

Homosexuality and God’s Institution of Marriage: An African Evangelical Perspective

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Abstract

Homosexuality is a practice that is confronting the African church. Even though some Western churches have embraced the clergy and members who are gay and lesbian, the phenomenon has received a mixed reaction from the African Church. Some churches in the African continent have refused the idea of entertaining a discussion, while others feel that homosexuals have a right to be heard. In this regard, this library research paper discusses marriage as God’s institution anchored on biblical teaching; the contemporary perspectives of homosexuality; the biblical view of homosexuality; and the African Evangelical perspective of homosexuality. The paper concludes that the church in Africa, in its response, should be rooted in the Scriptures to advocate for good moral behaviour in society appropriately.

Keywords: Evangelical, Christianity, Homosexuality, African, Western, Institution, Marriage

Introduction

Despite globalization and the quick rise of homosexuality, the church in Africa frequently takes too long to respond to some ethical dilemmas. Issues of this kind are typically kept at their lowest ebb in Africa due to the people’s cultural ideas and religious convictions. At the same time, talks of this sort have been going on long before social approval in many nations, for instance, in the UK, France, Argentina, and Belgium, to name a few.¹ Churches in Africa

¹ Nicholas C. Edsall (2006). *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society in the Modern Western World* (University of Virginia Press, 5.



appear to relegate the problem to the hands of their governments. This is understandable because no recognized cultural value unequivocally supports same-sex relationships.²

Maria Karolyn originally introduced the term homosexuality to characterize the same-sex phenomena in some critical writing in 1869.³ However, despite the phenomenon predating civilization, the description is not as accurate as most people think.⁴ For instance, according to David J. Atkinson and David H. Fields, homosexuality is equivocal in that it may apply to different types of people depending on their particular preferences and behaviours.⁵ This is true of the “*yan daudu*” that Azuah spoke of in Nigeria. In this situation, homosexuals primarily involve themselves in same-sex marriages or relationships instead of engaging in same-sex sexual activity.

A basic definition of homosexuality is described as having feelings for and having sex with people who are of the same gender. Allan Bell, who has written on homosexuality, asserts that “the homosexual experience is so diverse that the word homosexuality is employed as a type of umbrella word.”⁶ Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people are grouped under this umbrella as LGBTQ+. While referring to these diverse conditions, this essay will only use “gay.” Female homosexuality is described as lesbianism;⁷ gay and lesbian characterize male-to-male and female-to-female sexual connections, respectively. Bisexuality denotes having sexual relationships with persons of more than one gender⁸, while transgender refers to someone who has undergone a medical procedure to change from one gender to another.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the labels “perverts” and “inverts” were used to refer to these groups. A person who identifies as heterosexual but occasionally engages in gay behaviour is a pervert. In other words, when perverts sometimes have homosexual intercourse, they misrepresent their actual sexual orientation. On the other hand, confirmed

² Adejuwon, E. A. and Seminary, N. B. T., (2020). “Homosexuality: An African Christian Ethical Perspective.” *International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research*, 1(8).

³ Kunhiyop, S. Waje. (2008). *African Christian Ethics*. Nairobi: Hippo Books, 33.

⁴ Časni, D., (2020). “Ecology in Light of the Cape Town Commitment.” *Kairos: Evangelical Journal of Theology*, 14(2), pp.98.

⁵ Church-hill, A. N., 2020. “The Message of John the Baptist on Repentance in Luke 3: 1-12 As a Panacea for Socio-Political Change in Nigeria.” *Jalingo Journal of Christian Religious Studies*, p.173.

⁶ Cioè-Peña, M., 2022. “The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's School: Interrogating Settler Colonial Logics in Language Education.” *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, p.25.

⁷ Adejuwon, E. A. and Seminary, N.B.T., p.8.

⁸ David M. Halperin, Thirteen ways of looking at a bisexual. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 9, no. 3–4 (2009): 453.



homosexuality is an invert. It is argued that because inverts act according to their fundamental nature, their gay intercourse is neither a perversion nor distortion.⁹ Despite being medically and psychologically proven, both groupings are defined by several scientific debates and hypotheses. The disagreements that come from this have societal and ethical implications. Every racial, cultural, religious, and socioeconomic group, even the most culturally¹⁰ conservative, contains homosexuals. Homosexuality is unaccepted in most parts of Africa.

Recently, governments in Africa have had mixed reactions to the pressure of the Western world on homosexual rights. In 2023 Uganda passed a law that criminalized LGBTQ, but the pressure to cede ground has been immense. The church in Africa must realize that homosexuality cannot be ignored any longer, given how quickly it permeates society. In Africa, the church has consistently opposed homosexuality.¹¹ When African countries move toward recognizing homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle, the church should provide a moral compass for the nation. The matter should not be left solely to political figures or national governments to decide; rather, it should be open for national discourse. Many churches in Sub-Sahara have condemned homosexuality, but others have misused the scriptures.¹² There should be a straightforward approach to how to deal with the issue without injuring people emotionally.

Marriage as God's Institution

The first two chapters of Genesis record the beginning of all things. God saw what he created as good. Jack and Carole affirm that on the sixth day when man and woman were created, the Lord looked out over His creation and confirmed that it was very good (Gen 1:31). This paper argues that marriage is God's institution between male and female. Any union between man and man or woman and woman is a human institution that threatens God's plan and purpose for marriage. The paper looks at marriage as God's institution, homosexuality from a contemporary perspective, biblical perspective on homosexuality, and African Evangelical Christian perspective on homosexuality.

⁹ Kunhiyop, S. Waje. (2008). *African Christian Ethics*, 304.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹¹ Van Klinken, A. (2020). "Changing the Narrative of Sexuality in African Christianity: Bishop Christopher Senyonjo's LGBT advocacy." *Theology & Sexuality*, p.4.

¹² Maake Masango (2002). "Homosexuality: A Challenge to African Churches," *HTS: Theological Studies* 58, no. 3 : 965.



Many inventions mark the modern world and seem contrary to the creator's intention. God is the creator of all and has laid down principles that govern the world he created. Marriage is a divine institution God formed from the beginning and beginning with a male and a female, i.e., a husband and a wife. In marital union, there is a husband and a wife (Gen 2:23). God had in mind a male and a female, that a woman and a man and not otherwise. Adam and Eve had no issue with this institution since they were not seeking to give their idea. God brought it about because He saw loneliness in Adam and decided to close it, according to Genesis 2:18. Marriage is "The solemnization and blessing of the union of man and woman."¹³ This definition makes it clear that marriage is a union and that union is between a man and a woman. The bride leaves her family and becomes part of her husband's family or clan (Gen 24:58-61). Children are mentioned to show that the union was also for procreation, notably that only the opposite sex can procreate. Kavin DeYoung argues that the Old Testament levirate laws treat procreation as the natural outworking of the covenant marriage. In Deuteronomy 25:5-5, these laws are named because they obligate a deceased man's brother to marry his widowed sister-in-law to bring offspring for his brother.¹⁴

Marriage has been God's institution from the beginning, and it was for procreation and reproduction. Jesus in the New Testament affirmed that husband and wife were meant to be together from the beginning (Matt 19:1-4). In Greek law, marriage was a process of transfer, by which the counsellor of the woman or father gives her away to another man for the procreation of children.¹⁵ Also, in the Roman tradition, a man takes a woman to procreate children.¹⁶ God established marriage between man and woman, the pattern from the beginning. Jack and Carole argue that the great foundation that supports marriage is laid firmly at the world's creation. Those who think that marriage is a man's idea are wrong.¹⁷ Marriage must be based on the purpose for which it was created and follow God's order and practice from the beginning.

¹³ J. D. Douglas, Merrill C. Tenney, and Moisés Silva, eds. (2011). *Zondervan Illustrated: Bible Dictionary*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1875.

¹⁴ Kevin DeYoung (2015). *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 25.

¹⁵ Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth, eds (2003). *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, , 928.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 928.

¹⁷ Jack Mayhall and Carole Mayhall (1978). *Marriage Takes More than Love* (Colorado Springs, Colo: NavPress, 15.



From the Christian perspective, marriage is a holy institution from God and must be seen as such. It is not just a social institution that man initiates and has the power to do and undo, but a divine institution with divine backing. Marriage is not a human invention, even though it is a recognized and regulated human institution in all countries. Christian teaching on this subject is clear, beginning with the positive assertion that marriage is God's idea, not humans.¹⁸ We must answer at this level: What is marriage concerning sex or gender? Without a clear definition of marriage, we will not make sense of anything related to homosexuality.

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman, which is socially recognized and approved by nature and is lifelong and exclusive. Marriage is fundamental in all human societies and the family's foundation."¹⁹ This definition indicates that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Marriage is the union of a man and a woman who make a long-term, exclusive commitment to one another of the kind that is intrinsically (naturally) satisfied by having children and raising them together. By performing conjugal acts, the behavioural component of the reproductive process, the spouses seal and renew their connection, joining them as a reproductive unit.²⁰

Having a biblical foundation of the issue is when the reader or the interpreter can relate a biblical text or verse with others before drawing an application that meets society's needs. Marriage is a divine institution whose author is God. At the beginning of human history, God highly valued marriage. At the wedding feast in Cana, Jesus Christ worked His first miracle (John 2). God determined that a man should not be alone; he created a mate for him and named her woman. Instead of another man, he created a woman. Only a woman had what the man needed to be complete, so he needed her. Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman and a bond between the married couple and God. God plays a crucial role in marriage. He is the creator and establishes rules guiding a marital union.

Astonishingly, the divorce rate is the same for believers and non-believers. The reason is that both groups want to control marriage through their ideologies rather than following God's will and regulations. Marriage is a serious commitment that should only be under

¹⁸ John R. W. Stott. (1990). *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today* (Old Tappan, NJ: F.H. Revell,) 285.

¹⁹ J. D. Douglas and Robert G. Clouse, eds (1991). *New 20th-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, 2nd ed., Baker reference library 4 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House), 546.

²⁰Brown, J. K., 2019. "Introduction: Definitions, assumptions, themes, and issues." In *Sanctions and Sanctuary* (pp. 11). Routledge.



spiritual guidance. God's direction and Abraham's servant's search led to the decision of Isaac's wife, who was chosen as a result. Rebecca was only in the right place at the right time because God had chosen and prepared her to be. After being blessed by her family, Rebecca left, and Isaac was praying when she first met him. Isaac adored his wife, and God blessed their union. God's prescription for a happy marriage is agape love. This love permeates marital hurdles because it does not insist on getting its way. Marriage's commencement of a new connection should precede all other relationships. When a man turns away from his parents and pledges his loyalty to his wife, marriage is given priority. By leaving, one prefers the new connection over the old one.

Additionally, it means healing all the emotional scars and hurts from our relationships before the marriage. One can be set free from your past through the love of Jesus Christ and the support of one's spouse, allowing a person to be the understanding partner God intends to be. Marriage is an act of leaving and cleaving. A couple can only unite by solidifying their new connection and creating a new home by departing from their parent's house. It is intended to glue or bind together, i.e., cleaving permanently. The third benefit of marriage is becoming one flesh. You depart, cleave, and merge into one body, one working entity. This entails the fusion of two personalities, not just in terms of the sexual union but also in terms of hobbies and interests. When a marriage works as a single, cohesive unit, the married couple acts, thinks, and feels as one. They unite in spirit, heart, and intellect. Divorce is so heartbreaking because it destroys the divine institution of marriage.

When a man and a woman marry, they immediately become one flesh according to the Bible; however, it will take them some time to learn each well as they grow. With their different personalities, a couple should accommodate each other as far as their personalities are concerned; despite their upbringing and personalities, they will realize that they must learn to accept and grow together in their uniqueness. Their different personalities should help them become one since they are recognized as complementing rather than antagonistic. This isn't easy because humans are frequently inclined to do the opposite.

The natural human tendency depending is to do what we want. The word of God helps us confront our wicked behaviour. It also reminds us of our need for a Savior who can make us righteous and open the door to God's grace to act morally. The believer has access to



God's grace and the righteousness of Christ. Marriage success depends on God's grace; by God's grace, married couples can influence each other's lives for the better.

Homosexuality and Contemporary Perspectives

Homosexuality is a union instituted by men in which a man unites or has a sexual attraction with persons of the same sex in the name of marriage. The New Catholic Encyclopedia clarifies, "Homosexual and invert describe anyone who is erotically attracted to a notable degree toward persons of his or her sex and who engages, or is psychologically disposed to engage, in sexual activity prompted by this attraction."²¹ Homosexuality is a psychological and erotic attraction that moves a man toward another man and a woman toward another woman. Though the term homosexual can refer to both males and females engaging in sexual activity with persons of the same sex, lesbianism is often used to refer to females who choose to engage in the act.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, same-sex attraction was a major subject in mental, medical, and religious circles.²² Churches hold various beliefs. The Orthodox Church (since the beginning of the New Testament church) has been against sanctifying homosexual unions.²³ Globalization has increased the scope of cross-continental exchanges, eroded cultural barriers, and fragmented geography and time in sociopolitical and economic relations. Discussions of homosexuality in modern African communities have two different views. The first view appears that minority sexualities like LGBT, which were not accepted by culture or religion, are increasingly moving into the open. With the growth of education, globalization, and quick-developing digital technology, the idea that homosexuality is taboo appears to dissolve in the African society of the 21st century. Many African nations are eschewing their traditional views of the family unit in favour of what may be atypical cultural norms and patterns. The church has a significant difficulty due to the alarming rate at which the homosexuality issue spreads across Africa.

Many African nations have either allowed the practice or do not have any regulations. With a constitution that protects legal rights and same-sex marriage, South Africa is the most

²¹ Catholic University of America, ed (1981). *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, McGraw-Hill v. 17 (Palatine, Ill: J. Heraty, 116.

²² Bullough, V.L., 2020. "Childhood Gender Nonconformity and Adult Homosexuality: A Historical View." In *Childhood Gender Nonconformity and the Development of Adult Homosexuality*, p. 12.

²³ Pam & Chuwang (2012). *If Your Father Was A Homosexual!* p 39.



liberal country in the first category. The President of Malawi, Joyce Banda, vowed to end the nation's ban on homosexuality after the enactment by her predecessor. This action is seen as a step toward breaking with much of Africa, where the conduct is decried. The causes of this change in opinion and belief are several. Some of these include the national government looking for acceptability and recognition on a global scale.²⁴ The Malawian experience, for example, shows a note of compromise in such practices. According to President Joyce Banda, her government chose this because it wanted to mend fences with "traditional development partners who were uncomfortable with our lousy legislation."²⁵ What she meant by "bad laws" were those that marginalized gays. Although homosexuality is illegal in Nigeria, it is increasingly becoming more widely recognized. While most nations are against the practice, some fight for its acceptance. However, homosexuality is no longer frowned upon in the twenty-first century's first decade, and Nigerians, for example, are no longer forced to avoid discussing the subject.

According to Amnesty International, laws regarding gays and lesbians in Africa have been tightened. Homosexuality is reportedly illegal in thirty-two (32) African nations. In contrast, twenty-three (23) nations have already started a dialogue in favour of LGBT people, albeit to varying degrees, and five have instituted the death penalty for homosexuals. In East Africa, Kenya has criminalized homosexuality, and Uganda has been very firm in opposing the practice.

According to Frida Lyonga, "anti-gay viewpoints have been regularly proclaimed in African communities through Christian church or Muslim beliefs, through political hate speech, and in day-to-day discussion" as viewed through some socio-religious lenses (2014: 785).²⁶ The public views gays as abnormal. In some other modern viewpoints, homosexuality is considered "an illness or sickness; a possession by wicked or demonic spirits, an occult practice, or simply a disgusting influence from the "morally decadent." Therefore, the church must concur and propose a suitable solution to the problem. Politically, some African leaders have also spoken out against homosexuality. Sam Nujoma of Namibia said that homosexuality was a horrible, inhumane perversion that needed to be eradicated from society.

²⁴ Lyon, N., (2023). "Value Similarity and Norm Change: Null Effects and Backlash to Messaging on Same-Sex Rights in Uganda." *Comparative Political Studies*, p.697.

²⁵ Roger, Crook. H. (1995). *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. P 120.

²⁶ Lyonga, Frida. (2014). "Un-African? Representations of Homosexuality in Two Contemporary Nigerian Films." In *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, Vol. 5, No.4, (786).



While Robert Mugabe, the former president of Zimbabwe, condemned homosexuals as “worse than pigs and dogs.”²⁷ It is implied that homosexuality is not permitted in many African countries.

Biblical Perspective on Homosexuality

Sexual concerns are bringing divisions in the churches as the subject of slavery did 150 years ago. The issue of homosexuality poses a threat to split the body of Christ. We look into the Bible for direction yet get stuck in an interpretive dilemma. Is the Bible able to address our uncertainty over the matter? Even though there aren’t many biblical verses that directly and unambiguously address homosexual activity, the ones that do are enough to create a consistent biblical perspective on the issue, especially when considered in the context of the Bible’s more considerable teaching on human sexuality.²⁸ The few biblical texts we will look at first are found in the Old Testament and the book of Leviticus.

In Leviticus 18:22, homosexuality is considered an abomination; in Leviticus 20:13, the same language is used, and this shows that God is not happy with this act in human relationships. The punishment given for this practice was death. Lovelace comments on these texts and maintains that these passages denounce male homosexual behaviour. However, two arguments are made to discount their relevance to modern Christianity. First, they are disregarded as a component of the early Jewish culture’s cultic taboos, which are wholly human in origin and do not reflect God’s will concerning homosexual behaviour. Theoretical interpretations of their significance in Jewish life cast doubt on their applicability to all forms of gay behaviour. Finally, it is claimed that they are irrelevant to Christians because God explicitly freed the first-century church from having to observe the Levitical commandments.²⁹

The key concern is “What do the scriptures say about homosexuality?” For Douglas, “Homosexuality (Rom 1:26–28), prostitution, adultery, and fornication (Gal. 5:19; Jude 7) were condemned along with other vices prevalent in the early Christian era. Indulgence in

²⁷ Vasu Reddy (August 1, 2002). “Perverts and Sodomites: Homophobia as Hate Speech in Africa,” *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 20, no. 3, 168.

²⁸ Richard F. Lovelace 1979). *Homosexuality and the Church* (Lamp Press, 87.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.



such vices would keep a person from entering the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9–10).”³⁰ The Bible, through human authors, did not prescribe us as a ground for the practice of same-sex marriage or homosexuality. Commenting on this, John Stott states that the Bible has biblical texts that speak negatively about homosexuality. He argues that, according to four primary biblical scriptures, the homosexuality issue is addressed negatively: (1) the Genesis 19:1–13 account of Sodom, for that which is only logical to compare the very similar to the account of Gibeah (Judges 19); (2) the Leviticus passages (18:22; 20:13), that expressly forbid “lying with a man as one lays with a woman,”³¹ (3) The description of the decaying pagan civilization by the apostle Paul during his day (Romans 1:18–32); (4) Two lists of sinners by the apostle Paul that each makes some reference to homosexual behaviour (1 Cor 6:9–10 and 1 Tim 1:8–11).³² The Bible is explicit and should inform our thinking and practice since God created all, and we are accountable to Him.

According to the Genesis account, “the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning against the Lord” (13:13),³³ and “the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was so great and their sin so grievous” that God decided to investigate it (18:20–21). In the end, God “overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities” (19:25) by a judicial act that was entirely following the justice of the judge (18:25).³⁴ DeYoung argues that the prohibitions against homosexual behaviour cannot be reduced to victimization categories. After all, both parties were to receive the death penalty. The Mosaic law prescribed no punishment for a woman forcibly seized by a man (Deut. 22:25–26).³⁵ If this were a question of homosexual rape (at the hands of a master, a conquering army, or a violent mob), only the aggressor would be put to death. Leviticus is doing more than outlaw unwanted same-sex sexual behaviour.³⁶ Stott states that they were accused of trying to subject the two angels, Lot was entertaining in his home, to homosexual acts, according to the orthodox Christian interpretation.³⁷

³⁰Bible Gateway (May 15, 2023) “BibleGateway.Com,” last modified 2023, accessed, <https://www.biblegateway.com/>.

³¹ *New American Standard Bible*, Ref. ed (1975). (Chicago: Moody Press.

³² Stott and Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 339.

³³ *New American Standard Bible*.

³⁴“ChristianityToday.Com,”*ChristianityToday.Com*, accessed May 16, 2023, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/>.

³⁵ DeYoung, K. *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* 36.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 36.

³⁷ Stott and Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 339.



For many Christians, the above sentiment sums it up. While they are willing to be tolerant toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, granting marriage rights to same-sex couples is excessive. And blessing same-sex marriages in the church seems entirely out of the question.³⁸ Matthew further argues that blessing same-sex marriages in the church seems entirely out of the question. Christian Marriage is holy, an institution ordained by God. It isn't something we can redefine based on personal feelings or shifts in public opinion.³⁹ Pam and Chuwang et al. maintain that, according to Christianity, absolute ethics exist and are based on the character of God, particularly on the unchanging moral code of a Creator God. The ethical perspective escapes the unreliability of cultural relationships. It assumes that God is accurate and has made clear unchangeable standards. It affirms that these criteria are accurate, truthful, and compatible with His creation.⁴⁰ The truth is that human sexuality and morals should flow from their creator God who has set standards for His creatures. Pam et al. also based their argument on Scripture and argued that the Bible claims that God made "kinds"—including "man"—and instructed them to "multiply" (Gen 1). The "kinds" had male and female genders for multiplication.

Moreover, everything that was produced "was good." Therefore, a male and female of the same sort would reproduce naturally before the Fall of Man.⁴¹ Naturally, sexual relations must happen only between male and female gender; anything other than that is not what the creator intended for human beings. Chuwang et al. maintain that "Man, as distinct from animal, is a moral being and has been given God's injunction on the matter."⁴² This analysis of texts has demonstrated that Scripture has no support for any form of homosexual behaviour. John Stott remarks, "Homosexual Christians are not satisfied with the biblical teaching about human sexuality and the institution of heterosexual marriage."⁴³ For many who participate in this discussion, the inference is that if we comprehend the message of the Bible and provide the correct response, we will apply it correctly. In a few diverse ways,

³⁸ Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian: The Biblical Case in Support of Same-Sex Relationships*, First trade paperback edition. (New York: Convergent Books, 2015), 121.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁰ Gyang D. Pam, Gyang M. Chuwang (2012), p 89.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 91.

⁴³ Stott and Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christians Today*, 347.



homosexuality highlights the challenges in interpreting the Bible.⁴⁴ In responding to issues such as homosexuality, which is a controversial issue within the Christian setting, pastors and Christians should not base their argument and interpretation on one Bible verse, but interpretation should always consider the context. Most Christians believe that homosexuality is not a Christian tradition. A few Christian groups, including the Metropolitan Community Church, the United Church of Christ, and a fraction of the Episcopal Church, were among those who first tolerated homosexuality but did not permit it for church leaders.⁴⁵ The involvement of priests charged with paedophilia and other scandals forced the church to address the issue of homosexuality worldwide.

The Bible states that homosexuality is opposed to God’s plan for humanity. Numerous verses in the Bible show that heterosexual behaviours that do not involve homosexual behaviour were commanded and sanctioned by God. The few scriptures in the Bible that speak directly to the topic do not consider homosexuality a psychosexual inclination but rather reference certain forms of gay behaviour. From the creation account onward, sexual intercourse between different sexes was evident. Adam and Eve were to procreate and care for God’s creation.

The Old Testament portrays the punishment meted out to Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 and 19. Sodom is where the city’s reputation for vice is on display. The desire for males for illicit sex was one of the factors contributing to the city’s decline.⁴⁶ Because they had sinned homosexuality with an unrepentant heart, God condemned the people to destruction. This serves as a reminder that God holds homosexuals entirely responsible for their sins.⁴⁷ Leviticus also condemns same-sex partnerships, saying, “Do not lie with a man as one does with a woman; that is repulsive” (18:22).⁴⁸ In Leviticus 20:13, such action is punished by death: “If a man lies with a man as one lays with a woman, both of them have done what is abominable. They must be put to death since their blood will be on their heads.”

⁴⁴ William M. Tillman Jr (2001). *The Church’s Response to Homosexuality: Biblical Models for the 21st Century* (Review and Expositor), p. 251.

⁴⁵ Carol A. Shepherd ((2019). “It’s Just Crap: Bisexual Christians in the USA Discuss Church Life,” *Bisexuality and the Western Christian Church: The Damage of Silence*, 192.

⁴⁶ Paul, K. O., 2020. “Mirroring Corruption Epidemic in Nigeria via the Biblical Lens: The Role of the Church.” *Asia-Africa Journal of Mission and Ministry (AAMM)*, 22, pp.35.

⁴⁷ Alabo, S. B., Opuowei, J. P. and Umezurike, J. E., 2023. “An Ethico-Philosophical Disquisition of Homosexuality.” *Asian Journal of Philosophy and Religion*, 2(1), pp. 141.

⁴⁸ *Holy Bible NIV*, 1984.



As Sherwin Bailey noted in the introduction, some academics provide pro-homosexuality readings in contrast to the usually unfavourable conclusions from biblical passages. They argue that the few biblical allusions to homosexual behaviour cannot substantiate the importance normally accorded to the key Hebrew and Greek terms.

According to them, the word “knows” in Genesis 19 shows that Sodom’s sin was inhospitality rather than homosexual perversion.⁴⁹ Given that the Sodom story focuses on homosexual acts, condemns the homosexual rape of divine messengers, and seems to pass more general judgments against social injustice and failing to extend hospitality to strangers. They also question the validity of reading these allusions as a general condemnation of homosexual relationships (Ezek 16:49-50).

These scholars fault the Old Testament’s prohibition against homosexuality as being inconsistent and disregarding those who disobey other rules in the Holiness Code from a hermeneutical standpoint. They contend that 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy use the Greek word *arsenokoites* to describe a male prostitute rather than a homosexual person seeking a committed, long-term relationship.⁵⁰ Paul is said to have been unaware of a recognized homosexual orientation as a young boy his age, according to Romans 1:26-27. As a result, the cultural gap between his time and the present prevents his criticism of sex interaction from being generalized. When it is argued that other behaviours that violate the Holiness Code are not given as much attention as homosexuality, I feel that the justification for permitting what the code condemns is weak. The New Testament has two specific biblical references that categorically forbid homosexual conduct.

Paul denounced homosexuality as abnormal and inconsistent with the manner of life in God’s kingdom. Furthermore, it transgresses both the Law of God and the gospel. In Romans, Paul claims that women “exchanged natural bonds for unnatural ones. “Similarly, men ceased dating women in a personal capacity and instead developed passionate relationships with one another. Men acted immorally toward other men and received the consequence for their self-depravity. Stewards claim that this conduct exposes the pride and sinful lusts of the Gentile world before a holy God, highlighting their guilt (1:26-27, NIV).

⁴⁹ Lumintang, S. P. I. and Daliman, M., (2023). “Reformed Theology and Church Reformation Always Happening and Will Never End.” *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, 10(5), pp.163.

⁵⁰ Luoto, S., (2019). “An Updated Theoretical Framework for Human Sexual Selection: From Ecology, Genetics, and Life History to Extended Phenotypes. *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology*, 5, pp.57.



They repress righteous activity in favour of wicked behaviour and seek desires that dishonour God instead of living according to His commandments. Such an act is completely at odds with the holy God who calls his people to holiness. Like this, D. F. Wright claims that the multiple arguments of this biblical mandate to justify homosexuality and cast doubt on the widely held belief that homosexuality is a sin could not stand since the wording of the Bible text is deliberately intended to depict homosexuality as a vice. He asserted that Paul could not have predicted some elements of present conflicts, such as “monogamous” same-sex relationships between persons who identify as homosexual. However, it is safe to assume that Paul could only have seen all homosexual behaviour, regardless of specific orientations or dispositions, as opposed to the creator’s plan for human life to be abandoned upon conversion.⁵¹ In 1 Corinthians, God clarifies that homosexuals will not be allowed to inherit his kingdom. “Do not be deceived: The kingdom of God is not for sexually immoral idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy drunkards, slanderers, or swindlers. (6:9-10).⁵² These Bible passages are unmistakable proofs that God detests homosexual behaviour. The church is to proclaim that Christian moralities are God’s prescription and loving demand for all individuals.

Katherine Jeffers and the leadership of the American Episcopalian church were not allowed to participate in communion by the group of conservative archbishops led by the Rev. Peter Akinola. The Episcopal Church in America’s selection of Gene Robinson as a gay bishop was in opposition to this. Following the 2003 election, the Methodist Church in Nigeria rejected the act and severed connections with it. One factor that could cause a person’s position to shift is the need for attention and approval. Homosexuals want to be heard, have access to all fundamental liberties, and be accepted by society, according to Clark and Rakestraw.⁵³ According to Crook, people reject and shun LGBT people and make crude jokes or remarks about them while hostilely staring at them.

In Africa, the situation is similar as pressure to alter unfavourable sentiments against them develops over time. The anxiety about acceptance and recognition that has developed with higher levels of education and exposure may result from the desire for morality to be

⁵¹ Bantekas, I., (2021). “Discrimination against LGBTI Persons on the Basis of Scripture: What Did Ancient Church Scholarship Really Say?” *Religion & Human Rights*, 16(1), p.51.

⁵² *Holy Bible, New International Version*.

⁵³ Adegbola, O. F., (2019). Points of View and Modality in the Discourses of Homosexuality in Selected Nigerian Newspapers. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(4), pp.83.



built on actual and scientific data rather than on traditional normative assumptions of a community. Because of developments in science and information technology, people now have access to a wide variety of knowledge. Kunhiyop argued that psychological and scientific evidence had replaced conventional wisdom and religious conviction. The increased ease of access to knowledge via the internet has tremendously aided the desire to reject traditional beliefs in favour of fresh concepts.⁵⁴ The first factor is the wearing down and neglect of traditional values and beliefs. The West has always had a considerable cultural influence in Africa and globally. In many African countries, younger generations are supposed to find foreign cultural practices more alluring. The issue of homosexual behaviours will become increasingly acceptable as the new generation of Africans rejects conventional ideas and practices and considers morality's putative arbiter as non-authoritative.⁵⁵

The second factor is the disapproval of ecclesiastical traditions and biblical revelation. Perhaps rejecting biblical revelation and ecclesiastical faith or practice is the most painful and challenging departure from what the church in Africa perceives as usual. It would be devastating if the church embraced a secular, humanistic perspective that values any sort of love other than agape as the most vital part of sexual expression. Even among Christians, there is growing support for the idea that church rules and biblical revelations no longer apply to people of other faiths or cultural orientations. Indeed, many changes are taking place in African societies that demand a response from the church. The church must sustain its stand on homosexuality in conformity with the scriptures. Only when the church stands for the authority of the Bible as the revelation of God's rules for His people can it do so and be faithful to its calling.⁵⁶ Scripture's priority in defining matters of faith and practice cannot ever be compromised.

⁵⁴ Listiorini, D., Asteria, D. and Sarwono, B., (2019). "Moral Panics on LGBT Issues: Evidence from Indonesian Tv Programme." *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*, 3(3), p.365.

⁵⁵ Javed, M., Rashid, M. A., Hussain, G. and Ali, H. Y., (2020). "The Effects of Corporate Social Responsibility on Corporate Reputation and Firm Financial Performance: Moderating Role of Responsible Leadership." *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 27(3), p.1399.

⁵⁶ Spadaro, A., 2020. "Covid-19: Testing the Limits of Human Rights." *European Journal of Risk Regulation*, 11(2), pp.321.



African Evangelical Christian Perspective on Homosexuality

The United Nations and Western human rights groups support those who advocate for LGBT rights despite their lack of comparable infrastructure. These organizations strongly emphasize achieving “global solidarity” to advance sexual rights in Africa. They also export Western sexual rights advocacy models, which their African partners accept and support as genuine African models. It discusses the contradiction between national “claims” (Africa has the right to uphold its “traditional values”) and global democratic “claims” (Africa must uphold LGBT rights as human rights).⁵⁷ For Mbiti, Africa is built on religion, found in their way of life and language; religion is ingrained in each African society’s native tongue, making fluency in that language essential to understanding its religious practices. There are also specific men and women in every civilization who are well-versed in the religion of their people, as well as others who oversee the carrying out of religious rituals and ceremonies. Through teaching others to carry out the religious life of their community, these pass on their knowledge to persons in the public.⁵⁸ If we want to build on the premise of Mbiti, then homosexuality is not part of Africa since it is not found in their language. The perspective of African Evangelical Christianity acknowledges African traditional beliefs.

Africans believe in the moral order, which exists in the minds and actions of the African people. This moral order helps a person to distinguish between what is good from what is evil in the community and society. Mbiti again argues that the African people analyze life experiences from the standpoint that God created and sustains the universe.⁵⁹ It is believed that God, or his agents, directly or indirectly, controls the rules of nature.⁶⁰ The church in Africa has a severe issue due to the moral threat that homosexual acts pose to the culture. While homosexuals worldwide are becoming more accepted and acknowledged, their African counterparts continue to look to them for understanding and support. Ironically, if the church postpones a coordinated response, this need for recognition may not last long in Africa. Some national policies on the social, political, and economic issues shaking many countries are some reasons why the movement toward acceptance may be quicker than

⁵⁷Baum, T. and Hai, N. T., 2020. “Hospitality, Tourism, Human Rights and the Impact of Covid-19. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(7), p.2400.

⁵⁸ John Mbiti (2000), *Introduction to African Religion*, 2nd rev. ed. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publ, 30.

⁵⁹Cordeiro-Rodrigues, L., 2022. “Towards a Global Philosophy of Religion: Reply to Schellenberg and Draper.” *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 14(3), p.276.

⁶⁰ Mbiti and Mbiti, *Introduction to African Religion*, 41.



anticipated. For instance, out of Africa's 54 nations, about 36 have maintained laws against homosexuality, while others have passed legislation in favour, most recently Botswana in 2019. South Africa took the lead in this movement in 2006.

The church appears to be trailing behind in starting a dialogue that would result in an engagement with LGBT issues. If these delays persisted any longer, the church might be accused of being insensitive to the needs of its neighbours, for which it is accountable. What should the church do as a result? The church agrees that everyone's need for salvation trumps their social status and sexual orientation. While the church in Africa must respect its cultural traditions and adhere to biblical commands, the foundation for a coordinated response should be the recognition of homosexuality as immoral and a cultural practice devoid of biblical approbation. The consequences of giving up include that the gospel and, of course, the teaching of Christian morals in households, schools, and the wider public would be in jeopardy. As a result, the following suggestions are made for the church in Africa.

Firstly, uphold the authority of the Bible: The African church must continue to take the biblical position against homosexual behaviour. The church must resist the temptation to support practices that the Bible denounces. The church should firmly affirm and uphold the integrity of the word of God in this way. The church must accept homosexuality as any other threat to society and adopt reformative initiatives for improvement and transformation. The church should "guard" gays from the risks of exclusion to prevent them from missing the opportunity for their redemption through solid biblical teachings that would enable them to have a conversion experience and ultimately experience salvation. Gay people can be reached with the truth of the word of God through many mission initiatives and church social ministries.

Secondly, enhance the teaching of Christianity in missionary schools. Even in the secular educational system, the church must equip children and teenagers with spiritual and moral foundations. Today's youth are overexposed to various things; because information and communication technology are readily available to many on digital platforms. It is easy for children and youth to be misinformed on matters of sexuality. It is essential to educate young people about the risks and threats that engaging in gay behaviour may present. Such establishes one's relationship with oneself, others, and God. The church may use Christian teachers in public schools to teach biblical truth from a moral viewpoint in situations where



government rules forbid the use of the Bible in secular and public schools. Biblical principles are made tangible to people in their worldviews and situations through music, theatre, writings, artistic expressions, and similar demonstrations; as a result, grasping the truth and embracing it would be much easier. The church-affiliated schools should provide curricula that convey ethical requirements and moral standards of society in a respectful manner.

Conclusion

Given how quickly homosexual alliances spread in many parts of Africa and the world, the church should not remain silent. Although there is intense pressure from the Western economies on third-world countries, especially in Africa, the church should be sensitive enough to such an emotive issue and be careful enough to apply the scriptural teaching with love regarding the issue of homosexuality.

Openness in this context refers to the understanding that every person is a “neighbour” to whom the church has a duty and a sinner who needs justification through faith in Christ. However, the conversation should be deliberate to avoid undermining the authority of the Bible. Avoiding compromise indicates that church leadership should support moral principles at all levels. According to biblical standards, no sin is worse than the other. Because of this, homosexuals who are potential saints as they become willing to correct their ways should also be given a chance by the church. The love of God should be displayed to homosexuals just as we often do to other sinners. The love of God displayed through Christ is intended for the neighbour who could be homosexual. In fairness, the church in Africa should show love instead of expelling them. The church should continue to speak out against the practice in line with what it believes to be biblical truth and societal ideal.

From the scriptural passages cited in this paper, God designed that a man and a woman should marry each other. All other unnatural sexual relations are forbidden and regarded as sinning against God. It should be noted that the devil is against the plans of God and that he will counterfeit everything that God has ordained.

As mentioned above, Africans believe in the moral order, which exists in the minds and actions of the African people. This is in line with biblical teaching to which the African believer has subscribed. Homosexuality is, therefore, an unnatural form of sexual relation that the Bible and traditional African beliefs forbid.



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