

TOWARDS HOLISTIC SEXUAL FLOURISHING IN AFRICA

Daniel Osei Bediako-Akoto

Towards Holistic Sexual Flourishing in Africa

Another Look at Human
Sexuality from a Ghanaian
Christian Standpoint with
the Presbyterian Church
of Ghana as a Case



Boekencentrum *Academic*, Utrecht

www.uitgeverijboekencentrum.nl

Boekencentrum *Academic* is part of Uitgeverij Boekencentrum

This publication is no. 58 in the Mission series (Missiological Research in the Netherlands).

Editorial board:

Prof.dr. M.T. Frederiks

Prof.dr. M.M. Jansen

Prof.dr. A.M. Kool

Cover design: Oblong, Jet Frenken

Cover photo: Mieke Hoekstra, www.lafreelancealot.frl

Typesetting: Gewoon Geertje

ISBN 978 90 239 7167 2

NUR 706

© 2017 Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, Utrecht (The Netherlands)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording or otherwise – without written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in articles or reviews.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	9
List of Abbreviations	13
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	15
1.1 Statement of the Problem	15
1.1.1 Sexuality as a taboo: silence over sexuality	16
1.1.2 Sex and gender	18
1.1.3 Sex as procreation	20
1.2 Aim of Research	22
1.3 Research Question	23
1.4 Key Concepts and Background	25
1.4.1 Defining sexuality	25
1.4.2 Defining the African context	28
1.4.3 Defining the church	29
1.4.4 Historical and cultural introductions	30
1.5 Delineating the Field of Research	34
1.6 Methodology	36
1.7 Structure of the Book	44
1.8 Relevance of the Research	44
1.9 Conclusion	45
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	47
2.1 Introducing the Main Themes	47
2.2 Existing Research on Sexuality in the African Context	47
2.2.1 Silence and sexuality in Africa	47
2.2.2 Gender in Africa	51
2.2.3 Sexual behaviour in Africa	57
2.2.4 What contribution this study seeks to make	59
2.3 Towards a New Theology of Sexuality: Redeemed Sexuality	60
2.3.1 Why the notion of redemption and how does it connect with sexuality in the study?	60
2.3.2 Redeemed sexuality is essential to holistic human flourishing	64
2.3.3 Redeemed sexuality: biblical foundations	66
2.3.4 Redeemed sexuality: three elaborations	69
2.3.5 Redeemed sexuality and the African context	78
2.3.6 Creation and redemption	81
2.3.7 Redeemed sexuality: summary of key characteristics	85
2.4 Conclusion	86

CHAPTER 3: EXISTING PARADIGMS OF SEXUALITY IN AFRICA	88
3.1 Introduction	88
3.2 Sexuality issues of contemporary theological concern in Africa	89
3.2.1 Silence over sexuality	90
3.2.2 Gender challenges today	110
3.2.3 Issues of concern regarding sexual behaviour today	111
3.3 Traditional African Paradigms of Sexuality (TAPs)	118
3.3.1 Silence over sexuality under TAPs	118
3.3.2 Gender within TAPs	120
3.3.3 Sexual behaviour under TAPs	127
3.4 Traditional Christian Paradigms of Sexuality (TCPs)	138
3.4.1 Broader context of sexuality in the church in Europe from which the missionaries came to Africa	138
3.4.2 Sexuality scene in the 19th century Europe	143
3.4.3 TCPs and silence over sexuality	147
3.4.4 Gender under TCPs	148
3.4.5 TCPs and sexual behaviour	151
3.5 Conclusion	158
CHAPTER 4: PCG MEMBERS' OPINIONS ON SEXUALITY	160
4.1 Introduction	160
4.2 A Brief Summary and Justification for Using the FGD Approach	160
4.2.1 Congregations, composition and consent of groups involved in the research	160
4.2.2 Pilot study	163
4.2.3 Analysis of Data	164
4.3 Field Report: General Remarks/Observations	166
4.3.1 The youth and sexuality	166
4.3.2 Discussion groups compared/contrasted	167
4.4 Responses from the Discussions	168
4.4.1 Participants' views about maleness and femaleness	168
4.4.2 Role of Bible on participants' sexual opinions	169
4.4.3 Participants' opinions on gender	170
4.4.4 What participants said about sexual behaviour	175
4.4.5 Use of African wise-sayings in participants' responses	182
4.4.6 The church's handling of sexuality	184
4.5 Conclusion	186
4.5.1 What my research did not find	186
4.5.2 What my research found	187

CHAPTER 5: EVALUATION OF TRADITIONAL PARADIGMS AND MEMBERS' OPINIONS ON SEXUALITY	189
5.1 Introduction	189
5.2 Silence over Issues of Sexuality	189
5.3 Gender-Roles	193
5.3.1 Challenging the two-genders-only discourse	194
5.3.2 Women's roles in Africa	197
5.3.3 Men in African communities	208
5.3.4 Harmful gender categories: African sayings	214
5.3.5 Re-reading Genesis 1-3	220
5.4 Sexual Behaviour	223
5.4.1 Penile-vaginal expressions	223
5.4.2 Oral sex	224
5.4.3 Masturbation	227
5.4.4 Singleness and "appropriate vulnerability"	230
5.4.5 Pre-marital sex: delayed gratification or "our day" eaten too early?	233
5.4.6 Childbirth as sexual pleasure?	236
5.4.7 Homosexuality and the African socio-cultural context	243
5.4.8 The church and homosexuality	245
5.5 Conclusion	246
 CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	 247
6.1 Introduction	247
6.2 Breaking Gender Stereotypes	250
6.2.1 Restoring human dignity	250
6.2.2 Restoring equality between women and men	251
6.2.3 Fighting double standards	253
6.2.4 Recognizing sexual complexities	255
6.3 Enriching Sexual Expressions	258
6.3.1 Sexual pleasure has many sides	258
6.4 Tackling Sexual Silence in the Church	262
6.5 Need for Sexual Paradigm Shift: Theology of Redeemed Sexuality	263
6.6 Recommendations	265
6.6.1 Society	265
6.6.2 Church	266
6.6.3 Theology	267
6.7 Areas of Further Research	268
 Nederlandse samenvatting	 269
Summary in English	274

Bibliography	279
Primary Sources	279
Secondary Sources	283
- Books	283
- Articles	303
- Other Online Publications	313
- Dissertations Consulted	315
Appendixes	317
Appendix One: Questions for Focus Group Discussion	317
Appendix Two: Questions for Pilot Study	319
Appendix Three: Participants’ Consent Form	323
Appendix Four: A Pictorial Impression of Focus Group Discussions	327
Appendix Five: The Basel Missionary Society’s Rules on Marriage	329
Appendix Six: Wedding Night Sexual Experiences of ‘Inexperienced’ Young couples	330
Appendix Seven: Plight of Two Masturbating Persons	332
Appendix Eight: EAA’s Mother’s ‘Bold Attempt’	333
Index	335
Curriculum Vitae	346
Mission Series	348

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Rev. Professors Ntreh and Anum of the University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana, with whom this doctoral journey began in 2009/2010 before its continuation in the Netherlands. I thank Rev Martin Obeng and Mr Kojo Okyere for their support in the early days of my PhD programme at UCC. I thank Rev and Mrs Andam of the Methodist Church – Ghana for accepting to host me at Abakrampa during my UCC days as I commuted to and from their home and UCC campus.

I am deeply grateful to Professors Mechteld Jansen and Marcel Barnard through whose untiring supervisory role this doctoral thesis has seen the light of day. Indeed, it was a challenging academic journey yet you didn't give up. Your faith in me has paid off and I say a big thank you for it. I also thank Dr. Pieter Dronkers for accepting to assist me re-structure the work. Pieter's strong but very helpful editing hands have really contributed immensely to bring the dissertation to its present state for which I will be forever grateful. I thank Mr Anthony Runia, who graciously accepted to correct my English for me as well as Ms Eleonora Hof and Mr Rob van Waarde, colleague PhD candidates, who on numerous occasions provided very useful suggestions for some portions of the study.

I thank Mr Huub Lems through whose kind assistance I obtained all the necessary funding for the study when, halfway through the journey of this project, the PCG Emmanuel Congregation of Amsterdam withdrew all the funds it had earlier on provided for this project. I thank Rev. A. van de Broek, Rev. Dr Ayetey-Nyampong, the then Director for Ecumenical and Social Relations at the General Assembly (GA) of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), and Mr Kwakye Odamé for all the background roles they played to initiate the move for this doctoral programme. My appreciation goes to the then Moderator of the GA, Rt. Rev. Dr. Yaw Frimpong-Manso, Rev. Hebert Anim Oppong, the then Clerk of GA, and Rev. Dr. William K. Ofosu-Addo, the then Director of Mission and Evangelism at the GA office for facilitating the process of my coming to the Netherlands and for the privilege of being assigned pastoral responsibilities while I undertook this project. The arrangement has helped me immensely in the writing of this dissertation. Among the several benefits of that arrangement, the following two need to be mentioned. Firstly, my pastoral role during the period of study offered me a welcome feedback on the sensitive subject of sexuality. Most of the members with whom I shared some findings criticized, questioned and made very useful contributions to the theoretical assumptions I shared with them. This always forced me to go back over some of my arguments to recheck how they served the overall sexual needs of the members of the church or otherwise. This therefore served as a kind of 'built-in' critique mechanism of my positions. The other benefit was the

privilege and opportunity the pastoral role itself offered me to recruit participants for the field research in the Netherlands.

I extend my appreciation to the current leadership of the PCG, the Rt. Rev Prof. Emmanuel Martey and Rev Dr. Ayetey-Nyampong the Moderator of the GA and the Clerk of GA respectively for the support they provided me whenever duty took them to Europe in the course of the study.

My appreciation goes also to the leadership and entire members of the Rejoice Congregation at Kade for accepting to be our ‘home’ congregation as my wife and I were sent out by the PCG as student-missionary in Europe. I cherish the spiritual assistance in the form of unflinching prayer support as well as the moral and material support they provided.

I thank Rev Angelina Danso, Rev Bernard Bamfo Bosompem, Rev Roger Wegurih, Rev & Mrs Gyamfi Mensah, Mr & Mrs K. Agyena, Ms Doris Vidda, Nana Barimah Asamoah Kofi IV, Mr & Mrs Okraku Atiemo, Mr. Richard Owusu, a PhD candidate, Mr Ofori-Agyei, Rev Kutu, Rev Konadu Boahen, Mr & Mrs K. Owusu-Ansah, Mr Samuel Tetteh, Mad. Yaa Gyamfua, my ‘daughter’ Yaa Wonder and ‘The Ladies’ for the moral and spiritual support they gave me whenever I was emotionally down in the course of the study. Also to Mr. David Korley, Mr Robert Agyei (Odehye), Mr. Francis Owusu-Ansah, Mr Sammy Mireku and Mr Sammy Owusu who ran various errands for me including picking up and returning library books for me whenever I was under stress, I say a big thank you.

The following persons contributed generously to get me an iPad which became a huge blessing by keeping me in touch with the work at all times and in all places to add to it and to take away from it as and when it became necessary. To them I express my deepest appreciation. They are Mr Schandorf Afari, Mr Peter Takyi, Mr David Korley, Ms Christiana Osei Owusu, Ms Harriet Asiamah, Ms Mavis Ofosua (Kaakyire), Ms Lucy Amoako, Ms Juliana Owusu Nsiah, Ms Henrietta O. Asare, Ms Ivy Dowuona, Naa Ashiokai and Ms Judith Gyimah.

I am grateful to Dr Alexander Nueh (a.k.a. Kwasi Broni), then a PhD candidate, and his wife Obaa Yaa Afrakomah, Rev. Dr Isaac Amoah, Rev. Dr Abamfo Atiemo, Rev. Prof. D.A. Kpobi, Rev. Dr J. W. Acheampong, and Dr Mrs Lilian Ayetey-Nyampong for their moral and intellectual support.

I express my heartfelt appreciation to the leadership and entire membership of the Holland/Belgium District of the PCG for the huge material, psychological and spiritual support accorded me in this study. Mention must also be made of the generosity that the Emmanuel Congregation in Amsterdam demonstrated to me by paying for all the books that I needed for the study. For this kind gesture and many more, I thank the entire membership and the Session whose names I lack the space to mention here.

I am greatly indebted to some immediate family members who, in one way or the other, were directly involved in the ups and downs of undertaking this impor-

tant project. Among these, particular mention must be made of our son Samuel Oteng Bediako who was my best friend in the course of the study; our daughters Maa Adwoa, Salo, Gifty, Grace and Godfred for the sacrifices you all made to allow Mum and me to be away from you at the time you needed us most. I thank Afua Agyeiwaa (Ms Ernestina Owusu) and your children as well for keeping our home in Ghana for us so that I could be away from home to undertake this study.

Most important of all is the deepest appreciation which I express to my dear wife, Mrs Juliana Osei Bediako for the ceaseless emotional, spiritual, moral as well as physical support and contribution towards the successful completion of this project. You had to make a lot of sacrifices to make this project possible. You kindly read over the work and made very useful corrections. Without your kind and selfless support I wouldn't have come this far with this doctoral programme and to you, therefore, I say a big thank you. Indeed, you have been behind it all, 'Ayekoo'!!!

List of Abbreviations

ABC	– Abstinence, Being faithful, Condom use
ARC	– Agricultural Research Centre
ATRs	– African Traditional Religions
AU	– African Union
BDB	– Brown, Driver and Briggs
BMS	– Basel Missionary Society
CCG	– Christian Council of Ghana
CDs	– Compact Discs
CEB	– Common English Bible
CEV	– Common English Version
ESV	– English Standard Version
FGD	– focus group discussions
FGM	– female genital mutilation
GNB	– Good News Bible
HIV/AIDS	– human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ICT	– information communication technology
LCC	– Local Council of Churches
LGBT	– lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
NRSV	– New Revised Standard Version
NT	– New Testament
NUPS-G	– National Union of Presbyterian Students-Ghana
OAU	– Organization of African Unity
OT	– Old Testament
PBFs	– penis-bearing females
PCG	– Presbyterian Church of Ghana
PW	– Priestly Writer
STDs	– sexually transmitted diseases
TAPs	– traditional African paradigm of sexuality
TCPs	– traditional Christian paradigm of sexuality
VBMs	– vagina-bearing males
WHO	– World Health Organization
YMCA	– Young Men’s Christian Association

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study problematizes and re-evaluates opinions on human sexuality among members of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) against the backdrop of existing paradigms of sexuality in Ghana today. In the assessment of these opinions, the theological notion of ‘redeemed sexuality’ will function as the evaluative framework.¹ This notion is rooted in the theological argument that in Christ *all things have become new* for humans and, as sexual beings, this newness touches on their sexual identities too.² ‘Redeemed sexuality’ seeks to promote holistic *human sexual flourishing*³ and a positive attitude towards sexuality. I will begin with the opinions of church members. However, I will also explore the traditional paradigms against the background of which these views are formulated and discuss the reported sexual behaviour related to these opinions.

In this first section, I will introduce and characterize the opinions on sexuality that I will problematize and re-evaluate in the study. As I will demonstrate, true sexual wellbeing is often negated, and this becomes especially problematic and particularly pressing in three areas that are central to my study.

Firstly, in most communities of Africa⁴ the fear of breaking sexual taboos often prevents an open conversation about sexuality.⁵ Secondly, there are strong expectations about the specific roles and different ways in which men and women should define and express their own sexuality. Thirdly, there is a widely shared opinion that sexuality

1 A full treatment of this is given under 2.3.

2 See 2 Corinthians 5:17.

3 These key concepts employed in this study are explained under sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.

4 I am quite aware of the possible danger of overgeneralization of issues concerning Africa. I have therefore set an appropriate limit to my work of which I give details in the last paragraph of section 1.1.3 and in 1.4.2.

5 The question of silence over sexuality needs some qualification here. My research indicates that silence in relation to human sexuality is not peculiar to African societies alone. It seems to be the case that sexuality attracts some level of discretion and/or silence in other cultures outside of Africa as well. Cf. Donald Symons, “On the Evolution of Human Sexuality” in David N. Suggs and Andrew W. Miracle, eds., *Culture and Human Sexuality: A Reader* (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing, 1993), 73; Renee DePalma and Elizabeth Atkinson, “The sound of silence: talking about sexual orientation and schooling”, *Sex Education*, Vol. 6, Issue 4 (2006), 334f; Carissa M. Froyum, “Making ‘good girls’: sexual agency in the sexuality education of low-income black girls”, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, vol. 12, Issue 1 (2010), 59ff., and John Maury Allin, “Foreword”, in Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes, III, eds., *Male and Female: Christian Approaches to Sexuality* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), vii. In any case, it is important to stress that the focus of this current study is on possible effects of silence over sexuality in Africa.

exists only for the goal of procreation. In the next three subsections, I will give a first description of these three clusters – *sexual taboos*, *gender inequality*, and *focus on procreation*.⁶

1.1.1 Sexuality as a taboo: silence over sexuality

Sexual taboos come to the surface in three different ways in Africa. Firstly, there is a general feeling of discomfort in connection with talk about sexuality in most communities.⁷ Sexuality is often considered too sacred,⁸ mysterious⁹ or even dangerous¹⁰ to talk about. In most of these communities any kind of sexual activity is expected to take place in secret and away from all, particularly children. The taboo nature of sexuality demands that when sexuality has to be discussed in the open, this has to be done in figurative speech rather than in plain language.¹¹ However, as long as sexuality remains a taboo, it will be very difficult for any society to change attitudes and opinions that might hinder people from flourishing sexually.

Secondly, sexuality is often seen as something that dents the reputation of a person or makes him/her ‘dirty’. This position seems to have gained much impetus also from the church’s portrayal of sexuality as ‘unspiritual’, ‘immoral’ and ‘carnal’.¹² From this perspective on sexuality, mere engagement in sexual talk may easily lead to stigmatization.¹³ Thus, sexuality neither makes for an ‘enjoyable sphere’ nor for an issue of celebration for many people. However, sexuality is about

6 Subsequently, these will be referred to as *silence over sexuality*; *issues related to gender*; and *sexual behaviour* respectively.

7 Scholastica Nganda, “Sex Education: Do Our Teens Need It?” in Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale, Richmond Tiemoko and Paulina Makinwa-Adebusoye, eds., *Human Sexuality in Africa: Beyond Reproduction* (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2007), 53.

8 Michael Moloney, “Married Couples and the Expression of Sexuality during and after Middle Age” in Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale, Richmond Tiemoko and Paulina Makinwa-Adebusoye, eds., *Human Sexuality in Africa: Beyond Reproduction* (Johannesburg: Fanele, 2007), 158; see also Signe Arnfred, “‘African Sexuality’/Sexuality in Africa: Tales and Silences” in Signe Arnfred, ed., *Re-thinking Sexualities in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Uppsala: The Nordic Africa Institute, 2006), 69.

9 Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women & Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 23, 33.

10 Karabo Mohlakoana, “It was Rocky, Long, Winding and Twisted”, *Feminist Africa*, Issue 11 (2008), 74.

11 Scholastica Nganda, “Sex Education: Do Our Teens Need It?”, 53.

12 Cf. Nii & Margaret Amoo-Darku, *Biblical Marriage in an African Context* (Accra: SonLife, 2008), 158.

13 Sylvia Tamale, “Researching and Theorising Sexualities in Africa” in Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 12. (It is also worth mentioning that while I was writing this dissertation, someone anonymously published a defamatory article against me accusing me of writing a thesis on homosexuality as a ‘Minister of God’ even though I was writing on *sexuality* and not *homosexuality* as such. This is a typical case of stigmatization which those who decide to talk about sexuality are likely to be subjected to in most African societies such as Ghana.)