

Ghana's Anti-Gay Bill: Why the Church Should Think Again

Introduction

Ghana's Parliament has just passed a Bill criminalizing same sex intercourse and LGBTQ+ activities. The bill specifically criminalizes those who engage in male-male or female-female sexual intercourse, those who identify as gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender etc, and those who "promote" such activities and sexual orientations. The bill seems to have the massive support of religious bodies and persons, including churches and Christians. I therefore deem it necessary to offer brief reflections on the anti-gay bill.

Incontrovertible Facts

1. Biblical teaching against sexual intercourse between persons of same sex is clear and consistent. Homosexuality is harshly condemned in the OT (Lev. 20:13, etc) and mentioned alongside other immoral acts or sins as detestable or abominable (Rom 1: 26-28; 1Cor. 6: 9-11, etc). No amount of exegetical gymnastics can therefore interpret these texts away as some biblical scholars in the West have tried to do in recent years in their quest to find biblical support for same sex relations.
2. Gender fluidity has been with humanity for as long as humans existed and are known in every society and across every culture. We have various local names and identifiers for individuals who may have male or female genitals but do not conform or subscribe to the male-female sexual orientation or attraction. Even where we don't have specific names for such people, we know them in our communities. The general attitude of society towards such individuals has been "don't ask, don't tell."
3. Same-sex sexual intercourse has been with humanity for as long as humanity existed. These acts are mentioned in the Bible in the famous Sodom and Gomorrah story in Genesis 19 and condemned in other texts as pointed out above. The Bible will not be condemning an act that did not exist. Same sex relations are therefore not a new "Western invention" as some argue. What is a new Western invention, is the normalization and legalization of same sex relations and sexual intercourse.

Reflections

Personally, I am against the push from the West to normalize and legalize same sex relations and sexual intercourse. It is imperialistic and colonialist! Similarly, I am against the push in some developing countries, including our own, to criminalize homosexuality. What is most problematic about Ghana's Bill, is that it criminalizes people for merely identifying as "gay" or "lesbian" etc. Are we seeking to simply bury our heads in this legislation as a society and pretend that these people have not been with us for generations and do not exist in our midst and live in our homes? Or is it the terms "gay" and "lesbian" that we are so afraid of and seek to criminalize?

Then there is the hypocritical part of the bill which criminalizes certain forms of sexual intercourse such as anal and oral sex, but only for people of the same sex. Which means it is okay for heterosexuals, including the politicians who advocated for and voted for the bill and religious leaders, to engage in these same sexual acts but not homosexuals. The question is whether it is the act itself which constitutes the crime, or the persons engaging in the act who embody the crime? Even more hypocritical is that the leading proponent of the Bill, Sam Nartey George, argued on JOY TV back in 2015 that gay people are human beings whose human rights are protected by Ghana's constitution. He rightly chastised the media for "wasting" precious airtime discussing homosexuality when they should be focusing on the myriad economic and social challenges facing Ghanaians. This is the same Sam George, barely five years later, spending more than three years of precious parliamentary time and resources debating the same issue. What has changed? Have gay people since ceased to be human and now need to be criminalized? Or has the socio-economic conditions of Ghanaians improved in 2024 than it was in 2015?

Conclusion

So, what should churches and Christians do? In my humble opinion, we must continue to uphold the biblical teaching on homosexuality as part of Biblical Ethics as we would on all ethical and moral questions. Churches, on matters of principle, may resist any push from the West to normalize and legalize same sex relations. But we should not be supporting moves to criminalize homosexuals. The church is not called upon to become God's law enforcement agency. We don't want a Christian Taliban State. And if we believe homosexuality should be criminalized by legislation, then we should be doing the same with the sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the greedy, drunkards, slanderers and swindlers (1Cor. 6:9-10). By allowing the church to be hoodwinked by Sam George and his ilk who are clearly pursuing their parochial political agendas, the church is tacitly conceding that we have failed and are now looking for legislation to do for us what we have failed to do in 2000 years of witness. On this note, may we remind ourselves of what Paul says in 2Cor. 3:6; "*Our ministry is not based on the letter of the law but through the power of the Spirit. The letter of the law kills, but the Spirit pours out life.*"

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