

The Bible and faith-based Homophobia/Homomisia* in Africa

A case study on the use of biblical texts in the post-colonial war on gay people

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Abstract

This article focuses on the use of the Bible in the campaign against gay people in Africa. The basic source is an anti-gay song of Paul Dzampah, a Christian singer-songwriter in Accra, Ghana. The song shows a multi-layer image of homosexuality which can be seen typical for post-colonial Africa's hybrid cultures. Traditional views are hybridised with Western concepts and the whole is integrated in the struggle for an African identity characterised by ethical purity and religio-cultural independence from the West. The article states that the influence of biblical texts should not be overestimated. The Bible is used selectively as an additional authority but the anti-gay concept is not deriving from an interpretation of specific biblical texts.

Introduction

One of the most obvious phenomena relating to the Bible and violence is the global movement which can be labelled as the “God-hates-fags”-movement. Activities against sexual minorities are globally spread and can be found in societies as different as the USA and Iran, Russia and Uganda. *Homomisia* is not necessarily related with religious ideas, but in many countries it is clearly a faith-based (or at least faith-related) concept. In the United States it is a special topic for conservative Christians; in Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries it is even backed by state laws which root in the religious tradition, ‘Sharia’. As the – traditionally Christian – societies in the West tend to separate secular laws from religious traditions they do not give much legal basis for homomisia. Anti-

* *Homomisia* (= hate against homosexuals) seems to be a better word than “homophobia” (= fear of homosexuals) as the latter one may be understood as a psychological excuse of hatred, discrimination and even killing others. (Cf. Gunda 2010:64f.)

discrimination regulations tend to protect the right of sexual minorities – even in countries where conservative Christianities are very strong, e.g. the USA.

The separation of secular laws and religious traditions is typical for those societies influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment, Europe's evolution to religious neutrality of the state since the 18th century. This philosophy also developed the idea of general human rights; rights which are independent from state, culture, religion, sex and status. It is obvious that during the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the era of colonialism, European societies have not been a convincing example for the impact of human rights on politics, but that fact cannot expel the idea of human rights itself. On the contrary, it proves the necessity of the idea.

It took two world wars and the unprecedented crime of *Shoa* until my own country, Germany, allowed the concept of human rights to find its way into the constitution and into political practice. And even after that this concept was primarily focussed on political freedom, whilst sexual rights were left unattended to for a long time. In fact, even political rights were mainly interpreted in a nationalist way. Every country in the West thus focussed on ensuring the rights of its own citizens. The rights of migrants' for example, were completely disregarded. Even nowadays only a few western politicians keep in mind that the global economic injustices and the restrictive migration policies are brutal violations of human rights. If an average politician in Germany is asked why the right to live in this country is a *national*¹ right and not a global *human* right, there exists a high probability that they simply would not understand your question.

It is obvious that the political reality of human rights often is no more than public pretence without substance. It is, however, equally obvious that some progress has been made over the centuries, and the fragmentary character of human rights practice be no reason to give up the concept as such.

¹ Nowadays 'national' must be understood in a broader sense. The permission of residence is granted with only slight restrictions to persons from the European Union and some wealthy countries, while normal citizens of 'poor' countries are kept away by highly restrictive visa regulations.

Seen from the outside, it seems that in post-colonial African societies the topic of poverty and injustice is dominating the life of ordinary people while the political discourse is often dealing with other topics. This might be linked to the specific problems of post-colonial states. More or less half a century after gaining independence it is more and more difficult for the African elites to explain all the misery by blaming the impact of colonialism. Thus it is inviting to direct the public attention to “previously advanced” minorities. The “othering” of homemade problems has always been a favourite strategy – more often than not a politically successful one. Germans are experts in this since the time of Hitler’s strategy to “solve” Germany’s problems by killing the Jews. As an African leader – Zimbabwe’s all time messiah-president – proudly labelled himself as “Hitler”,² it may be not too farfetched to interpret the kill-the-gay rally taking place in some African countries within this paradigm. The purpose of this article is, however, quite modest. I shall not attempt to present an overall exposition of the sociological mechanism of homomisia. Instead, I shall present only a brief case study by analysing an example from Ghana, the Christian song *Abomisexuality*.

Some biographical notes on the author

The song I will deal with was written by Paul Dzampah, a Ghanaian singer-songwriter based in Accra. Together with other songs, it is well documented since I had the honour to edit them in one of our previous BiAS volumes (cf. Kügler 2014). As I gave a biographical introduction on Paul in this edition (Kügler 2014:8-27) this will not be necessary to repeat here at length. Just short information will be given:

Paul Kosi Dzampah was born in 1965 at Kpando, a small town located in Ghana’s Volta Region. He studied at Legon University (Accra Region) and graduated in Linguistics and French. At the same time he learned the German language at the Goethe Institute, Accra, up to C 2 Level. After Paul completed his university studies, he worked as a part-time French teacher at the Regional Maritime Academy in Accra (1995-1997).

² In 2003 Mugabe told journalists: “I am still the Hitler of the time, [...] This Hitler has only one objective, justice for his own people, sovereignty for his people, recognition of the independence of his people, and their right to their resources. If that is Hitler, then let me be a Hitler tenfold. Ten times, that is what we stand for.” (Thornycroft 2003)

Since 1998 he is teaching German at the Goethe Institute in Accra. In the years from 1999 to 2004 he worked as an officer for the Ghana Prisons Service. Nowadays, Paul's main job is teaching German at Goethe. Paul is married and a father of four children, two daughters and two sons. Dzampah's religious biography is characterised by several changes. Born in a Catholic family, Dzampah started his religious life as a Catholic, but he became an Anglican when his family left the Catholic Church and went over to the Anglican Church in the 1980s. As was general the case, the children joined their parents in their shift. Later Paul began to look for his own personal faith. He found his way to the Pentecostal movement – quite typical for higher educated urban youth at the time. In 1985, at the age of 20, Dzampah received the Pentecostal baptism with the Holy Spirit and he also shared in the Pentecostal practice of *glossolalia*. In accordance with Pentecostal theology, Paul understands speaking in tongues as speaking in a heavenly language, the tongue of the angels, which is regarded as superior to human language; therefore he relates *glossolalia* primarily to 1 Cor. 13:1 and 14:14-19. Despite his highly impressive experiences with Pentecostal spirituality, Paul left from his church. He thought that many Pentecostals were more occupied with collecting money than with prayer, and the “gospel of money-making” was not what he was looking for in his spiritual life. Leaving Pentecostalism behind, Paul decided to lead a Christian life without any specific church membership.

When I met the artist-teacher-prophet in 2013 – during an excursion with students of mine to Accra, Tema, and Ashaiman – I was deeply impressed by his spirituality, which allowed him to lead Christian life beyond making money with his religious gifts. Paul's Christian way of life was also fascinating to me as it transcended the denominational competition, so typical for post-modern Christianity in Africa, with all the boasting and self-praise of prophets, apostles, bishops, and healers. Particularly, his concept of a Christianity which is “not too churchy” made me consider editing some of his texts. When the first part arrived via e-mail, I was surprised – even somewhat shocked – about the harsh words against homosexual persons uttered by this man otherwise so friendly and peaceful. Although I indicated to Paul that our book series usually has a quite friendly attitude towards sexual minorities, I refrained from any censorship. And to my surprise, when he handed back his texts after proof-reading the part against homosexuals had even been expanded and currently it is so large that the reader might think homo-

sexuality is the most important topic in contemporary African Christianity – a problem even more urgent than poverty, corruption and destruction of the bio-sphere. Compared with the few, and short biblical texts mentioning same-sex acts the enormous stress put on this topic at least is astonishing.

Dzampah's image of homosexuality in contrast to Western political correctness

The prime source for analysing his attitude towards homosexuality is Dzampah's song *Abomisexuality* (Kügler 2014:51-90).³ As the text is too long for a detailed exegesis, just the main aspects of its image of homosexual practice will be analysed. According to the song, homosexuality is characterised as follows:

It is

- a phenomenon mainly involving **men**,
- a matter of **choice**,
- a way of physical **violence** damaging the penetrated person,
- an expression of social **hierarchy** (connected with economic difference between rich/powerful/adult and poor/powerless/young,
- an act **humiliating/dishonoring** the penetrated person.

It is obvious that this description is quite different from what Western societies would label as 'homosexuality'. From 19th century, until the "sexual revolution" in the second half of the 20th century homosexuality was viewed as a sexual orientation which was abnormal, a kind of disease which should be cured, if possible. According to the various opinions about the origin of this disease the best treatment was seen either as re-education, specific drugs or psychological treatment. Quite exceptional for a disease, in most countries homosexual acts were also forbidden by law (in Germany, e.g., the famous § 175 StGB/ penal code) and were punished by the state. Since the 1970s the view changed and homosexuality was seen as a more or less unchangeable sexual orientation which should be allowed among consenting adults. Rape and child abuse, of course, are still forbidden and sanctioned but the gender of the involved persons does not matter.

³ Quotation of this song will be rendered as: *Abomisexuality* with page numbers.

In summary, Western political correctness currently conceives “homosexuality” as an orientation/life style. It is connected with sexual identity and cannot or should not be changed, except by the persons themselves. It is a human right to be sexually different from the majority and the state should not interfere in sexual matters as long as the human rights of other persons are not touched by homosexual persons.⁴ Dzampah’s concept of homosexuality seems to be close to the minority (or at least politically incorrect) view in Western countries which still sees homosexuality as something that should be forbidden and/or cured. Yet, similarities may not be as big as they seem at first sight. For example, the matter of sexual role is only seldom mentioned in Western public discourse. When Klaus Wowereit (later Berlin’s *Regierender Bürgermeister* [mayor], 2001-2014) confessed publicly that “I am gay and this is ok!”⁵, there was no public discussion of whether he is ‘top’, ‘bottom’ or ‘versatile’. Contrary to this Western position, the matter of sexual role is, in general, regarded as extremely important in African discourse about homosexuality. No surprise, therefore, that Dzampah also focuses almost exclusively on the penetrating man, whilst regarding the penetrated mainly as the helpless victim. This is only one indicator that his homomisia is not simply a copy of a Western original. I agree with Adrian van Klinken who convincingly nuanced

“arguments that explain African controversies regarding homosexuality in terms of exported American cultural wars, proposing an alternative reading of these controversies as emerging from conflicting visions of modernity in Africa” (Van Klinken 2014: 259).

Although it is clear that postcolonial African views of homosexuality are predominantly influenced by Western colonialism,⁶ a proper under-

⁴ In order to protect non-consenting persons, the legal sanctions for rape (in marriage also) and child abuse were even made more rigorous in most Western countries. The gender of the involved persons does not matter anymore.

⁵ German: “Ich bin schwul und das ist auch gut so!”. Wowereit’s outing was in all probability motivated by political reasons. Running for his first term in Berlin, he successfully tried to avoid that right-wing opponents could play with the topic. (Cf. Wikipedia 2015, Klaus Wowereit).

⁶ Until today this influence is resulting in the different penal sanctions put on homosexuality. While Anglophone countries usually preserve the rigorous regulations of British colonial government, francophone Ivory Coast never had such regulations as the French colonialists were not so much interested in the topic. (Cf. Aldrich 2003; Engender/Oxfam 2009).

standing of Dzampah's homomisia cannot be achieved when his specific African context is ignored.

The African background of Dzampah's concept

In the cultural context of a modern African country such as Ghana, Dzampah's attitude towards homosexuality is not as surprising as it is from a Western perspective. Research done in the last decades suggests that the whole idea of homosexuality coined in 19th century Europe may not be fully adequate for the African situation, which is characterised by a high pluriformity (cf. Murray & Roscoe 1998; Murray 2000). Due to the fact that in Africa sexual activity between men "is most often not associated with a homosexual identity, but men having sex with men usually have sex with women as well, get married, and have children" (ARWPS 84, 2005, Abstract), some authors simply speak of "men having sex with men" (MSM) as, e.g., the World Bank report (ARWPS 84, 2005) does. The authors of the World Bank report define MSM as including "all males who engage in same gender sexual relationships, including boys and adolescents" (ARWPS 84, 2005: ii). In this article the definition will, however, be changed insofar as I substitute "sexual relationships" with "sexual encounters". In the context given here, it is necessary to use a broad definition which includes all MSM by leaving open several aspects, e.g., the existence of a personal relationship, the number of sexual encounters, and also the number of partners implied. This broader definition of MSM includes men who identify themselves as gay, "born this way" (cf. Van Klinken & Phiri 2015), as well as the boy who is raped by an elder neighbour boy, and the "gay-for-pay" youngster browsing the internet in search of a "sugar daddy"⁷ to bring him out of the high-density-suburbs of Greater Accra, or at least helps him to have a better life there. It includes the man who is striving for a long-term-relationship with a male partner as well as the married man paying young men for penetrating him from time to time. When the word "homosexuality" is used here, I consider this in the broad sense of the MSM-concept.

⁷ The 'sugar daddy' phenomenon of course is not limited to MSM. Cf. Feder & West 2013: 21f., where Gerald West interprets Boas in the book of Ruth as a "sugar daddy": wealthy, powerful men helping women to survive or live better and require gratefulness/love/sex as a reward.

Due to several factors, among which the societal pressure on non-accepted sexual behaviour maybe an important one, homosexuality in modern Africa often is characterised by phenomena that would be punishable in Western countries too. These things may always have existed in Ghana as they did in most countries, but people seemed to live better with public silence on sexuality in general (cf. *Abomination*: 66), and specifically on homosexuality, which “did not exist” in societal consciousness. As the wall of silence is crumbling more and more, things come to light of which the society apparently “never knew” – due to successful tabooing. However, as they are seen right now, in a period when African societies are struggling considerably in building up a post-colonial identity, they are often linked with fatal Western influence. And the more Western countries, the former colonial powers, are pushing African governments to respect sexual rights, the more inviting it is to interpret these rights as something neo-colonial and un-African, even if the pressure is not meant to allow sexual violence or child abuse. Western politicians usually have consensual sex between adults who “are born like this” in mind when speaking of “homosexuality” and “gay rights”. The reality of homosexuality in Africa, however, is not adequately expressing the Western concept of the “gay couple”, i.e., two men with a homosexual orientation/identity, integrating sex in a long-term-relationship on the basis of equal rights. If Western people and Africans use the term “homosexuality”, they usually mean completely different things. This makes understanding even more difficult than what it is anyway – due to colonialism, neo-colonial capitalism and other factors. Dzampah’s negative image of homosexuality is influenced by the cultural reality he is sharing. This cultural reality is determined by specific discourses, such as post-colonialism, and by personal experiences and observations he may have had and made. Some aspects of these cultural and/or biographical factors for Dzampah’s homomisia can be figured out.

As a language teacher at the Goethe Institute he is familiar with biographies (mostly of women, but of men too) that were influenced by the contact with Western “lovers”:

Students are promised studies abroad
 The jobless are promised well paid jobs
 Just mellow and all these become yours
 And when asked say it’s my own will
 (*Abomisexuality*: 60)

Of course the text does not specify who is promising here, but when it says “students are promised studies abroad” we may not only think of local MSM but also of the white male tourist coming to Ghana for sexual adventures/relationships with young African men. Even if the persons involved will not understand their doing as prostitution, it must be clear that the differences in age, wealth, and power are enormous and a partnership of equals is constituted with difficulty. The hierarchy of rich/powerful and poor/powerless can, of course, not be limited to this scenario. Dzampah generally characterises homosexuality, connecting it directly with the role in the sexual act:

When two gentlemen forge a marriage
 Surely the poorer becomes woman
 The richer won't have his back let loose
 He never wants to be in pampers
 Surely he finds that so degrading
 He degrades won't let be degraded
 Here too oh poor man is exploited
 Injuries added to his injuries
 Economically exploited
 And politically exploited
 Intellectually exploited too
 And again sexually exploited
 Managers do not wear the pampers
 Ministers do not wear the pampers
 Presidents do not wear the pampers
 Only poor man is put in pampers
 (*Abomisexuality*: 60f.)

The focus on hierarchy and violence all through the song may also be explained by observations Dzampah might have made during his time as an officer for the Ghana Prisons Service, specifically, his repeated mentioning of the physical damage of the penetrated man, suggests the sexual violence which can be found in prisons when powerful men select prisoners of lower status to be their “wife”. The following passage in particular may hint to violent MSM in prisons as one possible background for the song:

Those who cause others to lose control
 Of their rectums given by nature
 Commit crime that should be chargeable
 Prosecutable punishable

Those who force adults to wear pampers⁸
Reducing adults to old babies
Commit crime against humanity
And should face justice of human beings
This is crime against human nature
The nature of a healthy rectum
Those who condone this should be co-charged
And prosecuted with the culprits
(*Abomisexuality*: 56)

It must be said, however, that Dzampah quite generally sees homosexuality as sexual and violent expression of dominance. The central target of his critique is the penetrating man, who uses economic, social and physical power to achieve his goal:

It's major part of gay strategy
Using money food and other baits
Turning thereby full men to women
And using force as a last resort
(*Abomisexuality*: 60)

On the other side, the penetrated man is seen as a victim suffering from physical damage and dishonoring:

The victims may be good lecturers too
When they want to call a spade a spade
They would tell you they are not happy
That their only rectum is destroyed
And the pampers they have to put on
Without a hope to leave it one day
As the babies who grow always do
Once in pampers always in pampers
Some can no more afford the pampers
The destroyer suddenly vanished
On his way to destroy some others
In the on-going degradation
(*Abomisexuality*: 59)

Protecting people from getting victims of homosexuals is a matter of human rights and a prime task of the state. Dzampah is interpreting the existing laws against homosexual acts as tools of such protection. If for-

⁸ I must confess that before reading Dzampah's text I never knew that penetrated men need "pampers", but in his view pampers are a symbol of the damage that gay sex does to the penetrated man. They are mentioned often (51.54.54.56.59.60.61.67.74.82.85), 24 times in total.

eign politicians⁹ (and local activists/politicians as their puppets) criticise these regulations, they follow a neo-colonial plan to gain power over Africa again. Thus, the hierarchical structure of homosexuality is understood also in a global scenario where the West, rich and powerful, with its gay-friendly attitude, is the (sexual) aggressor, while Africa, poor and helpless, is the victim who has to protect the back¹⁰ of his sons (cf. *Abomisexuality*: 74).

Gays are degrading people's rectums
 This is what we are complaining of
 And you say we must amend our laws
 To permit this abomination
 (*Abomisexuality*: 62)

Colonialist Goliath Kangaroo
 Has become missionary for gays
 His Fathers brought here Christianity
 He's bringing homosexuality
 (*Abomisexuality*: 66)

These cheats want to cheat in everything
 The cheats of the corporatocracy¹¹
 Are the driving forces behind all these
 By and by they'll regret all these frauds
 Thank God for Russia and all others
 Who refuse to bow under pressure
 From these emperors of vanity
 They must know they cannot buy us all
 These wicked lions are too greedy
 Bottomless pits they can't have enough
 Now hide behind our mis-leaders
 With their great plan of indirect rule
 (*Abomisexuality*: 85)

⁹ Political agents named are UK Prime Minister Cameron (*Abomisexuality*: 60, 66, 73), USA President Obama (*Abomisexuality*: 61.66) and "UN chief" (*Abomisexuality*: 70).

¹⁰ As *Abomination* is very much focussed on penetration as the physical aspect of homosexuality it is not surprising that 'back' occurs 9 times (*Abomisexuality*: 58, 60, 61, 74, 75, 76, 77). Even more often we find "rectum" (*Abomination*: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 84), 31 times in total.

¹¹ The expression refers to the global rule of international corporations.

The role of the Bible in Dzampah’s homomisia

When we ask for the role of the Bible in *Abomisexuality*, it must be kept in mind that Dzampah sees his songs as given directly by the Holy Spirit. It would be strange if a divine authority would cite the Bible instead of speaking in its own words. Thus, we cannot expect too much literal quotations of scripture in these texts. But, of course there is a lot of the Bible in Dzampah’s songs. The earthly author (the only object accessible to academic analysis) grew up in a Christian environment and his thoughts and language are impregnated by biblical texts. It therefore makes sense to ask which biblical texts/concepts are in the background of *Abomisexuality* even though there are no direct quotations.

The title of the song can be seen as a first hint, as *Abomisexuality* is a newly created word combining ‘abomination’ and ‘sexuality’. ‘Abomination’ refers to a most influential text in the Christian debate on homosexuality, Lev. 18:22:

²² You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.

Also relevant in this regard is Lev. 20:13:

¹³ If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

In these texts we find important elements of Dzampah’s concept of homosexuality, as they both focus on homosexual acts without speaking of concepts such as sexual orientation/identity. Homosexual acts are seen as a matter of choice which should be avoided as they are against the divine commandment. The reason why Israel’s God is against such acts can be deduced from the specific expression “with a male like with a woman”. The obvious argument is that this expression serves to indicate it is against the divine world order that a man should be “turned into a woman” by being penetrated. In a patriarchal world, where the male gender is connected with domination, strength, and the power to rule, while the female gender is connected with being dominated, being helpless, weak, needing guidance and protection by a man (father, brother, husband), it is a crime to reduce a male person to the lower female status by treating him like a woman.

This concept can also be found in Gen. 19, where Lot saves his male visitors from a mass rape by offering his virgin daughters to the aggres-

sive masses.¹² In Ancient Near Eastern societies this was not a simple solution for a father, as his honour lay in preserving the virginity of his daughters until marriage. But it is apparent that the sexual abuse of male strangers was a much bigger damage than that of the own daughters. This is so because the females are naturally made for penetration, while males are not. The story in Gen. 19 also indicates that penetration was seen as an expression of power (cf. Gunda 2010:270f.). The father decides on the sexuality of his daughters without asking. Later their husband would decide without asking. And also the men who want to gang-rape the strangers use penetration as a power tool useful to put men of lower status on their place in the social hierarchy. This may also indicate that men in Judah/Israel could use the penetration of other men to show them their lower status.¹³ If that is true, the “Code of Holiness”¹⁴ (Lev. 18-26), to which both of these texts belong, even has implications of social justice. It states that no man should be humiliated by being used like a woman. This ideal of equality was perhaps no more than an ideal, and even one excluding women, but it can be used to make a difference between Judah/Israel, the chosen people, and the others.¹⁵

¹² *Abomisexuality*: 70 f. alludes to this story: “Sodomization of world nations / In the name of so called human rights / Gomorrhisation of the world nations / Is a rifle that will backfire”.

¹³ See also Judges 19, where another story of “phallic aggression” is told (cf. Gunda 2010:272-280).

¹⁴ The “Code of Holiness” is a collection of older material which most probably was put together in post-exilic time, in a period when Judah was a province of the Persian Empire. Compared with the elite of the empire Israel had all reason to feel powerless and poor. Through the strategy of othering, the “Code of Holiness” works on the problem of inferiority and precarious identity. The dominated ones are defined as those who are the chosen people of the only God while the others (adhering to non-existing gods) have nothing to do with him. By depicting Judah/Israel as a zone of holiness, the authors try to establish a national identity which *de facto* was not a given anymore. The tiny spot of Judah, unimportant Persian province, should be understood as the centre of creation, an area of holy otherness. Banning homosexual acts from this holy area was meant to disenfranchise the hierarchical structure of the empire. All Jewish men should be equal and different from pagan men (cf. Seidl 2009).

¹⁵ If we try to express the concept in gender language, the most powerful penetrator is the Persian king as the manliest of all men in the empire. His local vicar is the most powerful penetrator in Judah and the dominated local men are his wives. In the virtual zone of holy otherness, however, they can be real man, equal to each other, socially and also sexually. Women must be left out in this concept of equality as real man of

The strategy of othering (cf. Punt's article above) can be found all over the "Code of Holiness". Other peoples are doing evil things, but Israel will not do such. "Abomination" is one of the central expressions for the taboos which separate God's own people from others. The dietary rules belong to this strategy also. They are identity markers and create corporate identity by making a difference between Judah/Israel and the *gojim*, and reducing communication between them by excluding the central point of eating together. The regulations on sexuality given in the "Code of Holiness" also are part of othering strategy. Israel is holy, different from the pagan profane world, not only by avoiding abomination food but also by avoiding abomination sex.

The othering strategy in Leviticus perfectly corresponds with the discussion on homosexuality as an un-African phenomenon. Othering homosexuality as something colonial/neo-colonial is a good contribution towards building up a post-colonial identity, especially since most African states are colonial products and still lack a national identity. Many Africans still feel/are poor and helpless, dominated by foreign powers.

Related with the idea of holiness is also the death penalty in Lev. 20:13, which finds no reception in *Abomination*. The reason may be twofold. The first is because Dzampah sees imprisoning as sufficient.¹⁶ And secondly, Lev. 20:13 not only sentences the penetrating man to death but the penetrated one as well. To punish the victim is clearly against Dzampah's ethics. In the framework of the Book of Holiness, however, ethics are not the major point. The supreme value is the pure holiness of God's people. A man turning into a woman by being penetrated is as much disturbing the holiness as does his abuser, and that is why he must also die.¹⁷ It would be difficult for Dzampah to adopt this thinking as this

course need someone to dominate/penetrate and homosexual acts must be banned as they would annihilate the equality of all men. If we add, that in the Ancient Near East many men were MSM, the tabooing of homosexuality contributes even more to the creation of corporate identity by othering.

¹⁶ As a born Catholic he may also have a principle distance to the death penalty since the Popes are preaching against it.

¹⁷ The same structure can be found in the ban on sex with animals, where the penetrated animal also has to die. This logic can be understood if one compares Israel with the temple. It is holy to be being separated from the pagan surroundings and therefore it can be the pure and holy house for God? If a priest violates the purity of the temple by killing or injuring a fellow priest, both of them will be thrown out. Aggressor and victim are both disturbing the holiness of the sanctuary.

archaic concept of holiness would be “immoral” for him. His main focus is always on the victim and on the physical damage which is done to him:

The human being is dehumanized
 Losing nature's break for his rectum
 And the power to apply the break
 Surely this is our *major* complaint
 (*Abomination*: 53, my italics)

Another important biblical background text for *Abomisexuality* is that which is referred to in Romans 1:26-27:

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.¹⁸
²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

While Old Testament texts do not put much emphasis on “nature”, the concept of “nature”/*physis* was of extreme importance in the Greek-Hellenistic culture which the New Testament context shared. Romans 1:26f. belongs to a larger part (1:18-3;20) of Paul's letter where the apostle attempts to show that all human beings – pagans as well as Jews – are sinners, deserving death. *Sola fide*, only by believing in the salvific death of Jesus Christ can they gain salvation. For the Jews he can use the Torah to “prove” their sinfulness. Being God's chosen people Israel has the explicit commandment in the Mosaic laws and can be judged on this basis. With the pagans, however, the case is more complicated. The apostle knows that it would be unfair to punish someone for not abiding by a law unknown to them. Paul solves the problem by saying that the pagans have the law in their hearts. Of course, this cannot be the Mosaic Law specifically; it is the law of nature. Thus nature is extremely important to him, as only an appeal to this “natural law” could provide a basis upon which he can declare acts as sinful which the doers themselves did not see as evil in their cultural context.¹⁹

¹⁸ Paul has to mention women also as he wants to show that *all* are sinners and need the salvific power of Jesus' death. Although this article focuses on MSM, it might be worth saying that verse 26 may not refer to lesbianism only. The use of an artificial penis or even reptiles for the pleasure of upper-class women can be meant similarly.

¹⁹ Of course, Jews always saw pagans as sinners without using the idea of *physis*/nature, but in Romans Paul is addressing a mixed Christian group, consisting of a Jewish mi-

Many men in Greek and Roman time were MSM. In the tradition of the Greek cities, pederasty, the erotic relationship between an older citizen and a free boy (son of another citizen) was a cultural institution which (officially) was meant to educate the boy and introduce him into the society of free men. Pederasty can even be understood as a *rite de passage* indicating the end of childhood.²⁰ While only Plato made an attempt to exclude any sexual aspect from this relationship (so-called “Platonic love”), the common understanding of this was to have sex with a boy but to avoid anal penetration.²¹ The boy as a future citizen should not be “turned into a woman”. The free citizen was part of the ruling elite and women could not rule as being “female” was the same as being “inferior”. That is why such a boy was supposed to show no interest²² during intercourse and stay without any arousal during the act. This, however, seems to be an artificial construction and reality of pederasty most probably was different from this. From her analysis of Greek literature and pottery painting, Carola Reinsberg (1993:189-199) assumes that full penetration was a taboo but nevertheless widespread. As pederasty with its initiatory/educational understanding was an exclusively aristocratic phenomenon there was an ongoing cultural discourse on it. Therefore, it is much better documented than other types of homosexual acts. The remarks made in popular texts such as comedies indicate that, apart from pederasty, the sexual use of slaves and prostitutes was common

nority and a majority of non-Jews (*hellenoi*). Therefore, he cannot simply share in the traditional Jewish “pagans-bashing”. Instead, he must argue in a way that is plausible to non-Jews too.

- ²⁰ The pederastic relationship often started when the boy was 12 years old and should normally end with the boy’s adolescence. Citizens, who loved someone who already was beyond puberty, were mocked by their fellow citizens as loving “a hairy ass” (Reinsberg 1993:168f.). Erotic relationships could lead to the charge of prostitution when the “boy” was found to be beyond 18.
- ²¹ The ideal sexual technique, therefore, was seen in intercourse between the thighs of the boy who was supposed to stand upright, face to face with his partner. Turning his back, bowing or laying down would have been seen as too feminine.
- ²² For the boy’s later career it was important to have a lover of high social status. That is why particularly attractive boys tried to find the best man and reject others. The elder one had to impress the boy in many ways. Gifts are often depicted, specifically rabbits and cocks. These animals were connected with hunting and fighting. So they served well as symbols of aggressive masculinity. (Cf. Reinsberg 1993:176-178) Often the difference between pederastic gifts and prostitution payments was not clear. (Reinsberg 1993:180-187)

and included all genders. As shame was exclusively put onto the penetrated man, there was no problem, as long as the social hierarchy was maintained in homosexual acts, i.e. the higher ranking man had to be the (male) penetrator while the less honourable man should be in the (female) role of being penetrated. Homosexual relationships between equals were a taboo, especially when the persons involved were two citizens. Free men must not have sexual intercourse/relationship with each other as at least one of them would have lost his male honour by being “turned into a woman”. Only high discretion could save the men involved from societal marginalisation and other sanctions.

The hierarchical context of sexuality given, homosexual acts can also be found in the context of war. The successful soldiers could use penetration to humiliate the defeated enemy. Sexual violence against men and women was seen as the perfection of victory – as it is even today.



| 23

The cultural basis for this concept was the understanding of penetration as aggression in order to subjugate. Penetration shows the superiority of the penetrating man. Women were seen as inferior “by nature”, which

²³ The pottery painting (470/460 BC) shows a Greek soldier hunting a defeated Persian in order to rape him (Cf. Reinsberg 1993:177).

means that it was their “natural” role to be penetrated. Slaves and defeated enemies were inferior and thus it was their role to be penetrated. While most modern discourses are dominated by sexual identity, in ancient times the only relevant category for MSM was “role”. As long as a man played the masculine role of penetrating, it was not important if he penetrated a woman, a man or even an animal. To penetrate a man could even be seen as boosting his manliness, because a man who managed to dominate another man could be considered stronger than one who could dominate only women.

This aspect of domination/superiority was of great importance in Roman times too. Roughly stated, it was the only important aspect because Roman culture did not know the institution of pederasty as a *rite de passage*. When the emperor both slept with the wives of his senators and penetrated their sons, he showed to the aristocratic ex-elite in a sexual way that republican times have gone and senators are no better than slaves. When the same emperor allowed a slave to penetrate him, it served as a reason to find him ridiculous. A penetrated man (= woman) cannot be the leader of the Roman world power.²⁴ That is also why Caesar’s opponents mocked him as “the Queen of Bithynia” (Suetonius, Caesar: 49) in order to block his way to autocratic rule. The rumour that he had been penetrated by Nicomedes of Bithynia, i.e., a regional king inferior to Rome, had a clear political message: a penetrated (female) man cannot rule over the Roman Empire (cf. Suetonius, Caesar: 22) as female persons are unable to rule. If Caesar would have penetrated the Bithynian king he would have played the “natural” role of a Roman ruler chosen by the gods to dominate the world. Of course, homosexuality was not limited to the political elite. We must assume that the cultural world the addressees of Paul’s letter were living in was full of MSM. Usually free men used slaves (of any gender) for their personal pleasure. That was no ethical topic as long as they preserved their role as the dominant man. Sexual encounters or relationships between free men were rejected in Rome as they had been in Greek *polis* culture. No citizen should lose his status as member of the ruling elite by being turned into a woman.

²⁴ The concept can already be found in Ancient Egypt. The myth of Horus and Seth (papyrus Chester Beatty I, 20th dynasty) tells how Seth tries to discard his competitor by penetrating him. Seth fails. Horus, however, manages to triumph over Seth by making him pregnant from his semen. So Horus gains the divine throne (cf. Lichtheim 1976:219f.).

To sum up, the Roman context of Paul and his addressees was fairly similar to the Ghanaian context as Paul Dzampah sees it: Homosexuality is conceived as a hierarchical act of domination. Neither sexual orientation/identity nor relationships between equals play a role.

Both the apostle and Dzampah reject such homosexuality as against nature. We must, however, note a difference here. These two Pauls do use the concept of nature differently: while, with *physis*, the apostle Paul refers to the (culturally) natural role of the man who should penetrate women and not be penetrated by another man, Paul Dzampah focuses first and foremost on the physical aspect of nature. The rectum is biologically built as an exit and should not be used as an entrance. As mentioned above, role aspects can be found also, but the health of the rectum is a major concern.

In summary it can be said that Dzampah's homomisia is influenced specifically by the abomination concept of the "Holiness Code" in Leviticus and the *physis*-concept of Romans 1. Although he understands the Bible as the direct Word of God his hermeneutics are quite selective as only specific aspects of the biblical texts are adopted. It would thus be mistaken to claim that his homomisia is a result of biblical interpretation. Rather, his concept of homosexuality is formed by cultural factors of post-colonial Africa, particularly the debate on African Christian identity. Biblical elements are used to support this cultural construction, but this is where it ends. Therefore Dzampah's homomisia differs from the specific biblical texts which condemn same-sex intercourse. Even if his reading does share certain aspects from those texts, such as "nature", these are entirely absorbed by the discourses of today and so lose their original contextual meanings for current cultural or contextual readings. Thus, Dzampah's use of the Bible is quite similar to what Gunda (2010:154-157) found in the Zimbabwean debate on homosexuality. The Bible users do not necessarily derive the knowledge about right and wrong from the Bible but, instead, from current cultural sources. As in many cases biblical traditions are amalgamated into these cultural sources, bible users do not notice that the text of the Bible is not the origin of their concepts. One's own position (views, concepts, attitudes and values) is usually derived from non-biblical sources such as the family tradition, education, culture, the dominant societal mainstream, political correctness, personal preferences or deformations, and so on. The Bible only serves as a source for finding confirmation of one's own view in the Word of God. Gunda shows in a most convincing way that not

only the conservative-homomisian party reads the Bible in a highly selective and ideological way, but also the gay-rights movement does so. The difference is, however, that the gay-friendly interpretation is usually only pro-gay and not anti-heterosexual. That means that a gay-friendly reading of the Bible may also be highly ideological but, at the same time, it is self-defensive and not trying to aggressively eliminate other sexual orientations.

Abomisexuality, the Bible and violence against homosexuals

In contrast to the texts in Leviticus, Dzampah is explicitly against killing gay people. They have to be put in prison as the state has the duty to protect their potential victims, but he clearly rejects violence:

We don't call for the gay to be killed
 He's our brother he may change one day
 But we don't want him to change our sons
 We have right to defend our interest
 We don't call for gays to be harassed
 They must stop harassing our sons
 We have the right to defend our laws
 And how dare you to take that from us
 (*Abomisexuality*: 74)

The supreme goal is to change gay men: "Come let's change gays before they change us" (*Abomisexuality*: 78). The problem is, however, that most homosexuals are not known. So it would be an advantage to have "open gays". Then they could be watched and be isolated:

Mic. was tried for molesting children
 After showing them pornography
 If he were to be an open gay
 The parents would have been more careful
 Yes open gays can help us better
 We can then rescue our children
 We don't have our girls too close to males
 We would then keep our boys far from gays
 By removing gays from boys' hostel
 By removing gays from male toilettes
 By removing gays from the male wards
 We want to avoid tempting the gays
 Marriage does not help the sex-crazy
 Neither does it help the sex-deviant
 Even we, we try not to get too close
 For sex is highly inflammable

The public eyes help us in this case
 We care how people would regard us
 But the gay evades public satellite
 That's what makes him really more dangerous
 (*Abomisexuality*: 75)

This passage is highly interesting as it shows the partial influence of the Western homosexuality concept when it regards homosexuals not simply as MSM, but as a species beyond male and female. This species must be separated from the world of men as can be seen from the following quotation (*Abomisexuality*: 70) too:

The gay no more fit for boys' hostel
 Neither qualified for girls' hostel
 Gays cheating on us in boys' hostel
 Activist where do we house them now?
 The gay no more fit for male prison
 Neither qualified for the female
 Gays cheating on us in male prison
 UN Chief where do we lock them now?

The whole society must be united against homosexuality as the litany of different groups in *Abomisexuality*, 67-70 suggests:

You the biologist must rebuke the gay
 He's confusing students of the subject
 /.../
 You the scientist be concerned by this
 He is distorting the facts that you wrote
 /.../
 You good footballer must rebuke the gay
 He's robbing you of future spectators
 /.../
 You the good trader must rebuke the gay
 He's robbing you of future customers
 /.../
 Army General must rebuke the gay
 He's robbing you of men and officers
 /.../
 You politician must rebuke the gay
 He is robbing you of future voters
 /.../
 You, the President must reprove the gay
 He's robbing you of future citizens
 /.../
 You the good doctor must rebuke the gay
 He is robbing you of future patients
 /.../

You the employer must query the gay
 He presides over our depletion
 /.../
 You the humanist must topple the gay
 He presides over our extinction
 /.../
 You naturalist must talk to the gay
 He must be your student number A 1
 /.../
 You psychologist must counsel the gay
 He must be your client “numéro un”
 /.../
 You the psychiatric examine the gay
 He must be patient of intensive care
 /.../
 You the policeman must arrest the gay
 He is disturbing the public order
 /.../
 You the good preacher must preach to the gay
 He must be your target Nummer A eins
 /.../
 You the spiritual must pray for the gay
 He needs your prayers for his deliverance

This is a strategy of othering which creates a firmly united “We” against homosexuals and their supporters. The wish that homosexuality should not exist, is obvious. Homosexuals simply have no place in the ideal Afro-Christian society Dzampah is striving for. This way of thinking is not at all innocent. The wish that a specific group of people may change so that the group as such no longer exists can be seen as an eliminatory concept of ideological violence. If ideas are suggesting a specific way of acting, then Dzampah can be called a *Schreibtsichtäter*.²⁵ Paul is an extremely peaceful person and he never will be found with the street gangs chasing and killing men alleged to be gay. His eliminating concept, however, can be seen as a preparation of physical violence. Eliminatory texts such as *Abomisexuality* contribute to a social climate fostering the development of hate, resulting in physical violence finally. The combination of laws against homosexual *acts* and the hybrid concept of seeing MSM as a dangerous *species* produces a potentially explosive mixture. In the end, like in Uganda, it may happen that men can be beaten to death

²⁵ On the contribution of modern theologians to the climate of hate, cf. Van Klinken & Gunda 2012.

(even without ever having had sex with a man) simply because someone says “he is gay”.²⁶ If modern African societies want to avoid creating an additional source of violence they will have to develop more inclusive concepts of African identity and African Christianity. And they will also have to think about the role of the Bible in public discourse. In modern African societies it will not suffice to use the Bible selectively as a manual for public and private life. Instead, kind of a critical reading of the Bible will be needed (cf. Gunda 2015).

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²⁶ For the situation in Uganda seen from a victim perspective cf. Dada 2014.

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