Homosexuality: An African Christian Ethical Perspective

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ABSTRACT
In spite of global developments in information disseminations, many issues remain confined when it comes to the African continent. As popular as the issue of homosexuality is in the developed nations of the world, it is still kept at the lowest ebb in many African nations. Although no known cultural value absolutely endorses sexual orientation between same sex, yet lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual issues (LGBT) is increasingly becoming approved especially by Western or developed nations. The church in Africa cannot continually ignore responding to the issue of homosexuality. Like any other ethical issue collectively agreed as alien to the culture, the church in Africa seems to remain silent on the issue leaving itself at the mercy of governmental decisions. This paper examines the issue of homosexuality and the concept of the neighbor to propose an African Christian response for the church. The church needs to see the homosexual as the neighbor to whom it owns the responsibility of compassion for their redemption and transformation to take place. The recommendations are for the church to uphold biblical injunctions by condemning acts of homosexuality. However, the church should tolerate homosexuals by provision of programs for their redemption. Also in a preventive measure to the act, Christian education programs should be enhanced in schools, homes and public institutions through which the church could avail access to meeting the utmost need of salvation for every life.

Keywords: Homosexuals, Africa, Anthropologist, Tradition, Neighbor.

INTRODUCTION
The church in Africa is generally slow motioned in her response to various ethical issues in spite of civilization and rapid developments across the globe particularly on homosexuality. Ethical challenges of this kind are often kept at lowest ebb in Africa because of the people’s religion and rigid cultural beliefs. Because no known cultural value absolutely endorses sexual orientation between same sex, discussions of this nature has been on-going for long prior to societal approval in many nations of the world including UK, France, Argentina and Belgium, to name a few while the church in Africa seems to leave the issue in the hand of her governments. (Femi, Fani- Kayode, 2013: 18). In an article titled “Homosexual Pastor Docked for Having Sex with Church Members,” the founder and General Overseer of a Pentecostal church was said to have been remanded at the Federal Medium Security Prison on homosexual allegation. This happened following his confession to the act with a young boy who swore to an oath of secrecy with him in the church, (http://cknnigeria.com/2013/08-homosexual-pastor-docked-for-having-sex.html. accessed on 20/02/18). The Nigerian law says, that such act of sexual activity was indecent and punishable under section 214(1) 353 of the 2014 constitution of Nigeria. In a similar posting, another incidence; “Rise of Homosexuality in Nigeria: Molestation no Longer Gender Specific” (Susan), alerts that there is an incessant increase in homosexual affiliations in the society and that it cuts across gender preferences.

The word homosexuality was first used by Maria Karolyn in 1869, while referring to same sex phenomenon in some criticism (Samuel, Waje Kunhiyop, 2008:303). Former, M. Joan defines a homosexual person as one who feels a strong erotic attraction to person of the same sex. The homosexual has the ability to be sexually aroused by members of the same sex and prefers to engage in sexual activity
with members of the same sex (1993:79). Although the phenomenon is as old as civilization the
description is not as precise as most people assume (Roger Crook, 1995: 119). For instance, David J.
Atkinson and David H. Fields asserts that, homosexuality is ambivalent in the sense that it may apply to
various kinds of people based on personal orientation and behaviors (1995:450). This is the case with the
“yan daudu” described by Azuah in Nigeria. Homosexuals in this case rather than being people in same
sex sexual practice are mainly people in same sex relationships or marriage. In general however,
homosexuality is defined as the acts of feeling, and engaging in sexual activity with person of the same
gender. Also writing on homosexuality, Alan Bell (nd, 9) postulates that “the homosexual experience is
so diverse that the word homosexuality is used as a kind of umbrella terms.” The branches under this
umbrella include lesbians, gays, bisexual and transgender coined as LGBT. This paper would stick to
using the word homosexual while referring to any of the LGBT conditions. Lesbianism from the Island of
Lesbos (White, 2001:576) describes female homosexuality while particularly gay and lesbian describe
male to male and female to female sexual relationships respectively. Bisexual connotes one who practices
sexual relationship with both gender, the transgender is one who is changed from a particular gender to
the other through some surgical process.

From an African ethicists point of view, Kunhiyop, while describing homosexuality as involvement of
sexual attraction to those of the same sex, identified two bi-functional groups as the constitutional and
situational natured in the sense that they have not chosen to be homosexuals but instinctively found
themselves inclined(2008:303). Supporting this view, Cook also describes the other group as the pervert
and invert group. While the pervert occasionally indulges in homosexual act the invert genuinely
practices homosexuality (1995: 120). Perverts and inverts are terms used by sexologist homosexuals
primarily in 19th and 20th century to refer to homosexuality. A pervert is one who is really heterosexuals
but occasionally indulge homosexual acts. In other words, perverts distort their actual sexual orientation
when they occasionally engage in homosexual sex. An invert, by contrast, is one who is genuinely
homosexual. It argued that homosexual intercourse by invert is not a perversion or distortion because they
are acting in accordance with their essential nature (Kunhiyop, 2008:304). Both groups though medically
and psychologically proved are characterized by a lot of scientific arguments and speculations. The
resulting disagreements are not without ethical and sociological implicational inferences.

Homosexuals are found in every racial, cultural, religious and socioeconomic group including the most
culturally conservative. In Africa, especially Nigeria, homosexuality is relatively unaccepted and
adherents are avoided with disdain. However, it is obvious that African, particularly the church can no
longer linger on taking the issue of homosexuality into compromise consideration as it is fast creeping
into the society. The position of the church in Africa has always been against homosexuality. It is double
unacceptable from cultural and religious perspectives. If many nations in Africa are beginning to tilt
towards accepting homosexuality as an appropriate alternative lifestyle, the church must not fold her
arms, the church should begin to be concerned and respond appropriately. The issue should not be left
only at the discretion of political leaders or national governments.

African Traditional and Contemporary Views of Homosexuality

In most part of Africa, homosexual acts are not morally acceptable and as such should not be mentioned
in public. It is viewed as a perversion of morally acceptable marriage pattern which if discovered would
best be described as one of the “world turning upside down” phenomenon. Homosexuality is perceived as
a cultural value distortion because it was to lack the basic intention of sexual union which is for
procreation. Eugene Patron affirmed that “little more than anecdotal attention is paid to departures from
procreative sexual practices in traditional (African) cultures (Heart of Lavender: In Search of Gay Africa,
accessed 20/04/19). He went further to say that little more than a footnote is allocated to any discussion of
homosexuality in Africa. Such a global phenomenon ought to find wider coverage of analysis to
determine appropriate resolutions for the society.

On the other hand, there are claims that traditionally, some African societies actually endorse homosexual
practice but not openly. In a claim by an anthropologist, same sex sexual relationships are found in some
parts of Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Benin and Zimbabwe, (Awondo, 2016) Also, Azuah supports the claim 
that homosexuality is not foreign to Africa, opining that same sex relationships existed in pre Colonia 
Nigeria among the Igbo of Eastern Nigeria (2013: 10, 34). In this culture, the issue is not necessarily 
homosexuality per se but that of same sex marriage because the purpose is not for satisfying sexual urge 
but to ensure the perpetuation of the family lineage. Azuah further explains that in this situation, women 
marry women; an only child could choose to marry a woman to have children so she could keep her 
father’s lineage. She arranges with her wife to have sex outside and have children with a man outside of 
their marriage for the purpose of procreation. In the Northern part of Nigeria, the “yan daudu” were male 
prostitutes who came out annually in a cultural festival dance in the open (Azuah, 2013) Party organizers 
hired them as entertainment crew for their guests because they dressed, and performed roles and acts 
considered traditionally to be women’s, calling them “dan daudu” sees them as having acceptance within 
their culture until the arrival of Sharia law in 1999 (Sunday Tribune, 2011:34). 
Politically, many African leaders oppose acts of homosexuality. Quoted by Kunhiyop, Daniel Arap Moi, 
the former President of Kenya asserted that homosexuality is against African norms; traditional and even 
religion. It is considered a menace which is counter to Christian teaching in Africa and therefore, a great 
sin.(2008: 304) Similarly, John Atta of Ghana extrapolated that “I will never initiate or support any 
attempt to legalize homosexuality in Ghana” while President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe seriously 
campaigned against acts of homosexuals and said; “I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my 
human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations like those of homosexuals who offend 
against the law of nature and the morals of religious belief backed by our society should have any 
advocate in our midst or even elsewhere in the world”(ibid.). This position would neither proffer definite 
solutions to the problem nor absolutely prevent it from resurging intermittently. In a constitutional 
review conducted in Zimbabwe, the president declared that Zimbabwe would not give in to any 
international pressure or influence to compromise on the issue of homosexuality. Also in Malawi, late 
president Bingu wa Mutharika while pardoning on humanitarian ground a same sex couple following their 
engagement said; they had “committed a crime against our culture, our religion, and against our laws” 
(Smith & Mapondera, 2012: 20). Yet, the issue was not put to final rest as it pitches the nation on global 
watch on debatable stance of what actually constitute a crime by international standard. 
In the contemporary African societies, homosexuality discussions are of two perspectives. For instance, 
the minority sexuality such as LGBT which was neither culturally nor religiously recognized seems to be 
gradually becoming evident. The notion that sees homosexuality as taboo seems to be eroding in the 
twenty first century African society with the rise in education, globalization and fast information 
technology. Many states in Africa are abandoning their traditional ideas of the family relationship and are 
moving toward what could be termed as unusual cultural values and patterns. The pace at which the issue 
of homosexuality is creeping into Africa is becoming alarming and poses a huge challenge to the Church. 
In a Wikipedia posting, thirteen countries in Africa have either legalized or have no laws pertaining to it. 
South Africa is the most liberal in the former category having constitutions which guarantees legal rights 
and same sex marriage. For instance, following the death of her predecessor, Joyce Banda, the President 
of Malawi pledged to lift the country’s ban on homosexuality. This step is described as a step in breaking 
ranks from much of Africa where the act is condemned. A number of reasons are responsible for this shift 
of position and belief. Some of which include a search for international acceptance and recognition on the 
part of the national government. The Malawian experience for instance has a note of compromise which 
was obvious. President Joyce Banda claims her decision was made because her government wanted to 
normalize relations with “our traditional development partners who were uncomfortable with our bad 
laws” (Crook, 1995:120) In essence what she termed as bad laws are those which ostracized 
homosexuals. Although legally unacceptable in Nigeria, homosexual issues are gradually coming to the 
lime light. While many are opposed to the practice, a few are agitating for its legitimacy. In the early 
decade of the 21st century however, homosexuality is no more a taboo and Nigerians are no more plagued 
with avoidance on the issues of homosexuality. South Africa tops the list of homosexual liberalism in 
Africa and the act has come to be accepted as a norm in many parts of Africa.
The Amnesty International says there is a tightening of laws on Gay and Lesbians in Africa as estimated that homosexuality was outlawed in thirty two (32) African countries while about twenty three (23) are already engaged in some dialogue in favor of LGBT though raging in degrees while five introduces death penalty for homosexuals. As a serious crime where it is banned, the offence attracts punishments ranging from life imprisonment to death penalty (Wilkipedia.org/wiki/LGBT-rights, accessed on 15/03/19). Kenya is one of such African countries where homosexuality is criminalized. This act of intolerance is written in the penal code articles 162 and 165 of the Kenya constitution as criminal offence with life imprisonment as penalty. Thus upholding the law in a lawsuit against it in May, 2019. (www.nytimes.com. Accessed 10/12/19). Anti-gay laws have become harsher in Uganda in 2013 December when the Uganda parliament passed the law, likewise in January 2014 the Nigerian President passed the amendment law to existing laws with wider and harsher punishment on homosexual (https://www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbti-lgbt-gay-human-rights-law-africa-uganda-kenya-nigeria-cameroon. accessed on 16/02/18).

Viewed from some socio-religious lenses, Frida Lyonga opined that “anti-gay view-points have been repeatedly espoused in African societies through Christian church or Muslim doctrines, through political hate speech, and in day-to-day dialogue.”(2014: 785). The society at large is deviant at practicing homosexuals who are caught in the act. Politically too, some African leaders have spoken against homosexuality; while the former President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe described homosexuals as “worse than pigs and dog” (V. Reddy, 2002:168), Sam Nujoma of Namibia described homosexuality as horrible and inhuman perversion which should be totally eradicated from the society (Phillips, 2004: 157). The implication is that homosexuality is not acceptable in many nations in Africa. In some other contemporary views however, homosexuality is seen as “a disease or sickness; a possession by evil or demonic spirits, an occult practice, or simply a despicable influence from the ‘morally decadent.’” (Reddy, 2002: 171). While this divergence goes on politically, the church needs to agree and proffer appropriate solution to addressing the issue.

**Biblical View of Homosexuality**

The universal church generally believes that homosexuality is not a Christian culture. Initially, the few church denominations, which endorsed homosexuality such as the Metropolitan Community Church, the United Church of Christ and partially the Episcopal Church, all in America did so to accept members but not to permit church leaders. The involvement of priests accused of pedophiles and similar scandals spurred the church globally to taking homosexual issues as a challenge. The Bible clearly teaches that homosexuality is not compatible with God’s plan for humanity. There are many biblical references showing that God ordained and approved heterosexual act within the union of marriage which are not in homosexual activity. The relatively few biblical passages dealing with the subject do not treat homosexuality as a psychosexual orientation but rather refer to certain type of homosexual acts. The major references completely condemn same sex genital expression.

Beginning with the creation account, sexual activity was obviously between opposite sex. The first human beings were made male and female. The primary purposes of creating Adam and Eve include for taking care of other creation and for procreation. Obviously, a homosexual union is not able to fulfill this latter purpose as it has been in creation. God’s creation of male and female and the commandment to bear children is a sign to show that God ordained heterosexuality and not homosexuality (Gen 1:27-28) (Geisler, 2003: 267). God declared that all that God made were good. That human beings are made in the image of God means that they are good and therefore should not partake in anything that will distort that image of God which is good.

The Old Testament narrates the judgment passed against Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 & 19. Sodomy is an indication of the sin that characterized the city. The demand for the men for the purpose of illicit sex was a reason for the destruction of the city (Shield, 2004: 201). The people were condemned and destroyed by God because of their unrepentant hearts in the sin of homosexuality. This is given as a warning for people of all ages that God holds homosexuals fully accountable for their sin (Kraus, nd: 62).
Also in Leviticus, the Bible speaks against illicit sexual union among which are same sex sexual acts; “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.” (18:22, NIV) This act is punishable by death as shown in Lev. 20:13 “If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads” (NIV).

Some scholars, however, following the leadoff Sherwin Bailey provide pro-homosexuality interpretations to challenge the traditionally negative conclusions drawn from the aforementioned biblical passages. Exegetically, they argue that the key Hebrew and Greek expression in the Bible’s few references to homosexual behavior cannot bear the weight usually put on them. They argue that the word “know” in Genesis 19 shows that Sodom sin was inhospitality, not homosexual perversion (Atkinson, 1995: 451). They equally question the accuracy of understanding these references as blanket condemnation of homosexual relationships to the extent that sodomy story focus on homosexual acts, its judgment is upon the homosexual rape of divine messengers, and its larger judgment appears to be against social injustice and inhospitality to strangers (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

Hermeneutically, these writers point to what they claim as inconsistency involved in invoking the Old Testament law against homosexuals, as turning blind eyes to those who transgress other regulations in Holiness Code. They contend that arsenokoites in 1Corinthians and 1 Timothy means a male prostitute not a homosexual person who seeks a lasting faithful relationship (Macquirrie, and Childless, 1986:282). In additions, Romans 1:26-27 is cited to argue that Paul as a child of his age was unaware of a settled homosexual orientation. His condemnation of sex intercourse cannot therefore be applied across cultural gap that separates his day from the world of today. In the view of this writer, argument that other practices which violate the Holiness Code are not given as much attention as it is with homosexuality lacks justification for permitting what the code abhors.

In the New Testament, two biblical references distinctively speak against homosexual acts. Paul censured homosexual practices as unnatural and incompatible with the lifestyle of God’s kingdom. It is also an affront to God’s law and the Gospel. For instance in Romans, Paul writes that “women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.” (1:26-27, NIV) In the view of Stewards, this practice exposes the guilt of the Gentile world and focuses on their arrogance and shameful lusts before a holy God. Rather than following God’s instructions in their lives, they suppress righteousness for unrighteousness and follow passions that dishonor God (2003:3). Such act portrays the perpetrator as poles afar from the Holy God who calls his people to his holiness.

Similarly, according to D. F. Wright, the various arguments put up against this biblical injunction to justify homosexuality and challenge this traditional conclusion that homosexuality is a sin could not hold because the choice of words in the Bible text is clearly spelt to paint homosexuality as a vice. He stated that

Generally, Paul could not have envisaged some facets of contemporary debates such as ‘monogamous’ same sex relationships between persons of homosexual preference. It is nevertheless a safe conclusion that, whatever might be said about individual orientations or dispositions, Paul could only have regarded all homosexuals’ erotic and genital behaviors as contrary to the creator’s plan for human life, to be abandoned on conversion (Wright, 1993: 414).

Further in 1Corithians, God will not qualify homosexuals among those who will inherit God’s kingdom. “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (6:9&10, NIV). These biblical texts are definite indications that God abhors acts of homosexuality. The Church is to declare that biblical injunctions are for all human being because they are made by God in His image and Christian morals are His prescription and His loving command for all intelligent creatures (Clark, and Rakestraw, 1996: 47).
All along, the Church in Africa has taken a bold stance against homosexuality. This was first demonstrated publicly by the team from Nigeria at Zazibar in 2007. Led by the Revd. Peter Akinola, the team of conservative archbishops refused to take communion with Katherine Jeffers and the leaders of American Episcopalian. This was in protest of the election of a gay Bishop, Gene Robinson, by the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Since the said election in 2003, the Methodist Church in Nigeria has disagreed and dissociated herself from the act. Some factors that may be responsible for a change of position may include quests for recognition and acceptance. Noted by Clark and Rakestraw, homosexuals want to be heard, they want to enjoy every right to live and to be accepted in the society. (Clark & Rakestraw, 1996: 47). Crook also noted that people avoid and exclude homosexuals, they also whisper or joke about them, staring at them with hostility.

In Africa, the story is not different, as agitations to reverse ill-feeling against them mounts per time. The uneasiness for acceptance and recognition may have heightened due to increase in the level of education and exposures which create the desire for morality to be based on empirical and scientific data rather than traditional normative dictates of a culture. Developments in scientific researches and information technology have created an influx of various kinds of knowledge to the people. The implication is that certain knowledge becomes appealing. In the similar way, (Kunhiyop, 2008:305) affirmed that, psychological and empirical data have replaced traditional authority and religious conviction. Thus increase in ability to access knowledge on internet is a high contribution to the quest to abandon traditional views for new ideas. Other views include:

1. Erosion and abandonment of traditional values and belief are also contributory factors. Western cultural influences have always been strong not only in Africa but also globally. Across many African nations, foreign cultural practices are considered more appealing to the new generation. The more the New Generation of Africans reject traditional beliefs and practices seeing the supposed arbiter of morality as non-authoritative (Kunhiyop, 2008:305), the more the issue of homosexual practices would be getting more acceptable.

2. Rejection of biblical revelation and ecclesiastical practices: The most pathetic and challenging of divergence from what the church in Africa considers as regular is perhaps a rejection of biblical revelation and ecclesiastical faith or practice. If the church would embrace a worldview shaped by secular, humanistic views which singles out any form of love other than the agape as the most important factor in sexuality expressions would be devastating. The thought that biblical revelations and church injunctions are no longer binding on people of other faith or cultural orientation is gaining wide promotion even among the Christians. No doubt, a lot of changes are happening in African societies calling on the Church for response. The church must be able to maintain its stance in line with the scriptures on the issue of homosexuality. The church can do so and be faithful to its calling only when it maintains the authority of the Bible as the revelation of God’s norms for His people (Guenther Haas, 1999: 15). The authority of scripture for issues of faith and practice cannot at any time be compromised.

The Neighbor in African and Christian Perspectives

The African are traditionally noted for communal living. In the words of Nasimiyu, community participation is a very prominent value among the African people. It permeates all life; it is the matrix upon which all human and social values, attitudes, expectations and beliefs are based (Nasimiyu, 1986:257). In other words, the African valued relationship and togetherness whereby values and norms are collectively prescribed and expected to be followed. No person is believed to exist in self alone and therefore considerations for others are expected in behaviors and conduct. This is buttressed by the assertion of John Mbiti about the typical traditional African society as “I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am” (Traus & Lowery, 2004:168). Thus, the African traditional perspective of the homosexual would be that of a neighbor who is a part of the community deserving the compassion needed to bring a transformation for communal peace and tranquility.

Following an African philosophical thought of the Neighbor, the concept of Ubuntu comes to be applied. According to Elias Kifon as it relates to the issue of homosexuality, Ubuntu relationships welcome others,
and profoundly resist violence (2016:15). The attitude of the society and especially of the church to the homosexual calls for a wit to be neighborly, compassionate and avoidance of anything that may invoke violence in African society. The word “neighbor” stems from *plesion* which refers to the person who lives nearby. Jesus teaching and healing ministry expanded circles of respect, right-relationship, and social cohesion. He invited his disciples to enlarge their social group as inclusively as possible (Malina, 2009:251). According to Richard Niebuhr, (1963:57) human actions from Christian perspective provide understanding which helps in developing self-identity in response to God, others and the environment of existence, he emphasized further that morality is evident in loyalty to God, and the neighbor following the example of Jesus for universal responsibility and reconciliation for solidarity (Niebuhr, 1963:88). In the parable or story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus instructs his followers to “go and do likewise” showing love to whoever needed to be loved. To do likewise is analogical and implies faithfully and creatively discerning what is required to follow the example of Jesus as shown by the good Samaritan in the socio-cultural context to which the church belong.

Christians are called to love and to be compassionate. In the view of Mercher, the insights provided by the Samaritan story include Jesus teaching the deepest longings of the human heart and the profoundest meaning of human life for which the Christian is to receive courage, compassion and all the essentials for normative attitude, thought, feelings, speech, actions, and relationships (2013:34). The expectation of Jesus for the followers in the parable of the Good Samaritan is to showing compassion to whoever needs it around His people. According to the *Pulpit Commentary*, the love of the neighbor is not exclusive to only blood-relations, acquaintances, fellow countryman or co-religionist, rather it is all inclusive of all and whoever can be helped in anyway including the rejected, fanatical, the corrupted and even to the enemy (Spence & Excell, (ed.) 2011: 282-283). The love of God to be shown to all people including the homosexual, is encompassing and without discrimination. Thus, the Christian attitude should be appreciations for being partners in the Divine interest in man and the enablement to embrace the neighbor with the given interest of God being the Father of all created in His image and Christ the Redeemer and Savior of all who will be brought to Him for all are precious in His sight and for all He came to die and alive for all as well. As God loves, so the church should love. Loving the neighbor as self is seeking for the well-being of the neighbor to bringing about the establishment of the purpose of God in all humankind.

In a distinct analysis of a theory of love, Warren J. Smith asserted that “God alone is to be loved for His own sake while the many created goods are loved neither for their own sake nor ours but for God’s sake” (2016: 137). It implies that all people are created good and therefore deserved to be loved. The community life of the African and the neighborly understanding of the society become important and relevant to the church on the contemporary issue of homosexuality. According to Mutesh P. L. (2015) community values including hospitality, solidarity, acceptance and respect are vital for church enrichment in African context. The show of these to the human irrespective of ethnic, religion, socio-economic class and as implied sexual orientation and differences is implicit to the understanding of the neighbor by the church.

**Ethical Perspectives for Church Response**

Homosexual practices pose a moral threat to the society and therefore impose critical challenge to the church in Africa. While homosexuals across the globe in other parts of the world are gaining more acceptance and recognition, their counterparts in Africa continually look up to them for sympathy and support. Paradoxically, this anticipation for recognition may not linger for long in Africa if the church would delay a collective response. Some reasons why the move for acceptance may be faster than anticipated include some national policies on social, political and economic challenges rocking many societies. For instance, out of the 54 nations on Africa, about 36 nations have sustained rules against homosexuality while others have passed Bills in favor including South Africa taking the lead in 2006 and most recently Botswana in 2019. Describing the situation in Botswana as a ‘step against the current in
Africas advocates claim that its laws against homosexuality were discriminatory and that the overturn is protecting human right (Alan Yuhas, Accessed 20/06/19). The indication is that the pace of governmental compliance may be faster than the church can imagine. The church seems to be lagging behind in building up conversation which would produce collective response regarding homosexual issues. If such delays continued longer the church may be tagged as too sullen to the plight of the neighbor to which it owns responsibility. What then should the church do? The church agrees that the need of everyone for salvation outweighs their social status including their sexual orientation. While the church in Africa needs to uphold their cultural heritage as much as biblical injunctions must be observed, recognizing homosexuality as amoral and a cultural practice lacking biblical approval, should form the basis for collective response. The implications of folding the arms include that teaching of Christian moral standards and of course the gospel in homes, schools and the general public would be at stake. Therefore, the following recommendations are postulated for the Church in Africa on the issue of homosexuality:

1. Uphold the authority of the Scriptures: The church in Africa must maintain the biblical stand of frowning at the practice of homosexuality. The church is not to bend towards approval of such practice which the Bible; the basis of her authority disapproves. In this way the church would affirm and hold fast to the truth of the Word of God without compromise. However, the church should tolerate homosexuality as with any other menace confronting the society and be challenged to take up reformatory programs for correction and transformation. On this note, homosexuals who are identified by the church should be “protected” from the dangers of exclusion from the church to avoid missing the avenue for their redemption through sound biblical teachings which would help them have experience of conversion and eventual salvation. The various mission activities and social ministries of the church can create opportunities for homosexuals to be reached with the truth of the word of God.

2. Enhance Christian Education in Mission Schools: The secular educational arm of church should be fortified with sound Christian Education to meet the spiritual and moral needs of children and youths. The contemporary youth is such that is overly exposed through the Information & Communication Technology (ICT) to many things. Unless thorough teachings of the Word of God is incorporated into their secular educational system, youths and children would be misinformed on issues of homosexuality and they would be overly exposed and indulge in the practice. Youths should be made to understand the potential threats and dangers posed by their indulging in homosexual practices. The danger inculcates such affecting self and relationship between others and with God.

In situations where government policies prevent the use of the Bible in secular and public schools, the church may approach the teaching of biblical truth from morality perspective in contextual ways through Christian teachers in public schools. Through music, drama, writings, artistic expressions and similar demonstrations, biblical truths are made to be real to people in their own worldviews and contexts; thereby, understanding the truth and accepting it would be lot easier. Church schools should develop curriculum to communicate ethical demands and moral expectations of the society with sound religious tones.

CONCLUSION
The rate at which homosexual affiliations is creeping to Africa warrants that the church should be more open in the discussion on issue of homosexuality. Openness here means the recognition that all human are included in the ‘neighbor’ to which the church is responsible and is the sinner who needs justification by faith in Christ. Howbeit, all dialogue should be carefully driven to not allow for compromise of the authority of the Bible. Avoidance of compromise implies that ethical standards expected of church leadership should be upheld at all levels. No sin is greater than another by biblical standard. Therefore, if other sinners including liars and other forms of sexual sins such as adultery, fornication and vices are endured and controlled by the church, homosexuals who are prospective saints as they become willing to mend their ways should also be given the chance by the church. The homosexual is a neighbor for which the love of God demonstrated through Christ is meant. The church in Africa should in fairness stand on
what she holds as culturally ideal and biblically true and continue to speak against the practice while not sending them away either.

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