

## **Examining the Homosexual Worldview and its Implications for African Religious Contexts**

**Shadrack Chebet Rotich**

**Kabarak University, Kenya**

**Author's Email: [shadrack\\_rotich@yahoo.com](mailto:shadrack_rotich@yahoo.com)**

### **Abstract**

This study's purpose is to help individual Christians and church, in general, to critically examine the homosexual worldview that is forcefully advancing against the biblical worldview and the potential threats it poses to the sanctity of human life and sexuality. Homosexuality is no longer a secret issue in this generation. It has invaded the social, cultural and religious circus. It is high time for the church to study, expose and confront this evil. Any compromise will cause the church to lose its ethos and headed for peril. Edward T. Welch, in his booklet on Homosexuality; Speaking the truth in love, acknowledges that “homosexuality is the hot issue of the day even more than abortion” (Welch, 2000). This study is of benefit to all religious organisations that subscribe to Christian biblical values.

**Key Terms:** Homosexuality, homosexual worldview, sociocultural implications

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## Introduction

The term “homosexuality” was introduced into English from German in 1892. It is derived from Latin *home* (man) but from Greek *homoios* (like or same) and thus has to do with same-sex orientation” (Via 2003, 2). The acronym LGBT refers to Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Trans-genders” ([www.gaychurch.org](http://www.gaychurch.org)). Homosexuality has lived in the world and in Africa for a long time. Homosexuality is a serious moral issue that moved from one generation to another. In Africa, for instance, homosexual practitioners had lived with such perversion for a very long time even before the arrival of the early Christian missionaries. It is important to note that homosexuality was never one of the issues that bothered people in Africa. This is because those who lived in such relationships carried out their activities in secret.

Nobody in the families or society knew about the existence of such relationships because they were never made public. Interestingly there wasn't any law prohibiting homosexuality in most African communities because no one in the community knew anything about individuals with a homosexual orientation. However, the arrival of the postmodernist worldview which advocates for individual rights and the freedom to express oneself, homosexual practitioners in Africa were told to come out and openly declare what they have been practising in secret to the public. As a matter of human rights, they came out without hesitation. But to their dismay, the public or society vehemently despised and condemned their practice such that today homosexuality has become a serious taboo or offence in almost every culture in the African society (a statement made by Prof. Nkansah during his response to Dr Shceluter's Lecture #1 at NEGST chapel on May 11, 2010).

In Kenya, according to the *Daily Nation* newspaper published on Wednesday, May 19, 2010, Kenyan gays who came out publicly to reveal their identity as homosexuals, the *Daily Nation* again published a report under the title,

“Church where Kenya's gay, lesbian Christians worship”, on a church in Nairobi that allows homosexuals to come for worship. The church is headed by Rev. Michael Kimindu and has 22 members (Gekara, 2010) Reverend Kimindu claims that he preaches to the “other sheep” that Jesus talked about in John 10- verse 16.

The question is why has homosexuality suddenly become an issue in Africa? I think part of the answer is that every society or culture in Africa has its moral and ethical standards which it seeks to preserve. Homosexuals are being resisted and even condemned in most societies because their practices violate the moral and ethical standards set by the community. However, the battle is not yet over. Edward T. Welch has noted that “today new interpretations of scripture and sophisticated medical studies are persuading more people that committed homosexual relationships are biblically permissible” (Welch, 2000, 1).

It is amazing that even some Christians have been persuaded to believe that God created homosexuals with a different sexual orientation, and therefore, they should be loved and accepted as they are. This scenario can make one conclude that part of the reason why homosexuality has become a “hot issue” is that Christians have compromised the authority of the scriptures. Not that Scripture has lost its authority, but the manner in which some Christians use Scripture to address critical and fundamental moral issues like homosexuality is embarrassing to the one who once said “Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream... Is not my word like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:28-29; NIV). We have left other “authorities” (science, human feelings, culture, etc.) to speak forcefully and dictate on the society on what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. Hence the society is left in a dilemma to choose which authority to follow or not to follow. It is,

therefore, our task to research and properly address the issue of homosexuality in a way that will be relevant to our context.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Description: Homosexual Christians and Their Convictions

In this section, we will see how gay and lesbian Christians think about homosexuality. This part will focus on how gay and lesbian Christians have interpreted the biblical passages about homosexuality to make them look as supporting their views or position. Most of the information on this particular view is taken from the website [www.gaychurch.org](http://www.gaychurch.org). This church is located in the United States and the pastor of the church himself a practising homosexual. The pastor emphasised that those who have a homosexual orientation should not be excluded from the salvation of Jesus Christ. According to him, homosexuality is not sin since it is simply a sexual orientation. One of his emphases was that churches were segregating homosexuals (gays, lesbians, and trans-genders). The philosophy of the congregation is that the salvation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Trans-genders (LGBT) can be viewed using two different approaches; first, they argue that many LGBT Christians have experienced God's presence in spite of their sexual orientation. Second, whatever the sexual orientation of LGBT is does not make any difference because all men have sinned and can only be saved through Christ.

Therefore, it is wrong to conclude that LGBTs should be excluded from the salvation of God because of their sexual orientation. This church's philosophical argument about salvation is ambiguous. First, LGBT Christians argue that they have experienced the presence of God, meaning they have the Holy Spirit in them. However, according to Isaiah 6:1-7, sin cannot strive in the presence of God. Furthermore, in John 16:7-10, the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment. Second, THE GLBT Christians

argue that their sexual orientation part of their human nature; and since all men have sinned, they need forgiveness which comes through the acceptance of the death of Christ on the cross. However, the Scripture warns against indulging the sinful nature and its desires (Galatians 5:16-21).

According to the gay pastor, homosexuality is not a sin per se. He acknowledges that there are many biblical passages that condemn and prohibit homosexuality; rather, he chooses to interpret those passages by assuming what God's intention was. The following biblical passages address the issue of homosexuality: The story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the book of Genesis (19:1-4), is a biblical view of homosexuality below.

### Sociocultural Implications

The aspect of the community is very strong in Africa. Whatever an individual or groups of individual do affects the entire community. Homosexuality, in this case, though it may be practised by a few individuals, tends to affect not only the individuals convened but their families and other intuitions in the community. The family, for instance, is the basic unto of the society. From time immemorial, the family has been attacked by various forces ranging from the political, economic as well as the religious arena. The intention of these forces has been to undermine or downplay the family with all its social-cultural values.

Homosexuality is undoubtedly one of the powerful forces that are currently confronting the family, which is a fundamental sociocultural institution. As a social institution, the family upholds certain values that are intended to keep the society intact. One such value is a responsible sexual behaviour which is allowed only in a national relationship between a man and a woman. Homosexuality violates the sexual norms that are sanctioned by the family and the society at large by advocating for the freedom of individuals; in this case,

men, to have sexual relations with other men. Certainly, this was not God's intentions for the family as we read from Gen, 2:24 & Rom. 1:26-27. Many families and societies in Africa have been affected in one way or another by homosexuality. For instance, the divorce rate in most African communities has increased; homosexual victims find it difficult to recover from their abuses; it has led to the spread of various disease, it has open doors for demonic oppression, and above all, it has invited a lot of curses both in the family and in the society at large. It is unfortunate that today in many schools; young boys are being abused by so-called fathers and bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

This scenario makes the homosexuality problem even worse because the church which is another institution in the society that is supposed to act as a light to expose this ill and to uphold moral sexual standards have instead compromised its position by indulging in the same thereby giving room for homosexuals practitioners to carry out their activities with ease. By indulging in homosexuality through its members, the church seems to have lost its moral authority to speak against this ill. The homosexuals, on the other hand, have come out and they are vehemently fighting not only for their rights but for recognition in the society. Today homosexuals want same-sex marriages to be legally constituted. They're also asking the church to recognise and ordain them as priest and bishops. These pressures from the homosexual communities have far-reaching implications as we have already noted. It is high time, therefore for men and women of integrity to combine their various gifts and resources to wage a ceaseless war to save the family and the society as a whole from this evil.

#### **Other religious views of homosexuality**

Religion is the major contributor to the controversies over the issue of homosexuality. It is that way because many people, in reference to their religion, think that

homosexuality is sinful and abhorred on principles based on religion. African Traditional Religions, Islam, and Christianity are included. The majority of religious leaders worldwide do not agree with homosexuality.

#### **African religious worldview**

Africans by nature and religion do not accept homosexuality. In every African society, speaking about homosexuality is a taboo and should not be spoken about by anybody. However, there are some debates on whether homosexuality existed among Africans, Murray thinks that, though Sub-Saharan Africa does not have a clear record on homosexuality, there is a clue that North African societies practised the act. He says that women in Muslim societies in North Africa indulge in homosexuality in the royal estates because most men around were eunuchs (Murray & Roscoe, 2001).

Murray does not believe that Africa is free from the practice of homosexuality. He believes that throughout the history of Africa, there have homosexual practices among both sexes. He adds that the practice has been there for a long time in Africa. (Murray & Roscoe, 2001). For instance, Murray says that coastal countries in Africa practice female homosexuality more than any other countries. He pointed too to Sudan, Ethiopia, and the coastal part of Kenya. Murray's allegation might be true if one pays attention to what takes place in Africa these days. In Malawi, for instance, there has been recently a case of two gays who came out clearly to conduct their engagement (BBC News, 2010) If such kinds of stories and others are found in Africa, what guarantees that Africa has been free from the practice of homosexuality? Homosexuality must have been there in Africa because it is a sin that affects the world, including Africa.

#### **Islamic worldview**

Islam is one of the religions that do not tolerate homosexuality. Homosexuality is an evil act, and it should

not be part of people sexual life. Under Islamic law, homosexuality is a vile form of fornication that is punishable by death. However, beneath the surface, there are implied references to homosexual behaviour in paradise; this has been a part of historical Muslim and Arab culture (Hanz, 2009).

The Qur'an mention refers to gays, but there is no mention of lesbians. In Islam, the Qur'an is the source of moral instruction as well as the Hadith (sayings) of Mohamed. The Qur'an has two verses that clearly state Islamic disapproval of homosexuality:

*"We also sent Lot: He said to his people, 'Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation (ever) committed before you? For ye practice your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds'" Qur'an 7: 80-81.*

Also, the Qur'an says,

*"What! Of all creatures do ye come unto the males, and leave the wives your Lord created for you? Nay, but ye are forward folk." Qur'an 26:165.*

The two verses above clearly state the position of the Qur'an and hence Islam on the matter of homosexuality. In the same way, Prophet Mohammed in his sayings stated his disagreement with the practice of homosexuality. The following are some of his saying vis-à-vis homosexuality:

*If a man who is not married is seized committing sodomy; he will to stoned to death... The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "whoever you find doing the action of the people of Loot, execute the one who does it and the one to whom it is done" (Abu DAWUD, 4448,4462).*

Mohammed also said that "Whoever is found conducting himself in the manner of the people of Lot, kill the doer and the receiver"(al-Tirmidhi, Sunan 1:152). Though al-Tirmidhi

mentions Mohammed's will for the homosexuals to be killed above, Muslim scholars do not agree on the punishment that homosexual deserves. The reason for the disagreement is due to doubts about the authenticity of the report by al-Tirmidhi. Muslims believe more on the Quran, and not the sayings (Ahadith). However, Muslims worldwide agree that homosexuality is sin and not be practised among the people who know God.

#### **Christian worldview**

The Christian view on almost every aspect of life is based on the teaching of the Scripture. Since will analyse homosexuality in the view of the Scripture below, we are posing the common view of Christianity on the issues at this point.

The Christian's aim is to seek the will of God in everything. Because some issues are not well defined in the Bible and because it is hard to label some ethical issue with sin or righteousness, the reasonable things Christians depends on is the will of God (Moss 1977,25)

Moss does not stop there, he goes further to Christian ethics and suggests that, if anything is harmful to the society, it should be abhorred (Moss 1977, 29). By so saying, moss things that homosexuality is harmful to society because it is not acceptable in society. However, he says that when young people indulge in homosexuality, saying that they feel like practising it, they are influenced and convinced by homosexuals who solicit for the practice (Moss 1977,29).

#### **The Biblical View of Homosexuality**

Though the Bible does not use the word "homosexuality" in the Old Testament, its description of same-sex is utterly condemned as it condemns other forms of social evils as murder, adultery, premarital sex, kidnapping, lying and idolatry. Surprisingly, the homosexual community promotes their homosexuality practice by among many other things claiming that the Bible actually promotes and

condones homosexuality. Those claiming that the Bible either is silent or condones the Bible either is silent or condones same-sex intercourse either lacks theological knowledge or deliberately avoid the reveal biblical truth.

### **Instances of homosexuality in the Bible In the Old Testament**

Our first biblical case of people of the same sex having sexual intercourse is the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. The demand of the men of these cities for Lot to realise his male guests for them to have sex with them is indicative of their same-sex sexual lifestyle;

*And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight?*

*Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them. But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, 'please, my brothers, do not act wickedly (Gen 19:5-8).*

The Greek word in the New Testament for homosexuality is literally "a sodomite" from the name of the city of Sodom which alongside with Gomorrah was completely destroyed by God because of homosexuality. Though the pro-homosexual may say there is no word for "homosexual" in this passage, Nissinen explains that "in English, the term "sodomy" (verb "sodomite" is a person who engages in it. This semantic development, which has its roots in the translation of the Bible... Thus, the core of sodomites since, as it has been conceived, was "homosexuality" (Nissinen 1998, 45). The sin of same-sex sexual intercourse was so grave that is even echoed in the New Testament;

*Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way. As these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire (Jude 7).*

As a chosen nation, the children of Israel were to be different from the pagan Canaanites. Hence Holiness Code was provided for them in the Old Testament book of Leviticus (chapter 17-26), which attempted to spell out ways the people of Israel would act differently than their Mediterranean neighbours. The Holiness codes clearly prohibited sexual intercourse of the same sex; "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination" (Lev 20:13). "If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death" (Lev. 18:22-23).

In discussing the sexual lifestyle of the Israelites in relations to her evil neighbouring nations, Nissinen states that "Holiness code thus presents sexual activity between two men as an example of the repulsive ways of the so-called Canaanites, which the people of Yahweh should avoid" (Nissinen 1998, 38). However, the homosexuals' sympathisers like Soards who want to justify same-sex practices, believe that "The Bible says remarkable little about homosexuality. In fact, there is no biblical word for homosexuality. The relevant texts tend to speak graphically about actions not about persons of sexual orientations" (Soards 1995,15). Soards further states that "But biblically formed mind as we know it from subsequent biblical texts, Sodom and Gomorrah became symbols of God's judgment, not symbols of sexuality" (Soards 1995, 16). Perhaps Soards should explain what the judgement was for. Or what did these man of the city wanted to commit? There is a need to call a spade a spade not to compromise evil or sacrifice godliness at the altar of compassion and social tolerance.

### **In the New Testament**

It is in the New Testament that the word "homosexuals" is used. Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians warned that evildoers, who include homosexuals, will not inherit the kingdom of God, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous

shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals" (1 Cor. 6:9 NIV). In Genesis, God created Adam and Eve and ordained that marriage should be between a man and a woman (Gen 1:24). In reference to the perfect design of marriage God instituted, human being practised otherwise and began the unnatural sexual relationship that necessitates Paul to address in Rom 1:26-27 "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way, also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." This clearly demonstrates that the people of Rome practised the "unnatural" sexual act, which is homosexuality.

Therefore, in conclusion, the Bible has clearly defined to us the God-ordained type of sexuality that it should involve a man and a woman. Similarly, the Bible should be our final authority, not our traditions, culture or science.

### **Causes of Homosexuality**

There are several explanations as to what causes one to be a homosexual person. Some people have from a scientific point of view sought to believe that homosexuality is due to genetic makeup or biological causes; whereas others especially the evangelical Christians are of the opinion that the Bible clearly states sin to be the cause. The scientific search of the cause of homosexuality that began from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century has not fully established proof of any biological or genetic factors to be the cause of someone being a homosexual. A leading researcher Rekers after his in-depth study on the cause of homosexual said the "Nineteenth-century theories about the cause of homosexuality mistakenly assumed that the condition was biological" (Reker 1982, 64). This similar finding is shared by Peterson in his study on sexual orientation that " The bottom line

from a half – century's theory and research: If there are environmental factors that influence sexual orientation, we do not yet know what they are. If someone were to ask me, "What can I do to influence my child's sexual orientation?" my answer would have to be "I haven't a clue."

Rakers further observed that" It is true that sexual behaviour in lower animals is instinctual, governed by the hormonal system, and sexual behaviour in higher mammals is influenced by both hormones and learning. But in humans, research has shown that the director of sexual preference is apparently the product of learning experiences rather than biological factors" (Rekers 1982, 64). And finally, Rakers concluded that "People who experience homosexual temptations are said to have homosexual tendencies. A wide variety of social learning experiences evidently contribute to vulnerability to homosexual temptations" (Rekers 1982, 65). Similarly, Welch quoting Le Vay, another leading researcher who conducted a post-mortem examination about homosexuals said, "Eve Le Vay recognises the limitations of his stud, suggesting that it is little more than investigation to further research. He knows that his observations are tentative until confirmed by other researchers and his corroboration has not as yet been forthcoming... And that his measurements could be prone to error" (Welch 2000,21). Therefore, it is clear that the cause of homosexuality is not biological, but rather it is temptations, lust and behaviour.

### **CONCLUSION**

It is important to know that homosexuals are people create to God. Therefore, we should not condemn and demonise them. Instead, Christians should learn to love and pray for the homosexuals for God to deliver them from the bondage of homosexuality because homosexuality is just like any other sin. Therefore, Christians are instructed in Galatians 6:1-2 to restore gently in love those caught in sin; however, they should be careful not to fall into the same

temptation. However, homosexuality, like any other sin, should not be tolerated in the church.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

In applying the scientific perspective of the phenomenon of homosexuality, the below two points should be seriously taken into consideration:

1. There is a need to use qualified Christian Scientists who have done intensive research on the possibility of genes or biological factors on homosexuality. One of the psychological supports the homosexual have is that we were made this way, so why blame us? But with proof of otherwise from a reputable Christian scientist they may admit that it is a moral problem hence open up for help.
2. There is a need to have trained pastors who are sound with evangelical doctrine and able to do accurate biblical exegesis to reach out to the homosexual. Similarly, the homosexual should be taught that reading into the text is doing injustice to the Bible.

Concerning the religious point of view, it is good that religion should take part in addressing the issue of view, it is good that religion should take part in addressing the issue of homosexuality. Religion is not an abstract issue that Imams or Pastors talk about. The issue of homosexuality has meat o hot debate in the continent of Africa not only because of the culture of the African people but partly because of the religions that the African people have embraced. There are clear tendencies in Africa to abolish the tole of religion when it comes to ethical issues such as homosexuality.

Before going further in addressing the issue of homosexuality religiously, Muslims need to agree among themselves on the view of Islam in addressing the phenomenon. Based on the verses on Qur'an and the

"Ahadith" of the Prophet Muhammed above, it is clear that Islam does not tolerate homosexuality. However, if the is lack of consensus among Muslim scholars, they should look for a common ground on which the view of Islam can be clear as far as homosexuality is concerned.

Christians, in a similar way, should not keep silence and allow homosexuality invade the life and hart of people. Christians, in general, do not agree with homosexuality since their holy book does not seem to allow it. It is known that some Christians, such as the gay pastor above, vie for homosexuality. This view is not based on the Bible but on human right's perspective.

Religion is important because its aim is to bring peace and harmony among people as a way of introducing them to God and preparing them for life to come. Because religion does not seek to harm or grab people's freedom and enjoyment, it should be considered as a major factor and source for addressing the phenomenon of homosexuality. Homosexuality, in the view of religion, is not acceptable because it is not godly, and it is not mentioned in the holy books as part of what human beings should practice.

In a comprehensive view, it is clear from our discussion concerning homosexuality that, it is a major moral issue in our society today. Therefore it is not wise for the church to ignore this truth. Whatever approach the church would take to address this issue will either cause the church to be relevant or irrelevant to the society. Here are some following are a few suggestions on how the church can effectively address this issue;

First, the church should show love and sympathise with people with a homosexual orientation. However, the church needs to be careful, to tell the truth using the approach of Jesus with the woman who was caught in adultery (Jn. 8). Loving homosexuals is one thing and telling them the truth is another thing. As Christians, we

have been commanded to love one another. The love of God cuts across every culture, race, religion etc. In other words, God does not discriminate. However, we should understand the God's love is contagious. It is meant to renew and transform our behaviours to match those of Christ. Therefore as we show love to our homosexual brothers, we should be careful to tell them the truth because only the truth will set them free (Jn.8:32).

Secondly, the church should accommodate homosexuals and help them to overcome their situations which is abnormal and contrary to biblical norms. As Christians, we believe that people with a "homosexual orientation" need help. Individuals with a homosexual orientation for one reason or the other were born with such a biological condition as scientific evidence has proven. The church needs to accommodate such individuals and counsel them to accept their condition. However, the church should warn and encourage them not to have sexual relations with other men because it is despicable in the eyes of the Lord (Lev. 18: 22).

Thirdly, parents should educate their children about human sexuality at a tender age. This will help the children as they grow up to make informed choices on how they should relate sexually with other people. Most testimonies from

homosexuals show that they received such orientations at their early childhood stages. Therefore parents should heed the biblical command to "train up their children in the way they should go, and when they're old they will not depart from it" (Prov. 22;6)

Fourthly, theological schools and seminaries, especially in Africa, should design courses that would train men and women on how to reach out to the gay and lesbian communities. The issue of being relevant in a postmodern age is very crucial. Fifthly, parents should carefully consider the dangers of sending their children to same-sex schools because a lot of homosexual and lesbian practices take place in such institutions. Unfortunately, some of the teachers in these institutions are also involved in homosexual relationships.

Finally, there is a need for accountability in the family, church and in our institutions. The church should set up accountability structures where members will care for each other and hold each other accountable. This can be effective where members meet and share in small groups rather than the normal Sunday assemblies where people hardly know each other.

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