

A look at issue of homosexuality religion essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The response of the church to the issue of homosexuality is problematic; it is so because homosexuality now has become so evident and conspicuous. It is shocking how people are coming out in the open as being homosexual and how it is being discussed openly and even receives sympathy from some quarters in the church. The obvious fact is that it can no longer be ignored. In this paper I will discuss how the church in Africa should respond to this problem.

ANALYSIS OF CONTROVERSY

Homosexuality is a legal offence in most African countries, although in recent years there are attempts to legalize it in some countries, but it is legal in most American states. This is why it is a controversy to the Anglican Communion which is world wide.

The definition of homosexuality according to Woods Jr (1968, p. 135) " the word homosexual can be used to refer to various subtle gradations of erotic attraction or involvement between members of the same sex."

The moralist would dismiss moral objections on homosexuality basing on natural law, which they say natural law assumes that the structure of male and female genitals determine their function sexually. The early church also criticized same sex practices, for example Gagnon (2001, p. 163) puts it very well that " Jews, like Greek and Roman critics of Homosexuality, rejected it on the ground that it was against nature, that is apart from the fact that the law forbade same-sex intercourse." He says there are four reasons why only intercourse between male and female was considered to be in accordance with nature. The first he says is that there is no procreation in Homosexual

intercourse and the second reason is that it is an affront to how God designed the male and female organs. The third reason is that there is no natural erotic passion in Homosexual sex says Gagnon and the last he says is that not even animals practice Homosexual intercourse. But some scholars would argue that apart from reproduction purposes, sex serves a number of functions. According to Woods Jr. (1968) “ the judgment that sex is only for reproduction is as limited to an agrarian, low-population economy as the judgment that pearl are valuable is to a consumer economy.”

The Lambeth conference resolution number 1. 10 of 1998 states that in view of the teaching of scripture, that marriage should be between a man and a woman in a life long union, it recognized that there were persons who experienced themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Some of these people are church members and therefore need pastoral care, moral direction and God’s transforming power.

The resolution was to listen to the experience of the homosexual persons and ensure them that God loves them. Although they called for the ministry of the pastoral care to all irrespective of sexual orientation, the resolution did not advise the legitimizing or blessing of the same sex union nor ordaining those in same gender union.

Some would argue that in the Bible it is not clear what they meant by homosexuality. For example Bishop David Russell in his leaf let (page 3) wrote that the Biblical writers never ever contemplated the kind of homosexual that we are contemplating today, the Partnerships we are seeking to have affirmed in our time. I do not agree with him and others who

think in these lines because the Bible is very clear on homosexuality. In Leviticus 20 : 13, it is very clear that a man who has sexual relations with another man, both should be put to death because they have done repulsive thing. The other text, which condemns homosexuality in the New Testament, is Romans 1: 26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10. it is therefore very clear that homosexuality is condemned in the Bible. If the homosexual of the Bible (Leviticus 20: 13) is same as the homosexual of today, then homosexuality is an ancient form of sexual perversion.

Those who seem to support homosexual argue that we are all sinful, and we have God who is love, who loves infinitely. They even give the example of the woman caught in adultery (John 8) Jesus heals her and blessed her. They say this should be our approach to the whole problem in African communion.

The latest response concerning homosexuality was in the article, which appeared in the Post Newspaper of July 12, 2010, where the Church of England blocked the appointment of a gay clergyman (Jeffrey John) to the post of Bishop. This issue brought the liberals and conservatives at loggerheads, and could have possibly affect Arch Bishop Rowan Williams stand. It is the second time John is being rejected to be consecrated Bishop, on the ground of being gay. Williams said he was not going to allow himself to be pressured into supporting anyone.

According to Reuter as quoted in the post (ibid) Williams has always attempted to put a stop to the infighting over the issue of homosexuality in the Anglican Communion and last month he warned those member churches,

which approves them or actively oppose them that they will be sidelined from official doctrinal committees.

RESPONSE OF CHURCH IN AFRICA

The church in Africa does not have one voice on homosexuality. It is divided into three camps. There are those who support homosexuality, for example South Africa. There are those who are neutral, they neither support or condemn for example Zambia, Zimbabwe, and others are those who condemn for example Nigeria and Kenya

The province of the church of Central Africa that is Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi stand is that those persons who practice homosexuality are not setting a good example of what scripture teach and those bishops who knowingly ordain them act contrary to the scriptures and teaching of the church. They say it is the responsibility of the church to lead those who deviate from the right teaching of scripture to repentance, and to assure them of God's forgiveness, hope and dignity. I agree with this statement because it is not all who are in homosexual practices, who are doing because they want to, but some claim to be born homosexuals and they need to be helped.

This people have to be brought out and helped, according to Jacques (1976, p. 114) " the danger of repression is not that it stops people practicing their secret lusts and perversions but that it prevents them from acknowledging them." So the best way for the church to deal with homosexuality is to recognize that homosexuals are there and they need to be helped.

As for our country Zambia the problem is not a local one but a communion one. What I mean is that we do not have a homosexual problem as the Anglican Church in Zambia at the moment; we are involved because our church is a worldwide church and what ever affects doctrine in one area affects all. Nevertheless people in Zambia have commented on this issue, for example when Robinson was consecrated Bishop, the Bishop of Central Diocese Bishop Kamukwamba commented on 12th December, 2003 in an interview in Lusaka, the article that appeared on the website Anglican Evangelical Ministries, that the Bishops in Zambia were against the act because it is not biblical and was unchristian. He said the Anglican Church will not associate itself or support gays. He said, however ties with Anglican churches that tried to resist the ordination will be maintained. He said we should support and pray for others to resist further temptations. Another comment came from Bishop Mumbi of Luapula Diocese, just recently, in his capacity as Zambia Anglican Council Chairman stated as quoted in The Church of England Newspaper (2010) that although the West is promoting homosexual lifestyle it is against Christian belief and African values. He says our traditional morality as Zambians have received double assault from pressure of the west and from rapid breakdown of society due to urbanization.

From the above comments from the two bishops we can see that the church in Zambia does not support homosexuality, but at the same time wants to remain in communion with those who practice and support homosexuality. What they believe in is what the bible or scripture teach on marriage, for example, (Genesis 1&2) which states that God intended Man to be married

to a Woman. So following the Genesis arrangement, those who marry from same sex are obviously sinning.

Christianity also teaches us not to look down or discriminate sinners, this is shown by Jesus's example with the woman caught in adultery (John 8) he did not condemn or discriminate her and Jesus went to eat with the tax collector and sinners (Matthew 9: 9f). People should not be left in their acts of wrongdoing; they should be helped because people who live in sin will be punished. The example is (Genesis 18: 20) God punished the city of Gomorrah and Sodom for the same practices like homosexuality, so people should be helped to refrain from such practices and prayed for as bishop Kamukwamba above suggested.

Christianity should be a religion which should show an example of good morals, at the same time love and peace should be proclaimed to every person regardless of their sexuality. The church is the school for sinners and no one should be discriminated.

CONCLUSION

The issue of homosexuality has been with us for time immemorial, and it will remain with us as long as people continue to exist. But as the church we should approach it with caution, with understanding and consultation so that we may achieve our goal as people who are geared to bring about the kingdom of God. God accepts each one of us as we are, so we should accept each other as we are. So as the Anglican Church and the Arch bishop Williams are looking for the way out of this issue, which is threatening to

divide the church, they should embrace and co-exist with the people with homosexual problem in order to help them.