

Homosexuality and Spirituality: A digital age missiological dilemma for the Anglican Church in Uganda

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Abstract

Homosexuality, an erotic sexual attraction to same sex individuals, has been in existence since ancient days and the lifestyle grows every year that unfolds. Legislations to reverse homosexuality are documented in sacred and political books of history. The underlying forces behind homosexuality are speculative. Voices are calling on political and religious leaders to give space to consenting homosexual adults. European and some Asian countries have scrapped punitive laws but in the Arab world and majority of African countries, punitive legislations are in force to protect the sanctity of traditional families. To the opposing voices, homosexuality is an abomination, unnatural, and human beings associated with such should be caged out of society. Is spirituality and homosexuality a digital missiological dilemma of the Anglican Church in Uganda? To examine the question, three methods – allegorical, literary, and historical approaches were relied on. Results show that homosexuality is a social construct that is installed in the software system of human beings. Ingrained systems can be uninstalled through spiritual deliverance and psychotherapeutic interventions, however, to the homosexually oriented people, the sexual lifestyle is an innate biological drive, and for that reason, consenting adults should be accorded freedom to express their sexuality publicly. The dilemma facing the missiological mandate of the Anglican Church in Uganda towards homosexual people is that scientists have failed to prove that same-sex attraction erotic drives are inborn. If such a proof was in existence, then sacred scriptures recorded on the pages of the Bible would have been realigned and contextualized to speak to the Ugandan Anglican church vis-à-vis African social traditions. This article displays the causes of homosexuality, biblical worldview of homosexuality, effects of homosexuality practices, current debates on homosexuality, and a call for Uganda Anglican religious leaders to design missiological programmes that if well implemented, would provide peaceful abode for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Key words: Homosexuality, Gay, Bible, Church, Culture

Introduction

Homosexuality, a same sex erotic sexual lifestyle that has been held since ancient days by elites as abnormal and inhuman behaviour, is being cherished and promoted on the global scene by the very people who criminalized it. To the majority of Ugandans, homosexuality never had historical abode in the black culture. It is a lifestyle imported and imposed by Europeans. The Anglican Church in Uganda is facing it rough in their effort to align homosexuality with spirituality in the current digital age. To examine Ugandan sexuality social traditions, three methods – allegorical, literary, and historical approaches were relied on. Historical methodology that centres on understanding human voices out of the past was used to investigate historical and current debates on homosexuality (Palmer, 1969, pp.7-10, 60-63). Next, literary interpretation method was relied on to reflect on biblical scriptures that shade light on homosexuality (Grace Theological Seminary, 2022). Finally, the allegorical approach, theorized by St. Augustine (354 - 430 AD) of Hippo as a literary text exposition in which the significances of rhetorical narrations become manifest to the cultural context of the readers (Mazzeo, 1978, p.3) was used to expound the mythical truths hidden in African social traditions (Bostock, 1987, p.39). The causes of homosexuality, biblical worldview of homosexuality, effects of homosexuality, and current debates on homosexuality have been chronicled. To handle the question of homosexuality, Ugandan Anglican religious leaders have been called on to follow a five linear behavioural change engagement process to design missiological programmes that if well implemented, would provide peaceful abode for the LGBTIQ+ community.

1. Meaning of the Term ‘Homosexuality’

The word ‘homosexuality’, to mean having sexual feelings towards people of the same sex as well as engaging in sexual behaviours with same-sex individuals (AVERT, 2014) came into usage in the late 19th Century. It was coined by Karoly Maria Benkert (1824-1882), an Austrian Psychologist (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, 2020).

Since then, scientists reworked on the term ‘homosexuality’ to mean mental disorder or moral deficiency observed in people who exhibit same-sex attraction and same-sex sexual behaviours. However, the terminology is associated with stigma and for that reason, the community of homosexual men and women who share sexual attractions, use the term 'gay'

for men and 'lesbian' for women to safeguard themselves from being labelled abnormal or ill (AVERT, 2014; Daven Hiskey, 2010).

The abbreviation 'LGBTIQA+' is used to define the community of homosexuals; thus, **L** stands for lesbian – a woman who is in a sexual relationship or sexually attracted to a fellow woman. Lesbians also prefer to be called gay women; **G** for gay – a man who is in a sexual relationship or sexually attracted to another man; **B** for bisexual – an individual who is sexually attracted to or is in a sexual relationship with both a man and a woman; **T** for transgender – a condition whereby a person believes his/her physical body and gender expression are not similar to the assigned sex at birth; **I** stands for intersex – a condition whereby an individual feels his/her assigned sexual organs at birth are not compatible with his/her gender identity; **Q** means queer/questioning – acronym used by the gay community to fight oppressive systems that oppose homosexuality; **A** stands for asexual – a person who does not have sexual feelings towards others but may engage in sexual behaviours with either gender; + (**Plus**) signifies other gender identities and sexual orientations such as incest, bestiality, paedophilia, etc., that are carpeted to avoid public uproar (South Dakota State University, 2023; Youth Engaged 4 Change, 2023).

2. Historical Roots and Acceptance Trends of Homosexuality

Historical records evidence that laws that codified homosexuality were in existence during the Greece-Roman period. Roman emperors are reported to have been involved in homosexuality, thus, Augustus Caesar (63 BCE -14 CE) had sexual relations with Julius Caesar; Nero (37-68 CE) was in same-sex marital relationship with two men in succession, and Hadrian (137-138 CE) married Antonius (David Scasta M.D, 1998, p.6).

Homosexuality for men was promoted in ancient the Greece-Roman world but with the coming into force of Christianity as a state religion during the third and fourth centuries, the practice was abolished. Homosexuality went on behind closed doors for a long period of time but during the enlightenment period, the lifestyle exploded on a high scale (Scasta, 1998, p.7). Scholarly works highlight that in the 18th Century, homosexual men in England formed social clubs that defined their identity. Men dressed up and behaved like women, adopted feminine names, engaged in same sex night marriage ceremonies, had sexual encounters in back rooms, and they performed mock births (Weems, n. d, p.82).

Lesbianism on the other hand is documented to have been coined from the Greek Island of Lesbos where the poetess Sappho extolled and encouraged female homosexuality during the middle ages. However, given the fact that, the sexual lifestyles attracted stigma, lesbian practices went on behind the curtains (Bieber, 1969, pp.2-5). The onset of Industrial Revolution in the 17th Century opened doors of opportunity for women to venture into the mercantile economy. The civilized ideological environment influenced many women to come out of cultural prisons and express their lesbian identities publicly. Women initiated salons, artistic coteries, religious organizations, and educational institutions came to the limelight and these provided opportunity for the development of intense lesbian friendships (Martha Vicinus, 1992, pp.472-473).

After the Second World War, associations aimed at coordinating and improving the social positions of homosexual men and women were set up in several European countries (Borghs, 2016, p.31). Since then, acceptance of homosexuality as a lifestyle gained ground steadily. The 2019 survey results on the question of legislation and promotion of homosexuality conducted by Pew Research Centre, revealed on the global scene, societal acceptance of homosexual people to be highest in European and Asian countries. The sexual lifestyle was found to have thin acceptance in Sub-Saharan Africa with the exception of South Africa ranked at 54%. In the Middle East, space for homosexuals was non-existent, apart from the state of Israel, ranked at 44% acceptance (Poushter & Kent, 2020).

3. Reasons for Legislation and Promotion of Homosexuality

Human rights advocates have raised voices, asking legislators, religious bodies, and cultural institutions to accord freedom to homosexual oriented persons (Ellis, 2002, p.455). Among the reasons advanced to seek for inclusiveness are that homosexuals are: discriminated at work places, denied health insurance, suffer social stigma, experience violence from family members and friends, denied career growth opportunities, live in isolation and fear, and suffer from mental disorders that could be avoided if social environments accept their sexual orientations (Zappulla, 2017).

In most countries where it is illegal to be identified as a homosexual, gay couples are denied rights to: legalize their marriages, adopt children, divorce their spouses, freedom of gender identity expression, protection from domestic violence, medical decision making power on

behalf of the spouse, automatic inheritance of spouse's assets in the event of death, etc. (Revel & Riot, 2014).

Homosexual people face torturous life challenges that destabilize normal societal functioning, for example, the first incidence of HIV virus is reported to have occurred among homosexuals. The virus got its way to bisexuals, who then transmitted it to heterosexuals and this led to massive loss of lives (CDC, 2001, p.429). Homosexuality liberation voices then, are advocating that if the lifestyle is accorded freedom of expression, monogamous marriages promoted and indecent behaviours condemned, then society would progress normally (Zappulla, 2017). However, this line of thinking is argued to be wrapped in Eurocentric traditions and detached from the decorative beauties of African cultural traditions and religious expressions of communities that are negative to homosexuality (Hairsine, 2019).

4. Theories of Homosexuality

Different theories have been developed to explain the root causes of homosexuality and these are highlighted as follows:

a) Genetic Makeup: Some people believe that homosexuals are born with genes that orient them to be gays. This view has been taken on by homosexuals and people who support them to attain expression space in society. However, scientific research done by several academicians has not proved so. Majority of gay people who have been involved in the study have been found to be fully male or female without any genetic defect (Conservapedia, 2015).

b) Learned Behaviour: Some people, especially those who oppose the sexual orientation, believe that homosexuality is a learned behaviour which is influenced by a number of factors and some that are documented by Paul Cameron (1997) include; i) molestation by parents, siblings, aunties, uncles, and friends; ii) an individual's personal choices as a result of sexual self-indulgence; iii) influence of homosexual friends and authority figures such as teachers; iv) influence of homosexual parents who support homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle; v) exposure to pornography in childhood; and vi) living in a liberal society that approves curiosity and encourages sexual exploration.

c) Mental Illness: Psychologists assert that homosexual behaviour is a mental illness brought about as a result of symptomatic factors arrested early in childhood development. They go on to argue that homosexuals have unnatural or perverse desires as a consequence of poor familial relations in childhood or as a result of early childhood trauma (Conservapedia, 2015).

Bayer's narrations extracted by Scasta (1998, pp.9-10) point out Freudian factors that are postulated to be responsible for the formation of homosexual lifestyles among men, these are: i) excessive interest in genitals during the autoerotic phase of psycho-social development influences boys to turn toward men who have penises; ii) frustrated oedipal phase that denied the boy gratification of his mother is transferred to men who love him as his mother would not; iii) oral fixation on the mother leads to the desire to experience oral sexual gratification from the penis /breast; iv) deprivation of a mother figure leads to strong attachment to the father; v) fear of father's retaliation during the oedipal phase causes the boy to avoid women; and vi) sibling rivalry from an older brother is transformed into homosexual love of the formerly hated brother.

In helping people to come out of homosexuality, psychologists trace early childhood suffocated sexuality to try to fix the problem. However, there are children who don't grow up with their biological parents, some are brought up in orphanages, babies' homes, and by adoptive caregivers. Could it be that people who miss out on being nurtured by their biological parents are never homosexuals? Probably there could be hidden forces behind homosexuality, other than mental illness igniters.

Genetic makeup as a source of homosexuality incubator seems to be gaining ground on the global scene, this is because mental influencers of homosexuality have been therapeutically handled for generations but they have not yielded results. If mental disorder igniters were of demonic origin, then the gifted Christian demonic deliverers would have cured the situation. On the other hand, if the lifestyle was a social construct, then, punitive legislative laws held by many nations would have suppressed the behaviours. Nonetheless, there appears to be something beyond missiological intervention that is whirling the lifestyle to spread wings.

Postulating the human mind as an empty plate at birth as spiritualized by Job (1:26): *Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart*, then the social construct theory of homosexuality behavioural formation holds weight. The human brain can be comparable to the software central processing unit of a computer. The work of the software system is to store and process computer user required information, however, in the software, disruptive viral programmes can be installed by either bad hearted or curiosity-oriented people. Equivalently, the human brain is the central processing unit of human behaviours. Whatever is installed in the brain is processed and expressed into actions.

For instance, when the human brain is infected with a forgetful virus, then that individual is diagnosed as suffering from amnesia or if the chemistry of the brain is interfered with, then a person is declared to suffer from mental illness. Brain damage illnesses influence people to engage in senseless activities that attract public sympathy but at the cost of destabilizing social order.

In the case of homosexual lifestyle, it is convincible that it is a socially constructed behaviour, installed in the software system of an individual's central processing unit. With time, the lifestyle stretches roots and becomes very difficult to uninstall. Probably, with support of well programmed pastoral counselling, the affected individuals can be helped to unshackle from addictive sexual lifestyles.

The greatest dilemma of life is that the religious environments where homosexual people would run for help, such places are littered with thorny words that are driven in the guts of individuals who might have innocently found themselves admitted and chained in life injurious systems. In addition, recently enacted government legislation in Uganda is lethal. Identification of one victim leads to arrest of several contact victims. In the absence of constructive mentors and living in a hostile environment, gay people go into hiding. Many, for fear of being exposed as they seek medical, parental, and spiritual attention, die in the process. Those who have had the guts to come out, society has incriminated them and I suppose that is why the voices are everywhere asking conservative societies to free the consenting adults but hold the barbaric ones who rape and defile children accountable for their beastly actions.

Nevertheless, the painful challenge that oscillates in the minds of religious communities in Uganda, is that world leaders have taken on a genetic view as a source of homosexuality accelerator without convincing scientific facts. They are championing promotion of LGBTIQ+ wrapped in the gist of universal human rights, a condition that is seen as imposition of Western culture, which is not African. The Anglican Church in Uganda is struggling to believe that homosexuality is genetically designed, and God breathed. However, the lifestyle can be negotiable if it's regarded as sin, I suppose in that way, a bargain for consenting adult romantic homosexual relationships can slowly receive public tolerance.

Sin, though context defined and is of several tributary entities, Apostle Paul describes it as a viral force that emits specific entities that get installed in human software system. Once fixed, sin replicates at a terrific speed and takes full control of the human ability to withstand societal unacceptable lifestyles.

Human innate moral systems that are responsible to enforce acceptable moral standards become weak. Sin engulfed human beings finally dance at the dictates of viral forces and become incapacitated to unchain themselves (Romans 6:11-18; 7:8-20).

Looking at the challenges that Paul encountered wrestling with his sinful lifestyles, one comes to realize that it is not easy go for an individual to uninstall a habit that is fully rooted. While computer machines affected by viruses can be formatted at a cost of emotional pain of losing good documents, sin infested human beings when not well handled, they can be driven to extinction.

Contrastingly, wresting with unacceptable social lifestyle does not necessarily mean that sin stained individuals are useless and have nothing to contribute to socioeconomic transformation of a community. No human being on earth is perfect. The good and the bad in each individual are innate and the two forces are in opposition. When the greater good is put into consideration, then the beastly lifestyles can be tolerated. However, the level of tolerance ought to be context caged, least behavioural lifestyles that expose mankind to disease epidemics delete society out of existence.

5. Gay Sexual Practices and Ill-Health Challenges

Studies reveal that almost all homosexuals engage in sexual practices that are virtually unknown among heterosexuals (Bowden, 1995). Some of the sexual practices such as anal, fisting, faecal, urine, and sadomasochism are extremely degrading and humiliating. People involved are reported to suffer from deadly disease epidemics. The number of homosexual people diagnosed with mental illnesses and sexually transmitted diseases overtakes that of heterosexual people. Alcohol, tobacco, drugs and substance abuse that lead to eating disorder, depression, anxiety, heart diseases, high blood pressure, lung diseases, lung cancer, and suicidal deaths have been found to be higher among homosexual men as compared to the heterosexuals (Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 2023).

Homosexual men as compared to heterosexuals register high levels of HIV infection; human papilloma virus (HPV) that causes anal papilloma and anal cancers; hepatitis that causes liver cancer, cirrhosis, and liver failure; gonorrhoea; chlamydia; anal fistula; and syphilis (Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 2023).

On the other hand, homosexual women as compared to the heterosexuals acquire herpes, syphilis, and gonorrhoea when their mouths/tongues get in contact with the vagina. Putting

fingers in the vagina of the infected sexual partner has been found to spread herpes, HPV, bacterial vaginosis, trichomonas, chlamydia, and gonorrhoea. Kissing the anus has been established as the source of spread of syphilis, herpes, hepatitis A, and intestinal infections. Use of sex toys or carrots in the vagina or anus has been connected to the spread of trichomonas, chlamydia, herpes, HPV, and gonorrhoea. Piercing and sadomasochistic sexual activities have been discovered to transmit HIV and all types of Hepatitis (NHS, 2022).

In societies where homosexuality is illegal, it is difficult for individuals battling with same-sex encounter health challenges to seek medical attention and counselling services. Those with reasonable sources of incomes are able to access medical care. However, the situation is most likely to be worse among jobless young people who are incapacitated financially to acquire quality medical services (Kelleher, 2019).

Ill health challenges and the associated shame that homosexual people battle with spill over to heterosexuals and affect the emotional bonding of workmates, business associates, friends, neighbours, and close family members. Advocating for freedom of gays and promoting their lifestyles is what makes Ugandan religious and political leaders to rant fire. Anti-gay crusaders in Uganda are armed with tools to crush the beastly lifestyle out of existence.

Crushing homosexual people out of existence may be viable but there is no recorded story that brings to light specific societies that have been successful at weeding immoral behaviours and criminalities out of their communities. Probably religious leaders and legislators in Uganda are in the kitchen preparing a special menu that when imprisoned homosexuals are fed on, they will come out clean and never to infect society.

6. Biblical Views of Homosexuality

Several biblical passages have been reflected on by homosexuals in order to push their liberation agenda to be accorded space in society. Their arguments are mainly focused on Noam-Ruth and Jonathan-David relationships as compared to other scriptures that are hard to contextualize.

a) Naomi – Ruth Relationships: The events surrounding Ruth that are flavoured with love, loyalty, care, and faith in God are theorized by the gay community to mean that the daughter and mother-in-law were in a homosexual relationship. The affectionate words of Ruth to Naomi: *where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay...* (Ruth 1:17-18, NIV) are taken on to justify lesbian marital relationships. If Naomi and Ruth were not lesbians, then, why do

heterosexual couples use the words of Ruth in their wedding cards? They ask (Stahlberg, 2008, pp.22-32).

A hermeneutical reading of the story recorded in the book of Ruth, one comes to understand that Naomi was a gifted woman who did what it took to build strong loving relationships with her daughters-in-law. As she left Moab, after the demise of her husband and sons, she urged her daughters not to follow her. If she was a lesbian, then why did she come to a detachment decision at such a point of time when she badly needed intimate companionship to recover from bereavement episodes?

If it is true, that Naomi was in a fulfilling lesbian monogamous relationship, why did she allow her sexual partner to get married to Boaz? Humanly speaking, is it possible for a lesbian couple in monogamous marital relationship to allow a sexual partner to engage in extra marital affairs? Probably the marital bond between lesbian couples is a unique one. In a nutshell, it is hard to prove that young Ruth was in a sexual relationship with her aged mother-in-law. The biblical argument tied on Noam-Ruth lesbian monogamous relationship is flabby for the homosexual community to advance their agenda in communities that are negative about same-sex sexuality.

b) Jonathan – David Relationships: Gay community advances the argument that ‘there was sexual contact and affection between David and Jonathan’ (Scasta, 1998, p.5). That the two kissed each other many times. They made a covenant of love. When Jonathan died in battle; David lamented that the love Jonathan had for him was more than that of a woman (1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:41; 24: 41, 2 Samuel 1:26).

Christians contend that David was a brother-in-law to Jonathan, married to his sister Michal. They lived in the same palace (1 Samuel 18:20-30). The duo were also close military companions and such factors bonded them. Just like the Jonathan-David relationship, there are same sex friendships in almost every society. Such people are emotionally bonded to each other in pursuit of common goals but it is quite hard to conclude that same sex friendships mean homosexual relationships.

Accordingly, kissing was a cultural sign of parental and friendship intimacy among the Hebraic community, for example, Isaac kissed Jacob (Genesis 27:26), Laban kissed Jacob (Genesis 29:13), Laban kissed his children (Genesis 31:55), Esau kissed Jacob (Genesis 33:4), Joseph kissed his brothers (Genesis 45:15), Jacob kissed his grandsons (48:10), Joseph kissed his dead father (Genesis 50:1), Moses kissed Aaron (Exodus 4:27) and Jethro (exodus 18:7), Samuel

kissed Saul (1 Samuel 10:1), Absalom kissed everyone in his reach (2 Samuel 15:5), David kissed Barzillai (2 Samuel 19:39), and Joab kissed Amasa (2 Samuel 20:9).

In the New Testament, Judas Iscariot approached Jesus with a kiss (Mathew 26:47-56, Mark 14:43-50, and John 18:3-12) and Apostle Paul encouraged believers to greet each other with a kiss (Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1Thessalonians 5:26, and 1 Peter 5:13. Kissing, just like same sex individuals hugging each other or walking while holding hands, does not mean that such people are in homosexual relations.

David while in lamentation, compared Jonathan's love to that of a woman because women rate higher when it comes to supportive life chores nurturing engagements (Becca, 2023). However, the affectionate nurture support of Jonathan towards David superseded that of women. Jonathan protected David from the wrath of his father, King Saul who wanted to kill him on many occasions (1Samuel 18:10-11, 17, 25; 19: 9-13; 20:32-33; 22:6-23; 24:1-22; 26:9). In later years, David reached out for Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son and rewarded him handsomely because of the companionship his father accorded him (2 Samuel 9:1-13). In all the encounters, David had with Jonathan, it's not recorded anywhere that the two engaged in homosexual relationships or David took on another man in place of Jonathan as his sexual companion. Therefore, the arguments advanced by the gay community are still weightless to support their identity promotion in communities that have strong attachments to biblical scriptures.

Opposers of homosexuality have biblically reflected on: the marital union of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2: 18-24), opposite sex pairs of animals Noah assembled in the boat (Genesis 6:19), destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29), high intensity sexual drives of homosexual men of the city of Gibeah (Judges 19:1-30), anti-homosexuality Mosaic laws (Leviticus 18: 22-28; 20:13), and Pauline homosexuality condemnations (Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:9-11) to infer that promotion of homosexuality is an abomination in the sight of God.

Christian puritans have put into action biblical scriptures to avoid contact with homosexual sin-stained individuals. Some Christian leaders regard homosexuality as filth and people who are involved should not be accorded space in society nor their constructive contributions accepted. Pocketing their money, means sharing in their sinful lifestyles. According to some Anglican African Christian leaders, they are better off dying of economic poverty other than receiving donations from people who call themselves Christians and yet they are involved in sexual filth.

Former Archbishop of Nigeria, Peter Akinola, asserted, “We will not, on the altar of money, mortgage our conscience, mortgage our faith, mortgage our salvation” (Grossman, 2014).

In Uganda, Christian religious leaders contend that the suitable sexual companion whom God brought forth for a man was a woman and not a fellow man. The cardinal duty of the first family was to procreate and populate the earth (Independent, 2023). To the contrary, the gay community contends that marriage is not all about children (Ashford, 2015). Of course, there are heterosexual couples who are in fulfilled marital relationships without biological children. However, children are pivotal components of the essence of marriage. Few people commit themselves to childless marriages. Probably, to maintain the candle of family business continuity, some couples whose resources allow, do adopt children, not that they like it, but it is out of great pain. In the same way, gay couples can adopt children, but parenting a child who is not a product of your sexual union, may not be fulfilling, but it is a worthwhile adventure for the purposes of passing on accumulated estates to the next generation.

7. Debate on Homosexuality in the Global Christian Community

The dispute about homosexuality in the Anglican Communion started in 2003, when on 2nd November, the Episcopal Church of USA consecrated and enthroned, a gay priest, the Reverend Gene Robinson as the Anglican Bishop of the New Hampshire. This event irritated the worldwide unity of the Anglican Communion (Bongmba, 2016, p. 22).

To make matters worse, gay Bishops and lesbian priests were recognized by the See of Canterbury and invited to participate in the 2008 Lambeth conference. That very year, all African Anglican Bishops joined by other Bishops from different continents seceded. At their meeting held in Jerusalem, they formed Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON). The focus of the newly created institution is to protect the church family from homosexuality, a lifestyle that is condemned in biblical scriptures and to promote the New Testament message of faith, justice and mercy without coercing anyone to be part of the church family. ‘Justice, it is argued, affects the entire community and cannot be reduced to simple, individually based, morality’ (Bongmba, 2016, pp. 23-24).

To add salt to the wound, the Church of England on Thursday, 09 February 2023, resolved to bless same sex marriages (Independent, 2023). The event marked the ecclesiastical approval and promotion of homosexuality lifestyles in the worldwide Anglican Church. In defiance, some African church leaders such as the Anglican church of Kenya top leadership (Chris

Sugden, 2023) and that of Uganda (Mugalu, 2023) issued statements distancing themselves from their mother church. They informed congregates to distance themselves from those who promote homosexuality and warned them against being lured by the financial packages that LGBTIQ+ organizations offer to the vulnerable groups in society.

Rejection of homosexuality in Africa is not only voiced by the Anglican Church leaders but also by many Christian denominations who view it as a foreign lifestyle imported and imposed on Africans wrapped in the luggage of external aid to the poor. A study conducted among prominent Christian religious leaders in 2016 across 33 African countries revealed 80 percent rejection of homosexuality lifestyles (Dreier, 2019). Homosexuality is held as a taboo and illegal in 37 African countries (Heneghan, 2014), except in South Africa where same sex marriages have been legalized and the Anglican Church is advocating for their rights (Redaction Africanews, 2021).

In the Catholic fraternity, although, Vatican holds that same sex marriages are not God's design of marital relationships and as such, priests cannot bless same sex marriages (Chappel 2023), the apex religious leader, Pope Francis, cautioned Catholic bishops all over the world to accord homosexual oriented people respect and pastoral care. He argued that homosexuality is not a crime among consenting adults but a sinful lifestyle (Winfield, 2023). Meaning that if the saving Grace of Christ shines on homosexual people, they can be forgiven, sanctified and regenerated.

8. Debate on Homosexuality in Uganda

The wind of homosexuality has challenged Christian worldview that cherish sexuality within the confinement of marriage and only between the opposite sexes. Ugandan Anglican Christian leaders are questioning the sources of theology that their Canterbury spiritual ancestors are relying on to promote homosexuality and install gay people in high-ranking ecclesiastical offices (Bingham, 2014). The voices of religious leaders were taken up by legislators who took to their hills to enact anti-homosexuality laws.

The recently legislated Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill that puts a ban on same sex marriages and bars promotion of related activities is considered to be one of the harshest bills in the current digital world. Aggravated homosexuality that involves same sexual intercourse with minors, people with disabilities, and incidences of rape that lead to transmission of HIV/AIDS; attract death penalty. In addition, people who promote homosexuality and anyone convicted to

have attempted to engage in same sex sexuality earns a jail sentence ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment. Of the worst scenario, child homosexuals, once convicted, they get locked up in jail for three years (Acharya, 2023).

The bill is seen by human rights activists as violation of international treaties to which Uganda is a signatory. To the Europeanised mindsets, human freedom of expression and association have been violated. In addition, privacy, equality, and non-discriminations are fundamental human rights that have been suffocated. They go on to point out that people with disabilities have their innate free will to sexual choices but such rights are chained (Budoo-Scholtz, 2023).

Human rights activists further infer that persons with disabilities are caged from advancing their homosexuality needs to able bodied persons and as such the law relegates disabled persons to people who are sexually impaired. To the advocates, Uganda anti-homosexuality laws do not accord dignity to people already affected and infected by homosexuality. Activists point out that the bill has got no provision to protect victims from community discriminations, police brutality, forced medical examinations, and evictions from vocational environments (Budoo-Scholtz, 2023).

Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill to the Eurocentric mindset is harsh in nature towards adults who are independent minded to make conscious sexuality choices that matter to them. They go on to elaborate international fundamental rights without a critical analysis of African social traditions. To the Africans, homosexuality is not about acquisition of diseases that can easily be treated but destabilization of societal equilibrium packages stitched in the black skin.

The Western world seem not to reflect on their colonization tainted history and it appears they have not mastered relational engagement skills of cultural inculturation. Their quest is to cosmetic other cultures and force them to wear Europeanised intellectual dresses. They are so zealous to promote white culture as if the world is ending the next day. Cultures that insist on wearing their innate traditional lenses are regarded as primitive and backward, as such, they are forced to adopt new lifestyles. Scanning through the white culture, primitive trends appear in their literary sources to have taken decades to evolve.

Of course, promoting new innovations is vital to ensure a faster accommodative society but different cultures discover their intellectual space in the world at different life speed. Forcing

new lifestyles to a people who are voicing their disgust is not different from violating their cultural rights.

The greatest gap observable in Ugandan ant-homosexuality law is that remedies are not provided to people who are already affected and infected by homosexuality. The lifestyle that is strongly ingrained in an individual, it takes a lot of strength to unshackle. It is doubtful whether prisons can provide cure and long-lasting remedies. Law makers would have spelt out a special ministerial office to look into the affairs of homosexual people. Such an office would be equipped to design advocacy programmes, to give periodic reports, and to engage the public in dialogue on the best ways homosexual people can be integrated and respectfully accommodated in society.

In addition, the law is silent to what happens when the initiator of same sexual contact is a disabled person. That could be one of the reasons opposition voices are irritated. In this sense, disability varies. There are people who are mentally impaired. They are incapacitated to make informed decisions. There are human beings that lack sense of respect when it comes to engaging in same sex relations with disabled people. Sexual encounters come along with sexually transmitted diseases and the burden of treatment is left in the hands of caregivers and if the infected individual is not under the custodianship of a compassionate person, death is the ultimate end. It is therefore paramount for the opposers of the bill to dig deep into the circumstances under which the laws were enacted so that they propose informed remedies to water the fears raised by the legislators.

9. Homosexuality and Cultural Traditions in Uganda

Ugandans have strong belief in supernatural powers invoked by community elders. It is on the bases of adherence to cultural traditions that equilibrium, harmony, and orderliness is observed in the community (Kakumba, 2023, p.8). Accordingly, human sexuality is a sensitive topic. If advocates of homosexuality are to have their ideologies assimilated in African culture, the ethos surrounding human sexuality must be understood and handled with great respect. Key African sexuality components are:

a) Sexuality Open Talk: In Uganda, sexuality is highly respected in the religious, political, and cultural circles. It is regarded as a sacred responsibility between man and woman geared towards precreation and family continuity. Mentioning the names of sexual organs in African languages be it orally or in literary texts is unacceptable. Public indigenous sexuality talks

attract public uproar, punishment by elder, and to a certain extent community expulsion. Sexual organs in indigenous orality and in written form are coded pet-names (Otim, 2021).

If by accident, an individual comes in eye contact with the sexual organs of parents, then, a ritual must be performed to ward off bad omens that may cause misfortunes. Parents rarely hold straight talks about human sexuality with their biological children. Such duties are relegated to paternal aunties for girls, maternal uncles for boys, peers, and teachers in schools. To the disgusting sexuality talks, gay people are referred to as human beings who leak faeces, drink urine, have objects drilled in their anuses, and people who subject their physical bodies to injurious bleeding (Otim, 2021).

Sexuality talks in forums that are a mixture of children, in-laws, and elders are forbidden. Even within the confines of marriage, it is not possible for couples to talk about their sexuality and express romance publicly (Bongmba, 2016, p.16).

To the Western world, open sexuality talks are normal but it isn't so in the African context that upholds male-female sexuality as divine. Point blank elaboration of human sexuality in private and public arenas in African indigenous languages is a hard rock to crack and such cultural clashes have not been taken care of by the advocates of homosexuality.

b) Women are Sources of Wealth and Prestige: In Uganda, marriage rituals attract monitory gifts from the bridegroom. The occasions are characterized by music and plenteous foods for everyone who turns up for the function whether invited or not. During marriage ceremonies, marital social traditions are passed on to the next generation. Tributary family members, neighbours, and family friends benefit greatly from the gifts dished out by the bridegroom. A family with many girl children is highly honoured especially when all go through marriage rites. Most Ugandan households look forward for a day when their daughters will officially introduce sons-in-law. Women whether single or in cohabitation relationships work towards such colourful occasions to come to pass in their marital life journeys (Hague & Thiara, 2009, pp.12-16).

The view held by Westernised cultures is that women are traded by their parents and as search they are regarded as purchased asserts by their husbands who subject them to domestic violence (Hague & Thiara, 2009, pp.16-18). No matter the orientalist's views and even when in certain incidences women are abused, breaking the long held African marital consummation traditions and grafting in gay marriages, is a trend that cannot be accommodated in Uganda.

c) Boys are Sources of Security: Boys in Uganda are regarded as sources of family lineage continuity. They take care of their parents in the old age. In the African culture, the elderly are not caged in camps. An African family without a boy child is seen as moving towards extinction. A boy-less family is stigmatized in the community. To solve the anomaly, some men take on polygamy in search of boy children. It is through boy children that ancestors are reborn, family continuity is upheld, and the next lineage generation is sustained (Monitor, 2021). A young man to pronounce himself gay, it drives arrows not only in the guts of parents but the entire neighboured and tribal network that participates in child upbringing (Mukwaya, 2018, p.17).

Scanning through human sexuality restrictions that are inherent in African cultures, it is speculative that black skinned Ugandans advocating for gay rights are driven by the quest for money dished by the Western world but within their guts, they are well aware that homosexuality is a taboo in African ethics. If indigenous activists are squarely examined, one can be surprised to find out that they have caged their immediate family members from homosexuality influences.

10. LGBTIQA+ Community and the Mission of the Anglican Church in Uganda

Acceptance of homosexual people in the Anglican Communion of Uganda, especially to empower them with spirituality formation skills and possibly usher some to occupy sacred positions of responsibilities, is a missiological dilemma that religious leaders are battling with in the current electronic age. Stigma and discriminations attached to homosexuality if not well handled by religious institutions will keep the affected individuals from seeking spiritual healing and medical services. In addition, homosexuality-spirituality detached conditions are most likely to make it hard to control sexually transmitted diseases, risky lifestyles, and criminalities against humanity (UNAIDS, 2021).

Of course, thinking of the challenges associated with promoting and legalizing homosexuality, it makes religious leaders to battle with the question of how best they can offer spiritual formation services to the legalized unbiblical same sex marital partners. Legalization and promotion come along with restructuring of social traditions, that is, dormitories and places of convenience in schools have to be modified, the Bible has to be rewritten, prisons cells have to be adjusted, masculine and feminine roles and preferences have to be redefined, and then, there is a possibility of promoting bestiality and incest, after all, a normal adult has free will to make

sexual choices. To avoid societal destabilization, ant-homosexuality bill is an option that has been put into action in Uganda (Family Research Council, 2015).

Enforcement of ant-homosexuality laws in the current digitally networked global economy is a wishful navigation but legislative efforts are worthy undertaking. Lessons learnt along the way can be brain crackers to provide a basis upon which societal coexistence with homosexual people can be premised. If the Anglican Church in Uganda is to live by the pastoral mandate of redeeming humanity from sinful life struggles, then there is need for religious leaders to engage in missiological dialogue with homosexual communities. The missionary engagement process can flow linearly in five stages:

Stage One: Human beings are influenced by environments that shape their beliefs and career aspirations. Ideologies from foreign culture interfere with the normal lifestyles of the natives. The indigenous community at this stage is defined by common religious and cultural ideologies, unaware of praiseworthy aspects of emerging cultural trends. They are inclined on the negative aspects that erode normal cultural routines and expose people to rejection and diseases. The beastly aspects of intruder culture are widely circulated. Very little effort or no effort at all is undertaken to bring to display the positive aspects of irritating behavioural lifestyles.

The duty of top Anglican Church religious leaders in Uganda at this stage is to take time to learn the cultural uniqueness of a foreign culture, assimilate themselves in the emerging cultural trends, and establish strong relationships with promoters of homosexuality. Identifying with foreign cultural trends and getting involved in dialogue engagements are gestures that can position top religious leadership to win the trust and confidence of stigmatized groups.

However, in Uganda, religious and political leaders have taken the punitive stance, a condition that is most likely to lead to death of innocent people but not to deter the lifestyle. The `punitive stance to a certain extent is connected to the Eurocentric mentality that undermines the creative uniqueness of African cultures. Africans are caged among primitive people who lack the acumen to think for themselves and move towards economic sufficiency. At the nasal of foreign aid, Africans are coerced to adopt new cultural trends (Guyson, 2023).

To avoid confrontations with international economic giants, it is important at this stage for top management religious leaders to catalogue destructive and positive aspects of homosexuality. Contextualised purpose statement broken into achievable goals and action steps can then be developed to focus at influencing behavioural change at individual, family, and community levels. Missionary programmes wrapped in the saving grace of Jesus Christ are most likely to radiate constructive information to the masses and provide conducive societal space for homosexual people to access therapeutic support.

Second Stage: Leadership organs of Anglican Church in Uganda are hierarchal structured. At this stage, capable Christian leaders from tributary churches, if involved in dialogue, can raise constructive ideas of what can be done to promote the good aspects of emerging cultural trends and to bridge the gaps identified at stage one. Indigenized curriculum focussed at advocacy for respect of cultural indignity and tolerance of foreign cultures is instituted at this stage.

Third Stage: At this stage, religious leaders who have attained mind-set shift to new cultural trends are flagged off to promote indigenous mission multiplications in their grass root churches. If monitory resources are accessible, education, cultural, and civic institutions are supported with seed monitory resources and technical expertise to quicken indigenization of new cultural trends.

Fourth Stage: This is the stage of measuring impact in the mission field. Behavioural inculturated curriculum lessons implemented by religious leaders are felt in the social outlook of grass root people. Grass root people get involved in relational dialogue about the new cultural trends with their family members, neighbours, and friends.

Fifth Stage: It is at this stage that the indigenous community is ushered towards self-propagation and self-theologizing. People have the ability to theologize biblical teachings to address the cultural expressions of their community towards homosexual people. The multiplication effect goes as new ideas are innovated to inform the present and radiate bright lights of hope for the community to secure a better tomorrow.

The above staged illustrated processes indicate that it is important to understand the lived cultural reality of humans before getting on the podium to enforce new trends. If promoters of homosexuality are to influence gradual change, they need to take a great deal of time to reconstruct the meanings of cultural manifestations and expressions of indigenous people by immersing themselves fully in the social traditions of African communities.

It is paramount for advocates of homosexuality to step in the shoes of the people in opposition to exercise transposition. Nevertheless, immersing in other cultural traditions to trace their historicity and attain clearer understanding of their cultural manifestations may be time consuming and financially constraining, but it is a profound duty to respect the cultural aspirations of others.

Conclusion

Homosexual lifestyle has existed for centuries. However, in the recent decade, the lifestyle has swept the entire earth. Political and religious debates are everywhere in support of the sexual orientation lifestyle while many opposing voices are armed with lethal weapons to drive the lifestyle to abyss. Some countries have enacted laws to protect the marital rights of homosexuals but other countries still regard the act as illegal.

Is homosexuality socially constructed or driven by biological forces? The author's view is that homosexuality is a social construct that is installed in the software system of human beings and for that reason, such a system can be uninstalled through therapeutic intervention, however, to the homosexual-oriented people, it is innate biological drive, and for that reason, consenting adults should be accorded freedom to express their sexuality publicly.

The dilemma facing the missiological mandate of the church in Uganda towards homosexual people is that scientists have failed to prove that same-sex attraction erotic drives are inborn. If such a proof was in existence, then sacred scriptures recorded on the pages of Bible would be realigned and contextualized to speak to the Anglican Church in Ugandan vis-à-vis African social traditions.

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