has been handed down from generation to generation. Hence, the popular advocacy for the legalization of homosexuality cannot be accepted as a contemporary alternative norm for human sexuality.

Many advocates of homosexuality try to identify or locate homosexual behavior in African and Ghanaian culture in order to weaken the Ghanaian stands against homosexuality. Though homosexuality seems to have been in Ghana since time immemorial,³⁶ it was regarded as deviant sexual behavior. And so in raising cultural voices against homosexuality, it can be said that heterosexuality is what has been handed down through various generations and not homosexuality. Homosexuality is not an accepted norm for human sexuality. As a popular Ga proverb says: *BlemakpanorAtsaa* which means (we only extend ancient ropes). Thus, homosexuality cannot be contextualized or indigenized in the Ghanaian culture and church. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson has postulated that:

For countless historical and cultural reasons, changing social attitudes and political accommodations regarding gay and lesbian persons, and the status of same-sex relationships, are being clarified in these Western, postmodern societies. The Churches within those societies necessarily are deeply engaged in

³² Joseph Nicolosi, "What Freud Really Said about Homosexuality and Why", *Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol.7 (2016): 24-42

³³ N. E. Whitehead, "Are Gay / Lesbian Relationships Really as Short as They Seem?", *Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol. 7 (2016): 99-125.

³⁴ Mamuda Halidu, interviewed by the author, Old Fadama, 12th April 2014.

³⁵ Kwame Ghartey, interviewed by author, Chorkor 25/05/2014.

³⁶ Amenga-Atego, 'Marriage without Sex?', 14-37.

this process and are divided in their responses.³⁷

Since human society is dynamic, there may be vacuums created that may require an accepted new and modern approach to doing some things. Homosexuality cannot be said to be a new and modern way of human sexuality because it is not a natural and primary means of procreation.

Homosexual behaviors are mostly reported to be taking place in urban cities more than in rural areas. This could be due to urban phenomena and way of life. The urban phenomenon in Ghana is mainly enforced by the migration of rural populations to urban areas in pursuit of economic well being among others. There is congestion in many urban areas of Ghana, and this has led to the establishment of ghettos and slum settlements in cities. There are no taboos and strict adherents to cultural values as exists in rural communities, and so new cultures could be easily adopted.³⁸ Urban dwellers could live any kind of life without notice or it would take some time before it becomes known, due to the individualistic lifestyle as against the rural communal lifestyle.

Given the continuous urbanization of Ghanaian cities, which is likely to have a proportionate increase in homosexual behaviors, how can the Church sustain its campaign against homosexuality and extend its mission to homosexuals in urban cities? The United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) as captioned in the work of Kpobi pointed out that “The challenge for the next few decades is learning to exploit the possibilities urbanization offers.”³⁹ Despite all the negativities associated with urbanization, it offers outstanding opportunities for mission because many urban dwellings have social amenities and infrastructure, which could be used by the church for a mission to homosexuals, just as Paul took advantage of the *Pax Romana* to preach and spread the gospel across the Roman Empire.

Christian Missions to Homosexuals in Ghana

Jewish and Ghanaian cultures agree to some extent, by the celebration of festivals, observance of holy days, the system of priesthood, and patriarchy, that existed in Jewish religio-cultural settings, are present in the Ghanaian religio-cultural settings. Even though there are geographical, educational, and economic gaps between the Ghanaian context and that of the biblical worldview, the biblical prohibition of homosexuality resonates with the Ghanaian cultural context.

Unfortunately, the Church has done little over the years to concretely combat the issue of homosexuality just for the usual admonishment of congregants to desist from the practice. It is therefore a positive sign that the various religious bodies supported the bill and submitted memoranda for consideration by the committee of parliament handling the bill. The Church of Pentecost, the Methodist Church Ghana, Apostolic Church Ghana, the Anglican Church Ghana, and Christian ecumenical organizations such as the Christian Council of Ghana, National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches, National Clergy Association, Ghana Congress of Evangelism, Catholic Bishops Conference of Ghana, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council among others submitted memoranda to support the bill.⁴⁰ Whether the bill is passed as law or not, the church in Ghana must have a policy on Christian mission to homosexuals which is currently prevalent in cities in Ghana.

Traditionally, cities are perceived by some Christians as places where chaos and evil abound. Missionaries who subscribed to the view that the city is chaotic and evil hinged their argument on the city of Sodom and Gomorrah. Therefore rural mission was often preferred over the urban mission. It could also be due to the lack of trained personnel, who could take a mission to urban dwellers. The missionary personnel in the church were probably suited for the rural mission.

³⁷ Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *From Times Square to Timbuktu: The Post-Christian West Meets the Non-Western Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U. K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 148 – 149.

³⁸ David N. A. Kpobi, “Unless the Lord Watches Over the City...’Urbanisation and Christian Witness in Ghana, *Journal of African Christian Thought* Vol. 14, No 2 (December 2011): 20.

³⁹ Kpobi, “Unless the Lord Watch Over the City...’ 20.

⁴⁰ “Church Of Pentecost supports anti-LGBTQI+ Bill with 15,000 signatories.” Accessed December 30, 2021.

<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Church-Of-Pentecost-supports-anti-LGBTQI-Bill-with-15-000-signatories-1374112>.

Christian mission is about the people, and should not be focused on spatial areas, hence, emphasis should be placed on all human habitation. The city can be described as a magnet that attracts both good and questionable characters. The church must not allow the city to impact its negative tendencies on her but must present Christ to the city.⁴¹ The inflow and patronage of the services of prophets of Neo-Prophetic Churches/ Ministries who promise quick “financial breakthrough” in the cities, and the continued advertisement of the services of so-called traditional priests and medicine men and women in cities, point to the fact that city dwellers appreciate religious solutions to their challenges.⁴²

Biblically, God and many of His servants built and made use of cities. In the Old Testament, Cain was the first to be mentioned of building a city after he was cursed by God (Gen.4:7). The inhabitants of Babel decided to build a city in opposition to the command of God (Gen. 11). The reason for the building of the city was to make a name for themselves, which suggests that there were other competing cities. The Genesis accounts of cities seem to be against the will of God but later, cities were used to advance the purpose of God. David had a connection with the city of Tyre in order to have access to materials for building the Palace (2 Sam. 5:11-12). His Son Solomon maintained the relationship during the building of the Temple (1 Kings 5:1-2).

In the New Testament, Jesus and the early church used cities to achieve the purpose of God. The Temple was housed in the city of Jerusalem; many Jews in the Diaspora annually travelled to Jerusalem for pilgrimage. Jerusalem is both the religious and political city of the Jews. According to the gospel of John, Jesus went in and out of Jerusalem many times (John. 2:13; 6:4; 11:55; 7:2; 5:1; 10:22). The early church took the gospel to urban cities such as Iconium, Philippi, Athens, Macedonia, Antioch, Samaria, Rome, etc (Acts 8;14;17;17;28). New religious movements and Philosophers are present in these urban cities.

The restricting force of the church being successful in urban missions is the lack of interface between mission and the social sciences (fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, history, law etc.).⁴³ The complex nature of urban cities suggests that a close tie be formed between mission and the social sciences. Mission in urban areas is marked by timelines. By observing the trends in the community, the church could plan for the future. The social sciences are not new in mission. In his attempt to obey God’s mission, Nehemiah effectively engaged the social sciences as a tool to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2-3). With the active engagement of the social sciences, the church will be able to vary its approach to mission in different contexts. Father Shanahan, a Roman Catholic missionary, aptly puts it: “if we go from town to town talking only about God, we know from experience that much of our effort brings no result. But no one is opposed to schools”.⁴⁴ The use of the social sciences does not suggest neglect of Scriptural principles but the use of social realities to advance the redemptive work of Christ to homosexuals.

Christian mission in contemporary times “should not underrate either the role of the Holy Spirit or the use of modern methods of strategizing as indispensable aspects of their operations,”⁴⁵ because human society and the behavior of homosexuality are dynamic, complex, and always evolving. Theology must engage the social sciences to formulate urban mission projects for homosexuals. Outdoor crusades which make altar calls for homosexuals will hardly yield the needed result because many of them are afraid of being rejected by society when identified. The use of the social sciences will foster a close relationship between the clergy and the laity for mission because some of the laity may have been trained in one field of the social sciences or the other, and will be directly engaged in urban mission with the clergy in understanding the challenge of homosexuals and how to effectively deal with it.

Homosexuality in both Old Fadama and Chorkor is fuelled by social injustice, environmental ethics, unemployment, and educational gaps. Many of the youth in the area see the elite flout the laws with impunity.

⁴¹ Harvie M. Conn & Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God*. (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001). 165.

⁴² Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, “A Study of ‘Prophetism’ in the New Testament and its Implications for Ghanaian Christianity” (BTh. Thesis, Trinity Theological Seminary, 2013), 47-48.

⁴³ Conn, & Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City & the People of God.*, 167.

⁴⁴ Max Assimeng, *Religion and Social Change in West Africa: An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion* 2nd Ed. (Accra: Woeli Publicashing Services, 2010), 91.

⁴⁵ Kpobi, “ Unless the Lord Watches Over the City, 17-27.

Therefore they also try to flout the law on the acceptable norm of human sexuality. Many 'masculine' gays and lesbians who are economically placed do not live in Old Fadama and Chorkor; they come to satisfy their homosexual desires with the 'feminine' gays and lesbians in the area. There is a wide economic disparity between 'masculine' gays and lesbians and 'feminine' gays and lesbians just like in heterosexual relationships where men have the upper hand in most cases. Some of the youth find it difficult to be gainfully employed because they have not been adequately schooled or trained in any skill. One can hardly find a well-established school building in Old Fadama, probably because the settlement is illegal. However, there are temporary school structures.

Rt. Rev. Prof. Martey was reported to have said in August 2011, on a Joy F.M. morning show that the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) will build a rehabilitation center for homosexuals. This is not to endorse homosexuality but a pastoral approach to help homosexuals overcome their sexual preference. In a later interview with Rev. Dr. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, the then Clerk of the General Assembly of the PCG, he reiterated that the Church is yet to start the building but currently counselors are being selected and trained for the task ahead.⁴⁶ It is good to have rehabilitation centers for homosexuals but the challenge will be how to identify and bring homosexuals into the rehabilitation centers because persons who indulge in homosexual practices are not bold enough to declare it openly for fear of stigma in Ghana.

Many of the 'feminine' gays and lesbians are not adequately trained or educated, hence, church-founded universities could give scholarships to these persons who are willing to go to school. The church ought to look at the larger picture of the city rather than the limited focus on only its members because the church and its members live in the city. Scholarship schemes set up for young 'feminine' gays and lesbians by church-founded universities must not be conditioned on brilliance but needy persons. It must be a consented effort to help them to become employable. In this case, persons who did not do well in their immediate past examination could be sponsored to better their results and then pursue tertiary education. "Globalization has had the effect of increasing interaction not only between different ethnic groups but also among adherents of different religions. Since this trend is not a one-way street, it facilitates the breaking down of various barriers and keeps all parts of the world in touch with each other."⁴⁷

It seems the church is not taking advantage of globalization to enhance its fight against homosexuality. Globalization has compelled urban dwellers to seek what makes news or what is new, and some churches have not been very innovative in this area in Ghana. Making news does not refer to rejecting the Bible and Jesus and preaching the demands of the populists, but it is rather the approach to doing urban missions. For example, the author was nearly attacked during this research in one of the research areas, the reason being that he was dressed in a suit and therefore looked more like a stranger to members of the communities. The research was also been conducted discreetly because homosexuality is a delicate issue that sustains some families economically. In addition, the author's language was more interrogative to the dislike of some respondents, hence the attack. Hence, the researcher had to quickly change from the use of the English language in which he sounded interrogative to a mother-tongue language that he heard them speak – Ga and Hausa, and then they finally cooperated with him. What the research revealed was that urban missionaries to areas of increased crime and immorality must put away liturgical attires and theological languages that the people can hardly relate to. Globalization allows the pastor to dress as the homosexuals do in order to reach them for Christ. However, in dressing like them, one must be careful not to be attacked or attract derogatory remarks from anti-homosexual individuals, institutions, and the church.

One of the human resources that have not been used effectively by the church in Ghana for urban missions is the laity who have expertise in psychosexual analysis, and sociology. It has been proven that using psychosexual therapy can change the sexual orientation of some homosexuals to heterosexuality.⁴⁸ An instance is a thirty-year-old woman who has been successfully treated for lesbianism using psychoanalytical

⁴⁶ Rev. Samuel Ayete-Nyampong, interviewed by the author, 6/5/2014.

⁴⁷ David N. A. Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana: The Ecumenical Heritage* (Accra: Asempra Publishers, 2008), 166.

⁴⁸ James E. Phelan, Neil Whitehead and Philip M. Sutton, "Response to APA Claim: There Has Been No Conclusive or Convincing Evidence That Sexual Orientation May Be Changed Through Reorientation Therapy," *Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (2009): 9-40.

therapy.⁴⁹ This is not to argue that psychology does not have limitations.⁵⁰ However, since the African is incurably religious,⁵¹ when religion is combined with the social sciences it is expected to yield an improved result for homosexuals by converting their heterosexuality. In addition, the laity often live, school, and even work with some of the homosexuals; therefore, they could be oriented to reach out to them individually. Making the pastor an icon in mission as inherited from the Protestant Reformation⁵² does not make an urban mission to homosexuals consistent because they have several administrative and supervisory roles to play. In addition, some of the pastors live in mission houses which do not foster knowledge of the community in which some homosexuals live. It is a fact that one does not necessarily need to live in a community to know the happenings in the community. However, the pastor or layperson who lives in the community with homosexuals would have first-hand information on homosexual trends in the community. This calls for the involvement of the laity in the urban mission to homosexuals and it will help narrow the ecclesiastical gap that exists between the lay and the clergy for mutual church growth in demographics and discipleship. People attend Church services all the time, hence the Church can be a major tool in the fight against homosexuality in Ghana. More effort, strategies and policies need to be put in place to achieve this quest.

CONCLUSION

A survey of media reports and legal advocacies in Ghana in the last decade points out that homosexuality is on the ascendancy in Ghana, which has been strongly resisted by the church and society. The reason for the resistance is the religio-cultural norms of Ghana, which accepts heterosexuality as the norm for human sexuality and the natural means of procreation; and homosexuality as deviant and immoral. Urban mission to chaotic areas borders on issues of social injustice, unemployment, environmental issues, and education gaps among others. The complex nature of urban settlements needs the input of the social sciences for an effective and result-oriented urban mission to homosexuals. Demographics have shown that more people are living in urban areas than rural areas. This suggests that urban mission should be the focus of the church. The nature of the urban way of life has given impetus for the increase in homosexuality. Urbanization is a global phenomenon, and the church would have to take advantage of this to reach out to homosexuals. The church in Ghana needs human resources (trained pastors and lay) and logistics for efficient and effective urban missions. The church in Ghana needs to set Christian values that will guide its members, to relate to homosexuals in the spirit of human dignity.

For many homosexuals, coming to accept one's God-given sexuality is an enormous step in understanding oneself as loved by God, and part of this acceptance process includes appreciating the company of other homosexuals. Developing a strong communal identity is natural for any like-minded group particularly one whose members have faced persecution and rejection from the larger society. But when taken to the extreme, insularity can develop that will make homosexuals feel marginalized in their religious communities. The church must move beyond supporting legislation against homosexuality to having urban missions towards homosexuals.

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⁴⁹ Nathan A. Solomon, "Joanne: Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy with a Homosexual Woman", *Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol. 8 (2017): 27-37.

⁵⁰ Christopher H. Rosik, "A Tale of Two Task Forces: Evidence of a Growing Diversity Problem within Psychology?" *Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol. 8, (2017): 11-28.

⁵¹ Kofi Asare Opoku, *West African Traditional Religion* (Accra: FEB International Publishing Limited, 1978), 1.

⁵² Kpobi, *Mission in Ghana*, 160.

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