

## CHAPTER 6

### RESEARCHER'S ANALYSIS

In this chapter I intend to make a few observations as a summary of the research on homosexuality in the East African cultures and the Bible. I will start with the East African cultures by explaining a particular manner of evaluating homosexuality in the name of Africanness. I wish to propose that it is in the context of this seemingly paradoxical link between sex and culture, as distinct from individual choice, that we must place misunderstandings of homosexuality in East African cultures today.

The view of most people in East Africa, including conservative Christians, that there was no homosexuality in pre-colonial African culture is sustained by the assumption that if it can be shown that no homosexuality existed in East Africa prior to the coming in of the Western cultures, then it should be proscribed and any person who happens to practice it can be easily labeled a deviant. Also a different view is possible: If it can be demonstrated that there were such practices in East African traditional societies, any evidence of homophobia, whether cultural or political, can be shown to be capricious and baseless. These two views are united in the assumption that the legitimacy of sexual desire is derived from its location within culture.

The two views mentioned above cannot, of course, be disposed of in purely theoretical terms. The denial that there was any homosexuality in the traditional societies in East Africa takes place in the face of the continuing experiences of

social and religious conversions to which the people of East Africa have been subjected since the arrival of the agents of modernity. One of these has been a whole new way of thinking about the morality of sexual activity, which missionary Christianity introduced into Africa. I hope that this statement will not be seen to suggest that Christianity has been responsible for the introduction of homosexuality. The point is rather that in making its own ethical orientation on sexuality explicit, it allowed the possibility of talking about sex openly in cultures where moral codes on the subject were very largely worked out in silence. Once the silence had been broken, it was not difficult to begin to envisage other kinds of discourses which were not necessarily part of the Christian outlook. These new discursive opportunities opened the way for more than just a religious understanding of morality. To the extent that Christianity facilitated the establishment of Western modes of thought and behavior, it also paved the way for the introduction of social and cultural practices which were in many respects unknown in Africa.

This can be seen in the ways in which the effects of Western culture have become inscribed in different aspects of African reality: politics, economics, culture, language, religion and morality.

The advent of modernity in East Africa thus represents, at least initially, a moment of uncertainty, which is then precipitated into a cultural crisis by the shocking recognition of its largely disruptive effects. I would like to suggest that within such a context African people were obliged to make certain choices

regarding social and moral matters in order to find refuge from the anomie inflicted on it by modernity. The statement that homosexuality is new (foreign) to Africa, whether true or not can thus be understood as the moral cry of disoriented egos. For is it not the case that that which is alien, particularly if it is both linked to something familiar (such as homosexuality to sexuality) and plays such a fundamental role in the organization of social structure (as sex undoubtedly does in African society – witness the system of bridewealth), always brings about uncertainty and disorientation?

The claims that many have advanced that homosexuality never existed in traditional East Africa can be seen, on this account, to express a basic confusion between homosexuality as it is manifest in individuals today as an activity linked to choice and sex as an expression of culture. One characteristic of this confusion is that what is culturally recognized is used ideologically to deny any other activity which, whether it actually occurs or not, is deemed ‘perverse’ by virtue of standing (or rather of being placed) outside the circle of the culturally acceptable. This is simply to suggest that something is not necessarily immoral because it is culturally unacceptable nor can the existence or non-existence of an activity in a certain culture simply be predicted upon what is considered publicly legitimate. The assumption then is that because Africans did not know the existence of homosexuality, it is therefore morally problematical. And vice versa: something being African is equivalent to it being morally legitimate.

After going through this study, one can conclude that there is no customary usage to render the putative non-existence of homosexuality in African culture as an approximate of anything immoral. This can be shown quite clearly. The very denial that such a practice ever existed traditionally removes the possibility of any such metonymic approximation. Therefore African cultures/traditions cannot be used to judge a practice with which it was unfamiliar with since to do so would imply either familiarity or the fact that African traditions/cultures is a moral category, one comprehensive enough to cover all unforeseen cases. But we know that African cultures, whatever else it may be, is not a moral category. Yet those who employ it to proscribe homosexuality in its name are involved in an ideological move which is intended to secure some moral high ground against alleged perversion. The ideological character of this move can be brought out in several ways.

I. There is the absolutisation of heterosexuality, which is read back into African identity. The argument against homosexuality is made to take on a historical form which gives the appearance that culture has developed in such a way as to guarantee the moral uniqueness of heterosexual practices. Heterosexuality is then presented as historically or culturally valid while homosexuality is deprived of any historical validity.

II. The way in which the Africans argue against homosexuals is ideological is in its implicit rationalization and justification of particular forms of heterosexuality (polygamy, the pledging of minor girls to much older men, and the practice of

inheriting the wife of a deceased sibling) in the absence of any recognition of the problematical nature, particularly in the experience of women. The point here is obviously not that an ideal form of heterosexuality would justify homophobia but rather that the 'Africanists' reduce the morality of heterosexuality to the sexual act.

III. The third sense in which explaining homosexuality away in the name of African identity is ideological can be seen in the partiality with which those who use Africanness for this purpose use tradition. It is tradition, or rather the historical absence of a certain practice within tradition, that is used to deny the cultural legitimacy of that practice. Historical absence, whether imagined or real, is then taken to be synonymous with 'otherness' or foreignness. Clearly this is an imagined 'other' since its identity is nothing but the shadow of a reconstructed absence, yet the rejection or critique of 'otherness' in this is highly selective. African homophobes do not reject everything foreign or everything they claim to be foreign. And this make many fail to understand the fairness of those who condemn homosexuality in the name of Africanness.

As a result of the failure of East African culture to provide an adequate basis for the evaluation of homosexuality, the question remains whether the Bible can provide such a basis.

Going back to the Bible you will notice that, homosexual practices were well known in antiquity. In nations contiguous to Israel, they were known and practiced with few restrictions, as was bestiality. Extant literature provides

evidence that homosexual acts played a part in some religious cults in the ancient Near East. Female dress, eunuchism, and the accoutrements of women often were employed as well. For these reasons Israelite warnings and restrictions about male and female dress, homosexual acts and bestiality were not a figment of national imagination but addressed the situation at hand.

The Old Testament presents the male/female relationship as reflecting the full image of God in man. Marriage and sexual relationships take place within this male/female bonding as described in Genesis. For Jesus and Paul Genesis constitutes the normative, natural, and God intended pattern for sexual relations. The Old Testament's negative judgment on homosexual acts is consistent with this position. Both Genesis Chapter 19 and Judges Chapter 9 condemn more than homosexual acts, however. Other sin accompanied with violence also led to the judgements described in these passages. Homosexual acts cannot be isolated as the sole cause. But I disagree with any conclusion that dismisses homosexual acts from the sin of Sodom and Gibeah.

The prohibition in Leviticus clearly opposes same-sex acts. Arguments that try to connect it exclusively with idolatrous homosexuality are not convincing. Neither are arguments that limit the texts to demands for ritual purity rather than moral purity. We cannot relegate these prohibitions to Levitical purity laws disregarded by early Christians as not morally binding. Translation of the *‘ebah* with the Greek *bdelugma* ("abomination") in the Septuagint supports placing homosexuality in the ethical moral category, not merely the cultic. And the claim

that *yada*<sup>c</sup> ("know") means "get acquainted with" rather than "sexual intercourse" in the Genesis Chapter 19 account of Sodom does not stand. On the basis of the historical background, "cult prostitutes" and "dog" in the Old Testament are seen as having a probable homosexual connotation. The possibility of cultic homosexual elements cannot be completely eliminated from these words in their Old Testament context and historical setting. Other texts that purportedly represent homosexual relationships in the Old Testament are less clear upon close examination. The David and Jonathan and Ruth and Naomi experiences, when studied in context, do not really support a homosexual interpretation, as is claimed by some. A brief exegesis of these passages shows that not only is a homosexual interpretation not required, it is not the one most compatible with the context. The one story in the Old Testament where a homosexual interpretation may be correct is the case of Ham and Noah. But this is scarcely cast in a good light by the Biblical narrative.

In moving from East to West we find that in ancient Greece homosexual activity was a convention regulated by certain laws and traditions. Probably it came to the Greek mainland from Crete via Sparta, where it was connected with military training and comrades in arms. In later Greek and Hellenistic times military training of the young took place in the gymnasium and pederasty became the inheritance of the gymnasium. In some of these academic relationships the erotic element may have been sublimated and the improvement of the youth by the

elder male purely an intellectual and spiritual exercise. At its best the relationship may have been "platonic" in the modern sense of the word.

However, the tradition in which another man educated one's sons and was repaid by sexual submission of the son to him if he so desired carried the potential for much mischief. For those not guided by the philosophical-theological ideals of Plato, it degenerated into preoccupation with physical beauty and sexual excitement.

In the Hellenistic world, both the manly pederastic ideal of the West and the effeminate cultic homosexuality of the East existed side by side. The Romans tended to identify homosexuality predominantly with the latter, and the worst forms of homosexual violence and exploitation are documented for this period. The pagan moralists themselves entered into a debate about its good or evil aspects. A great many Hellenistic writers, especially Stoics, considered all such acts unnatural. Others defended the more refined forms of homosexual activity. Hellenistic Judaism and Christianity both condemned homosexual acts, also speaking of them as unnatural, but from a Biblical, theocentric creation rather than from the logos-based ethical doctrines of the Stoics.

The core of Paul's condemnation of homosexual acts in Romans is that they are unnatural. They cannot be understood as a part of God's providential ordering of nature in creation. Elsewhere Paul refers to homosexual acts as sin, and as we have pointed out, it is significant that the context of homosexual acts in the New Testament is the vice list. Such lists consist of qualities and activities not to be

found in Christians. Although people cite numerous texts to condone or condemn homosexual acts most of them do not apply. Although homosexual acts may be included within some of the references, their limitation to homosexual acts alone is unwarranted.

In this dissertation you will notice that a high view of Scripture is assumed, approached from a conservative protestant exegesis and hermeneutic.

Regarding homosexuality itself, I personally would like to point out that, after taking into consideration all the arguments put forth, it is very clear that no one really fully understands its causes, whether it is a physical, mental, or psychosocial phenomenon. Indeed, it may be a combination of all three.

From an ethical, moral standpoint conservative theologians see it either as an aberration or a condition that fits into one of the following categories: as I would discuss them here below.

First, there is a group that agrees that such a thing as a homosexual "condition" exists. According to them, this condition is part of the general evil which has existed since the fall of man. It falls in the same category as chronic diseases such as diabetes or arthritis and therefore a person is not responsible for a chronic disease, and often its causes are unknown. Only when a person deliberately aggravates the disease can he/she be held responsible for the consequences. If the disease itself provokes some kind of mental impairment, even this responsibility may be disqualified. As a result many East African and theologians, separate the so-called "homosexual condition", sometimes called

inversion or constitutional homosexuality, from the homosexual acts themselves. The condition, possibly multi-factorial in origin and of unknown cause, must not be considered the direct responsibility of the individual. Consequently, the homosexual who has the condition but who does not act out his/her impulses is not to be condemned in any way. For these theologians, then, not only should the person not be condemned, the non-practicing primary homosexual should be welcomed into the church as a Christian brother enjoying all the rights and privileges with the other members. "Such an individual struggles against sinful desires as do other church members and is not to be treated as a second class citizen."<sup>1</sup> Nor is such a person considered sick in the radical sense of the word, at least no more than a controlled epileptic, diabetic, or haemophiliac. Such a person struggles with a special problem, with which he/she learns to live, work and give a Christian witness. Naturally the analogy between the chronically ill and homosexuality is not complete. Most of the chronically ill can be diagnosed and receive therapeutic care to control a definite pathological condition. The homosexual generally has no recognized pathology or treatment. He/she must control desires for the same sex by choice and with the help of God. Apart from this attraction to the same sex, the homosexual may be as healthy or healthier than the next person.

Because the homosexual does not seem to be "ill", and because the question seems a matter of choice, homosexuals usually do not receive much sympathy.

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<sup>1</sup> K.S. Kantzer, "Homosexuality in the church," Christianity today (April 22, 1993), PP. 8-9.

What I want to say at this point is that the attraction and desire may stem from a very early age. Once the person reaches the age of accountability, however, he/she is responsible for how he/she expresses or controls those desires.

Second is a group of people holding that homosexuals are sick. Possibly it stems from psychological factors or some early psychological maladaptation. Many theories are propounded about the exact mechanism or mechanisms. But these theories are not mutually exclusive, for there is a core of consensus. Many modern homosexuals object to this estimate of their condition. They claim that such findings are based on visits of disturbed homosexuals to psychiatrists. In general, the population of homosexuals, they say, is no sicker than the general population of heterosexuals. If all heterosexuals were judged by those who visit psychiatrists, the heterosexual population would be deemed sick too. The main difference between this position and the first is that here the sickness or deviance is thought to be treatable. For the most part, the treatment consists of various kinds of psychotherapy.

Third, another group denies that homosexuality is a psychological or pathological condition at all. To them, what predisposes a person to same sex attraction is only the persistence of a sinful habit stemming from uninhibited sexual fantasies, both of which need to be repented of and abandoned. This group sees great danger in confusing sin with pathology, especially if the pathology becomes an excuse for sin. For them, to postulate a pathology behind kleptomania, nymphomania, or inveterate adultery as excuse for those and other

evils opens the field to a wide range of evils justified under the guise of illness or diminished capacity.

Again, these remarks are aimed at homosexual acts. The proponents of this view make it quite clear that temptation to adultery does not make an adulterer; the act does so. Likewise, temptation to homosexuality does not define a homosexual, rather the act. This view utterly rejects the idea of a homosexual condition or that it is an illness.

It is quite clear that two of these views, the first and the third, consider same sex acts on the part of adults to be sin.<sup>2</sup> As a result, both of these views require a Christian homosexual, namely one having the condition, to live a lifestyle without same sex genital acts. For the primary homosexual who is not at all attracted to the opposite sex, this is tantamount to requiring a celibate lifestyle. As a minister of the gospel who believes that the Bible and the Bible alone should be the normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality I do favor the first and third views which almost mean the same thing. I do accept the idea that there maybe a mechanism – as yet unknown – which predisposes some individuals to homosexual attraction, but it is also clear that many are predisposed to same sex attraction because of their persistence in a sinful habit stemming from uninhibited sexual fantasies. The individual must not be held responsible for the condition or for early psychosocial factors that may

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<sup>2</sup> Others argue that homosexuality is normal and therefore partially acceptable if done in a responsible manner, or fully acceptable in the context of “Love.”

strengthen the tendency. The individual is responsible, however, for same sex acts after the age of accountability. The condition may lie outside the individual's choice but the acts do not.

The fact is that this condition is a part of the general evil which has existed since the fall of man. Whereas the homosexual is not to be condemned and welcomed into the Christian church as a Christian brother enjoying all the rights and privileges with the other members, on the other hand, he should by all means struggle against sinful desires, repent and abandon them as do other church members. He must struggle to control desires for the same-sex by choice and with the help of God's power, he will overcome. Honestly there is a great danger in confusing sin with pathology, especially if the pathology becomes an excuse for sin. To inveterate adultery as excuse for those and other evils open the field to a wide range of evils justified under the guise of illness or diminished capacity and therefore the idea that homosexuals are sick should be ignored and rejected as confusing and misleading.

To argue that the acts are likewise determined and inevitable is to reduce the homosexual to the instinctive reflexive mating behavior of animals, which is unacceptable. Homosexually oriented individuals are human beings with the power of choice over their drives and desires. Since on Biblical grounds homosexuality is not a part of God's plan and intention for the sexes, the power of the will and the power of the choice must be exerted to inhibit such desires, not to enhance them. Although the causes of homosexuality are ill-defined, the

argument that homosexuality is due to some genetic or chromosomal defect has little support. The existence of identical twins, in homosexual the other not, keeps this thesis from gaining much credence.<sup>3</sup> Post-natal hormone changes likewise have not shown much promise. The quantity of hormones in the bloodstream seems not to affect choice of sex partner, although it may strengthen the same sex drive.

All that we can say at the moment about the cause or causes of homosexual inversion is that in some homosexuals there may be an elemental and subtle biological factor predisposing to homosexual orientation. In itself, however, this apparently is not the sole cause of homosexuality. Subsequently social environment may enhance or discourage the tendency, but again the relevant psychosocial factors are not known. It is unlikely that a single mechanism underlies all forms of homosexuality. The biological rationale applies at best to a subgroup of homosexuals, and even if valid for this subgroup it is likely to be multifactorial. Homosexual inversion then appears to arise from multiple etiology — some homosexuals having more of one factor than another and vice versa.

Not all who practice homosexual activity have an overwhelming predisposition for the same sex. Some heterosexuals turn to homosexual practice for a "safe" sexual outlet. For other heterosexuals it provides thrills and variety. Others have

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<sup>3</sup> However, a higher degree of concordance (that is the appearance of homosexuality in both twins) has been found in identical twins than in non-identical twins (see Marmor, P. 5.)

a homosexual predisposition that vary in intensity and length of homosexual experience, in accordance with deep felt personality needs.

At the moment the most confusing aspect of the homosexual scene deals with claims and counter claims concerning the possibility of change in lifestyle and the reversal of homosexual inversion. People on both sides are equally convinced, earnest and zealous for their positions, either that change can take place — some testifying to changes in their own lives — or that change is all but impossible. The latter is of the opinion that those who claim to be changed, were never inverts in the first place. Clinical evidence indicates that older homosexuals with long experience are not good prospects for change.

The more liberal view, arguing that change is impossible, has been in the ascendancy for some time now. In a lecture before the Royal Society of Health Dr. Elizabeth R. Moberly suggested three reasons for this development.<sup>4</sup> First is the growth of modern knowledge, second, the civil rights issue, and the third, "the relatively limited success of traditional attempts to cure or change homosexuals." For her, the third argument favors the liberal case and is entirely valid. She is convinced that there are genuine grounds for therapeutic pessimism with respect to homosexuality. She attributes this pessimism to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of homosexuality. She defines the homosexual conditions as one of same-sex ambivalence; a disruption in attachment to the

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<sup>4</sup> E.R. Moberly, "New Perspectives on Homosexuality," *Journal of the Royal Society of Health* (Dec 1985), PP. 206-210.

parent of the same sex. For her the classic "mother fixation" of many homosexuals is an effect rather than a cause. Therefore increased contact with the opposite sex is seen as irrelevant to solving the condition. What is needed, she maintains, is remedying of same-sex developmental deficits. Because the deficits stem from pre-adult development, the drive should be fulfilled non-sexually. "Some sex relationships are valid and legitimate, on a developmental perspective but it is not appropriate to express them sexually, again precisely because of their developmental character."<sup>5</sup> She asserts that in the homosexual condition pre-adult psychological needs are being confused with adult psychological desires. The answer is not, therefore, merely abstinence from sexual activity; for sexual activity is only an inappropriate way of meeting a legitimate need for same-sex love. Dr. Moberly continues, "it is misleading to assume that the homosexual condition is essentially sexual, and to evaluate it as such. "The homosexual condition — although often an occasion for sexual expression — is in itself a state of unfulfilled developmental needs."<sup>6</sup> Therefore the conservative demand that the developmental needs of the homosexual should not be fulfilled sexually should never be mistaken for a denial of the legitimacy of the developmental needs themselves. Pessimism about a change of orientation on the part of homosexuals, Dr. Moberly maintains, is due to a totally wrong approach to the condition. A different therapeutic approach might

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, P. 208.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, P. 209.

produce quite different results. Total pessimism is not warranted, especially for young and relatively inexperienced homosexuals whose prospects for change are much more encouraging, even with current methods of therapy.

We must distinguish also between change of orientation and change of lifestyle. The homosexual should not be led to believe that all desire for and temptation toward same-sex acts will be quickly removed. Just as heterosexuals are subject to lustful thoughts and inordinate desires, so the homosexual may be also.

As Christians, however, we believe that the Lord can change what the world cannot, both for the homosexual and the heterosexual. This change will not take place until there is a reformation in both camps. Homosexuals who insist on and even glorify an active homosexual lifestyle need to rethink that position with respect to Christianity. The idea that all can be forgiven while the practice willfully continues is a cheap grace the church cannot accept. It becomes "the grace which amounts to the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs."<sup>7</sup> Cheap grace is in this case powerless grace. It accepts justification, acceptance by God on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness. But it totally severs forgiveness from sanctification, the working out of righteousness in the actual behavior of the believer through the power of the word and spirit. Such a dichotomy creates a situation ethic that is inevitably antinomian. It is not surprising, therefore, to find some Christian oriented

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<sup>7</sup> D. Bonhoeffer, "The Cost of Discipleship" (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1959), P. 36.

homosexuals accepting an open-ended existentialist ethic in which the real value of man is unknown and yet to be discovered.

If the church accepts the idea of powerless grace it nullifies its evangelistic mission in the world. The gospel is no longer the "power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," and as Lovelace points out about such a church,

It should logically be prepared to tolerate many other forms of sin within the church which might cause neuroses if repressed. Compulsive adultery and fornication, compulsive racism and other forms of hatred acted out in physical hostility, compulsive disobedience to authority, compulsive theft and so on. The argument that sexual control is impossible for most homosexuals because they do not have the gift of continence leads necessarily to the church's encouraging premarital and extramarital sex among single persons, the divorced and the widowed. Neither the Bible nor the common convictions of Christians support the implication, and we must conclude that where there is responsibility to the continent God will supply the gift.<sup>8</sup>

The pro homophile literature written in a Christian context over-emphasises love and the Spirit at the expense of the Word. It is true that without these the church is a dry, lifeless husk. But it is equally true that the church without the objective word of God is a ship without a rudder. It simply rides out the swells of world events, facts, and opinions with all the other flotsam and jetsam until it is beached or smashed on the rocks. Uncontrolled and drifting, it has no means of directing its course.

For the church to try to function ethically without objective information from God concerning His will means it is dead in the water without chart, compass, or

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<sup>8</sup> R.F. Lovelace, *Homosexuality and the Church* (Ols Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1978), P. 75.

any real way of steering itself or anyone else. With both Spirit and the Word, the church has power, a means of direction, and can safely find a passage between subjective antinomianism and the rocks of legalism. Homosexuals need to reconsider the cultural, ethical, and scriptural passages in both Old and New Testaments that relate to homosexual behaviour. Exegetical and hermeneutical attempts to displace the plain meaning of these passages and a too simple reliance on the exegesis and arguments of scholars who support their opinions will not help. Rather than make other human beings masters of their consciences, homosexuals in the Christian context need to study the Scriptures for themselves. Then they will recognise that many pro-homophile arguments are "strained, speculative and implausible, the product of wishful thinking and special pleading."<sup>9</sup> Not all reforms, however, need to be made in the Christian-oriented homosexual community. Straight heterosexual members of the church need to take a good look at their attitudes as well. The heterosexual church needs to set its own house in order as far as sexual mores are concerned. The dizzying pace of marriage, divorce and re-marriage, the increase of one-parent families due to pre-marital sexual activity and other liberalizing tendencies in the sexual lifestyle of heterosexuals place the church in a poor position to preach to gays/lesbians.

Many homosexuals are convinced that increasingly permissive sexual attitudes in the Church will in time lead to acceptance of their sexual behaviour. It is

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, P. 133.

difficult for many Christian gays/lesbians to understand why they are scapegoats for sexual sins in the church. Is adultery or fornication less culpable than homosexuality? The church must become serious about all sexual immorality or it has a weak case against the homosexual and stands accused of rank hypocrisy. On the other hand homosexuals need to realise that two wrongs never make a right.

Secondly, the church needs to come to terms with homophobia and some of its ultra-conservative Knee-Jerk reactions even to the mention of homosexuality. Homophobia is a fear and hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality. As with most phobias, it is unreasoned and unreasoning. As with race prejudice, homophobia is often a transferred hostility. The homosexual becomes a convenient whipping boy on whom old fears, hurts and anger may be safely focused. Hatred of homosexuals may mask insecurity about one's own sexual identity. Christian concern is missing.

Whatever its cause, church members need to rise above it and to foster an attitude of compassionate concern for homosexuals while at the same time they strongly disapprove of the active homosexual lifestyle. Many who lack a conviction of sin in their own lives and their need of the Grace of Christ for daily strength will find it difficult to do this. Christians who understand human frailty and know the power of sin will be able to empathize with the pain, hopelessness, and guilt, the loneliness and rejection felt by many exclusive homosexuals. They will understand also that for many homosexuals the condition is not the result of

voluntary choice and will begin to appreciate why numerous homosexuals from a religious background sink in despair to the verge of suicide and sometimes complete the act.

All of this does not suggest that Biblical and theological arguments put forward by homophile advocates should persuade the church to change its position on the subject. On the contrary, how the church relates to homosexuality may determine how it relates to all other questions of morality. As a prominent Jewish author put it this way,

When religion begins to adapt its norms to current practice, it succeeds in becoming "popular religion" of the kind the Bible fought against through all antiquity. It then surrenders its right to speak in the name of a higher calling. Moral law must apply even — especially — in the face of popular neglect. Religion must teach society; it must hold up for its moral ideals for which to strive, ethical and spiritual norms the neglect of which will give men a bad conscience. The direction some churches are taking today threatens to leave the majority religion in our countries shorn of its ideals, its challenge, its role as conscience and its courage. I fear that, in some measure, contemporary Christianity is reverting to its pre-Judaic roots by institutionalising the sanction of popular immorality.<sup>10</sup>

This statement also is a challenge to all Christian Churches in East Africa, especially the Seventh Day Adventist Church. The church cannot condone homosexual activity without betraying its moral, ethical, Biblical, historical, cultural and spiritual heritage. Its conscious acceptance of the authority and inspiration of Scripture would need to undergo such a radical, liberalizing

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<sup>10</sup> N. Lamm, "The New Dispensation on Homosexuality: A Jewish Reaction to a Developing attitude, Jewish Currents (January – February 1968), PP. 15 – 16.

change that the fundamental teachings of the Church would be left without foundation.

The consequences of such change with its ramifications for theological, ethical, and moral teaching might be labelled by some as progressive, calculated to enlighten the church and produce a more compassionate laity accommodated to the modern society in which it lives. But in reality such a move would be a giant step toward re-paganisation of the church. The resulting religion would not be a Bible religion or that of the prophets, the Lord or the apostles, and not Christianity except in name. The church must accept the individual of homosexual orientation who needs help and support and struggles against same-sex tendencies. But those who insist on and promote the active homosexual lifestyle as natural, normal, or even superior to heterosexual relations by that very act disregard and undermine the sole authority upon which the church's very existence and mission is based, namely the Scriptures. They therefore should not be accepted by any Christian Church as its members.

Having gone through the discussion of homosexuality in East Africa and the Bible I now turn to the conclusion of the research on what should be the normative basis for evaluating homosexuality in East Africa.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

At a Seventh-day Adventist Church camp meeting in East Africa a debate in a Bible study on the ethics of homosexuality as perceived by the Seventh-day Adventist Church generated four positions on the issue namely: the culturalist, rejectionist, reinterpretationist and the reaffirmationist. Unfortunately the debate closed without a definite conclusion as to what should be the normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality by the SDA Church in East Africa, whether the Bible, culture or both the Bible and culture and as to what theological ethical guidance does the Bible provides for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in the present-day context. Consequently leaving the church divided.

In the introduction of this dissertation I formulated the following hypotheses, which I set out to prove:

- i. East African cultures do not provide an adequate normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality.
- ii. The Bible should be regarded as the sole normative basis for the theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality.
- iii. The Bible teaches that God condemns homosexual acts and practices, but loves the homosexual person, as much as He condemns adulterous acts and practices but loves the adulterous individual.

Looking at the research problem as to “what should be the normative basis for the Theological ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa?” I would like to suggest that the combination of silence on homosexuality and sexuality in East Africa cultures before the arrival of the agents of modernity as discussed in this research together with the absence of written material (documentation) on the cultures and histories of the societies of East Africa and the continent as a whole, make it very difficult to access the traditional understanding of sexuality. Those who argue that homosexuality never existed in East Africa and that its cultures have always been against it base their arguments on assumption and not facts.

With all the arguments set forth, I find it reasonable to conclude that there is no adequate basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality at all in the cultures of East Africa. Therefore any argument that its cultures ethically condemns homosexuality should be ignored and rejected as baseless.

My conviction, after examining the Biblical arguments for and against homosexuality, is that: (i) The Bible opposes homosexuality and is definitive for what the church should think and do about it. Here the Bible stands as the objective revelation of God’s eternal will. God distinctly forbids homosexuality. (ii) The Bible opposes homosexuality, but it is one sin among many. There is no justification for singling it out as more serious than other sins castigated in the Bible. In this case homosexuality is a sin but not a unique sin – no worse than that of liars, thieves and drunkards and adulterers. (iii) The Bible opposes

homosexuality but specific injunctions must be placed in the larger Biblical context of the theology of creation, sin, judgment and grace. The heart of the Bible is its central message. This central message becomes a principle to evaluate other less specific or less essential parts of Scripture. In my opinion, the central message of the Bible, including the “good news” about God’s grace in Christ, does not imply that we should condone homosexual actions. It does expect us Christians to love and respect the homosexual as a person and fully accept and accommodate him/her as a fellow member of the church, struggling to be faithful to the ethical message of the Bible.

In my opinion all my hypotheses have been proved right in the dissertation. There is therefore also no reason to take leave of my conviction that the Bible, Old and New Testament, being the written word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, is the infallible revelation of God’s will. The Bible is the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God’s acts in history and therefore is central in any formulation concerning homosexuality, whether theological or ethical and therefore should be used as the only normative basis for the ethical evaluation of homosexuality in East Africa. I therefore support the reaffirmation group in their argument that the Bible condemns homosexuality as sin and reject the rejectionist’s group who argues that the Bible is not the only normative rule, because the problem with them is that though they recognize the Holy Scripture

they freely subject it to unlimited human reasoning, making their interpretation highly subjective. This will be tantamount to re-writing the Bible not only on the subject of homosexuality but also on any other subject.