

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGE AND SAME-SEX PARTNERSHIPS APOLOGISTS

Rev'd. Odhiambo¹, E. O. Standslause², Ven. Onyango, P. Nehemiah³, L. Thomas Maito⁴

^{1,2,3}The Anglican Diocese of Bondo,

⁴Maasai Mara University, Kilgoris Campus,
KENYA.

¹standslauseodhiambo@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Marriage has been given to humanity by God to practice coexistence, the state of two beings functioning as one entity. The glue used to make coexistence hold together long enough that mental bonds are formed is the sexual gratification of the flesh. The binding of this relationship is further established through rearing children as a visible model of the spiritual birth and maturation process. And here is where the logic of same-sex partnerships runs counter to the laws of God: spiritual heirs of God are not reared by two mothers, or two fathers, but by one mother (the Church) and by one Father (God). Therefore, within the Church, marriage is always between a woman and a man and it is for life. This article articulates the Anglican Diocese of Bondo position on Biblical marriage and Same-Sex Partnerships.

Keywords: Marriage, Same-Sex Partnerships, homosexuality.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage was ordained by God as the union of one woman and one man. God defined marriage in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15-25), and commanded humankind to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28). In Matthew 19:4-5, Jesus tells us, “at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’ . . . ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ After creating Adam and Eve, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). A godly marriage relationship between a man and a woman symbolizes the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:25-33).

The creation account in Genesis chapter two gives the biblical basis for marriage. God saw that it was not good for man to be alone and so He created a female companion for him. According to Stott (1999), men and women are complementary and that these complementary differences constitute the basis for heterosexual marriage. Genesis 2:24 presents the concept that when a man and a woman are united in marriage relationship, it constitutes joining together of the two complementary people (Sahgal & Smith, 2009).

Because of Adam loneliness, God created Eve to fill this gap and his response to God’s creation of Eve presents a meaning. He said, “This is one of my bones and flesh of my flesh...” (Gen 2:23). The marriage covenant is more than a uniting of complementary people; it is a re-union. God created man and woman in a way that the two genders need each other in order to be all that He intended humanity to be. It has been noted that reproductive physiology is an indicator of this complementary interdependence and that “this design feature indicates that heterosexual union is that which is intended” (Botha, 2005). However, this complementary nature of the two genders extends beyond physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of humanity.

The element of marriage is, “for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). A man will be united to a woman hence one man and one woman. After their union, the man will leave his parents home and they establish a new family unit. The husband and wife becomes “one flesh,” not only in terms of sexual union, but also with respect to the other complementary gender differences. Jesus affirmed this understanding of marriage when He quoted Genesis account “... at the beginning God ‘made them male and female’, and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man put a sunder” (Matthew 19:4-6). Based on Gen 2:23-24 and quoted in Matthew 19:4-6, three facts can be deduced; (a) heterosexual gender is the product of divine will (b) heterosexual marriage is a divinely ordained institution (c) heterosexual fidelity is the divine intention. Stott argues that “a homosexual liaison is a break of all three of these divine purposes” (Stott, 1999).

According to conservative theologians and scholars the core purpose of marriage is procreation and that marriage cannot be divorced from its procreative potential (Wilson, 2005). The bible sanction sexual intercourse only within the bounds of marriage, natural reproduction results from sexual intercourse, so we argue that because same-sex partnerships cannot result in natural reproduction, it cannot be supported biblically.

METHODOLOGY

The research employed qualitative and quantitative research methods. The clergy and lay leaders in the Anglican Diocese of Bondo who were in a week’s long retreat in September, 2009 were interviewed and provided primary data. A total of forty two (42) were interviewed. Because of the nature of the research topic, the research was formed through the analysis of secondary data and in this respect, extensive library research was done, where journals, internet, newspapers, books, and reports were consulted and studied.

Same-Sex Partnerships Apologists

Same-sex partnerships, by definition, are not marriages. God’s design for marriage is not fulfilled by unions of same-sex partners. Such unions do not possess the complementarity between the sexes that God intended for marriage. It would be dishonest for any rational person to call homosexual relationships “marriages.” God hates dishonesty (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The liberal Christians who favour same-sex partnerships usually attempt to reinterpret the biblical texts which they erroneously purport to support homosexuality. The approach seems to be that if homosexuality can be scripturally justified, then same-sex partnerships is no exceptional. The Scriptures does not provide grounds for practicing homosexuality.

The same-sex partnerships protagonists argue that the biblical authors were addressing questions which were relevant then but not now. For instance, they argue that the attempted male gang rape of Genesis 19 is not relevant for today’s gay rights. This argument is fallacy because God and not culture established heterosexual monogamy and so it is both permanently and universally valid. The Anglican Diocese of Bondo argues convincingly that the Christian traditional understanding of exclusively heterosexual marriage is recognized from creation and time immemorial and that it is therefore superior to any human made law (The Anglican Diocese of Bondo, 2009).

The biblical commandment on adultery also precedes the Kenyan law, yet it is not legislated against. However, the Anglican Diocese of Bondo Christians should hold themselves

accountable to God's law. The Kenyan law does not prohibit adultery, but we as Christians know that we "shall not commit adultery" (Deut 5:18).

How we interpret the Scriptures lies at the root of the point of view we hold on same-sex partnerships. For those who believe that the Bible is, a description of how the authors understood things, the argument for or against same-sex partnerships is more one of social analysis than exegesis. Theological Scholars who hold a 'liberal' view of scripture reason from two poles. Firstly, what are the norms of society as it has evolved and secondly, what overriding biblical values govern the issue at hand? These scholars have identified love and justice as the two major bases that they believe should inform the same-sex partnerships discussion (Lozano-Beilat, 2009).

Apologists and their Concept of God's "Agape" Love

The apologists' concept is that God is love and because love is the highest virtue, all issues including same-sex partnerships, ought to be judged in terms of this concept. Biblically, love is a cardinal virtue but it does not stand in isolation. As recorded in the scripture, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Therefore, according to Jesus, love and obedience to God's injunctions are intertwined. This is elaborated when the bible says, "this is love for God, to obey his commands" (1 John 5:3). "Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6) and "Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22). Hence, the bible joins love with truth and obedience.

In the above quoted texts, it is evidently clear that obedience to God's commandments and truth partially define the concept of love. The liberal theologians who hold that love has primacy must then prudently define what they mean by love. Any vague meaning of love, uncoupled from the concepts of obedience and truth, opens the door to any "loving" relationship. If this argument is valid, then it is acceptable to have a loving and sexual simultaneous relationship with a number of partners therefore, the 'primacy of love' argument will legitimise polygamy.

Another argument from the primacy of love debate has to do with sexual expression. Same-sex partnerships apologists argue that, it is not just or loving to prevent people from expressing their love sexually according to their orientation. Sex is seen as an integral component of marriage and so the argument extends from homosexual activity to same-sex partnerships. However, the bible only affirms the sacredness and gives legitimacy to sexual expression within the marriage covenant but does not indicate that sex is essential for human fulfillment. On the contrary, the bible does not present celibacy and abstinence as regrettable human conditions (1 Cor 7:8). If this were the case then the scriptures would not teach against premarital sex.

Apologists and their Concept of God's Justice

The same-sex partnerships apologists, second argument in favour of same-sex partnerships, are the appeal to the pre-eminence of justice in the Scriptural revelation. Stott and Tutu hold the view that as we may not discriminate on the basis of gender or colour, so we may not discriminate because of sexual orientation (Stott, 1999). Same-sex partnerships then become a human rights issue. A counter argument to this is that we cannot claim a right which is not from God. Those who do not believe that human rights derive from the inherent dignity of humanity's creation in the image of God rather than from practical expediency and democratic opinion will not accept this refutation.

Pro-same-sex partnerships protagonist who is a Christian ethical analyst,” asserts that justice requires what he refers to as “de-centering” heterosexual marriage and extending social and theological legitimacy to same-sex partnerships. It is argued that the form and function of marriage is largely dependent on historical and cultural factors and claims that the concept of marriage is “evolving” and as a result, the concept of justice is the only standard by which we may judge the moral appropriateness of same-sex partnerships. But he acknowledges that marriage and family serve as building blocks of society and should, be regulated not by scriptural prohibitions, but rather by the concept of justice. He holds that justice demands the empowerment of same-sex partnerships as legitimate family form (Ellison, 2004).

It is prudent to note that justice is a terminology that describes what is fair and reasonable in terms of established law. Hence we assert that true justice reflects God’s character and is therefore eternal and not subject to cultural redefinition. Herein is the crux of the issue. The law of God is explicit that same-sex partnership is not acceptable therefore the law of God takes precedence on man’s law. As Christians we should influence civil law to conform to God’s law, because we know that divine concepts of justice take precedence over civic formulations (Masci, 2009).

A variation on the “justice” argument has been expressed on, “how God could create a homosexual person and then deny him, the right to sexual expression and marital fulfillment.” This subjective argument assumes that; God creates every human soul at the moment of conception and that this individual genetic creation determines cross-gender sexual orientation. We believe that the doctrine of immediate human soul creation flounders in the face of the doctrine of universal sin and the bible present homosexuality as a sin. This emotional and behaviour trait is like all other sinful patterns of behavior which is a product of humanity’s alienation from God. The Bible teaches that sin is a universal condition passed down through the generations of humankind since the fall of humanity. Homosexual orientation is, in this sense, no different from any other condition resulting from alienation from the creator. Protagonists of the “God made me gay” theory claim that modern genetic researchers have discovered what has popularly been labeled “the gay gene.” However, in his book the Bible and Homosex, cited from a secondary source, the genetic researcher Hamer states that “we have not found the gene which we don’t think exists for sexual orientation.” He also cites, from another secondary source, LeVay as stating that “I did not prove that homosexuality is genetic, or find a genetic cause for being gay” (Botha, 2005).

In their book, What God Has Joined Together, Myers and Scanzoni take the argument concerning justice one step further and argue that marriage is a fundamental human good and that, as such, it must be available to both heterosexual and homosexual couples (Meyers & Scanzoni, 2005). Marriage is indeed good but it is prescribed, scripturally, as pertaining to one man in covenant relationship with one woman. The appeal to justice is one of the two major platforms from which many liberal theologians argue the case in favour of same-sex partnerships.

Misinterpretation of Theological Epithets that Condemns Homosexual Activity

Homosexual behavior is sinful. Every mention of homosexual behavior in the Bible reveals that such behavior is not good (Genesis 19:1-29; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Jude 1:5-7). Even if the Bible never specifically mentioned homosexual behavior, it would still be sinful. In His infinite wisdom, God commands us to engage in sexual activity only within the context of marriage (Matthew 5:27-28; I Corinthians 6:18). Sexual immorality whether heterosexual or homosexual violates that command. Homosexual behavior undermines God’s creative intent for marriage and human sexuality and distorts the true, God-given gender identities of those who participate in it. God loves sinners, but He

hates sin. If we refuse to repent of our sins, God allows us to have our way and be separated from Him. If we die in that state of separation, that separation becomes permanent (Romans 6:23).

Homosexual Behavior is not rooted in an Innate, Unchangeable Characteristic

Contrary to popular belief, homosexual attractions are not unalterable, nor are they predetermined by genetic factors. First, defining homosexual behavior as sin and creating people with inescapable homosexual impulses would contradict God's loving nature. Second, the Bible clearly shows that God has the power to free people from homosexuality: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:9-11). Many people have been set free from homosexual attractions through the power of Christ and have either married or lived morally upright lives as unmarried persons. The rhetoric underlying the movement for same-sex partnerships is based upon the false premise that some people are intrinsically, and unchangeably, homosexual (Devon, 2006). In reality, the solution to the legal issues faced by same-sex partners is not same-sex partnerships, but repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Countering Same-Sex Partnerships Misinterpretation of Theological Epithets

The misinterpretation of theological epithets could be the result of extreme forms of delusion that may alter reality, and thus subject an individual or a group of people to distorted versions of religious facts. Pro-same-sex partnerships protagonists invariably start their argument with an attempt to show that the scriptures do not prohibit homosexual activity. Pro-homosexual, odd and fatuous attempt to insinuate that David and Jonathan, Jesus and John, Paul and Timothy were homosexual partners, have customarily attempted to make their case by seeking to refute the texts that purport to prohibit homosexuality.

In Genesis 19:1-3 the men of Sodom wanted to have sex with Lot's angelic visitors and one of the modern and liberal Christian theologian to attempt a re-interpretation of the Genesis 19 account based his argument on the Hebrew word "yada" found in verse five and translated as "know" in the King James Version, he say that the word does not mean "to have sex with." The argument is that Lot had violated an important social custom by taking strangers into his home without the permission of the city elders and that the men of Sodom felt threatened and insisted on interrogating the strangers to ascertain whether or not they constituted a threat (Bailey, 1955).

The response by Lot, "behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man" in verse 8 (KJV) and the Hebrew word is also "yada." This is affirmed in the New Testament that, "Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion" (Jude 7). We argue that the logical and rational way pro-homosexual theologians can argue against this kind of evidence is to hold that the Jude text is not inspired and should not be in the Bible. This takes the argument into the realm of the inspiration of scripture debate. An irrefutable underlying assumption by the Anglican Diocese of Bondo as they evaluated the same-sex partnerships debate is that the bible as we have it is inspired and authoritative.

The context of the Genesis passage gives a reliable meaning of verse 5 without appealing to the meaning of the word "yada" and Jude affirmation of the traditional interpretation. If it was a time of war it could be that the men of Sodom were concerned by the arrival of

strangers in their midst. But Lot's plea to the men of Sodom not to commit a 'wicked thing' does not make sense if the men of Sodom only wanted to speak to Lot's visitors. To affirm our position that these men were sodomites and that's why Lot offered them his virgin daughters in place of the visitors. The argument presented by pro-homosexual exegetes in this regard defies common sense and simple contextual analysis.

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 elucidate prohibitions against homosexual behaviour. Leviticus chapter 18 deals with unlawful sexual relationships, yet the pro-homosexual theologians attempt to connect Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 with Deuteronomy 23:17 in an attempt to show that the Levitical prohibition is only meant for temple prostitution. Leviticus 18:22 says, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" therefore, pro-homosexual theologians exegesis on these texts defies simple logic.

Paul saw the Roman community as decadent and promiscuous when he wrote "even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones (Romans 1:18-32). In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion" (Rom 1:26-27). But pro-homosexual theological scholars make the claim that Paul did not have committed homosexual relations in mind when he wrote these words. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, portrayed homosexual acts as "unnatural" and "indecent."

Pro-homosexual theological scholars also try to brush aside 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11 as references to idolatrous pagan religious practices. It is illogical to believe, that Paul had the specific issue of temple prostitution in mind when the list has other sins like theft, greed and drunkenness. If the Pro-homosexual position was correct then there would be no need for Paul to differentiate between four types of sexual sin, namely, sexual immorality, adultery, male prostitution, and homosexuality. The interpretation offered by the pro-homosexual theologians does not hold.

The Anglican Diocese of Bondo is of considered opinion that there are no biblical grounds for homosexual activity. The diocese finds all attempts to interpret away the passages of scripture prohibiting homosexual activity to be fanciful and unconvincing. In order to give even reasonable credence to the explanations given, one would have to abandon belief in the authority of a divinely inspired Bible. We do not therefore believe that homosexual activity is a godly option for any Christian who respects biblical authority. Same-sex partnerships stand on a sinking foundation. Not only is the homosexual underpinning biblically insupportable, but the scriptural definition and purpose of marriage does not support it.

Implications of Same-Sex Partnerships for the Anglican Diocese of Bondo

The Anglican Diocese of Bondo leaders face two challenges; how to address the concept of same-sex partnerships within the church and how to address same-gender marriage in Kenya and the world.

Challenges to Same-Sex Partnerships within the Church

The Anglican Diocese of Bondo holds heterosexuals and homosexuals with dignity, humility and compassion. It is, however, not an expression of true love to withhold rebuke and correction to anyone who negate and violates the principles and commands of Scripture. We can and should pray for and minister to those who practice homosexuality. If they choose not to renounce that way of life, then we should rebuke their actions but love the person.

The diocese has avoided the deception of creating two orders of sin. One of the current arguments is that we should distinguish between first and second biblical order of sin. Acts

15 makes the distinction between idolatry and eating meat sacrificed to idols. Pro-homosexual theological scholars who argue in this way regard the former as a first order and the later as a second order of sin. Their line of reasoning is that, because it is so seldom addressed in Scripture, we should regard homosexuality as a second order issue. As a result, we should regard sexual preference as a matter of individual conscience. The Anglican Diocese of Bondo holds that sin is sin and the bible does not differentiate between degrees of sin.

In a pastoral context, most homosexuals reject the concept of a possible “deliverance and healing” because they regard their condition as innate and normal (Stott, 1999). We should welcome all people, in any condition, into the worship services of the church where they can be exposed to the exposition of the Word and where they can open themselves to interactions with God for conviction and repentance of sin.

Challenges of Same-Sex Partnerships in Kenya

There is a distinct separation between state and church in Kenya. The Anglican Diocese of Bondo has a prophetic role in informing and challenging the state, but ultimately it must submit to the legitimate decrees of a legitimately appointed government (Rom 13:1). The diocese, having objected to and warned concerning the biblical illegitimacy of same-sex partnerships, needs to position itself within the rulings of civic law. This position is a call on its members and all Christians to live according to God’s statutes.

The Anglican Diocese of Bondo should be proactive and continue to warn the government, and society at large, of the negative implications of same-sex partnerships. Biblical ordained marriages are glue that holds society together and anything that undermines and threatens the creation and maintenance of Christian healthy marriages is therefore counterproductive to the welfare of society. We assert that same- gender marriage threatens the institution of marriage and research has shown that children flourish in a family parented by heterosexual couples (Wilson, 2005).

CONCLUSION

1. Human laws should not call good what God calls evil. Government is ordained by God (Romans 13:1). Human laws are the collective expression of our morality. Good laws reflect the eternal truths contained in God’s Word. Although we live in a society that often denies God’s truth, that truth is not contingent upon mankind’s beliefs. It is the height of arrogance for any government to pass laws that contradict God’s law as if any government knows better than He does (Proverbs 3:5-6). Marriage is encouraged and promoted under our laws because it is a good thing. Legalizing same-sex partnerships would encourage and promote sinful behavior, and would place homosexual relationships on the same legal footing as the God-ordained marriage relationship. This would be an act of rebellion against God. As Christians, we have a responsibility to speak the truth and to be “salt and light” in the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Same-sex partnerships subvert God’s truth and should be opposed by believers. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness” (Isaiah 5:20).
2. It is not unjust or unloving to limit the institution of marriage to relationships between one man and one woman. God hates injustice (Leviticus 19:15), but it is not unjust to oppose same-sex partnerships. Justice does not require the redefinition of marriage to accommodate homosexual preferences. Jesus said that “by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

However, the Bible also says that “love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth” (I Corinthians 13:6). It is neither loving nor just to support the legalization of same-sex partnerships, because such laws promote untruth, validate homosexual behavior, and encourage people to make lifelong commitments to relationships that distance them from God. Christians should display the love of Christ to those with homosexual inclinations, encouraging them to accept Christ as Savior and repent of their sins including homosexuality.

3. Same-Sex Partnerships compromises the needs of vulnerable children in order to accommodate the preferences of adults. The Bible tells us that there are serious consequences for those who mislead the young (Matthew 18:6). Same-sex partnerships would mislead young people into believing that homosexuality is a true identity and that homosexual behavior is an acceptable alternate lifestyle choice. Also, the legalization of same-sex partnerships would encourage parenting by same-sex couples. Homosexual relationships do not provide the stable family structure that God intended for children and that children must have in order to thrive in their environments.

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