

THE PLACE OF SODOM IN THE CONTEMPORARY HOMOSEXUAL DEBATE: A REFLECTION FROM THE HOMOSEXUAL COMMUNITY IN GHANA.

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Abstract

Homosexuality is a subject which has become the preoccupation of some contemporary biblical scholars and theologians. As nations continue to legalise same-sex marriage, the Church splits heads over the acceptance or otherwise of homosexual partnerships. Both protagonists and antagonists of the homosexual phenomenon appeal to the same biblical, theological and cultural issues to make their respective arguments. The major story in the Bible found at the centre of the debate is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. Those who argue in favour of homosexuality assert that the story of Sodom has been misinterpreted to antagonise homosexuals whilst opponents contrast that the story represents nothing other than the abomination of homosexuality. This article stresses the fact that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah represents a state of human depravity manifested in a shameless attempt by men to even have sexual intercourse with members of the same sex. It attempts to understand the behaviour of the men of Sodom from the perspective of the issues which give rise to the homosexual phenomenon in Ghana. This approach is built on the concept of "uniformitarianism" which says that the present holds the keys to the past. Using this approach the article emphasises the parallels that the homosexual community in Ghana makes with the people of the twin-city of Sodom and Gomorrah. The discussion takes the view that people who live homosexual lifestyles are not to be condemned by the Church as the worst of all sinners. Rather, the Church must perceive homosexuals as people who need help and must be reached with the love of Christ. In this approach lies the

opportunity to change them to live according to the expectations of Jesus Christ.

Key words: Homosexuality, Church, Bible, Sin, Uniformitarianism, Marriage, Occultism.

Introduction

Homosexuality is a terminology which applies to “an act of having sexual preference for members belonging to the same sex only. Males who prefer to have sexual relationship with males are known as gays whilst females preferring females are termed as lesbians.”¹ The biblical narrative of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah found in Genesis 19 has been widely used by both homosexual practitioners and activists, and anti-gay activists in their arguments in the homosexual debate. Supporters of homosexuality make hermeneutical and theological arguments from the biblical narrative to explain that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah does not emphasise the act of homosexuality as the cause of the destruction of the twin-city. They posit that it was rather the uncultured manner the people went about to have an acquaintance with the visitors of Lot which resulted in God’s anger being poured on them. Opponents on the other hand submit that the underlying cause of the destruction of the land was the sinful act of homosexuality which the people lustfully engaged themselves that brought judgement upon the land.

Contemporary Christianity is sharply divided over the subject of homosexuality and its place in the Church. Whereas some argue that same-sex marriage should be accepted by the Church Universal as has been done by some denominations and nations, others opine that marriage instituted by God is heterosexual hence same-sex marriage has no place in the Church. In view of the on-going debate, this article seeks to make a contribution by using biblical and scientific perspectives to explain the occurrence

¹ Frank Okyere, Homosexuality among Senior High School Students in Kumasi: An analysis of some selected gays and lesbians (MA thesis, Christian Service University College, 2016), p. 24.

of the homosexual phenomenon and how homosexuals should be treated by the Church. This article largely relies on my research findings on the experiences of some homosexuals in Kumasi (Ghana) for a Master's thesis in 2016 and my interaction with some other homosexuals as a pastoral counsellor over a four-year period. It also attempts to explain God's position on the subject through the Bible by reviewing the story of Sodom and other places where the subject has been mentioned.

Sodom and Gomorrah

The starting point for the debate on homosexuality has often been referenced from the story of the twin-city of Sodom and Gomorrah. David Kwadwo Okai and Frank Okyere state that "It was because of this story that homosexuality gained the terminology 'Sodomy.'"² For this reason this article will also open the discussion by looking again at the story as written in the Bible. In Gen. 19:1-13 it is written:

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed himself with his face to the earth, and said, "My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the street." But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight?"

² David Kwadwo Okai, Frank Okyere, "Legalizing 'LGBT' in the Nations: Ghana is at the cross-roads of choice" (The American Journal of Biblical Theology 18(10), March 5, 2017), p. 3. www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/OkaiDK01. Accessed on March 8, 2017.

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Bring them out to us, that we may know them.” Lot went out to the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, “I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof.” But they said, “Stand back!” And they said, “This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door. But the men put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves groping for the door. Then the men said to Lot, “Have you any one else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or any one you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy” (RSV).

Confidence Bansah argues that in interpreting this story, emphasis should be on the reason the angels of destruction entered Sodom. He says this reason was given by the angels to Lot and can be found in the statement “because the outcry against its people has become great before the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it” (Gen. 19:13).³ Bansah further reckons that the “outcry” could be inclusive of several sins such as “increasing oppression, corruption, wickedness, sexual immorality or injustice, among other things as outlined against the people of Noah’s era

³ Confidence W. Bansah, “The Church and Homosexuality in Ghana” (The American Journal of Biblical Theology 18(19), May 7, 2017), p. 4.

www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/BansahCW02.pdf. Accessed on September 28, 2017.

(Gen. 6:1-7).⁴ Furthermore, he is of the view that since the homosexual tendency appeared among the people of Gibeah in Israel (Judges 19:22-23) but the city was not overthrown like Sodom, homosexuality cannot be said to be the reason for Sodom's destruction.

Other liberal theologians also argue that the story of Sodom is one that bothers on hospitality rather than homosexuality. They explain that the people wanted to acquaint themselves with Lot's visitors but the manner they went about it was uncouth and that brought judgement on them. This line of argument is built upon the meaning of the verb "to know" ("yāda'" in Hebrew).⁵ The word is interpreted to mean cognitive knowledge which suggests that the people went to Lot's house just to know who the visitors were. Therefore, to say that the men of Sodom gathered at Lot's house to have sex with his visitors is to misconstrue the narrative.

In addressing the issues raised by Bansah and other liberals, it is necessary that I acknowledge the hermeneutical dexterity with which they go about in articulating their understanding of the phenomenon of homosexuality. I tend to agree with Bansah on the matter of the "outcry" in Gen. 19:13 which could include several acts of sin. Indeed it is written in Lamentations that the overthrow of Sodom was the result of sin (see Lam. 4:6). When prophesying against Judah, Isaiah made a comparison of the sins of Israel and that of Sodom and said they were alike (ref. Isa. 3:9). However, the similarity in this case was in relation to how expressive they were in sinning. Again, God spoke to Judah through the prophet Ezekiel to outline the sins of Sodom in this manner: "Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, surfeit of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and the needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me; therefore I removed them, when I saw it" (Ezek. 16:49, RSV).

⁴ Bansah, "The Church," p. 3.

⁵ Norman L. Geisler, *Contemporary Issues and Options* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), p. 280-281.

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When Israel lived in safety after finally settled in Canaan, the nation fell into apostasy and committed acts which were contrary to the laws and principles of Yahweh their God. Although God continued to raise prophets from their midst to warn and admonish them to return to the laws of the covenant, the people were insistent in their sinful ways and brazenly committed abominable acts. These included idolatry, oppression of the poor, shedding of innocent blood, corruption and the like. This situation is what Isaiah compares with Sodom in his prophecy and for this reason God sent them into exile; first the northern kingdom and second the southern kingdom. To this extent I admit that the people of Sodom were guilty of open display of all kinds of wickedness and for that reason the wrath of God was poured on them.

Nonetheless, the attempt by the men of Sodom who gathered at the house of Lot to “know” (“*yāda*”) the visitors must be placed in its proper context. In the Old Testament, this word is used about 1040 times⁶ and on numerous occasions the intended meaning is “to have knowledge (cognitive) of an object.” For example Genesis 8:11 reads “...so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth” (RSV). Words also derive their meaning from the context in which they have been used. For instance in Genesis 4:1 it is written: “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain” In this context, the use of the verb does not mean cognitive knowledge but carnal knowledge (sexual intercourse). In the same vein, this particular word “know” appears twice in the discourse between Lot and the men of Sodom. When the men demanded to “know” the visitors, Lot responded by using the same word to prevail upon them to take his two virgin daughters instead. It reads “...I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to you, and do to them as you please”(Gen. 19:7-8). The word is therefore used in this passage as a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

⁶ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, William White Jr, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc., 1996), p. 130.

There cannot be any justification to say that Lot might have misconstrued the mission of the men of Sodom. He had been living among them for several years and was very much aware of their activities including their sexual behaviours. Judging from the response of the men who said to Lot; “This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them”, and their attempt to break the door (Gen. 19:9), it can be inferred that they intended to cause harm rather than to just know who the visitors were. Just as Isaiah said several centuries later that they had no shame in committing sin, the people openly exhibited their vile nature even against the messengers of God. In summary, the “outcry” included their homosexual practices which God had already condemned before the angels entered the city. The two angels were only to execute God’s judgement and to their expectation the people exhibited their state of depravity before them by demanding to have sex with them.

As a result of the story of Sodom, several authors of antiquity adopted the name of the city to describe homosexuals. For instance, in repeating the law, the author of Deuteronomy wrote; “There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel” (Deut. 23:17, KJV). This terminology is also used four times in the book of the Kings (ref. 1 Kin. 14:24, 15:12, 22:46 and 2 Kin. 23:7). Flavius Josephus, a first century Jewish historian, also described the Eleans and Thebans of the Greeks in the same fashion.

.... And why do not the Eleans and Thebans abolish that unnatural and impudent lust, which make them lie with males? For they will not show a sufficient sign of their repentance of what they of old thought to be very excellent, and very advantageous in their practices, unless they entirely avoid all such actions for the time to come; nay, such things are inserted into the body of their laws, and had once again such a power among

the Greeks, that they ascribed these sodomitical practices to the gods themselves....⁷

When a similar incident in the manner of what happened in Sodom occurred in Israel among the Benjaminites of Gibeah in the days of the Judges, God did not cause burning sulphur to rain on the people but the repercussion was manifested in a different mode. The men of Gibeah also intended to have sexual intercourse with another man who visited their town. The aggressive approach they used was akin to that of the men of Sodom. Their lustful desire was so great to the extent that they raped the concubine of the visitor to her death (see Judges 19:22-29). Gibeah's destruction was executed by the men of the other tribes of Israel when they joined in battle to fight the people of Gibeah.

Biblical Argument

Brennan Breed makes an argument from the case of the daughters of Zelophehad found in the book of Numbers to support the acceptance of homosexuality in the contemporary Church. In this story, Zelophehad died without a male child but per the laws given to Israel by God through Moses, daughters had no right to inheritance. Upon being petitioned by Zelophehad's daughters who risked losing their father's property, Moses took the issue to God and finally the law was updated to accommodate women found in similar situations (cf. Num. 27:1-8). Breed is of the view that; "Life does not simply bend to correspond to a pre-formed, timeless ideal of law. Law works itself out as life is lived."⁸ He suggests that homosexuality was not legal in the Old Testament but learning from Moses in the aforementioned story, the

⁷ William Whiston and Paul L. Maier, ed., *The New Complete Works of Josephus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1999), p. 977.

⁸ Brennan Breed, "Bringing the Case before the LORD: A North American Perspective on the Bible and Human Sexuality," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 16, no. 2 (December 2013), p. 19.

contemporary Church can change its stance to accept homosexuality.

What Breed overlooked in his submission was the fact that the Church did not start in the 21st century. The Church today cannot act differently from its character from the beginning because the New Testament writings form the foundation of the doctrines and practices of the Church. In his epistle to the infant church in Rome, Paul set forth the reason the wrath of God comes upon humanity when he addressed the concept of faith. He was explicit that humanity's refusal to acknowledge and honour God for all His attributes caused a separation between the created and the creator. God therefore left humanity to their depravity resulting in all kinds of wickedness in the world namely; idolatry, homosexuality, covetousness, malice, murder, deceit, gossip, heartlessness, ruthlessness, etc. He closed the chapter by saying that humanity knows that all who engage in these acts deserve to die but humanity continues to do and also approve of those who do them (ref. Rom. 1:18-32). Paul repeated the list of those who stand in condemnation before God in his first epistle to Christians in Corinth and here too homosexuals were mentioned in the number (see 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Homosexuality, ipso facto, is born out of sinful desire. The contemporary Church cannot therefore amend to accommodate same-sex marriage.

Bansah says that Jesus Christ did not teach on the subject and by inference homosexuality cannot be considered by the Church to be unacceptable sexual behaviour.⁹ I do not think that Jesus Christ explicitly taught everything there is to human life in the Bible. For example, engaging in alcoholism, polygamy, examination malpractices, human trafficking, illicit drug trade, etc. were all not captured in the Bible as issues Jesus addressed. Will it be justifiable to say that these behaviours should be accepted by the Church and society in general? Like Paul said, all there is to know about God was made known to humanity from the beginning through His creation. There is no excuse for us today to think that

⁹ Bansah, "The Church," p. 5.

certain things have not been mentioned by Jesus and therefore humanity should remain agnostic about them. At least when addressing the issue of divorce in marriage, Jesus was explicit that God made the male and female human species for the purpose of marriage (ref. Matt. 19:3-5). He was making reference to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This clearly negates homosexual partnership. Marriage as instituted by God in the Garden of Eden was for the purpose of companionship, sexual gratification, procreation among others and it was between a male and a female. This has not changed because God is not influenced by human culture.

The Development of the Homosexual Phenomenon

To understand the phenomenon of homosexuality, many attempts have been made by several people to find the underpinning factors. There was an attempt to link homosexuality to a genetic factor by Dean Hamer in 1993. This did not succeed because his findings failed in another jurisdiction when it was replicated there.¹⁰ Others also cite brain structure and prenatal hormonal conditions as the reasons for the development of the phenomenon.¹¹ None of them has been conclusive.

Due to the use and misuse of science to explain homosexuality, I investigated the phenomenon by analysing the experiences of some homosexuals found in some senior high schools in Kumasi, Ghana. In addition to these people, some other people have voluntarily spoken to me in confidence and their experiences have been documented. After carefully analysing twenty-one individual cases, the common issues emanating from them are early sexual exploration, sexual abuse, influence of pornographic materials, desire for material rewards and the practice of occultism. One or a

¹⁰ Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, "The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Homosexuality Debates," in David L. Balch (ed.) *Homosexuality, Science, and the Plain Sense of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), p. 94.

¹¹ Okyere, *Homosexuality*, p. 24-28.

combination of these factors accounted for the homosexual lifestyles of the people studied.

Sexual exploration begins at an early stage in the lives of people. In a study by I. D. Norman et al, 13% of a sample population of 1068 taken from the 10 regions of Ghana say they experienced sex between 10 and 14 years.¹² The responses of 10 of the people I have analysed reveal that they had their first homosexual sex experience between the ages of 6 and 10. This was at the time when they were in primary school. Children who get to experience sexual activities with members of the same sex during this exploration period are more probable to develop homosexual habits later in their lives. At the adolescent age where their sexual desires are intense, they tend to direct such desires to people of the same sex. Norman et al again disclosed in the study that between the ages of 15 and 20, about 58% of females and 49% of males reported to have had sexual encounters at least once already in their lives.¹³ It is usually in the boarding schools that those who direct this increased sexual desire to members of the same sex are seen.

Furthermore, children who are sexually abused are likely to develop homosexual lifestyles. Some of the responses reveal that some of the homosexuals were sexually abused at childhood by some older people. The intriguing part of these abuses is that they are perpetrated by either neighbours or people of close relations. This even makes it more difficult to report. Sexually abused children who grow with the psychological defects they suffered from such experiences may end up becoming homosexuals. In his autobiography titled "Surprised by God," Stephen Arterburn, a psychologist and counsellor, describes in a dramatic style how his brother Jerry Arterburn became a homosexual. He says;

¹² I. D. Norman et al, "Homosexuality in Ghana" (Ho: Scientific Research Inc., 2016), p. 15.

¹³ Norman et al, "Homosexuality," p. 15.

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Jerry had been sexually abused by one of the older boys at a church camp when he was five years old. That experience, combined with having a father who was busy and often emotionally distant, formed in Jerry a powerful desire to please other men and win their approval. Most of this desire, he said, was not sexual, but a desperate attempt to gain attention and acceptance. For the most part, he controlled his infatuation with men by pretending it didn't exist. But as that increasingly failed, he tried to cover it up with a gold-plated image ... It was during that same summer that my brother had his first homosexual experience. After the midnight, in a swimming pool, another man locked his legs around Jerry's waist as they hung from the diving board. It ended there, but it was enough to open the floodgate of emotion that swamped Jerry's carefully constructed defences.¹⁴

When the story of Sulley Ali Gabass (a medical doctor in Ghana) first broke out in the media in July 2014, there were reports that similar allegations of sodomy had been made against him in the past. But for lack of evidence he had been left off the hook. Nevertheless, his uncontrolled lust for the act made him continue to find new victims till luck eluded him in 2014 and finally found guilty and jailed for 25 years. From the psychological perspective, Gabass may be a product of child sexual abuse and that has produced in him the abusive character which he appears not to have any control over. A child may also nurture hatred for the opposite sex depending on the experience he or she had. One girl responded that she was raped by her close male friends she often played with. From that time she never liked people of the opposite sex. Finding herself in a girls' school, she now felt comfortable to express her sexuality by directing her desires to other girls.

¹⁴ Stephen Arterburn, *Surprised by God* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1997), p. 63.

More so, the influence of pornographic materials cannot be counted away. At least four people who shared their experience did not hide this fact that what they watched in videos influenced them to act upon their desires. It is common knowledge that during the adolescent age, the desire for sex increases. When two adolescents watch pornographic video together and their desires are aroused, it is highly possible that the two will be led into having sex just to satisfy that urge. If the two belong to the same sex and this happens, depending on the satisfaction they derive from the intercourse, they are likely to repeat the act as it happened with some of the respondents. This may become an addictive habit which will be very difficult to quit. Indeed, almost all the practicing homosexuals interviewed in the research claimed that they wished they could quit homosexuality but found it difficult to do so.

People can also be influenced by the material rewards that may be given by the homosexual proposer. One lesbian said her sister offered her gifts to entice her into practising homosexual sex with her. A 28 year old man confided in me on August 21, 2017 that when he graduated from senior high school in 2007, he was invited by his aunt to relocate to her place in order for him to take charge of her shop. When this boy accepted the offer and settled with the aunt, her husband also promised the boy to make him the manager of his business. True to his word he made the boy his manager but not without the boy exchanging this offer with anal sex. According to the young man, his aunt's husband can give him GH¢3000 (US\$750) and sometimes more after sexual intercourse.

Another issue I found in these developments is the employment of occultism in homosexual activities in the country. There are lesbian and gay cults in Accra and Kumasi working seriously to win the vulnerable into their fold. A girl of about 10 years was taken to a lesbian cult in Osu, a suburb of Accra, by one of the leaders who in turn wedded and initiated the little girl into the cult. This innocent girl fell into this web of the devil because her mother

out of poverty gave her to a woman staying at Ejisu (a town in the outskirts of Kumasi) to serve as a house-help. The granddaughter of this woman happens to be a leader in the cult. She took the girl to Osu, wedded her, initiated her and made a blood covenant with her. She also took this girl to a certain clinic in Tema in the Greater Accra Region where the womb of the girl was removed and taken to a shrine for rituals. Over a period of about 9 years, this girl worked to recruit not less than one hundred other young girls for the cult. She confesses she was given the spiritual enablement to see beyond the physical. Therefore, she moved about lorry stations and in public transports and places to find the vulnerable. Like the slave girl whose story is recorded in Acts 16:16-18, this girl used her fortune-telling abilities to draw vulnerable young girls to the cult.¹⁵

Referencing these identified influential factors, I conclude that homosexuality is a product of nurture rather than nature. It is an abnormal sexual behaviour which develops over time as a result of what individuals experience in their lives. These experiences reflect the position of Paul when he addressed the Roman Christians earlier referenced.

Scientific Argument

There is a geological concept known as “uniformitarianism” which in its simplest explanation propounds that the earth is governed by certain principles which work to produce the physical features found on its surface. It explains that the events of the present hold the keys to understanding the past. For example if there is a volcanic eruption today and as a result lava gashes out from the interior of the earth and solidifies overtime on the surface to form a highland, we are to understand that some highlands which were formed in the past were as a result of similar occurrences. This concept in my view is the scientific version of Ecclesiastes 1:9 which says “What has been is what will be, and what has been

¹⁵ Self-confession made by a 20 years old lady during a counselling session on August 21, 2017.

done is what will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun” (RSV). Uniformitarianism asserts that the same causal agents work themselves out to produce the physical phenomena found on the earth which in effect agrees that nothing new happens.

Borrowing from this concept of uniformitarianism I submit that some, if not all, of the underpinning reasons behind the development of homosexual habits as I have relayed here were the same driving force behind the story of the men of Sodom. My personal experience with the lesbian group from which the young girl was rescued gives a lot of insight to what must have happened in Sodom, especially concerning their violent, aggressive and expressive character. It has been one year since the girl left the group but they continue to pursue her with aggression to get her back. On Saturday September 16, 2017 at about 04:45 G.M.T., I took the girl to her house in Kromoase, a suburb of Kumasi, after an all-night church service. In the middle of the junction before her house were seated two members of the lesbian cult she belonged. They were on a mission to take her back to their camp and these ladies were ready to die in the road because they would not give me way. I had to find a way to drive her to the house. On my return from her house, one of them said to me that I was wasting my resources on the girl. She said this because they thought that my effort to rescue the girl from their grips will be an exercise in futility. I have also received several SMS from her lesbian partner and one of them reads: “Taking someone’s wife and staying with your wife is nonsense”¹⁶

The hermeneutical approach used by homosexual advocates such as Bansah is insufficient because it ignores the conversation which started between God and Abraham in the chapter preceding chapter 19. To understand the story of Sodom in its entirety, it is imperative that Genesis 18:17-22 is considered.

The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great

¹⁶ SMS received at 08:49 GMT on December 3, 2017.

and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” Then the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know.” So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom (RSV)

Inference can be made from this passage that God’s intention of informing Abraham about His judgement of Sodom was to make Abraham and his descendants “keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice” (Gen. 18:19). Righteousness “embodies all that God expects of His people.”¹⁷ Hence, to live contrary to God’s expectation is to be unrighteous. Although God created humanity a free agent having the will to operate, He expects His people to live according to His will. Therefore, choosing Abraham to instruct his household to be righteous at a time judgement had been passed on Sodom meant that the latter was unrighteous and the former was not to follow that path. Sodom was clamorous in waywardness without any shame and God was visiting the people to experience their depravity.

Equally important and worth mentioning is the duration that their wickedness persisted. The burning of the city was not a spontaneous reaction to the attempt by the men to have sex with the two messengers of God. The statement; “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me ...” (Gen. 18:20-21), suggests that their debauchery (homosexuality included) had been going on for a time and people were lamenting on their offences. There was

¹⁷ Vine, Unger, White, Vine’s, p. 206.

no desire however in the people to cease as the behaviour passed on from one generation to another. It explains why the passage says “the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot” (Gen. 19:4-5). Much to God’s expectation, the people demonstrated their abusive and nefarious sexual behaviour which was a confirmation of the “outcry” against them. God had to end their insanity by destroying them.

The Parallels of Sodom and Ghana

A critical observation of the activities of the homosexual community in Ghana reveals a situation analogous to Sodom. The aggression being used by homosexuals in our world to legitimise their despicable activities is a witness to what happened in Sodom. All kinds of strategies including luring young people with money have been employed to get more people to join in the perversion. For instance, on September 21, 2017 a workshop was organised for men-sex-men (MSM) in a very popular hotel in Sunyani (a city in Ghana) and after the session, every person who attended was given GH¢100 (US\$25) by the organisers in addition to a lunch pack. Also, people who publicly speak against homosexual practices in the country are offered huge sums of money to support the practice and a clear example is the confession of Rev. Opuni Frimpong, the General Secretary of the Ghana Christian Council.¹⁸ As someone who vehemently opposes the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Ghana, he claims he was offered money by some donors to change his stance on the subject.

Occultism is idolatry and it is one of the methods that homosexuals have adopted to forcibly convert people to expand their community in Ghana. Occultism is defined as “belief in the

¹⁸ www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Donors-forcing-me-to-be-ambassador-for-Homosexuality-Opuni-Frimpong-518076?channel=D1. Accessed on March 12, 2017.

existence of secret, mysterious, or supernatural agencies.”¹⁹ Putting one’s faith in other spiritual or supernatural agencies except God is a serious breach of God’s expectation for His children. When introducing the laws of the old covenant through Moses, God said; “You shall have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3, RSV). Obviously, the people of Sodom were idol worshippers because they did not acknowledge and honour God. The involvement of occult art in homosexual activities is to frighten and bond new homosexual converts so that they do not retreat and spill the bean of the debauched behaviour. In addition, it gives the practitioners some level of confidence to display their wickedness without fear or shame.

The abusive and violent nature of the people of Sodom which can be deduced from the manner in which they approached Lot’s house is also displayed today by members of the homosexual community in Ghana. In 2014 at a pub at Adentan, a suburb of Accra, there was an open fight between two different lesbian parties. Broken bottles were used by the feuding parties in their confrontations. This was occasioned by one party failing to respect an agreement to return a girl she asked out from her married partner within the specified time. Around the COCOBOD area in Sunyani in 2016, there was an open assault unleashed by one lesbian faction on another. One party accused the other of snatching a member away and in the full glare of the people gathered in the area sharp objects were drawn against the accused. Further, in December 2016 at Osu in Accra, a preacher on evangelism in a particular neighbourhood was verbally assaulted by members of a lesbian cult for using the story of Sodom to preach.

Conclusion

From the discussion it is demonstrated that the story of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals a state of human depravity manifested in all kinds of sin which included homosexuality. It follows then that

¹⁹ www.dictionary.com/browse/occultism. Accessed on December 23, 2017.

sexual union created by God from the beginning was heterosexual and must remain so. For humanity to be reconciled to God which was the purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry, humanity must repent of every evil desire which includes homosexual practices. Therefore, the Church must not accept same-sex marriage as an alternative lifestyle.

Notwithstanding, the Church must work to bring homosexuals to the grace which has been made available to all people through the death of Jesus Christ. Ernestina Afriyie stands in agreement with this view when she notes:

“Just as Christians who are heterosexual and single must avail themselves of God’s sustaining grace and to lead a life of disciplined sexual abstinence, so must homosexuals avail themselves of that same grace. In the light of this, we realise that the homosexually oriented need a church that is a place of love, grace and redemption and not one that ridicules and condemns them.”²⁰

The Church must understand that homosexuals need help just as the woman who was caught in adultery by some Jews needed help and not condemnation. My interaction with homosexuals indicates that the Church does not pay attention to them and that makes it difficult for them to share their challenges. They have specific needs and the Church must find out those needs and address them in order to win them for Christ. It will be a serious deception for the Church to think that homosexuals are a group of people who operate outside it. About 98% of homosexuals I have encountered are members of some denominational churches in the country and play diverse roles in these churches. Although they acknowledge the influential factors which led them to form their homosexual lifestyles, they find it extremely difficult to approach their pastors for help.

²⁰ Ernestina Afriyie, “Theological and Pastoral Perspectives on Sexuality,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 16, no. 2 (December 2013), p. 42.

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Homosexuality should not be perceived by the Church as sin that surpasses all other sins. In fact, Paul counts homosexuals in the company of all other sinners like gossips, fornicators, idolaters, thieves, drunkards and the greedy (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10). If the Church does not condemn these sinners but try to change them to conform to the desired lifestyle that Christ expects of His followers, same must be extended to homosexuals. In so doing they will be won for the Lord Jesus Christ.

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