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Ökumenische Fallstudien zu Homosexualität und Kirche

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Einführung | Introduction

Werner Kahl

Seit geraumer Zeit bestehen in der Ökumene z.T. erhebliche Spannungen hinsichtlich der Einschätzung von Homosexualität, mit der Folge, dass lange bestehende Kirchenpartnerschaften in Frage gestellt worden sind. Dadurch ist die Reflektion und Vermittlung kirchlicher Einschätzungen von Homosexualität in der Ökumene der Missionsakademie als Aufgabe zugewachsen. Im Frühjahr 2012 fand an der Missionsakademie in Hamburg eine internationale Tagung zum Thema statt. Die in diesem Heft versammelten Beiträge von Joseph Acheampong (Ghana), Sanele Lavatai (Samoa) und Alex Mkumbo (Tansania) gehen auf dort gehaltene Vorträge zurück. Hinzu gekommen sind Beiträge von Victor Linn (Brasilien) und Werner Kahl (Deutschland). Unsere Erfahrungen an der Missionsakademie zeigen, dass das kontrovers-ökumenische Gespräch über Homosexualität möglich und sinnvoll ist.

For some time there have been great ecumenical tensions with respect to the assessment of homosexuality. One consequence is that long lasting church partnerships have been put into question. It is against this background, that the reflection and mediation of assessments of homosexuality in churches worldwide have become important to the Academy of Mission. In the spring of 2012 an international conference on the subject took place at the Academy of Mission in Hamburg. The papers presented by Joseph Acheampong (Ghana), Sanele Lavatai (Samoa) and Alex Mkumbo (Tanzania) are documented in this issue of TIMA. Contributions by Victor Linn (Brazil) and Werner Kahl (Germany) have been added. According to our experiences at the Academy of Mission, a controversial and ecumenical dialogue on homosexuality is possible as it is relevant.

The Gospel, the Bible, the churches and homosexuality

Hermeneutical reflections

Werner Kahl

From the given list of possible subjects for a contribution to this conference, I have chosen to reflect on the recent inter-church controversies about homosexuality.¹ To make it clear from the very beginning: I have neither come here as a missionary nor as an advocate for gay rights. As Biblical scholar who has specialized in intercultural hermeneutics, I am concerned at this conference solely with the analysis of the epistemic implications of the conflict.

It is remarkable that churches esp. from West-Africa and from Western Europe presently come to contradicting assessments of the issue of homosexuality, even though some of these churches belong to the same ecclesial families and they base their judgement on the same Bible. It seems obvious that the various cultures involved in the production of general knowledge, also inform to a large degree our differing interpretations of the Bible as they also inform our interpretations of the world in general.

I would like to give one example. On study trips for German students in Ghana, we always spend a day on Legon Campus. Typically they will share the following observation: It is amazing how freely homosexuals walk around here. When I ask them to explain they say: Well we saw so many men walking hand in hand! – A typical intercultural misunderstanding! By the way, I used to feel very awkward at the beginning of my time in Ghana when men after a greeting would keep on holding my hand. Or, for that matter when men from the Arab world would kiss my cheeks! We grow up in different cultures whose customs and values we have internalized as self-evident givens.

¹ Conference of the West-African Association of Theological Institutions (WAATI) at the University of Science and Technology (UST), Kumasi, Ghana (August 2013).

Understanding the complex hermeneutical dimensions of the debate might pave the way for a more appropriate understanding of the opposing view instead of condemning the other. Since we are meeting in Kumasi, I would like for us to consider for a moment a statement made by the great cultural anthropologist and theologian Bishop Kwesi Sarpong. In a recent radio interview on Joy News he warned against the practise of passing judgement about another's culture's practices. It is a quite comfortable and rather easy exercise to criticise positions held in distant cultures. This might serve all kinds of functions but it is seldom motivated by the quest for truth. Things are not so easy once we move out of our respective comfort zones, engaging people's opinions within their own cultures, cross-culturally. A prerequisite of such an endeavour would be to become familiar with a people's encyclopaedia in the broad semiotic sense, including their language, cultural traditions and societal conventions. This learning process is a precondition for cross-cultural understanding. Since we, however, like our cultures and societies, are not static but by necessity dynamic as living human beings, such a cross-cultural experience would not leave anybody unchanged, including one's opinions.

The intercultural dimension of the debate

The subject matter – opposing ecclesial views on homosexuality – is highly complex since it involves in our case at least three contexts: the two contemporary contexts in West-Africa and in Western Europa and the Biblical context.² With respect to the latter, we have to be more precise unless we choose to claim that the Bible speaks with one voice above culture. In spite of our different exegetical approaches, I think it can be agreed that such a view is academically untenable. The Biblical writings are fragments of concrete communications that took place in Mediterranean antiquity and the Near East, spanning over more than 500 years. Cross-cultural understanding, lets say between Ghanaians and Germans in our contemporary world, is at times a challenge, and the debate on homosexuality is a case in point. Understanding Biblical writings and assessing the range of meaning dimensions of Biblical expressions and statements is a much more difficult task, since the concrete contexts of these writings are lost to us; no-body can share in the encyclopaedia of ancient times; even our knowledge of the Biblical languages is very limited – and I claim that as someone who has taught Greek for many years up to post-graduate level; and we cannot ask any of the Biblical writers if we understood him correctly. What we can do as Biblical scholars is to argue for possible meaning dimensions (plural!) of Biblical texts and to point out problematic interpretations. This requires a re-construction of contexts of particular Biblical writings. This, however, is an

² There are, of course, more factors involved some of which pertain to power relationships between the North and the South, reflective of the colonial and missionary past.

undertaking that involves a constructive activity of the reader – a procedure that is fundamentally marked by a high degree of uncertainty.

Homosexuality and the Bible

Homosexuality is not a topic discussed in any Biblical writing. This holds true in a double sense:

1. The very term “homosexuality” was coined in European modernity only in the second half of the 19. century, contrasting the equally modern term “heterosexuality”. In antiquity, we do not find any term conceptualizing homoerotic dispositions and relationships in a similar way. This of course, does not mean that such dispositions and relationships did not exist in the Mediterranean world. In much of Greek antiquity, homosexual pederasty was widely accepted, but only in one form and that is important to note – with an elder man penetrating a boy. The other way around would have been an abomination to the Greeks! We see that homosexual activity functioned here within a certain frame of power structures. In much of the Near Eastern world and in Roman antiquity, homosexual activity was accepted as a means to humiliate conquered enemy soldiers. Subjugating enemies by male rape was wide spread in antiquity. Biblical examples are the story of Sodom and Gomorra in Gen 19 and of Gibeon in Judges 19.

2. Homosexual intercourse is never *discussed* in the Bible but it is *referred* to at a very few instances. In the OT in Lev 18,22 and 20,13 homosexual activity is condemned in similar lists of abominations punishable by death. It seems a problematic procedure to isolate these statements from their literary contexts, to de-contextualize them and to use them as arguments for present day discussions. The world in which we live today is very different from the world presupposed in Leviticus. This applies certainly to Western Europe. Just consider some of the other abominations listed here: Lev 18,18: “Do not take a woman and her sister into your harem at the same time, to have intercourse with the latter while the former is still alive” (by implication, polygamy is presupposed here as a given fact); Lev 20,9: “Anyone who curses father or mother should be put to death”; Lev 20,10: “The man who commits adultery with his neighbour’s wife should be put to death, he and the woman” (cf. Joh 8!); Lev 20,27: “Any man or woman of yours who is a necromancer or magician should be put to death; they should be stoned to death.”

Also the three NT texts referring to homosexual acts in passing (Rom 1,26-27; 1Cor 6,9-10; 1Tim 1,9-10) reflect cultural conventions which were self-evident in antiquity but which are no longer shared in modernity. The terms used in 1Cor and 1Tim referring to male homosexual activity are clearly those commonly used in Greek for male adult penetrators (*arsenokoitai*) and male adolescent receivers (*malakoi*: “soft boys”). In Rom 1 Paul refers to men and women who invert the “normal physical use

of sexual organs". He does so in order to exemplify the human ignorance of God. Such an attitude and behaviour, according to Paul, deserve divine capital punishment, as do envy, pride, and mercilessness, among others (Rom 1,28-32). In 1Cor 7 Paul makes transparent his assessment of marriage as a solution to sexual lust in avoiding other illicit sexual relationships (*porneia*) which might invite Satan into a person. According to this passage, Paul clearly favours sexual abstinence. Expecting the Kingdom of God, he is also not concerned about procreation.

Upon historical-contextual exegesis, the Biblical evidence against homosexuality quickly evaporates. Masiwa Ragies Gunda in his recent NT dissertation on "The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe" has convincingly shown how irrelevant the Biblical references to homosexuality are for shaping society in present times.³ Homosexuality in the modern sense of the world, i.e. a disposition marked by the desire and the possibility of same sex relationships informed by mutual love, is a non-issue in the Bible.

Contradictory assessments of homosexuality in context

In Western Europe people, including Christians, move together or get married exclusively for love. The same applies to homosexuals in the European Union who have the legal right now to get married by the state. "Love" has become the one and only generally accepted criterion for people to get married in order to achieve happiness. This criterion and this goal override all other concerns like any possible desire of the families involved or the ability to procreate. This view of relationships has become prevalent in Western societies. It seems self-evident in an individualistic culture whose members have internalized the fundamental secular creed that an individual is in charge to shape his/her destiny. At the same time, this deep seated conviction makes sense in a culture the majority of whose members do not reckon with an influence of any supernatural power in their daily affairs. The belief in the existence of such powers is found only in certain sub-cultures. To many, God is *deus remotus*, if they believe in the existence of God at all. Getting married one expects to gain individual happiness – full stop.

In preparation of this paper, I conducted a survey among my students on their assessment of homosexuality. Out of a total of 32 students, all of them undergraduates in the field of religious studies, at least 90% were of the opinion that homosexuals should be able to get employment as pastors in the Evangelical Church. The same number of students opined that homosexual couples should be able to receive a church blessing or a church wedding. None thought that

³ Masiwa Ragies Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe. A Socio-historical analysis of the political, cultural and Christian arguments in the homosexual public debate with special reference to the use of the Bible*, Bamberg 2010.

homosexuals should be criminalized. Less than 10% regarded homosexuality as sinful or as an illness. The vast majority held that homosexuality was normal and natural. There was one male student who told the class that he is homosexual. Students did not react to this statement in any noticeable way.

I was not surprised by the outcome of the survey. It reflects more or less the general attitude amongst the population including church representatives and politicians, towards homosexuality. In addition, the former, long serving mayor of Hamburg, has been known as a homosexual. The same applies to the present mayor of Berlin and also to the present minister of foreign affairs, the former vice chancellor – to refer only to the most prominent German politicians. All of them have been living in stable relationships and their sexual orientation is basically a non-issue.

I got surprised, however, by the strong reaction of the majority of my students when the results of the survey were presented to the class: Many voiced out their shock and utter disbelief when they noticed that 2 of their fellow students had ticked NO to the question whether homosexuals should be employed by the church. These two students did not dare to come into the open with their different opinion. I suspect that one of them was the only member in the class of a Pentecostal church and the other an immigrant belonging to the Russian-Orthodox Church.

Conducting a similar survey at a West-African academic institution would probably produce inverse results. I would expect, however, that the reaction of the majority against any disagreeing position would be as emotional as shown in the German example. To me, the contrast of opinions towards homosexuality is not problematic. It is culturally conditioned. I regard as problematic, however, the condemning attitude against minority positions.

Within the PCG it has been argued that homosexuality was un-natural, un-African, un-Biblical, Satanic and potentially dangerous since its endorsement might draw the wrath of God upon a nation.⁴ In addition, it should be noted that in virtually all West-African nations homosexuality is criminalised.

⁴ A report of the ad hoc committee to the General Assembly Council: On the implementation of the General Assembly Council Assembly 2011 decision 9 (February 2013); Speech of Prof. Dr. Emmanuel Martey, the moderator of PCG (Osu Presbyterian Church, June 30, 2013).

As I have indicated above, the claim that homosexuality was “un-Biblical” is exegetically and hermeneutically unsound. The claim that it was “un-natural” needs to be specified in light of the observation in natural science that any human population shows a small percentage of homosexuals. In addition, sexual acts like oral and anal sex is also practised in at least some heterosexual relationships, also among West-Africans. What constitutes “filthiness” – attributed in the discussion at times to homosexuality – is a question of “taste”, i.e. a personal preference that cannot be objectified. The claim that homosexuality was “un-African” needs to be qualified in light of the ethnological evidence to the fact that homosexual relationships were, and still are, institutionalized in at least some African societies, cf. S.O. Murray and W. Roscoe (ed.), *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies of*

Presupposed here is an *epistemic system of conceptualizing world* that is completely different from the one prevalent in contemporary Western Europe. As the theologians John Pobee and John Mbiti, the philosophers Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu, or the sociologists Patrick Twumasi and Max Assimeng – to name only some of the most prominent among African academicians of the past generation – have pointed out and as can also be proven socio-linguistically, the vast majority of people living in sub-Saharan Africa share a *knowledge of the world* according to which the individual *fundamentally belongs* – to an extended family and ethnic group in both diachronic (the lineage) and synchronic dimensions. These communal dimensions are interwoven with the sphere of spirits – God; local gods; ancestors; evil, bush, earth, and water spirits, and the like. For life to evolve in successful, i.e. life improving ways it is deemed necessary to act in accordance with a powerful spirit that allows for evil, i.e. life threatening spirits to be warded off.

In such a communalistic and spiritualistic environment, conducting one's life has the potential to affect one's extended family or even community, and there is a strong expectation that married couples procreate. In this context, homosexuality is widely held as an abomination caused by adverse spirits. As such, homosexuality might threaten the community both spiritually and materially.

It is within these West-African communities and cultures that local churches develop strategies of shaping their societies. Ecumenical partners from other parts of the world have neither the expertise to assess the implications of the homosexuality-debate in West-Africa at depth nor do they have the right to interfere with local opinions or decisions. We cannot but trust our respective ecumenical partners in their decision making processes and grant that they are the experts within their particular environment striving for responsible public statements. This benefit of the doubt, however, should be granted also to the European churches with respect in the ethical decisions they draw within their respective societies.

On June 24, 2013, the Council of Evangelical Churches in Germany (EKD) published a booklet addressing family issues from a protestant perspective for the contemporary German context, entitled in translation: "Between autonomy and dependence. Strengthening the family as a reliable communion." "Family" is understood here in a broad sense – as a reliable communion between loving partners, including partners of the same sex. Such communions should be blessed in church services. The rationale behind this stance is based on Gen 2,18: "It is not good that man is alone." EKD is trying here to address the reality of very fragile

African Homosexualities, New York 1998; Gunda, Bible and Homosexuality; St.F. Miescher, Homosexualität, in: J.E. Mabe (ed.), Das Afrika-Lexikon. Ein Kontinent in 1000 Stichwörtern, Stuttgart 2001, 250-251. That homosexual activity has been practiced in Ghanaian boarding schools, is an „open secret“. This phenomenon, which for female homosexual activity has been named *supi*, is an experience shared by many during adolescence.

family ties and the needs of a growing number of people who live alone or who raise children as single parents.

This publication occurred at a time when the supreme court decided that “registered homosexual couples” – a status legalized since 2001 and to be differentiated from “marriage” – should enjoy equal rights also with respect to taxation. The cabinet of the ministers of the German government which is dominated by members of the conservative Christian Democratic Union, endorsed the decision. It is now up to parliament to legalize the decision, and there is no doubt that the new law will pass parliament.

Conclusion

Churches are striving to make transparent the meaning of Gospel in their particular cultures and contexts. In so doing they continue an interpretive procedure that began in Early Christianity. The NT canon with the variability of its 27 writings and esp. clearly in the four gospel narratives gives ample evidence to this reality. Nobody possesses Gospel. It cannot be prescribed but at best circumscribed.

From my analysis and understanding of the NT writings I propose the following circumscription of Gospel: The Christ event is Good News because it proclaims and effectuates a divinely bestowed, all-embracing increase of life for potentially everybody (*salvation* in a broad sense). God has a particular predilection for all who have been denied a relationship with God by their fellow human beings who strive to exclude them also from communal relationships. The cross and resurrection signal and effectuate the divine election of the excluded ones.

The Word of God is not to be heard *above* culture but *within* culture. What Gospel might mean in a particular historical situation is up to debate. The Biblical writings in all their variability give a certain degree of *orientation*. They cannot serve as blueprint for interpretations of Gospel in our various situations.

The post-colonial Talmud scholar Daniel Boyarin in a discussion of Paul raises a point that might be helpful for our discussion: “(T)he rabbinic Jewish insistence that there is a difference between Jew and Greek and that that difference has value can be a liberatory force in the world, a force that works for a contemporary politics of the values of difference (...) against coercive sameness.”⁵ Boyarin explicitly includes here differences marked by “feminist, gay, multicultural, postcolonial” dispositions. This position certainly reflects the reality, possibilities, and trends of the society in which he lives and works, i.e. at Berkeley in California. But it does have relevance for the wider world in general, at for Biblical interpretation in particular, for today,

⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew, Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1994, 235-6.

global processes of migration have affected all parts of the world leading to rather rapid transformations of cultures and identities.

It is within these transformations that churches and other religious bodies all over the world are trying to position themselves and to make useful contributions for shaping their societies. In this respect intercultural debate, esp. among ecumenical members of the same church family, seems to be a promising tool that allows for a widening of horizons, for self-critical reflection of possibly problematic interpretations and assessments, and for envisioning new strategies to tackle societal phenomena which were previously unheard of in our respective communities.

Homosexuality

Perspectives from the Lutheran Church of Tanzania

Alex Mkumbo

In this study, a homosexual person is a person with sexual attraction to people of the same sex, or a person who engages in sexual activities with members of the same sex. The most common terms for *homosexual people* are *lesbians* for women and *gays* for men. No one knows precisely how homosexuality came into human history. Scholars think that the practices affiliated with the erotic attraction of people to one's own sex have been around since the early beginning of humankind. The earliest histories of homosexual behaviour seem to be found in ancient pagan religious practices. Whether the inclusion in worship was because the practice was already a part of the society at large or if the pagan worship introduced the practice is difficult to find out.

It is common understanding that a particular form of homosexual relations between men was a practice maintained for centuries in ancient Greece. These relations have been known as pederasty, "love for boys," because their basic form was erotic-social interaction between adult men and boys (a teacher and a student). For centuries it was acknowledged behavior in Greek culture, with some differences depending on the time and the place. Pederasty was dominant during the Greco-Roman age (8th Century BC – 323 BC) before and after Plato (428 – 347 BC), but it can be traced already to an earlier time, and it was still practiced at the beginning of the Christian era.

Pederast relations were an important part in raising young men to be mature members of society. It was really a matter of initiation, in which a boy, with the guidance of an adult, would mature into a man in both sexual and societal awareness. The aim was to increase men's spiritual capability and moral value.

In Sparta and some other provinces pederasty had an established link with military practice. For the reason that "only lovers can die for one another," military troops were sometime organized accordant to pederast relationships, so that a man and a

boy would fight side by side, the older serving as a model, to win the esteem of the younger. Reciprocally, he would gain esteem and sexual satisfaction from the young man. After the age of nineteen or so, the young man was expected to marry and establish a family. Those who did not, or who continued to engage in homosexual relations completely, were subject to offense, or abominable. Additionally, exclusive sexual passivity in men was disapproved and, occasionally, punished severely and rape of a free boy or young man was harshly condemned, and male prostitution by citizens was punished severely.

Pederasty therefore implied a homosexual relation in which the partners were not homosexuals in the modern meaning of the word. Pederasty was a social, educational, and moral development, in which cultural identity was more important than sexual identity.

The Roman empire was influenced to a great extent by the Greeks. Greece was conquered by Rome around 146 BCE. Hellenistic influence included attitudes toward sexuality. So homosexual conduct was rather common also in Rome. But, in Rome homosexual relationships usually happened between a slave and a master. Under certain conditions it was recognized, but it was not a renowned custom in Rome as it had been in Athens or Sparta. In the time of the republic period, Cicero professed that there is nothing illegal for a man taking another man to the country in order to enjoy his erotic sensual pleasures. Even though one could well have sex with his wife at home, a man in the baths, a prostitute in the brothel, and a slave in a dark corner, he would have only been challenged if he were not able to keep everything in its place. Prostitution, including male homosexual prostitution, was a common, legal, and tolerated behavior in the Roman streets and baths. Homosexual prostitution involved primarily slaves and foreigners. It was illegal for a free Roman citizen to become a prostitute; and there was no social esteem for prostitutes, male and female. Homosexual relationships between free men, however, were not mostly recognized and may have been even forbidden by law.

The Romans did not keep the educational aim, nor was homosexuality at any point intended by social or political reasons. Rather, the sexual act was an expression of manly power, and penetration was a symbol of maleness, the manifestation of the male body as such, the masculinity.

In the 6th century AD the Roman Empire made illegal homosexuality. This was partly due to the influence of other cultures upon the Capitol City, but specifically due to the spread and influence of Christianity. Christianity became the favorite religion of the day, and simultaneously often agreed biblical values for the aim of reward. Those religions that promoted both female and male prostitution were as well illegal from the empire. The death penalty to homosexuals was prevailing up to the 8th century, and although the death penalty was removed in most European Countries in the 19th century, homosexual activities were severely punished by long periods in

prison. Christians have reacted to the evident increase in approving of homosexuality in various ways. The impression that homosexuality is sin seems to dominate the Christian community. Christians consider approval of homosexuality as a threat to their belief.

First we have to differentiate between a person who has a homosexual orientation, and a person who is involved in homosexual activity. Participating in homosexual activities does not necessarily imply that a person has a homosexual orientation. It is well known that people under highly hard conditions after a long time without heterosexual touches, such as soldiers and prisoners, at times engage in acts of a homosexual nature. But this is not what is specifically understood as homosexuality. Nobody up till now can state the reason behind homosexual behaviour. But although the special reason for homosexuality is unknown, it is specifically accepted that homosexuality is not a matter of choice. It is just simply an abnormal orientation in the mind of a person, an orientation that might have been present at birth. Two things should also be made clear in this context: in a scientific medical sense the majority of human beings are neither exclusively heterosexual nor exclusively homosexual, but have predominant tendencies towards one of those orientations. The other thing is that homosexuality does not take with it any clinical health problem. Even though some religious sects believe that homosexual activity is wicked or immoral behaviour, research and studies explain that homosexuality is a normal and positive variance of human sexuality. Therefore it is no longer considered an illness.

The numbers of homosexuals are about equal in all societies, there is a general approximation of about 4-5% in any given population, with little differences between different societies. Thus, today it is generally recognized that, a part of human race is homosexual. But there is no agreement, nonetheless, on the reason for this case.

Though there still debate and doubt as to the genesis of human sexual orientations, but the contemporary knowledge suggests that sexual orientation is usually formed during early childhood. In a recent 2010 study,¹ the research concludes, with respect to our gender identity that, the final judgement of belonging to the male or female gender, and sexual orientation are programmed or organized into our brain structures when we are still in the womb. There is no indication that social environment after birth has an effect on gender identity or sexual orientation. Therefore sexual orientation is not a choice.

Always since homosexuality became defined and categorized as a form of human sexuality, and particularly after the Second World War, it has gained new attention and interest. This is proved in the increase of public debate also in modern scholarly

¹From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality>, 8.11.2011.

research. Likewise, the “coming out” of homosexuals themselves as a minority group has happened in the United States as well as in Western Europe.

Attitudes towards homosexuality among Christians today differ between Churches and cultures. In the Western countries, where the issue of homosexuality has been talked about and public debated for more than fifty years, there is broadly an attitude that homosexual orientation is something that is not natural, or it is imperfect in some way and contrary to creation and God’s plan. The Roman Catholic Church view is that homosexual behaviour cannot be accepted as normal, and the homosexual activities “under no circumstances can they be approved.” However, Christians have to recognize homosexual people and treat them with an attitude of respect and compassion. For most of them it is a trial, for they do not chose their homosexual condition.

In recent years there has also been a progress towards a full recognition of homosexual people, particularly in the Western Countries and particularly in Protestant Churches. For example the Methodist Church in 1979, stated that: “For homosexual men and women, permanent relationships characterized by love can be an appropriate and Christian way of expressing their sexuality”. In many countries in Europe it is possible today a homosexual partnership to be registered equivalent to marriage and blessed in the Church in a liturgy nearly similar to that of a normal marriage. Yet, such progression does not pass undisputed by public opinion, either outside or within the Churches.

Homosexuality, African Christianity and cultural traditions

The first evidence of possible homosexual relations in history is commonly considered as *Khnumhotep* and *Niankhkhnum*, an Egyptian male couple, who lived around the 2400 BCE. The pair is represented in a nose-kissing position, the most sexual affectedness in Egyptian art, encircled by what seem to be their inheritors.² Study also shows the existence of homosexuality in North Africa, specifically in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco in the early Centuries. Since North Africa has been long in contact with Greek culture and Roman Empire, it is possible that the region had the knowledge of pederast practices that it borrowed and that influenced homosexual practices. But in Sub-Sahara Africa there has never been any indigenous homosexuality in the region. Therefore, a belief that homosexuality is a western innovation forced upon colonial Africa by white men, and by Islamic slave trade is most likely acceptable. The spread of some aspects of homosexuality from *Nubia* to *Zululand* on the East Coast of Africa and offshore on *Zanzibar* and *Madagascar*, can be from the fact that *Nubia* has been in contact with Mediterranean countries for a

²From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality>, 8.11.2011.

long time, for instance, the Queen of Sheba (Eritea, Ethiopia, South Sudan) visited King Solomon (971 BC- 931 BC) in Jerusalem (1Kings 10:1-10), and Ethiopian Finance Minister who went to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 8:26-39). So it is not surprising to borrow pederast practice from there, and herself in turn transmit to her neighbours down to *Zululand* and *Madagascar*. Similarly, *Zanzibar* and the *East African Coast* in general, has been in contact with *Arabia* especially *Oman* for a long time, so it is not surprising too to find forms of homosexual practices noted in this region. Some form of homosexuality has also existed among Africans societies although delicately and secretly and would arouse strong social condemnations.

Forms of homosexuality noticed in African communities are sparse because out of more than two thousands societies, the studies reported only thirty societies are said to have some aspects of homosexual practices. Studies of Anthropologists show that aspects of homosexual relations noted in some African societies south of the Sahara are connected to socializations, medicinal value, religious significance, coping strategies, and prostitution.

The mentioned forms of homosexual behaviour were only tolerated in specific situations such as rituals, cultic practices, for declared medicinal value, and religio-political arrangement, they were not considered the standard, but often abandoned at the time of marriage. Therefore, homosexuality, in all these circumstances was not a good act that was socially sanctioned in the African context.

Socializations: Anthropologists reported that women in Lesotho engaged in socially approved long term, erotic relationships called *motsoalle*. Also *Azande* male warriors in the northern Congo habitually took on young male lovers between the ages of 12 years and 20 years, who helped with household tasks and participated in sex with their older husbands. The practice had died out after Europeans had gained control of African countries. But that was a practice connected to socializations which must have ended at marriage. Active Kikuyu pederasts called *onek*, and also cited 'homoerotic bachelors' among the pastoralist Nandi and Maragoli.

A *bori* cult relation among the mostly *Islamic Hausa* community which is patriarchal. The *cult* concerns, among others homosexuals from different cadres of men of low social status. Sexual relations between boys concerning manual stimulations and anal intercourse are considered not as an end in themselves but instead as sexual search that will interpret into heterosexual relations as boys bodily and emotionally matured. There were also homosexual relations among pastoralist boys of the *Cushitic-speaking Qemant* (Kemant) of Central Ethiopia.

Among the *Fon* of Benin and *Nyakyusa* of Tanzania, egalitarian relationships among adolescent males developed during their rites of passage from childhood to adulthood when they were isolated from females. It is reported that, *Nyakyusa* boys normally would leave their natal home between ages 10 years and 14years, to

become cattle herders living in separate settlement camps, such homosexual relations would end with marriage. Among the *Bangala*, a Congo ethnic group is cited as practicing mutual masturbation and anal intercourse. And there was homosexuality practised among the *Hutu* and *Tutsi* youth trainees at the court.

There were *lesbian* activities among the *Kaguru* women in Morogoro region in Tanzania. Where some *Kaguru* women practise *lesbian* activities during female initiation, women take both the functions of men and of women in demonstrating sexual legislation to initiates. It is also reported of *lesbian* practices among older girls and young women among the *Tswana*, *Ila* and *Naman* of South Africa in which there is use of phalluses. Researches report of *lesbian* practices are most common among the *chiefs'* and *kings'* older wives of *Nyakyusa* of Southern Tanzania, the *Mongo*, the *Nupe* of Nigeria, the *Tswana* of Southern Africa and *Azande* of Southern Sudan and in other polygynists living communally in households as co-wives than among the girls, who have so much attention from young men. Relationship of this form would from time to time so closely deepen that they would incorporate pledges of mutual assistance and gain acknowledgment from the husband and the rest of the household, finally being sealed by a certain ritual. But usually this would not include a sexual element.

Unlike men, women's attitude to forge reciprocal relationships with other women at an adult level is more common than as adolescents. First, because girls generally marry at a younger age than boys. Second, many girls often marry in polygynous families where they end up attracting minimum attention from their husbands but appreciable and deep interaction with other women. Third, women are also more sensitive and keen than men on reciprocity in any relationship.

Medicinal Value: According to German ethnographer *Günther Tessmann* in 1904 reports on trans-generational homosexuality, that is, between same-age grade as well as cross-generational homosexual intercourse among the Bantu-speaking *Bene*, *Bulu*, *Fang*, *Jaunde*, *Mokuk*, *Mwele*, *Ntum*, and *Pagwe* who live in three rainforests north of the Congo river in present-day Gabon and Cameroon, believed to be a *medicine for wealth*. Among the Muslim *riverian* peoples of the northern Sudan, men involved in a healing cult called *zaar* that is largely the sphere of women in a society with a well-marked sexual division of labor and sexual segregation. Some men are regular players at cult rituals, and a few become cult group leaders.

Religious Significance: A religious leadership function called *mugawe* among the *Meru* of Kenya which pertains wearing women's clothes and hairstyle. *Mugawe* are often homosexual, and sometimes are married to a man.

Within the *Bantu*-speaking communities, transgender function carries with it religious control that may include spiritual power, and life-enhancing female spiritual power. Men-Women are spiritually important because they incorporate both

masculine and feminine power. For example, among the *Ovimbudu* and *Ambo* of Angola, the *Ila* and *Tonga* of Zambia, the *Zulu* of South Africa, and the *Nilotic-speaking Lugbara* of Uganda. In this position, they take on a socio-religious function ascribed to an ancestral spirit through a dream, vision, or some experience of spiritual relation. In the mentioned communities, it is evident during adolescence; even where it is continued, it would be in secrecy due to the strong social anger it would otherwise draw. This practice of petting sexual organs without penetration, was viewed to prepare firm cross-gender relations among the youth.

Consequently, homosexuality, in all these circumstances was not a good act that was socially sanctioned in the African context. Trans-gender and trans-generational relations had an essential position in the traditional religious life in African societies. Trans-generational relations were engaged towards socializing children into adulthood. Trans-gender relations were connected to the achievement of certain types of religious authority. But it should be clear that forms of homosexual behaviour mentioned above were only tolerated in specific situations such as rituals, cultic practices, for declared medicinal value, and religio-political arrangement, they were not considered the standard, but often abandoned at the time of marriage, where it is continued, it would be in secrecy due to the strong social anger it would otherwise draw.

Copping Strategies: Marriage in African societies constitutes the focus of existence. Due to this understanding, some societies had a form of marriage woman to woman such as the *Iweto* found among the *Akamba* and *Gusii* all in Kenya, and *intobhu* among *Kurya* in *Tarime*, Tanzania, in family situations where a woman was barren, such a woman would go to find herself a "wife" who would give birth on her behalf. She would arrange for the due process, payment of bride-price and find the right person to stay with her married woman. This type of marriage was rare and not the ideal model. The barren woman was more interested in "using" another woman to get children without much consideration of which man actually did it. But the *iweto's* children, or the *intobhu's* children among the *Kurya* of *Tarime*, would adopt the name of the man of the home, whether he was alive or dead. This was because it was his line of descent that *intobhu* or *iweto* was perpetuating. However, this is not *lesbianism* because the two women do not relate sexually, but the *intobhu* or *iweto* gets children from a person known in the ancestry of the husband to the barren woman. However, at present, among the *Kurya* the married woman has sometimes freedom of finding a man of her choice but the children belongs to the *intobhu*. Since barrenness was seen as a catastrophe in most traditional African societies, community had coping strategies for individuals who fell victim to such. *Intobhu* and *Iweto* are exemplifying of such a coping strategy of what would otherwise happen, in a native African worldview, a tragic marriage.

In case of an impotent, the family could arrange for a brother of the impotent man to have a sexual intercourse with the wife so as to bear children for the brother. For the most part, this was done without the knowledge of the impotent man and the wife and the brother of the husband likewise the elders behind the plan would be bound to an oath of concealment, never to disclose this. So homosexuality does not constitute this potential and essential to sexuality, the reproduction of offspring, the root and focus of marriage relationships and family. There is no doubt from the analysis of these factors that homosexuality is not at comfort in indigenous African societies.

Prostitution: Same sex unions among women found in Mombasa along the Kenyan coast, with regard to Mombasa Muslim women's dance, called *lelemama* which functions among other things as a recruitment strategy into *lesbian* systems. Lesbians in Mombasa are known as *wasagaji*, a Swahili word, meaning, grinders. The verb *kusaga* (to grind) is usually used for the grinding of grain between two millstones, the upper being the small, and the lower being the big ones. These distinctions characterise *msagaji* relationships, with the dominant woman normally being older as well as richer. But they do not try to look like men and they wear and behave like all other ordinary coastal women. So, sexual activities of women are refers as *wasagaji* or 'grinders.'

Along the Indian Ocean coastal areas of East Africa, in Mombasa, Lamu, Malindi, Zanzibar and even some towns in the East African region know too well that male homosexual prostitutes are common. In Mombasa, male homosexuals are called *mabasha* in plural for the active partners, single *basha*, and *mashoga* in plural for the passive partners, single *shoga*. *Shoga* is also used between women to mean 'friend.' Another name for the passive gay is called *msenge*. For most part, these male homosexuals are confined to prostitution where the passive partner is paid for in cash. The paying partner is usually the active partner, the *basha*, and there are fixed rates of payment. Homosexual relations in Mombasa are almost between a young, poorer partner and an older, richer one. But more than economic is involved, for the reason that some of those who take a passive role are called *hanithi*, which is an *Oman Arabic* word, meaning impotence, sometimes is used interchangeably with *msenge*. As it is believed by many people that homosexuality in East African Coast was introduced by Arabs where Oman has long involved in trade and domination in this region especially of both Zanzibar and Mombasa.

Also there is the existence of homosexual activities among the street children in modern-day Nairobi City. Most of the street children are male ranging from 6 years to 30 years old or even more. First, there is homosexuality among these street children, much of this is by consent, which involves no outsiders from the group. Sometimes the older boys taking advantage of the younger ones, and even rape has been known to occur. Second, there is homosexuality with outsiders, where some of

the street children are forced by the chance of immediate financial payment and the latter find the street children are not costly as the habitual rent-boys. Some of these street children continue to become homosexual prostitutes and others finally opt for heterosexual relationships. Third, there is the phenomenon of male prostitution. There is a small group of mostly young adult men who offer sex for cash. Male prostitution in Nairobi is highly formalized and secretive and depends on a network of people who know each other. Since some of these young men are kept by homosexual men who are established but have no courage to come out for fear of the law, they are forced to operate underground. These young male prostitutes are not necessarily gays but practice homosexuality as a means of earning their bread. Boarding schools, prisons, the armed forces, and detention camps are some of the areas of situations that give rise to or encourage homosexual relationships.

There are strong customs, rules and statutory laws, which define marriage as a voluntary union between a woman and a man, but in actual practice their families must consent it, where they are asked for the participation of and contribution from at least, family members and relatives. In traditional Africa, the marriage agreement is between families or clans and is acted in the transfer of wealth from the man's family as a symbol of value, that is, the paying of bride-price. The paying of bride-price is the essential part of a legal agreement for marriage and is taken by a number of particular details. This is not seen as the purchasing of a commodity or as the buying of a slave; such an idea is not present. Such sexual privileges, the social and economic given through marriage agreement cannot be found in homosexual relationships. The African traditional worth did not imagine a situation where individuals were masters of their own sexuality. Sex was a community asset whose usage was closely monitored for the benefit of the individual. The community was a close society of connected activity, could impact the welfare of all other members of society. This understanding is basically essential and can be strengthened by the truth that in case of an impotent, the family and relatives could arrange the plan behind this problem.

In traditional African perspective sexual matters are not for public consumption, they are done in the privacy, therefore the homosexuals by the way of "coming out", displaying and expressing their sexual preference, seeking to transport homosexuality into the public arena, as a way of being recognized, is contrary to the traditional African culture. This being the African perspective, homosexuality hence does not qualify to be labelled African. So then homosexual persons who attempt to force the Community to notice them and their practices are behaving in an un-African way. Such manifestation of homosexuality is therefore not an African. In the process of building community, African culture has no place, no category and no concept that can accommodate homosexuality as a way of life because it does not fit with the view that humans should reproduce in order to be remembered for eternity.

Nothing is more important than the cycle of life from the unborn to the ancestors; anything that breaks that cycle, such as homosexuality as a way of life, threatens the very core of African society and philosophy.

In Africa, homosexuality is illegal for gays in 29 countries and for lesbians in 20 countries. Except in South Africa where homosexuality is legal and there exists a national legislation that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual preference. Many of the African countries have inherited these anti-sodomy laws from their colonial masters. In Tanzania homosexuality is illegal and punishable to imprisonment for 14 years. Although homosexuality is a serious criminal offence in Tanzania, punishable by imprisonment, but no one has been prosecuted. Zanzibar enacted a law in 2004 banning homosexual relations. Male offenders face more jail time, up to 25 years, than convicted women seven years jail. In Uganda also homosexuality is illegal, under the current Ugandan law, homosexuality is punishable by jail with a maximum sentence of seven years.

In most of Sub-Sahara Africa, however, homosexuality still is not a subject of public debate, and the legal position of homosexuality does not explain much about the position of homosexuals. That does not imply there does not exist an underground homosexual people, but not being a subject of public debate, even individual knowing of homosexuality can be low. Although in some other African societies there is a traditional knowledge of the existence of some sort of homosexuality, but formalized homosexual couples however generally remain unheard of.

In Mediterranean Africa, on the other hand, there are outspoken policies towards homosexuality, largely based on the Shari'a law. Homosexuality therefore is prohibited in most North African countries, as it is in most Middle East countries. Egypt is an exception one in not prohibiting homosexuality and has had some degree of public discussion on the subject.

Since homosexuality does not constitute this potential and essential to sexuality, the reproduction of offspring, the root and focus of marriage relationships, which lead to continuity of family or society, then African attitudes toward same-sex relationships have been mostly negative. As we have seen above, first, sexual activities in many African societies is understood to be between people of opposite sex and is carried out for the purpose of procreation, then homosexuality cannot qualify to be acceptable practice in African culture. For in African cultural tradition sex is an act that serves to propagate the lineage, the reproduction of life, having babies to continue the survival of the society. The attitude of many Africans towards homosexuals is that homosexuality is not part of African culture and traditions, it is against African moral values, set laws, culture and regulations, therefore it is unacceptable. Homosexuality is even against Islamic and Christian moral beliefs adopted by Tanzanian society and African society south of the Sahara at large.

African societies in general, are not ready to change their attitudes towards homosexuality even if there are some gays and lesbians in their midst, whose number is perhaps increasing, since they are seen as involving in unnatural sexual encounters which are much condemned as social abnormality. Extremists equate them to animals, whereas President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe described homosexuals as "worse than dogs and pigs."

The statement that the Bible speaks for itself is broadly common among African Christians, and it occupies a special place in the life and worship of the total population, of the Church and its members. In most African countries like Tanzania, where the majority are Christians, the Bible has strong influence that extended even to non-Christians. In these African countries with a Christian majority, the Bible is the single most read book, widely distributed in families and homes, and has drawn attention from all walks of life. Therefore, it is not surprising that every person acknowledges the significance of invoking the Bible to justify his or her views on different issues.

Christians believe in "the infallibility of the Bible," and that Scripture is its own interpreter, has led to literalistic readings of Scripture. Even those trained pastors, it is quite common to skip the exegetical task of discerning the original meaning of biblical texts and apply certain passages directly and literally to contemporary contexts. Others trained in exegesis, however, find that way of applying Scripture literally and directly to present-day contexts problematic and sometimes even oppressive.

The Lutheran principle of *sola scriptura*, and especially its consequence that Scripture interprets itself, and that all believers had divine authority to interpret the Scriptures, have avoided the problem of certain persons or groups elevating themselves to divine status in relation to others. No one is above Scripture; all are to be subject to it.

The ELCT Bishops do not accept biblical interpretations done by some theologians and scholars with the purpose to support and legitimize homosexuality while they are aware that the Bible prohibits homosexuality and anal intercourse. They say the Church's interpretations do not necessarily have to concur with those of the scholars. Thus the ELCT warns her members to read the Bible by themselves since it is self-interpretation, so that, they may not lose their faith in the face of this strange doctrine that could easily seduce people in this age of globalization. Therefore the ELCT declared that it stands firmly on the foundation of the Word of God written in the Bible that is self-explanatory and does not need interpretations by a certain authority or certain place. Therefore the institution of marriage remains as informed in the Bible on the creation stories and as Jesus referred to it in the Gospel of Matthew. This has been the long held Church teachings and understanding of the institution of marriage since time immemorial. They stated

that Church values such as marriage and its derived functions and meanings cannot be changed either with scientific, cultural, political, social, economic, or any other forces. Because it is based on the Word of God, and the Word of God cannot be changed or redirected by time, place, or circumstance. That means a social historical context of the biblical literature cannot change the Word of God. Therefore approving same sex marriages undermines the foundation of the Word of God for continuing procreation. Although the advocates of the same sex marriage use the Word of God in their teaching to justify their position, the ELCT rejects them because of their improper and incorrect representations of scripture.

The ELCT Bishops admit that there are homosexuals within their Churches and Tanzanian society in general. But the Bible condemns homosexual activities and anal intercourse particularly in the letters of Paul (1Cor 6:9-10; Rom 1:26-27) because they are against God's plan and do not conform to respectability and correct human behavior. As if the Word of God is not sufficient enough to support their views on homosexuality, the ELCT Bishops refer to the Tanzanian African culture and values which accept only marriages between man and woman. Being Tanzanians Africans having our own values and cultures since old times which have guided our lifestyles approving only marriages of the opposite sex, the homosexual life-styles cannot be accepted because it is against African values and cultures.

Studies show that the Bible addresses homosexuality once and for complete in the texts: Gen 19:1-11); Judg 19; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1Cor 6:9-10 and 1Tim 1:10. These texts are the so-called deadly weapons against which homosexuality cannot survive. Weapons that prove once and for all, that the Word of God knows about homosexuality and God has taken a step on the matter. Studies affirm that the Bible opposes homosexuality and is explained for what the Church should do about it. God clearly prohibits homosexuality but it is not a unique sin, no worse than that of liars, thieves, drunkards and adulterers. Homosexuality is equal to all other sins. However we should not acknowledge homosexuals rather take them in our Churches, helping to struggle to be faithful to Biblical ethics. The texts Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 have provided Christians with a clear genuine position that God clearly says that homosexual practice is an abomination, totally unacceptable to God and that it is absolutely abominable and disgusting. The critical argument on the Levitical laws is that they mention homosexuality as an *abomination*, which is a translation of the Hebrew word meaning the transgression of a divinely sanctioned boundary. It is thus not possible for Christians to support that which violates boundaries that were set by God, the boundary that separate men from women. The two cited Leviticus texts prohibit homosexuality describing it as an abomination that incurs the death penalty. The Bible making homosexuality a crime deserving the death penalty, shows how serious the crime is.

The fact that from the time of its introduction in Africa, Christianity was mostly seen as the enemy of traditional religion and cultural values and norms, has not stopped Christian leaders from advocating a return to those values now considered to be in agreement with the Word of God, and discard those considered to be not in agreement with the Word of God such as homosexuality. Thus, it is not possible for Christians to support homosexuality because that would be disobeying the Word of God. *The New Testament* also condemns all sorts of homosexuality because they are all manifestations of how "humans have changed the natural use of the opposite sex to that which is against nature"(Rom 1:26-27). Paul calls homosexuality unnatural and immoral is widely attested. Homosexual behavior is 'revolting' because it represents in sexual position the rebellion against God. It goes against the plan of God, existing from creation, for the union of male and female in marriage. Thus homosexuality is a transgression against creation in that the sexual nature of human beings is heterosexuality. Homosexuality is not only the abnormal sex exchange of the deviant, driven by lust and desire for sex stimulation, but the deviation from God's original creation plan which all homosexual behavior demonstrates. Men are required to have sexual intercourse with women, by nature women are required to be used in this way and not for men to use other men as women. It is against nature for women to desire to use other women as if they were themselves men. By inverting the roles and uses of sex, that is, men as penetrators and women as penetrable, homosexuals are committing a crime against nature. In Gen 1:27, God created them male and female. This is God's natural order which we human beings are violating. Most Christians believe clearly that creation stories describe how God intended creation. Natural, thus, is interpreted as the created order and owes its existence to God and cannot be changed. God did not render for homosexuality when He created man in his own image, male and female. In this case, the only scripturally genuine natural sexuality is heterosexuality. In this respect, homosexuality is unnatural because it is the contrary of what was created by God. Homosexuality is thus in and of itself disordered.

The texts 1Corinthians 6:9 and 1Timothy 1:10 have also featured outstandingly in the arguments against homosexuality in the discussions. Taken literally (1Cor 6:9-10), the text means what it says and since it is the Word of God it cannot be questioned or doubted. Homosexuals are immoral, listed among the 'unrighteous' who will not inherit the kingdom of God. This listing shows that all doers of these deeds are equally condemned. They are all offenders before God and are all advised to abandon their sinful acts. Likewise, in 1Timothy 1:10 the sodomites are listed among the unlawful and disobedient that God condemns. From these Pauline texts, it is rather plain that Paul's perspective was against homosexuality.

The argument is that the close relationship of African traditional culture and biblical culture is in this case based on the point of procreation and the strict differentiation between men and women. Homosexuality is unacceptable within the

African context because it is disapproved not only by the Bible but by traditional cultural norms and values as well. In this context we should keep those aspects of culture with moral values so far as they come in line with the biblical teaching, the Word of God.

Homosexuality is an immoral act. Same sex relationships, apart from being an opposition to African cultural existence, resist God's spiritual law which authorizes of only two life-styles, heterosexuality within marriage and celibacy, while, simultaneously prohibiting homosexual acts. Any uncertainty about the position of the Bible is removed by this proclamation of what is allowed and prohibited because these commands are acknowledged to be biblical. Immoral acts are thus, those acts that are in opposition with what God authorized by providing for them in the created order. Obeying God's moral law and his aim for our lives is the only way to attaining our highest goodness as human beings. Hence, homosexual relationships that are "loving relationships" are inconsistent with true love because they are in rebellion to God's law and intentions. Homosexuality is therefore immoral in all its forms because God's moral law prohibits it and also because it is against the intentions of God. Sexual ethics thus has to be taken as referring to the sexual relationship of the authorized couple, connoting the heterosexual monogamous couple as marked by Christian religion to be husband and wife. Anything that falls outside of this authorized couple is marked immoral and that includes all sorts of homosexuality and other sexual impropriety.

The ELCT Bishops see homosexual activities such as anal sex are against God's order of creation. Therefore they are rebellious against God's Commandment. That is why there is need for homosexuals to repent and be restored. They expressed that Gen 2:24 is in harmony with the life in an African context where marriage is between people of opposite sex and where there are clearly definite separated roles between male and female. Therefore, they strongly reject the act of men taking the role of women and women taking the role of men. They strongly object legalization of homosexuality, its acts, anal intercourse and same sex marriages. They are objecting to legalization of same sex marriage because it is as well against human dignity and Tanzanian culture. The ELCT Bishops believe that same sex marriage is not a marriage but a self-satisfied act of giving in to human desires. So it is sinful and evil to change God's purposes of creation of man and woman, which was announced by God Himself to be 'very good' (Gen 1:31) for the interest of few people with divergent sexual perspectives and activities.

They are convinced that this is not a normal constitution of a human person anywhere. Therefore the ELCT is objecting to lifestyle because it deviates from basic biblical teaching. And it rebels against God and misleads society. Thus, legalizing, permitting or approving same sex relationships is to sabotage the institution of marriage and its sanctity which is the base of community welfare. They warn all

human societies in the world that to approve, legalize or promote homosexual activities in any form is to reject natural ethical codes that humanize society. It is thus to go against God's Creation. Therefore, the Church's responsibility is not to agree to the wishes of homosexuals rather to help them accept their condition as a spiritual and physical problem. They stated that the true Church of Christ would fail in its obligation if it were to surrender to the pressure from homosexuals and sodomites. So then the Church has a responsibility to help homosexuals and sodomites to accept their sexual orientation as a spiritual and physical problem. For homosexual activities and anal sex are longstanding seen as an extreme sexual desire, and if a person under this state is not helped, it can lead to inhumanity. They affirm that sexual act must be restricted to the marriage bound of a male and a female.

There has been criticism also on recognizing homosexuals on the basis of sexual rights as human rights. Critics view homosexuals seeking constitutional rights, assuring their freedom is aiming to perpetrate their unnatural living style. Therefore, homosexuality is not a constitutional issue, it is a moral issue, and morality cannot be legislated. They must change from within their hearts as the Bible accounts (Jer 17:9). Critics see this as misrepresented to employ the term "human rights" in order to approve homosexuality and sodomy. They see this as an intentional misuse of a good term "human rights". They questioned if is it not also a human rights issue that children be raised in community with father and mother?

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the largest Lutheran Church in Africa, and the second largest Church in the Lutheran World Federation, opposes the same sex relationships and declared that those who are in such relationships and those who support the legitimacy of such marriage, are not welcome to work in the ELCT because such practice is incompatible with Biblical teachings. They also reject their influence in any form as well as their money and their support. ELCT remains stable and cannot change its position on this matter and will not support any attempts of campaigning or ultimate penetration of homosexuals, or advocates of same sex marriages, or other forms of homosexual activities. Thus the ELCT requests her partner Churches, nevertheless how strongly they differ with them on this issue of homosexuality, that they must not try in any means whatever, at any time, or any place to interfere with their standpoint on homosexuality.

Homosexuality

The position of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana in context

Joseph W. Acheampong

Homosexuality or same-sex relationship has become an issue for discussion in Ghana in recent years. Discourse on the issue has, in recent years, engaged the attention of stake holders of religious, social and political spheres of our national life. The church in Ghana, and for that matter the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), is not left out in the ongoing discussion. In this paper I would like to give an overview of the beginnings of the current discussion on homosexuality in Ghana and also situate the subject in the social, cultural, political and religious contexts of Ghana. I will then attempt a discussion on the view of the PCG.

Until about the last decade, homosexuality was not a subject of discourse in any section of the Ghanaian society. It is a fact, however, that there was an indirect admission of its presence (or possible presence) especially among students. As I was growing up, I heard about some expressions in the Akan¹ language which suggested that two males could be involved in sexual intimacy, although it was a taboo even to talk about it. Lesbianism is believed to be practiced among young ladies, especially in the secondary and tertiary institutions in Ghana for quite some time now. Students caught in such practice were penalized for their actions.² One can therefore say that homosexuality is not new to Ghanaians in its entirety, even though it had not come to the level of public debate.

In the past decade, especially from 2003, homosexuality has attracted public attention. This was when the nation was vigorously campaigning against HIV/AIDS. The population officer of the Greater Accra Region at the time, Ms. Ellen Rockson is on record to have lamented on the rate homosexuality was gaining grounds in the

¹ Akan is the largest ethnic group in Ghana. Tribes which belong to this group speak different dialects of the Akan language.

² The Ghana News Agency reported on 8th March 2005 of the dismissal of a student in a secondary school in Akosombo for his indulgence in homosexuality.

Greater Accra and the Eastern regions. According to Ms. Rockson, this practice was a contributing factor to the spread of HIV/AIDS in those areas.³ At this time homosexuality was an issue only in so far as it was a factor to the spread of HIV. It was from this time on that homosexuality became a focus for public discussion. This coincided with the consecration of a gay Bishop in the United States of America.

The Anglican Church in Ghana, through the Joint Anglican Diocesan Council (JADC) registered their disapproval of the move, describing it as unacceptable and contrary to the word of God.⁴ One can even say that this was not a direct reaction to the Ghanaian situation as such; nonetheless I believe it contributed to the consciousness of the emergence of homosexuality as a subject for consideration. It also interesting to note that at this stage, not even the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) was ready to discuss and talk about gay rights. In an interview with journalists on 16th December 2003, the Commissioner for CHRAJ indicated that gay rights could not be treated as human rights. For him, "...the minimum the commission could go regarding gay rights was that CHRAJ might entertain the complaint by a gay that had been refused a job on the basis of being a gay."⁵ Among his reasons is that homosexuality was frowned upon in Ghana; it would therefore not be prudent to bring it up as a human rights issue. This view reflects how unacceptable homosexuality is considered among Ghanaians.

These developments set the stage for what may be described as a full-scale public debate on homosexuality. People declared publicly that they were gay. It also became public knowledge that there were even associations for homosexuals and lesbians. This association fought against discrimination against homosexuals and decriminalization of homosexuality. In 2008, the association used the presidential and parliamentary elections to push for equal health delivery and legislation in favor of gay rights. This was championed by a group calling itself Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Trans-sexual of Ghana. They threatened to boycott the December 2008 polls "if nothing concrete is done to bring them into the mainstream of socio-economic life in terms of recognition of their human rights" [Source: Gye Nyame Concord, 23rd May, 2008]. This did not yield any positive response from the then government.

³ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=38540>, 12th April, 2012.

⁴ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=47349>, 12th April, 2012.

⁵ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=48420>, 12th April, 2012.

From this time on, homosexuality assumed a political dimension. The political slant to the issue became even more pronounced with the proposal of an International conference gays and lesbians in Ghana in 2006. This move was fiercely resisted by all opinion leaders in the country, including religious leaders, culminating in the issuance of a statement from the government of the time. In the statement, the then Minister for Information and National Orientation stated, among other things that "Government would like to make it absolutely clear that it shall not permit the proposed conference of International Gays and Lesbians to take place anywhere in Ghana."

The reason given was that "Government does not and shall not condone any such activity which violently offends the culture, morality and heritage of the entire people of Ghana" [Source: Ghana News Agency (GNA), 31st August, 2006]. The government's ban of the conference was purely based on cultural and moral grounds. This action of the government received a lot of applauds from the religious community of the country. According to a GNA report on 5th September 2006, the Ghana Office of an Islamic group, the Revival of Islamic Heritage Society hailed the government for not allowing the conference to take place in Ghana.

The group described homosexuality as a sinful act which is contrary to the teachings of both the Bible and the Koran. In a statement, the Islamic group called on religious bodies to "team up to sensitize the youth and children in schools and neighborhoods to stay clear of that sinful act that has been condemned by God." This was the first time the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, through the Moderator of the General Assembly Rt. Rev. Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Manso got involved in the debate. The church pledged its support to government's position on homosexuality, describing it as sinful and shameful [Source: The Chronicle, 8th September, 2006 edition]. Other religious bodies and personalities who condemned homosexuality at the time and threw their weight behind the government include the Christian Council of Ghana, the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches, Sheikh Osman Nuhu Sharubutu, National Chief Imam, and the Most Rev. John Martin Darko, the Catholic Bishop of Sekondi/Takoradi.

The political aspect of the issue of homosexuality turned a new twist when the development partners of Ghana, the UK and the USA in particular issued statements that Ghana stands the risk of losing all forms of assistance from them, should Ghana refuse to treat homosexuality as a human right issue. The government however refused to bow to the pressure. Till now, there is no law legalizing homosexuality in Ghana.

Homosexuals in Ghana

A self-styled human rights advocate for homosexuals, Nana Kweku Sarpong has claimed that about 3% of the Ghanaian population was either gay or lesbian [Source: Adom News, Friday, 4th November, 2011]. It must be said, however, that one wonders how scientific his survey was. Experts have said that people indulge in same-sex relationship in Ghana either for pleasure or for monetary gains. In other words, the question of a person's sexual orientation does not seem to be a causative factor.

This view is affirmed by a research conducted by a consortium of HIV/AIDS groups in Ghana in 2006. The research revealed that about 62% of Gays in Ghana indulge in heterosexual activities with their wives and girlfriends [Source: GNA, 6th December, 2006]. In the light of this, homosexuals are generally perceived as people who are either greedy for money, or morally bankrupt. Therefore homosexuality is considered to be a choice people make in order to satisfy their ego.

Recently there have been stories of homosexual marriages in Ghana. A marriage involving two men is said to have taken place last year. The incident which took place at night came as a surprise to all, including the owners of the venue of the ceremony, the GPRTU who reported it to the media. One of the couples confirmed the story to the media, and the other is banished from his area of residence by the chief since it is considered a taboo [Source: Joyonline, 28th April, 2011]. This took place in Kumasi, the second largest city in Ghana.

Within a period of three months, two lesbian marriages are said to have taken place in James Town, a suburb of Accra, the nation's capital. This also infuriated the youth of the area, who attacked the couple physically [Source: News one, carried by Peacefmonline: 19th March 2012].

Homosexuality and human rights in Ghana

There is no law today legalizing homosexuality in Ghana. Discussions on the matter have, however, shown diverse opinions among human rights advocates. While some think the laws of Ghana do not prohibit homosexuality, others hold a contrary view. For instance, it was reported by BBC that the Western Regional Minister is on record to have ordered the arrest of, and prosecution of all suspected gays and lesbians in the region. He also urged all landlords to report all suspected homosexuals to the law enforcement agencies. This directive followed reports that there were an estimated 8000 homosexuals in Takoradi, with 2000 registered gay persons in the city [Source: Star Observer, 21st July, 2011]. On the other hand, some human rights activists think that since the constitution of the country is silent on the issue, homosexuality should not be regarded as a criminal act, although they are not

calling for its legalization. Their emphasis has been on the need to respect the rights of homosexuals as the constitution provides for all people in the country.⁶

In spite all these calls, people believed to be homosexuals suffer from being stigmatized and, in some cases, physical attacked. In the above-mentioned lesbian marriage, for instance, it is reported that young men and women in the community physically attacked people they suspected to be homosexuals and even called for their arrest by the police [Source: Ghanaian Times, 14th March, 2012. On Peacefmonline.com].

Ghanaian culture and homosexuality

One can say that homosexuality is being practiced in Ghana, and it is even spreading at a very fast rate. Nonetheless, it remains unacceptable. What then accounts for the persistent resistance to the practice? In my view, homosexuality is incompatible with most cultures, if not all, in Ghana.

The traditional religion, which forms the basis of all our religious beliefs in Ghana, considers sexual sins in general and homosexuality in particular as a gross taboo with very negative consequences for both the individual involved as well as the community as a whole. It is believed that such evil acts have the potential to destabilize the harmonious relationship between the world of the spirits and that of the living which is crucial for a fulfilled life. Therefore anyone who commits such a taboo was severely punished, even after the required rites had been performed to restore cosmic balance.

Another aspect of the culture of Ghanaians that inhibits the acceptance of homosexuality is about our understanding of marriage. Traditionally, marriage is primarily supposed to lead to procreation. In fact, marriage is said to be a “fulfilled one” only when it leads to child bearing. The absence of children in marriage was a source of worry to the two families involved in the marriage, leading to polygamy, or even divorce in some cases. This is because child bearing was seen as a divine affirmation of the marriage, as children were considered a blessing from God. The desire to have children after marriage has persisted till now. Given this background, it is almost unimaginable that anyone will enter any form of marriage which will surely not lead to bearing children.

It can be said that it is from this context that the churches in Ghana have read and understood passages believed to be related to homosexuality. Christians in Ghana believe that homosexuality is a sin that attracts God’s wrath, and thus, has to be

⁶ Advocates for these rights include people Prof. Ken Attafuah, lecturer at the Ghana School of Law, Madam Oye Lithur, a lawyer and a human rights activist, and Mr. Ernest Amakye, a law lecturer at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

condemned. Preaching the sermon on Sunday, 26th February 2012, Archbishop Emeritus Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong is reported to have described homosexuality as an abominable act, which had the potential of incurring the wrath of God in Ghana, drawing parallels with Sodom and Gomorrah: "Just as the wrath of God came upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah at a time their men were sleeping among themselves and women were sleeping among themselves and women were marrying one another in rapid succession against the will of God, so will it happen in Ghana if we allow homosexuality to gain firm roots in the country" [Source: Daily Graphic, 27th February, 2012 edition]. This is in line with a statement issued by the Christian Council of Ghana earlier on, which quoted from Leviticus 18: 22 in different versions to support the view that the Bible abhors homosexuality.

The position of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG)

It is from this context that the PCG situates its position. The PCG has not been silent on the issue of homosexuality since the subject came up for public debate in 2003. As mentioned earlier on, the then moderator, Rev. Dr. Yaw Frimpong Manso, who is an Old Testament scholar described the practice as an abominable act. He made it clear that the church did not hate those who indulged in the act, but the practice was unacceptable. The current moderator, Rt. Rev. Prof. Emmanuel Martey has been consistent with the opinion of his predecessor on the matter. In fact he has been one of the most outspoken church leaders against the spread and legalization of homosexuality in Ghana in recent times. In one forum he intimated that "the Presbyterian Church of Ghana condemns homosexuality because it is unbiblical, unnatural and abnormal, un-African, un-Ghanaian and it is filthy, using Leviticus 18:22 puts it clearly that 'do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman'. That is an abomination". This was in reaction to questions from journalists who sought clarification on his position on the matter in an earlier sermon he had preached.

The moderator was also among those who urged the government not to bow to pressure from the nation's development partners. Consequently, during the last General Assembly of the PCG which was held in August 2011, the following was one of the decisions: "The Assembly decided to sever relationship with any partner church that ordained homosexuals as ministers and allowed for same sex marriages." As follow-up, the church came up with the following on homosexuality in a communiqué after the 2011 General Assembly:

"The General Assembly wishes to re-echo the stance declared recently by the Christian councils and associations on the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriages. We unequivocally state that we are also against any attempt to legalize or promote the practice of homosexuality and same-sex relationships in the country.

Our position is that gay and lesbian practice and/or same-sex marriages are unscriptural, un-African, and run counter to our cultural norms, values and custom.

As African Christians, we consider it appropriate to abide by God's injunction that the act is an abomination and a perversion. The recent news on the upsurge in the practice of homosexuality in certain parts of the country and that the act is gaining roots in our schools and colleges, is frightening. Doubtless, the act has serious health implications for unsuspecting spouses and partners, as over the years homosexuality has been identified as a major source of the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

The Church considers gay and lesbian practice and same-sex marriage as grave sins just as adultery, fornication, murder, stealing and rape, among others. A sin is a sin, and as such no human justification can obliterate or change that fact. The General Assembly wishes to state that although it unreservedly condemns homosexuality as sin, the Church is prepared to offer the needed pastoral care and counseling for those wishing to come out of the practice, in keeping with the truism that, 'God hates sin but loves the sinner.' We wish to further point out that it would be unacceptable for foreign development partners to premise or tie their economic assistance to Ghana on the country's stance on homosexuality. Cultures and values differ, depending on the geographical location and so it would be wrong for any foreign nation(s) to impose their unacceptable values and cultural values on other countries. Ghana should not allow the dangers of extreme permissiveness to ruin our time tested cultural norms and traditional values. The Presbyterian Church of Ghana is further taking steps – a process which has begun with its just ended General Assembly to sever relationship with any partner church local and foreign that ordained homosexuals as ministers and allowed for same sex marriages and wants to make it clear that we respect the decisions of our Ecumenical Partners abroad concerning gay and lesbian practice and same-sex marriages and believes that our position would also be duly respected by them."

In conclusion, the PCG, like the wider Christian community in Ghana considers homosexuality as sinful that should not condoned by the church. However the church is ready to assist those who indulge in it, hence the plans to set up a counseling centre for homosexuals. This is in line with the church's understanding that Jesus Christ loves the sinner, even though he hates sin.

Faafafine in Samoa: From Weak-man to 'to be like a Woman'

Sanele Lavatai

The *Faafafine* debate has been with us for decades now. Grossly simplified, the issue hinges on whether *Faafafine* is the same and considered as gay, transgender, and homosexual or not. *Faafafine*, it can be argued, is like culture, it is not static but it is dynamic. The perception of *Faafafine* in the traditional Samoan society is totally different from the present. On the other hand, modernization creates opportunity for changes in values, feelings, beliefs and behaviors and *Faafafine* can be in no doubt had been influenced and learned from outside culture. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, researches were either against or in support of the idea of *Faafafine* as meaning homosexual. Both views were extensively justified in both intellectual and aesthetic terms. However, far too little attention has been paid to the importance of the *Faasinomaga*, which is one of the core elements in the Samoan worldview. In this article I share my views why the issue is complex and how problematic it is to treat *Faafafine* as a separate entity from the *Faasinomaga*.

Fa'asinomaga – identity, belonging and designation in the Samoan culture

The term *Fa'asinomaga* embodies a multitude of concepts that include identity, belonging and designation in the *faaSamoa* (Samoan culture) (Tui Atua, 2009). The expression, *o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga*, makes explicit that every individual is entitled to a designation. *It is what gives them meaning and belonging. It is what defines relationships (va fealoaloa'i) and boundaries (tuā'oi) between ourselves and others, us and the environment, us and the cosmos, us and God (ibid).* *Faasinomaga* of the child and all Samoan people also explains why individuals have so many relatives and extended families, and why that person has a right to claim his/her identity within several families and villages. The significance of *fa'asinomaga* is

found in the belief of ancient and contemporary Samoans that people do not live as individuals but as beings who are related and integrally linked to their environment, who share divinity with ancestors, and with their gods (Tui Atua, 2003). So when we talk about *Faafafine*, we have to bear in mind that we are dealing with individuals who have social roles and responsibilities in their *Faasinomaga*, having a communal set of values. Whether they are born with or raised as *Faafafine*, they have been raised in a *faasinomaga*, they belong to a family, village, and the *faaSamoa*.

Origin and Traditional Understanding

The term *Faafafine* is comprised of two words – *faa* means to be like and *fafine* means woman. Literarily, *Faafafine* means to be like a woman. But what does it really mean in the Samoan worldview? Before Christ, the term was used to refer to weak young men in families, and villages in traditional Samoan society. Those, who did not have the strength of a warrior, the skills of a hunter, the experience of a fisherman and the courage to fight in war – those were the sports which tested manhood in olden days. If someone was weak and not able to participate, then he was to be like a woman and called a *Faafafine*. He would stay behind helping the ladies or the mother with their duties. In fact, it was shame for a man to be called weak-man or a *Faafafine* by his friends and his generation. The same case is also applied to families where all children are boys, the weakest one would stay behind and help their mother. So, *Faafafine* were men who were weak and were also able to married women and have children. I believe that during this period, there was no male attraction because the male part of weak-men (*Faafafine*) dominates and rules them.

Christian and Colonial Eras

The arrival of Christianity was the beginning of another new chapter for young weak men (*Faafafine*) in Samoa. First, the missionaries did not support the idea of men being treated like women. For them, a man is a man but they were not able to challenge because it is part of the culture. In addition, women are asked to cook while the men are working or fishing but traditionally, this was not the case in relation to the *Feagaiga a le tama ma lona Tuafafine* (brother-sister covenant). Furthermore, the weak-men learned that priests would not marry as well as the nuns. Thus, this is the period that the new face, form, and the meaning of the term *Faafafine* developed. However, the male part of weak-men dominates them but not as strong before.

Independent Samoa

When Samoa became independent, developments increased quickly not only politically and economically but also socially. The new breeds of *Faafafine* were born in the industrialized Samoa where freedom and human rights were introduced, which must be respected and honored. The capital Apia became the breeding zone for the modern *Faafafine* and the literary meaning of the term began to shine. They were no longer weak-men but to be like a woman. They dressed, walked and talked like women and even had new names for themselves because the female part of the *Faafafine* dominates them. In the villages it was another story because there was fear and shame but today it is the same as in town.

Modernized Era

The government of Samoa have approved, recognized and accepted the *Faafafine* Association. Why and how did it happened is another story but let us not forget that *Faafafine* have a *Faafinomaga*, they belong to a family, and they are also part of the society. On the other hand, the Prime Minister made it clear that there is no such thing as Gay Marriage in Samoa. What his perception was when he said can be interpreted in different ways – whether this might lead to something else, or he identified that *Faafafine* is different from a gay. Well, would there be a *Faafafine* marriage in the future is another question and this would definitely another interesting issue for discussion.

Today, it would be wrong to consider *Faafafine* as weak-men because some of them are physically stronger than some men. Unlike the past generations before, they are attracted to men because the female part of the *Faafafine* dominates them. They dress and behave like women. They never consider themselves as men anymore but most of them can do both women and men's responsibilities. That makes them unique and special in the present society.

In conclusion, *Faafafine* in ancient and traditional times are totally different from contemporary society. Although there is a cultural shift and adoption of new customs and ideas, the *Faafinomaga* and its cultural values and elements are retained. In relation to homosexuality, transgender and gay, *Faafafine* is different and unique in its own context. Its existence in Samoa defines social roles and responsibilities within the families and communities. However, for a way forward, I believe that it is time for the people in the Sacred Centre (Samoa) to take into consideration and discuss these issues in the church and in societies because we are also part of the global village. Finally, if the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of the term *Faafafine* needs to be developed.

Homosexualität und Kirche in Brasilien am Beispiel der Evangelischen Kirche lutherischen Bekenntnisses (IECLB)

Victor Linn

Die Verleugnung von Homosexualität

Obwohl die Evangelische Kirche lutherischen Bekenntnisses in Brasilien (IECLB) in vielen Aspekten als eine sehr liberale und wegen ihrer stets aktuellen Stellungen zu gesellschaftlichen und sozialen Fragen als eine sehr fortschrittliche Kirche bekannt ist, ist der Umgang und die Auseinandersetzung mit Homosexualität auch in der IECLB ein sehr schwieriger. Die Thematisierung und Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Form der Sexualität bekamen in ihrer Geschichte kaum einen Raum.

Die IECLB ist eine Kirche mit Migrationshintergrund, der auch ihre Denk- und Umgangsweise mit Themen wie Körperlichkeit und Sexualität prägt. Integration wurde in Brasilien immer als eine wichtige Aufgabe und Ziel betrachtet. In der brasilianischen Kultur ist Erotik allgegenwärtig. Sie findet Ausdruck in verschiedenen Alltagssituationen, wie Musik, Kleidung, Umgangsweise mit Sprache sowie Körperhaltung und spielt bei der Frage nach Identität und Selbstbewusstsein der Menschen eine sehr wichtige Rolle. So ist auch die Sexualität, mit all ihrer Vielfaltigkeit, ganz vordergründig. Die Existenz verschiedener Ausdrucksformen der Sexualität wird nicht verdrängt oder ignoriert. So hat auch Homosexualität einen Platz sowohl in der Kultur wie im Bewusstsein des Individuums. Damit ist eine gewisse Liberalisierung gegeben. Die Existenz von Homosexualität ist ein bekanntes Faktum. Womöglich stößt der Umgang mit Sexualität bzw. Homosexualität in der IECLB an eine Grenze der Integration. Die Existenz der Homosexualität wird als etwas Fernes betrachtet, was eher die anderen trifft. Im Laufe ihre Geschichte wurden von der Kirchenleitung zu verschieden sozialen Themen Manifeste und Dokumente veröffentlicht, jedoch erst in den letzten Jahre zum Thema Homosexualität. Diese Impulse wurden aber nicht auf anderen Ebenen der Kirche diskutiert oder aufgenommen.

In Brasilien herrscht eine machistisch geprägte sexuelle Rollenverteilung, welche die Dominanz des Mannes und die Unterordnung der Frau festzulegen versucht. Sie basiert auf einer differenzierten, polarisierenden Wertschätzung der verschiedenen Rollen, die auch die Homosexualität einbezieht. So wird die „aktive“ Position beim Homosexuellen als weniger minderwertig als die „passive“ Position betrachtet, weil diese mit der weiblichen Position identifiziert wird. Die abgewertete Position des passiven Homosexuellen ermöglicht die Hochschätzung des Hetero. Die Existenz einer abgewerteten Form der Sexualität dient dazu, die männlich geprägte Ordnung, und damit verbundene Machtstrukturen, zu legitimieren.

Als etwas Minderwertiges ist die Homosexualität in der Kultur integriert. Als Karikatur und etwas Exotisches ist sie allgegenwärtig – in den TV Programmen, in Witzen und in Schimpfwörtern. Auch in der Kirche fand sie so ihren Platz. Aber meist so, als sei Homosexualität etwas weit entfernt Existierendes – nie im eigenen Bereich, nie in den eigenen Kreisen. Ein Platz als würdiges Thema für eine offene Diskussion wurde ihr nie gegeben, bzw. das wurde immer vermieden, wahrscheinlich weil es für Homosexualität noch keine positiven „soziale Repräsentationen“ bzw. Bilder gab.

Diese Verleugnung führte dazu, dass in der Kirche homosexuelle Menschen nur existieren konnten, solange die Tatsache ihrer sexuellen Orientierung verleugnet wurde. In verschiedenen Instanzen wurden Kontrolle und Repression ausgeübt, ohne dass es offiziell thematisiert wurde. Bei homosexuellen Theologiestudenten, die sich als solche geoutet hatten, wurde deutlich gemacht, dass sie keine Pfarrstelle bekommen können. Manch andere, gegenüber denen eine Vermutung bestand, wurden in ferne Gegenden entsandt. Damit war für die meisten Homosexuellen in der Kirche die Verleugnung die einzige Existenzmöglichkeit. Es konnte sie nur geben, als gäbe es sie nicht. Die Angst, als solche identifiziert zu werden, hat auch dazu geführt, dass heterosexuelle Kollegen den Kontakt zu den Kollegen vermieden, wenn es eine Vermutung gab, er oder sie sei homosexuell. Die Nähe und Beziehung zu Homosexuellen könnte bei anderen missverstanden werden und die Vermutung wecken, dass er/sie auch homosexuell sei. Diese Angst und Vermeidungshaltung ist m.E. verantwortlich für die Tatsache, dass dieses Thema nirgendwo in den verschiedenen Instanzen der Kirche einen Raum für Diskussion bekam. Sich hierfür stark zu machen, implizierte zu viele Risiken. Die Besprechung der wenigen Impulse, die zum Thema gegeben wurden, wie durch den Lutherischen Weltbund, wurde immer wieder vertagt.

Der Druck der Gesellschaft

Durch die Etablierung von demokratischen Strukturen und Rechtsstaatlichkeit, die sich in der brasilianischen Gesellschaft in den letzten Jahren relativ rasch vollzogen

hat, hat sich die rechtliche Lage von Homosexuellen erheblich verbessert und Homosexualität wurde in den großen Medien aus neuen Perspektiven thematisiert. In Sao Paulo, die größte Stadt des Landes, findet jährlich eine Parada Gay statt, in der sich jedes Mal mehr als drei Millionen Menschen, die meisten davon sind Schwule und Lesben, zur Demonstration treffen. Die neue Rechtslage und die Präsenz in den Medien tragen dazu bei, dass ein neues Selbstbewusstsein entsteht. Dies fordert von der gesamten Gesellschaft einen neuen Umgang mit diesem Teil der Bevölkerung. Das wirkt sich auch auf die Kirchen aus. Diskriminierung kann bestraft werden. Witze und andere diskriminierende Ausdrücke, die bis dahin zum guten Ton gehörten, müssen vermieden werden. Fragen, wie z. B. zur „Homo-Ehe“, zu der sich Kirchen bis dahin geweigert hatten Stellung zu nehmen, werden von den Medien aufgegriffen, die eine verstärkte Diskussion fordern. Gleichzeitig mit der Verbesserung der rechtlichen Lage und der stärkeren Präsenz in der Öffentlichkeit wächst die Spannung unter großen Teilen der Bevölkerung, die dieser Veränderung widerstehen und mit erhöhter Gewaltbereitschaft gegen Homosexuelle antworten. Die Statistik der Gewalttaten gegen Schwule und Lesben ist in Brasilien enorm gestiegen. Auch die Gemeinden sowie Pfarrerinnen und Pfarrer sind in Bezug auf dieses Thema emotional aufgeladen und es verhärten sich die Fronten. All diese Aspekte führen dazu, dass die verschiedenen Ebenen der Kirche mehr oder weniger gezwungen werden, sich dieser Auseinandersetzung zu stellen.

Perspektiven

Obwohl die IECLB m.E. genügend theologische Argumente hätte, um sich stärker für die Rechte der Homosexuellen einzusetzen, wurde Ihre Haltung in der Regel geleitet von dem Wunsch Konflikte zu vermeiden. Diskussionen wurden meist mit dem Argument abgelehnt, die Gemeinden seien noch nicht vorbereitet. Wie bei anderen Evangelischen Kirchen, wenn dieses Thema erörtert wurde, wird es meist aus der Perspektive der Medizin und Psychologie dargestellt, im Hinblick auf die Fragestellung, ob es sich um eine krankhafte Erscheinungsform handelt oder nicht. In dieser Perspektive werden immer wieder neue Theorien aufgestellt und wieder in Frage gestellt. Die Diskussion wird unendlich und als Ergebnis bleibt im Bewusstsein der Menschen die Kopplung von Homosexualität mit medizinischen oder psychologischen Störungen.

In der IECLB wird zur Zeit nach neuen Wegen zur Erörterung dieses Thema gesucht. Da die gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen auch zu neuen und positiven Erfahrungen in den Gemeinden beigetragen haben, wird nach dem „Wie“ dieses neuen Umgangs gefragt. Wie so häufig bei Themen, die von Vorurteilen und Ängsten bestimmt werden, lassen sich diese nur solange halten, bis sie mit einer konkreten und bekannten Person verbunden werden. Da es in sehr vielen Familien Schwule und Lesben gibt, spiegelt sich das auch in den Gemeinden und Kirchenverwaltungen. Die

Tatsache, dass einige mutige Menschen in ruhiger aber selbstbewusster Weise von ihrem schwulen Sohn, Freund oder Kollegen usw. sprechen können, bieten sich neue Möglichkeiten, sich mit der Wirklichkeit der Homosexualität auseinander zu setzen auf der Ebene der Betroffenheit. Scheinbar fehlte es bis dahin in Gesellschaft und Kultur an positiven sozialen Vorbildern. Die stark männlich geprägte Kultur (Machokultur) ließ hierzu keinen Raum. Die Herausforderung der IECLB ist heute der Abbau von Ängsten und die Ermutigung von u.a. leitenden Menschen zu einem gelassenen Umgang mit einer Wirklichkeit, die schon immer da war, aber nur nicht sprachfähig war. Menschen dazu zu ermutigen, zu ihren Erfahrungen und Beziehungen mit und zu Homosexuellen zu stehen, sowie Homosexuelle selbst zur Sprachfähigkeit zu ermutigen, kann dazu beitragen, dass Ängste abgebaut werden. Die aktuelle Diskussion in der IECLB zeigt, dass die pastorale Perspektive wirksame Argumente bietet, die zu einer nachhaltigen Veränderung beitragen. Diese Veränderung besteht auch darin, dass für die Wirklichkeit der Homosexualität neue „soziale Repräsentationen“ gefunden werden, die die alten karikierenden Vorstellungen und Bilder überwinden.

Die Diskussion über Homosexualität in ATTiG

Werner Kahl

Am 21. Oktober 2010 fand eine bemerkenswerte Veranstaltung an der Missionsakademie statt: Zu einem ATTiG-extra Gesprächskreis war eingeladen worden zum Thema Bibel, Kirche und Homosexualität. Bereits in ATTiG (African Theological Training in Germany) brach das Thema immer wieder hervor, mitunter in unerwarteten Zusammenhängen. Es war deutlich, dass es sich hierbei um ein stark emotional besetztes Thema handelt – vor allem auch aus afrikanisch-pfingstlicher Perspektive. Der aktuelle vehemente Protest afrikanischer Partnerkirchen an der Praxis der Segnung von Homosexuellen und der Anstellung homosexueller Pfarrer und Pfarrerinnen im Norden war dann Motivation genug zur Einladung zu einem diesbezüglichen Gespräch mit afrikanischen Gemeindeleitern an der Missionsakademie. Als Gesprächspartner aus der luth. Kirche in Hamburg waren eingeladen Pastor Gunter Marwege (Kirchengemeinde St. Georg-Borgfelde; AIDS-Seelsorge; gemeindliche Zusammenarbeit mit Schwulen) und Pastor Nils Christiansen (Kirchengemeinde Meiendorf-Oldenfelde; Sprecher des Konvents homosexueller Theologen in Nordelbien). Zugegen waren zudem drei unserer Stipendiaten aus asiatischen Ländern. Es zeigte sich, dass ein ökumenisches und interkulturelles Gespräch in dieser inhomogenen Konstellation möglich ist. Dazu beigetragen hat sicherlich die in ATTiG eingeübte Zuhör- und Gesprächskultur und das dort gewachsene wechselseitige Vertrauensverhältnis einerseits sowie die Anwesenheit eines schwulen Pastors, der aus seiner Lebensgeschichte erzählte, andererseits. In dieser Konstellation konnte sich durchaus ein Gefühl von Sympathie entwickeln, wie ein pfingstlicher Pastor aus Nigeria im Anschluss mitteilte. Wichtig für das Gespräch war auch die Anwesenheit eines Arztes, der aus Ghana stammt und seiner ebenfalls aus Ghana stammenden Ehefrau, die in Deutschland als Krankenschwester lange Jahre gearbeitet hat. Sie konnten wichtige klärende biologische und medizinische Fakten zur Diskussion beisteuern. Im Gespräch wurde aus afrikanisch-pfingstlicher Perspektive Homosexualität typischer Weise als zu überwindende Sünde, die durch den Satan hervorgerufen sei, bezeichnet. Deutlich wurde, dass hier nicht nur

unterschiedliche bis konträre Deutungen von Welt aufeinander stießen, sondern auch differente Schriftverständnisse. Trotzdem war es möglich, die verschiedenen Positionen auszuhalten. In der Einwanderungssituation werden Migranten wohl nicht darum herum kommen, sich mit den Deutungen von Welt und Bibel, wie sie in West-Europa maßgebend sind, auseinander zusetzen. Auch diesem Prozess diene das Gespräch. Uns in dieser Tradition stehenden nötigt das Gespräch dazu, unsere Positionen hinterfragen zu lassen, uns ihrer kritisch zu vergewissern und sie gegebenenfalls zu modifizieren. Zu unserer kritischen und kontextuellen Lektüre der Bibel sehe ich freilich keine ernst zunehmende Alternative, zumindest nicht für den hiesigen Lebenskontext.

Thesen zu Homosexualität im Widerstreit von afrikanischen und europäischen Kirchen

Werner Kahl
(EED Bonn | Dezember 2011)

Homosexualität und Bibel

In der Bibel wird *Homosexualität* nirgends *thematisiert*.

Das trifft in einem doppelten Sinn zu:

Erstens, das was mit „Homosexualität“ in der Moderne begriffen wird – der *Begriff* begegnet erst in der 2. Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts im Gegenüber zum ebenfalls modernen Begriff der Heterosexualität –, ist weder in den wenigen in Frage kommenden biblischen Passagen, noch in schriftlichen oder bildnerischen Zeugnissen der gesamten Antike gemeint.¹ In antiken Texten geht es um homosexuelle Päderastie (Griechenland) oder um homosexuelle Vergewaltigung (Rom).

Zweitens, homosexuelle Handlungen werden in der Bibel nur an *wenigen* Stellen benannt; sie werden nirgends *eigens* thematisiert. In Lev 18 und 20 erscheint die Referenz auf homosexuelle Handlungen zwischen Männern als *eine* Aktualisierung des Themas „Gräueltaten“ unter anderen. Sie schließen sowohl im AT (wie z.B. Verfluchung der Eltern) als auch im NT von der Gottes- und Gemeindebeziehung aus und bedeuten damit den Tod (im AT: Tötung durch die Gemeinde; im NT: ewiger Tod durch Ausschluss aus dem Reich Gottes).

¹ „Die Behauptung, Paulus würde alle gegenwärtigen Erscheinungsformen von Homosexualität verdammen, wird durch seine Äußerungen zum Thema nicht abgedeckt“ (M.R. Gunda, *The Bible and Homosexuality in Zimbabwe*, Bamberg 2010, 369; Übersetzung: W.K.).

Neues Testament

Nur in paulinischen Briefen gibt es im NT Referenzen auf homosexuelle Handlungen, und zwar in der cross-kulturellen Begegnung des Juden Paulus mit Praktiken der paganen Welt, in Bezug auf Argumente, mittels derer Paulus ganz spezifische – und unterschiedliche – Probleme zu lösen versucht.

Der Konflikt zwischen Kirchen in Afrika und Europa

In der Auseinandersetzung geht es nicht nur um bibelhermeneutische Fragen, sondern insbesondere auch um interne (vgl. in Afrika auch evangelikale und pfingstliche Konkurrenz) und externe Aushandlungsprozesse vor dem Hintergrund eines rapiden Kulturwandels unter dem Sog der Moderne in Afrika einerseits und der kolonialgeschichtlich begründeten Abwehr missionarisch-paternalistischer Bevormundungsattitüden des Nordens andererseits.²

Evangelische Kirche

Die EKD Kirchen sind in der Fragestellung der gleichberechtigten Behandlung homo- und heterosexuell disponierter Menschen immer zivilrechtlichen Entwicklungen hinterher gelaufen, d.h. in Bezug auf die Einstellung homosexueller PfarrerInnen einerseits und auf kirchliche Segnungen gleichgeschlechtlicher Partnerschaften andererseits.³ Das ist begründet in einer unreflektierten traditionalistischen Bibellektüre.

² „Die ELCT ist nicht bereit, in einen Austausch mit Mitarbeitern einzutreten, die sich mit jenen verbünden, die in einer gleichgeschlechtlichen Ehe leben (...). Sie werden nicht eingeladen, in der ELCT zu arbeiten. Wir lehnen jeglichen Versuch der Überredung, ihr Geld und ihre Hilfe ab“ (Dodoma Erklärung, 2010).

³ Neues Pfarrerdienstrecht der EKD seit 1. Januar 2011, § 39: „Pfarrerinnen und Pfarrer sind auch in ihrer Lebensführung im familiären Zusammenleben und in ihrer Ehe an die Verpflichtungen aus der Ordination (...) gebunden. Hierfür sind Verbindlichkeit, Verlässlichkeit und gegenseitige Verantwortung maßgebend.“

Begründung: „Der Begriff ‘familiäres Zusammenleben’ ist hingegen bewusst weit gewählt. Er umfasst nicht nur das generationsübergreifende Zusammenleben, sondern jede Form des rechtsverbindlich geordneten Zusammenlebens von mindestens zwei Menschen, das sich als auf Dauer geschlossene, solidarische Einstandsgemeinschaft darstellt und damit den in Satz 2 genannten inhaltlichen Anforderungen Verbindlichkeit, Verlässlichkeit und gegenseitige Verantwortung genügt.“

The Bible, Gospel, and Homosexuality

Theses

Werner Kahl

In the Bible sexual relationships between same sex members are no-where condoned. On the contrary, they are condemned throughout. In the Bible, however, we have gathered witnesses of what Gospel meant to believers in antiquity.

Our Western-European societal organisation of life and our understanding of gender, of relationships, of love, of sexuality in general and of homosexuality in particular in the modern world, are very different from antiquity including Early Christianity:

1. Scientifically, also on a biological level, we have come to understand that all of us represent various degrees of masculinity and femininity, to the extent that a certain small percentage of infants in any region of the world is born with physical conditions for both sexes. (Up to a few years ago, physicians would remove surgically from these infants either the male or the female parts in order to adjust them to the expectations of society. When these children grew up many found themselves “in the wrong body” causing extreme identity problems).

2. In any culture we find a certain number of inhabitants with a – genetically or socially (cf. the fafafines in Pacific cultures) – determined homosexual orientation that cannot be changed, be it by violence, prayer, or science. Many of us have had some sort of homosexual encounter as children or as adolescents including Africans (cf. boarding schools).

3. We live in a society where homosexuality is NOT regarded as an abomination but where homosexuals can get married by law, in order to be able to organise their lives in a responsible manner.

4. Church in this society and with this scientifically informed knowledge, is challenged to represent Gospel in ways which correspond to our current knowledge of the world and to our societal organisation of life; ways which are relevant and meaningful to our people and which remain true to Christ as the one and only ultimate Word of God. A mere repetition of the answers to very different problems in Biblical times is too cheap and has the potential to undermine what Gospel is all about – that the merciful God has accepted us as His beloved children and that we are expected to live up to His love in everyday life.

Anonyme Umfrage in einem theologischen Seminar an der Universität Hamburg

Werner Kahl

Homosexualität im Streitfall zwischen den Kirchen

Auswertung

(10.4.13)

(Rücklauf: 32 = 100 %)

1. Ist es problematisch, dass es Homosexuelle gibt?

Ja	3	Nein	28
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2. Halten Sie – Mehrfachantworten sind möglich – Homosexualität für

Normal	22
Naturgegeben	16
Krankhaft	3
Sündhaft	3
Erbbedingt	3
Kriminell	0
anerzogen?	7

3. Sollen Homosexuelle in der Kirche arbeiten dürfen?

Ja	30	Nein	2
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4. Sollen sie als Pfarrer/Pfarrerinnen arbeiten dürfen?

Ja 27

Nein 5

5. Sollen Homosexuelle dieselben staatsbürgerlichen Rechte und Pflichten wie Heterosexuelle haben?

Ja 29

Nein 3

6. Sollen homosexuelle Paare in der Kirche

gesegnet 26 nicht gesegnet werden? 4

getraut 25 nicht getraut werden? 6

Literaturhinweise

Recommended literature

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Ecumenical case studies on homosexuality and the church

Ökumenische Fallstudien zu Homosexualität und Kirche

Seit geraumer Zeit bestehen in der Ökumene zum Teil erhebliche Spannungen hinsichtlich der Einschätzung von Homosexualität, mit der Folge, dass lange bestehende Kirchenpartnerschaften in Frage gestellt worden sind. Die in diesem Heft versammelten Beiträge dokumentieren, dass das kontrovers-ökumenische Gespräch über Homosexualität möglich und sinnvoll ist.

For some time there have been great ecumenical tensions with respect to the assessment of homosexuality. One consequence is that long lasting church partnerships have been put into question. This collection of papers proves that a controversial and ecumenical dialogue on homosexuality is possible as it is relevant.



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