

**CONTEXTUALISING JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY IN  
SELECTED CHURCH DENOMINATIONS IN IBADAN**

**BY**

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A Thesis in the Department of Religious Studies  
submitted to the Faculty of Arts  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

of the

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

**MAY, 2014**

**Dedication**

To the glory of Almighty God;

and

to my husband, Rev. Emmanuel Oyewole Oyekan

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## Abstract

Conflicts between Jesus' teachings on marriage and adultery and some church traditions have resulted in misinterpretation of some bible passages and wrongly premised church doctrines. Previous research has highlighted Jesus' teachings as a stratagem against the high rate of marital problems among Christians, but has not adequately examined the conflict between Jesus' teachings and church traditions on marriage and adultery. This study, therefore, examined Jesus' teachings on marriage and adultery in the Synoptic Gospels to determine the extent to which they aligned with selected church traditions and the effects of these on the churches.

The study was premised on Abogunrin's model of contextualisation. Eight Roman Catholic Churches (RCC), 15 Baptist Churches (BC) and 12 Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) in Ibadan North, North East, South East, North West and South West local government areas were purposively sampled. This was because they adequately represented the Mainline, Evangelical and the African Initiated Churches. Five hundred and fifty-four copies of a questionnaire were administered to purposively selected church leaders and members in the churches. In-depth interviews were conducted with 248 adults: married but separated (134), divorced and remarried (102), divorced based on restitution (12). Two focus group discussions were held with 25 people from each local government. Additional information was sought from church publications. Mark 10:1-12, Matthew 19:3-12 and Luke 16:18 were exegetically analysed. Quantitative data were subjected to percentages.

Jesus' teachings on marriage and adultery centred on the Christian concept of virtues across the Synoptic gospels. In Matthew, Jesus prescribes monogamy (Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:8), conceiving of sex as a mono-partner affair, which precludes adultery and fornication (Matthew 5: 27-30). He teaches re-marriage as a venture in sinful re-union (Matthew 19:5; Luke 16:18). Within marriage, He recognises a strict adultery-tied divorce (Matthew 19:9) or no divorce (Mark 10: 9-12). All the churches situated sex within marriage and monogamy, but accommodated remarriage on differential grounds: RCC and BC officially disallowed remarriage on grounds of broken covenantal marriages, and divorce caused by desertion, adultery and unbeliever partnership. The RCC offered remarriage in cases of invalid marriages; and CCC on grounds of childlessness, adultery and desire for a male child; but BC only for widows. Consequently, there was a higher rate of divorce in CCC (CCC=60.0%, BC=35.0% and RCC= 5.0 %) than in RCC and BC. Polygyny, though doctrinally approved in CCC, and disapproved in

RCC and BC, was a practice in RCC: 3.0% and BC: 24.0%. Paradoxically, while 85.0% of the respondents in the CCC recommended remarriage as an effective intervention in broken marriages, 55.0% of BC respondents and 30.5 % of RCC desired remarriage after divorce.

The teachings in Roman Catholic and Baptist churches were largely consistent with Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery; those of Celestial Church of Christ deviated completely from them. However, in practice, none of the churches aligned with Jesus' standards. Therefore, to keep within Bible-based prescriptions, the churches should align with the teachings of Jesus in theory and practice, but should be pragmatic in applying Jesus' principles.

**Key Words:** Marriage, Adultery, Divorce, Contextualisation, Synoptic Gospels

**Word Count:** 499

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## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I appreciate the Almighty God for the privilege and grace given me to complete this work. He initiated, executed and completed the research through me. The kind of inspiration I got from Him was unprecedented. My Father, I am unreservedly grateful.

I deeply appreciate my supervisor, Prof. S.O. Abogunrin, who faithfully encouraged and guided me to the completion of this work. His guidance, suggestions, and assistance have exemplified a gracious and generous spirit. I will continue to remember him for giving me the needed academic exposure.

The guidance and useful suggestions of the lecturers in the department deserve appreciation: Prof. D. I. Ayegboyin, Head, Department of Religious Studies; Drs J. K. Ayantayo; S. A. Fatokun; A. O. Dada; H. A. Labeodan; G.N. Toryough; J. S. Adekoya; O.O. Obijole; O. O. Familusi; and S. M. Mepayeida. God will be gracious to them.

Indescribably great were the contributions of Dr. S. A. Odebunmi, Dr. J. K. Mojinyinola, Rev. Professor A. C. Odebode and Professor A. O. Olorunnisola. They were a constant source of encouragement, especially when I lagged behind in making significant progress and when I had doubts as to whether I should continue the programme, although they did not know about my doubts.

My constant encourager and editor, Dr. Dn. A. B. Sunday of the Department of English, University of Ibadan, is worthy of appreciation. He made me believe that I am not bad academically. He sternly warned me against dropping out of the programme.

Rev. and Mrs. C.D. Oluwabukola, Rev. Dr. M. M. Ojuade, Mr. O.T. Akano and Rosalie Asagbenro were there always to lift up my hands in prayer. I appreciate them immensely. I thank them for giving me moral and spiritual support. I also appreciate Mrs. F. O. Balogun for doing the typing.

Finally, I must acknowledge the endurance and support of my loving husband, Rev. Emmanuel Oyewole Oyekan; and my children—Oyedele, Oyedeji and Oyekemi. My children, at times, reminded me that I was proceeding so slowly that they might complete their studies before me. I am especially thankful for their loving support and the sacrifices they made when I had to divert time from them to complete this work. It is my prayer and hope that this work will, in some ways, bring glory to God.

F. E. Oyekan  
May, 2014.

## Certification

I certify that this research work was carried out by **Funke Elizabeth OYEKAN** of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, under my supervision.

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## Table of contents

	<b>Pages</b>
Title page	i
Dedication	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Certification	vi
Table of contents	vii
List of tables	xii
List of figures	xiv
List of abbreviations	xv
 <b>CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Statement of problem	2
1.3 Purpose of the study	4
1.4 Scope of the study	5
1.5 Research methodology	5
1.6 Theoretical framework	7
1.7 Significance of the study	8

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Old Testament background	9
2.2.1	Marriage in the Old Testament	9
2.2.1.1	Marriage in the creation account	9
2.2.1.2	Marriage in the ancient Hebrew society	12
2.2.1.3	Marriage to kinsman	14
2.2.1.4	Concubinage	16
2.2.1.5	Levirate marriage	18
2.2.2	Sex and adultery in the Old Testament	20
2.2.3	Divorce and remarriage in the Old Testament	22
2.2.3.1	The interpretation of $\text{r}^{\text{f}}\text{b}^{\text{f}}$ in Genesis 2:24	22
2.2.3.2	Deuteronomy 24:1-4	24
2.2.3.3	Divorce of Malachi 2:13-16	26
2.3	New Testament background	28
2.3.1	Jesus' teaching on marriage	28
2.3.2	Jesus' teaching on sex and adultery	31
2.3.3	Jesus' teaching on divorce	33
2.3.4	Jesus' teaching on remarriage	37
2.4	Marriage and Adultery among few ethnic groups in Nigeria	38
2.4.1	Marriage	38



2.4.2 Divorce and remarriage among few ethnic groups	46
2.4.3 Concubinage among few ethnic groups	47
2.4.4 Levirate marriage among few ethnic groups	48
2.4.5 Polygamy as a feature in many Nigerian societies	49
2.5 Conclusion	54

### **CHAPTER THREE: JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE**

3.1 Introduction	55
3.2 Jesus' Teaching on Marriage	55
3.2.1 Background to Jesus' Teaching	55
3.2.2 Jesus and the Issue of Monogamy	58
3.2.3 The Issue of Celibacy	72
3.3 Man as a sexual being	74
3.3.1 Sex from different perspectives	75
3.3.2 The use and abuse of sex	78
3.3.2.1 The use of sex	78
3.3.2.2 The abuse of sex	79
3.3.3 Sex in the Old Testament and in Pauline writings	82
3.3.4 Prognosis for sexual sins (Matthew 5:29-30)	84
3.3.5 Celibacy today and its problems	86
3.4 Conclusion	93

## **CHAPTER FOUR: JESUS' TEACHINGS ON ADULTERY**

4.1	Introduction	94
4.2	What Constitutes Adultery according to Jesus	95
4.2.1	Lust as adultery (Matthew 5:27-28)	95
4.2.2	Divorce and remarriage as forms of adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark10:11; Luke16:18)	99
4.3	Variance between Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18	100
4.3.1	Text in the Synoptic Gospels	100
4.3.2	Reasons for the inclusion of the exception clauses in Matthew	101
4.3.3	The meaning and varied interpretations of porneia	104
4.4	Jesus' position on divorce in Matthew 19:3-9; cf Mark10:1-12	110
4.5	Perpetuity of marriage (Mark10:10-12, Luke 16:18 and Matthew5:31-32)	112
4.6	Paul's word "From the Lord" in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16	116
4.7	Conclusion	118

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE ISSUE OF MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY AMONG SELECTED CHURCH DENOMINATIONS IN IBADAN**

5.1	Introduction	121
5.2	Findings and analysis of interviews and observations	125
5.3	Summary of findings on focus group discussion	153
5.4	Conclusion	153

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

6.0 Summary	155
6.1 Recommendations	156
6.2 Suggestions for future research	158
6.3 Conclusion	159
<b>References</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>185</b>

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## List of Tables

	<b>Pages</b>
Table 3.1: Non-marital intercourse, masturbation, homosexual or bisexual behaviour from 1910-1970	76
Table 5. 1: Distribution of questionnaire among the local governments	125
Table 5. 2: Sex of respondents	125
Table 5. 3: Age of respondents	126
Table 5. 4: Marital status of respondents	126
Table 5. 5: Nationality of respondents	127
Table 5. 6: Number of churches used in each denomination	127
Table 5. 7: Number of respondents from each denomination	127
Table 5. 8: Responses on sex	128
Table 5. 9: Responses on the predominance of sex in contemporary society	128
Table 5. 10: Responses on late marriage as a cause of premarital sex	130
Table 5. 11: Responses on the financial demands as a cause of premarital sex	130
Table 5 .12: Responses on job security as a cause of premarital sex	131
Table 5. 13: Responses on churches' teaching on polygamy	132
Table 5. 14: Responses on the status of polygamists in the church	133
Table 5. 15: Responses on people's understanding of adultery	133
Table 5. 16: Responses on the danger of keeping secret from ones spouse	135
Table 5. 17: Responses on financial limitations as a cause of adultery	136
Table 5. 18: Responses on lack of sexual satisfaction as a cause of adultery	138
Table 5.19: Responses on the differences in religious beliefs as a cause of adultery	139
Table 5.20: Responses on the need for security as a cause of adultery	140
Table 5. 21: Responses on whether everybody is involved in lustful looking	143

Table 5. 22: Divorce rate among selected church denominations in Ibadan	149
Table 5. 23: Responses on the status of divorcees in the church	151

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## List of Figures

	<b>Pages</b>
Figure 1.1: Map of Nigeria showing Ibadan, Oyo State	122
Figure 1.2: Map of Oyo State showing Ibadan Metropolis	123
Figure 1.3: Map of Ibadan	124

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## List of Abbreviations

LGAs	Local government areas
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
CCC	Celestial Church of Christ
BC	Baptist Church
NBC	Nigerian Baptist Convention
MT	Masoretic Text
LXX	Septuagint
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections

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# CHAPTER ONE

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

For a holistic development and progressive society, there is the need for sound morality. Virtually all cultures of the world believe that religion has a lot to give in regulating the conduct of society. It is generally believed that, where sound morality is lacking, there will surely be chaos and lawlessness. Paul says “Where there is no law, there is no transgression” (Romans 4: 15; 5:13). There are laws, regulations and norms guiding the behaviour of every citizen in every locality and at any given time. In every society, the norm is that individuals should do what is right always, although what is morally right in one society may be morally wrong in another society. However, in spite of the differences that may be found from one society to another, “there is also a high degree of continuity in humanity independent of time, culture, and circumstances, especially when it comes to moral issues.”<sup>1</sup>

Moral values are definitely declining in today’s society. “It can be argued that, perhaps the major factor for the increase in divorce cases in the twentieth century has been the increasing social acceptance of divorce. This increased tolerance has resulted from relaxation of negative attitudes toward divorce among various religious denominations.”<sup>2</sup>

Nigeria, though secular by constitution, is deeply religious. The law of the land says that every citizen has the right to practise his or her religion. The three major religions: Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religions, profess to have one thing or the other to contribute to sound morality in Nigeria. Yet Nigeria is a society where such things as violence, rape, drug abuse, gay marriage, pornography and abortion appeal to some people. Commitment to marriage and family, the sanctity of human life, integrity and honesty, personally and corporately, have been compromised and devalued.

One way to have a sanitized society is to have good homes. The home, to a large extent, influences how one makes life decisions. It affects one’s attitude and self-esteem, and aids in the pursuit of a meaningful life. “Each healthy home is a macrocosm of the entire universe, helping to make the entire world a home for God. Harmony within a family often translates into harmony

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<sup>1</sup>E. Mueller, 2007. *What the Biblical text meant and what it means*. [biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/...](http://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/...) Retrieved on January 22, 2010 .

<sup>2</sup>T.G. Adegoke, 2010. Socio-cultural factors as determinants of divorce rates among women of productive age in Ibadan Metropolis, Nigeria. *Stud Tribes Tribals*, 8(2): 107.



among families, communities and nations. When there is no harmony among people who are related by blood, how can we expect to create harmony among strangers?”<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

Marriage is recognised in many places as the union of male and female in order that there might be continuity in human society. The former American President George W. Bush, while defending traditional marriage on February 24, 2004 says, “the union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honoured and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith.”<sup>4</sup> In recent times, there is an evolving paradigm and these traditional definitions of marriage may not be relevant. Marriage is difficult to define because the meaning of marriage differs for different people, times, and culture. William Kynes rightly observes that it may be appropriate, with the development in recent times, to define marriage as the union of two men or two women, or two adults who have consented to be living together in a loving relationship.<sup>5</sup> In countries like Canada, some states of the U. S. A., Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, England, Norway, Sweden, France, and Portugal, the law, which defines marriage to be a union between a man and a woman, has been struck out. These countries have adopted legally the same- sex marriage, homosexuality and lesbianism as legal.<sup>6</sup> Although Israel, the Caribbean countries, parts of the United States, and all states of Mexico would not perform same-sex marriage, they recognize same-sex marriages that were performed elsewhere. Australia has legislated change in sex of one of the partners in order for the homosexuals to be recognized.<sup>7</sup> Since couples in homosexual marriages are of the same sex, one of the couples would change his or her sex organ. This is done through operations. Same-sex marriage is strange in most African cultures, thereby making it difficult for most African countries to legally and openly adopt it, although there are homosexuals on the continent of Africa. In fact, South Africa has formally adopted same-sex marriage.

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<sup>3</sup>R. S. Jacobson, 2012. *Your home should become a light that illuminates the entire street and community.* <http://www.meaningfullife.com/personal/home/>. Retrieved on December 12, 2011.

<sup>4</sup>S. T. Ola Akande, 2004. *Marriage and family life in the Nigerian society: from the beginning to the end* (Ibadan: Daystar Press), 15.

<sup>5</sup>W. Kynes, 2007. The Marriage debate: a public theology of marriage. *Trinity Journal*, vol. 28, No. 2, 187.

<sup>6</sup>S. T. Ola Akande, 2004. *Marriage and family life in the Nigerian society: from the beginning to the end.* (Ibadan: Daystar Press), 17.

<sup>7</sup>S. A. Fatokun, n.d. Same-sex marriage: the Christian response. Department of Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

Nigeria has not accepted same-sex marriage as a legal form of marriage, but there are gays and lesbians in the country. Among those yearning for the recognition of homosexuals is a pastor and founder of a church. A Nigerian daily newspaper, *Nigerian Tribune*, published a story captioned, *Nigerian, Ghanaian Homosexuals Clamour for Recognition*. The report claims that only 76 countries of the world consider homosexuality a crime and Africa is one continent that strongly stood against it. Research shows that membership of the lesbians and gays in Accra, as at the time of the publication of the article were 250 couples. In Nigeria, Rev. Jide Macaulay is one of the homosexuals. He set up his church for gay couples in 2006. He has, however, relocated to Britain because of intimidation. Dr. Otibho Obianwu too clamoured for the recognition of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexual in Nigeria.<sup>8</sup>

Surprisingly, while the debate on whether or not to legalize same-sex marriage or not was going on, Britain threatened to withdraw her assistance to Nigeria if Nigeria fails to recognize same-sex marriage. Nevertheless, on Monday January 13, 2014, President Goodluck Jonathan signed a bill that criminalizes same-sex marriage. The bill prescribed 14 years jail term for offenders. Opinion differs on the passage of the bill. While some Nigerian citizens supported the bill fully, some opine that Nigeria is denying her citizens of their rights. While churches in Africa are kicking against homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality and intersexuality, some churches in Europe and America are consecrating gay priests as bishops.<sup>9</sup>

Is the church confused about Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage? Some churches allow divorce, while some do not allow it under any circumstance. The confusion moves around Jesus' statement in Matthew 19:9: "Whoever divorces his wife, except for adultery, and marries another, commits adultery" (cf. Matthew 5:32). Should the church hold tenaciously to Mark 10:2-12, which does not allow divorce for any reason, or hold to the view on that divorce and remarriage, are allowed on ground of adultery?

The continued relevance of Jesus' teachings on the issues of sex, marriage and adultery today have generated different reactions from different quarters and the controversies that trail their interpretations have remained unresolved. Jesus lived in the first-century Palestine. He never for once as an adult crossed the borders of the Jewish state. He was, therefore, greatly

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<sup>8</sup>A. Oluwapelumi, 2011. Nigerian, Ghanaian Homosexuals clamor for recognition. *Nigerian Tribune*, vol.275, .2023, 19.

<sup>9</sup>S. T. Ola. Akande, 2004. *Marriage and family life in the Nigerian society: from the beginning to the end* (Ibadan: Daystar Press), 18 & 19.

influenced by the Jewish beliefs and culture and his knowledge about the rest of the world was limited. The world is dynamic and has kept changing. The world of Jesus was not exposed to the same level of scientific and technological advancement as the contemporary world.

Moreover, ethical issues among the Jews today are not what they were 2000 years ago. The same is true of the rest of the world. How can the ethics from such a person be imposed as universal ethics? How relevant are the moral injunctions issued in Palestine in the first century to the Church in Africa, and particularly to Nigeria? What is the right interpretation of the teachings of Jesus on sex, marriage and adultery? Who sets the moral standard or different doctrines of the different denominations? These are some of the issues, which are examined in this research in order to give appropriate counseling on these issues.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The work studied the contemporary views about marriage and adultery in selected churches in comparison with Jesus' teaching on the issues. It sought effective handling of sexual rights among present-day Christians. It also explored churches' teachings on divorce and remarriage, and suggested actions that are necessary by individuals and churches to practise the teachings of Jesus on marriage and adultery in the modern world.

Besides, the work examined the continued relevance of Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery in the Synoptic Gospels to the contemporary believer in particular, and the society in general. It also described how the various passages in the Synoptic Gospels can be rightly interpreted, bearing in mind the variant interpretations within different church denominations. This was to identify whether there could be a locus for the teachings of Christ in the contemporary world.

The work explored the possibility of proclaiming the gospel in a way that expresses itself through appropriate cultural materials that have the capacity for transcending the particularity of cultures. This was to ascertain that the identity of the church as catholic becomes more vivid through a process of dialectic interaction balancing particularity and universality.

The research investigated the nature and causes of the growing moral decadence in family life in Ibadan. It attempted an evaluation of the effects of family moral laxity on the church and on society. Finally, it suggested probable solutions to some of the major ethical

problems confronting the homes and the church today. This will eventually promote moral consciousness and good conduct among Christians in Ibadan and, by extension, in Nigeria.

#### **1.4 Scope of the study**

Teachings about marriage and adultery appear in several of the New Testament books. This work is limited to the some passages in the Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke. This is to give room for an in-depth research on the teachings of Jesus on the issues of marriage and adultery.

The work is also limited to selected churches in five local government areas in Ibadan. Ibadan is a cosmopolitan city. People of diverse cultural backgrounds and ethical differences live in Ibadan. There are also different church denominations in Ibadan. Choosing Ibadan allowed the opportunity to study and evaluate the various interpretations of Jesus' teachings on marriage and adultery by the different church denominations in Ibadan and how these have impacted on homes and the churches in general. Five of the eleven local government areas were selected as the study area: Ibadan North, Ibadan North East, Ibadan South East, Ibadan North West and Ibadan South West. These were chosen because of the large population and the number of churches existing in these areas. They give a better picture of the various Nigerian cultures in Ibadan. Three church denominations were used. The Roman Catholic Church represented the Mainline Churches. The Baptist Church (The Nigerian Baptist Convention) represented the Evangelical Churches and the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC) represented the African Initiated Churches. These represented the major church denominations in Ibadan metropolis. This helped us to appreciate and understand their level of compliance with the teachings of Jesus.

#### **1.5 Research methodology**

The work did a critical and exegetical study of the selected passages. It applied the method of textual, literary and historical criticism to the studied passages. The comparative hermeneutical approach, which gives room for sound understanding, objective judgement, creativity and innovation, was applied.<sup>10</sup>

The teachings of Jesus were also juxtaposed with contemporary denominational realities to determine the relevance of the teachings. To do this, one thousand copies of three open-ended

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<sup>10</sup> A.Dzurgba, 2003. *God and Caesar: a study in the sociology of religion*(Ibadan: John Archers Publishers Ltd.), 32.

questionnaires were distributed. Seven hundred (700) copies of the first set (for church members) were given to church members, out of which 519 were filled and returned; 100 copies of the second set (for pastors) were given to church leaders, but only 26 were filled and returned; and 200 copies of the third set (for divorcees) were given to divorced members in the selected churches, but only 9 were filled and returned. Altogether, five hundred and fifty-four (554) of these were well filled and returned. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis, complemented with percentages, following this formula:

$$\frac{N}{TN} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

While ‘N’ stands for respondents, ‘TN’ represents the total number of respondents per statement.

It was discovered that the response from separated/divorced people was very poor (9 out of 200). Therefore, deliberate effort was made to identify separated or divorced people in the selected churches for interview. This was done with the help of some of the church members and some church leaders. The interviews was based on variables that caused the divorce or the separation. One hundred and thirty-four (134) separated individuals and one hundred and fourteen (114) divorced people were interviewed, making a total of 248.

Besides, a purposive sampling of 125 people from the selected denominations and different ethnic groups was carried out. This formed the focus group. The goal of this group was to promote self-disclosure among participants. Besides, participants ruminated on the comments of others and added relevant comments that could not be achieved through a one-on-one interview. This was done to ascertain the influence of participants' church teaching and cultural beliefs on their interpretations of Jesus' teaching on the issues. They were divided into 5 groups of 25 people in each of the selected local government areas and a-day seminar was organized for each group. The researcher served as the moderator and questions were asked concerning their cultural beliefs on marriage and adultery. They expressed their feelings about Jesus' teachings on the issues, as well as the doctrines of their churches. The “facts” collected during the focus group were used to ascertain the impact of their churches' teachings and cultural practices on the issues under study.

Altogether, 927 people were used for the research. The various data and the focus group discussions were statistically and content analyzed respectively. The result of the analysis and summary of findings are given in chapter six.

## 1.6 Theoretical framework

The study was premised on S. O. Abogunrin's model of contextual hermeneutics, tagged decolonizing New Testament interpretations in Africa. According to Abogunrin:

This deals with the situational interpretation of the Scripture, that is making Biblical interpretation relevant and meaningful in the context of the reader today. Under this approach the study of a text begins with the attempt to understand the original context of the particular text under examination, that is, the situation of the original writer, what was he reacting to and how did the original addressees react to the message when it was first delivered? What does it mean today in our own context? What is it saying to the local church, to the Church in Africa, and to the Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup>

This model holds that the teachings and doctrine of the person of Christ will be made relevant and well rooted in African culture if African Christians make appropriate use of African cultures and beliefs. Abogunrin asserts that New Testament interpretation in Africa has suffered and is still suffering from colonized interpretation by Western scholars. He notes that colonial rule cannot be separated from Christian missions from the West in the 19th century. Embedded in the Western thought of the missionaries' activities was the tendency to make Africans to conform to Western way of life and thought, which, in many ways, were different from biblical teachings. The theory postulates that, for proper contextualization of the New Testament texts, there is the need to purge African Bible scholars and Christians of the common belief in the West, that "if Africa had anything called religion and culture at all; none of them was worth preserving."<sup>12</sup>

Ibadan consists of people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There are various interpretations by different denominations, culminating in different understanding of Jesus'

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<sup>11</sup>S O. Abogunrin, 2005. Decolonizing New Testament interpretation in Africa, in *Decolonization of biblical interpretation in Africa*. S.O.Abogunrin, Gen. Editor. Ibadan: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 262.

<sup>12</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, 2005. Decolonizing New Testament interpretation in Africa, in *Decolonization of biblical interpretation in Africa*. S.O.Abogunrin, Gen. Editor. Ibadan: Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 254.

teachings on the issues under study. S.O. Abogunrin's model is able to ensure a common locus for the interpretations of the teachings of Jesus on the issues at hand.

### **1.7 Significance of the study**

This research proffers solutions that could, in this age of global decadence, serve as a blueprint in promoting ethical values and entrenching moral order in keeping with Jesus' teaching on morality. It would help to improve ethical standards in the Church, since sound morality is a prerequisite for the stability of any human society. The exegetical study of the selected passages and the critical analysis of the data collected during field research will help in this regard. The work would modify peoples' views on marriage and adultery. This is vital to reducing immorality in the society.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the views of some authors on marriage and adultery in the Old and New Testaments. Likewise, various views about the nature of marriage and what constitutes adultery among few ethnic groups in Nigeria are discussed. This review provides an overview of Nigerian customs, as well as the current situations concerning the issues. The chapter concludes with a reflection based on the analysis of the key areas investigated.

#### 2.2 Old Testament Background

##### 2.2.1 Marriage in the Old Testament

###### 2.2.1.1 Marriage in the creation account (Gen. 2:18-24; cf. Gen. 5:1-2)

I[;B' ( to be married ) is rooted in the creation account as presented in Genesis 1-3. in it God's will and design for marriage is clearly stated. God created a man and a woman in His own image. Andreas J. Köstenberger avers that, "God created men and women in His own image" means that God has given man the opportunity to partake in His dignity, honour and inestimable worth. Hence, man can think, act and decide, as God has given him intelligence to do so. In other words, God has given man the mandate of a representative rule (cf. Psalm 6:8). This image was to serve the purpose of ruling the world which God has created. Man and woman together must multiply and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28).<sup>1</sup> To set up a family home is to take part in an institution imbued with holiness.<sup>2</sup> This becomes imperative because marriage is God's idea (2:18). Matthew Henry affirms that the bond of marriage is stronger than that of nature.<sup>3</sup> This affirmation of the strong bond is explained by Clifton J. Allen as emphasizing the principle of colonization in marriage.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the husband and wife become loyal to each other and bother less about people around them, their parents inclusive. Truly, if the earth is to be inhabited (Gen. 1:28; cf. Isaiah 45:18), then "a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his

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<sup>1</sup>A. J. Köstenberger. *Leaving and cleaving: marriage in the Old Testament*. [http://moses.org/download-file/downloads/godfamily marriage.pdf](http://moses.org/download-file/downloads/godfamily%20marriage.pdf). Retrieved on March 04, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> *Jesus's Ethics*. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish ethics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_ethics). Retrieved October 26, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> M. Henry, 1991. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the whole Bible* (U. S. A: Hendrickson Publishers Inc.) 10.

<sup>4</sup> C. J. Allen, 1973. Genesis- Exodus, in the *Broadman Bible Commentary, vol. I* (Nashville: Broadman Press), 128.



wife, and they become one flesh”. (Gen. 2:24). As soon as the man cleaves to his wife, the primary loyalty is transferred to the new relationship that has been formed.<sup>5</sup>

In the first marriage, one has the revelation of God’s original intent. In the beginning, God created man and woman (Gen. 1:26-27). The account in Genesis 2 expatiates on this. Köstenberger observes that Genesis 2:18-24 presents God’s creation ideal for marriage.<sup>6</sup> “And the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” (Gen. 2:18). Edward Dobson opines that “God did not create woman from man’s head that he should command her, nor from his feet that she should be his slave, but rather from his side that she should be near his heart.”<sup>7</sup> The word for *help* is the Hebrew  $\text{עֲזָרָה}$ , meaning, “a supporter.”  $\text{עֲזָרָה}$ , does not indicate inferiority, for the same Hebrew word is used elsewhere to indicate the fact that God is our hope, a support in time of need (Ex. 18:4; Ps. 33:20; 146:5). Instead, the statement emphasizes the idea of parity “... I will make a supporter corresponding to him.”<sup>8</sup>

Jamies, Fausset and Brown observe that two theories are advanced for the interpretation of Genesis 5:1-2. The first theory is that, in the first and second verses, Adam is used collectively, not with reference to a particular individual, but to the human race, each country or climate having, according to this view, produced its own indigenous race of men, which sprang from its own prototypal Adam and Eve.<sup>9</sup> Genesis 4:14-17 and 6:1-6 are used as basis for this claim. The second theory is “founded on the alleged impossibility of knowing so much about the first man and his family history”<sup>10</sup>. It debunks any connection between the first man and the woman with races in the world since generations have passed and each race has her own identity. However, the first theory would be appropriate for Genesis 5:1-2. Robert Jamie, A.R. Fausset and David Brown assert that:

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<sup>5</sup> C. J. Allen, 1973. Genesis- Exodus, in *the Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press), 128.

<sup>6</sup> A. J. Köstenberger. *Leaving and cleaving: marriage in the Old Testament*. <http://beginwithmoses.org/download-file/downloads/godfamilymarriage.pdf>. Retrieved on April 04, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 20.

<sup>8</sup> E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 17.

<sup>9</sup> R. Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and D. Brown. A commentary: critical, experimental, and practical on the Old and New Testaments, Part One(Genesis-Deuteronomy). CD ROM Version, PC Study BibleVersion 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>10</sup> R. Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and D. Brown. A commentary: critical, experimental, and practical on the Old and New Testaments, Part One(Genesis-Deuteronomy). CD ROM Version, PC Study BibleVersion 5, Bible Soft.

The Hebrew word *ʾaadaam*, like the Latin *homo* and the English word "person", is a generic term, including woman as well as man (Gen 5:2; cf. Gen 1:26; 2:7; 6:7; Num 31:26; Hebrew, Deut 4:32; 8:3); but from being originally an appellative, it came, by frequent repetition, to be applied as the name of the first man, and in this application,... it has commonly, in Hebrew, the prefix of the article. But this rule does not hold universally, as Gen 3:17 presents a striking exception; and it cannot be doubted that, though without the article in this passage Adam designates the progenitor of mankind, both because the word is so used (Gen 5:3), and because in several other parts of Scripture it clearly bears the same distinctive reference (Luke 3:38; Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45; 1 Tim 2:13-14; Jude 14).<sup>11</sup>

The idea of equality is noted in Genesis 5:1-2. Here, God blessed the man and the woman as is usual for parents to bless their children; and gave them a common name, Adam. The implication is that between the sexes there is not that great distance and inequality imagined by some. The giving of this name both to the man and to the woman is an indication that both the man and the woman were one by nature, and afterwards one by marriage.<sup>12</sup> "The woman is *of the earth earthy* as well as the man".<sup>13</sup>

Edward Dobson gives the essential elements and four guiding concepts for successful marriage and an ideal marriage in Genesis 2: 21-25. These include: (1) separation from parents; undoubtedly, failure in this area is one of the major causes of divorce; (2) "cleaving to the wife": the word "cleave" means "to be glued together" in one marital relationship; the idea is that marriage must be the binding together of the husband and the wife; (3) becoming one flesh *ʾivʾbʾd; dx;a*. This concept indicates oneness, not only of mind, but also of emotion, will, spirit, and physical union;<sup>14</sup> (4) shamelessness – Adam and Eve had an open, transparent, vulnerable relationship; this is expected in every marriage. God's original design was that the marital relationship should be a permanent, lifelong arrangement (Gen. 2:24).

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<sup>11</sup> R. Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and D. Brown. A commentary: critical, experimental, and practical on the Old and New Testaments, Part One (Genesis-Deuteronomy). CD ROM Version, PC Study BibleVersion 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>12</sup> M. Henry, 2008. *Matthew Henry' bibles Commentary on the Whole Bible* (n.p: Hendrickson Publishers), 1076.

<sup>13</sup> M. Henry, 2008. *Matthew Henry' bibles Commentary on the Whole Bible* (n.p: Hendrickson Publishers), 1076.

<sup>14</sup> R. L. Hudson, 1973. *Till death do us part* (New York: Thomas Nelson), 42.

In the Old Testament, marriage was viewed as a covenant relationship made between a man and a woman and witnessed by God.<sup>15</sup> Edward Dobson's views can be seen in light of the Hebrew word for *covenant*, *tyriB*. . The word carries the idea that an agreement is binding the two parties to mutual privileges and particular obligations (cf. Gen. 24:58-60). The covenant guarantees that the ensuing marriage could not be broken. The Hebrew word for *companionship* in marriage has the literal meaning “to tame a wild animal” (Mal. 2:14). This means that you can get close to a *tamed* animal. The fear of the animal is no more there. Marriage involves the removal of fear and every other obstacle that will deprive the house of a warm and intimate relationship. It is quite similar to the idea of becoming one flesh. In marriage, the husband and the wife make a covenant to live together as companions until death do them parts.<sup>16</sup>

#### 2.2.1.2 Marriage in the ancient Hebrew society

In the Old Testament, two Hebrew words are usually used to describe the family. The first one is *hX'P;v.mi*, meaning “clan”, while the second one is *tyIB;*, meaning “house”. When references are made to the family, it means a group that has descended from a common ancestor, or consisting of the near kinsfolk.<sup>17</sup> According to Charles Foster Kent, the ancient Hebrew society was patrilineal and the descent line passed from father to sons. The father owned the children and had such an authority that he could sell his daughter into slavery and kill a disobedient child. The father could, in fact, render the vows of his daughter invalid.<sup>18</sup> John W. Drane affirms that the father in the ancient Israelite society could divorce his wife and arrange marriages for his sons.

O. J. Baab, however, observes that some scholars thought that the Jewish marriage is matriarchal in nature when one looks at the various examples of *beena* and *mota* marriages in the Old Testament.<sup>19</sup> *Beena* marriage is used to describe situations whereby the children remain under the control of the mother. In such situations, the husband moves to settle in his wife's

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<sup>15</sup>E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 27.

<sup>16</sup>E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 30.

<sup>17</sup>M. S. Miller and J. L. Miller, 1973. *Family*, in *Black's Bible Dictionary* (London: Adams & Charles Black), 185.

<sup>18</sup>C. F. Kent, 1907. *Israel's Laws and Legal precedents: from the days of Moses to the closing of the Legal Canon* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons), 52.

<sup>19</sup>O. J. Baab, 1962. *Marriage*, in *the Interpreter's dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 279-287.

home either permanently or temporarily. The cases of Jacob and Moses are examples of this marriage (Gen. 29:1-30; Exodus 2:21-22). *Mota* marriage, on the other hand, involves a situation whereby the wife remains in her home among her kins and the husband goes to visit her periodically. This was the case of Samson who visited his wife at Timnah (Judges 15:1). In this case, the marriage assumes the authority of the mother. This may be because of the role some women played in the Old Testament.<sup>20</sup> However, Baab is of the opinion that these scholars have been influenced greatly in the field of anthropology and sociology.

The family laws were contained in some portions of the Old Testament, especially in Leviticus Chapter 18. In it, the expected relationships between members of the family are spelt out. These laws aimed at “discouraging impurity on both an individual and at communal level”.<sup>21</sup> For example, no Israelite should uncover the nakedness of his father or mother, neither that of his brother’s wife nor that of his father’s wife. These laws prohibited sexual relationship between blood relatives. Any trespassing of the laws carried a death penalty.

That instances of polygamous marriages span through the whole of the Old Testament time cannot be debunked. Some scholars doubt the fact that polygyny was common among the average Israelites since it requires being wealthy to practise it. Gene McAfee rightly affirms that it is evident that polygyny, that is men having multiple wives at once, is one of the most common marital arrangements represented in the Old Testament.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, observed that, while polygyny (one man, many wives) is common; there is no single case of polyandry (one woman, many husbands) in the Old Testament. The Israelite tradition did not forbid polygamy, though there were no legislations towards monogamy (Genesis 16:3; 29, 30; 1 Samuel 1).

Polygyny comes in subtly in cases where rulers wanted to gain the confidence of the foreign nations. This was usually for economic and political reasons (II Sam. 5:13-16; I Kings 11:1, 3; II Chronicles 11:21; II Sam. 11:15, 27). Levirate marriage (*Halisah*) rival wives (*Saroth*) and concubinage are all forms of marriage which encourage more than one wife.

Opinions differ on whether polygamy is the perfect will of God or not. O. J. Baab observes that many passages referring to Hebrew laws strongly imply monogamy. These

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<sup>20</sup> An example of this is Moses’ wife. She circumcised her son on behalf of her husband (Exodus 4:24-26). More so, the wife could take wife for her husband or take wife for her son (cf. Gen. 16: 3; 21:21).

<sup>21</sup> S. F. Bigger, 1979. The family Laws of Leviticus 18 in their setting. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol, 98, No. 2, 187.

<sup>22</sup> G. McAfee, 1993. Sex, in *Oxford Companion to the Bible*. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D.Coogan, eds.(Oxford: University Press Inc.), 480.

passages are Exodus 20:17; 21:5; Leviticus 18:16 & 18; 20:10; 21:13; Num. 5:12; Deut. 5:21; 22:22; and 24:5. Other passages include Proverbs 12:4; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-31; Psalm 128:3; Ezekiel 16:8 and Malachi 2:14.<sup>23</sup> Some scholars are of the opinion that God did not forbid the Old Testament saints to have more than one wife. To them, the Law even has instructions for the man with more than one wife as an indication of His divine approval (Deuteronomy 21:15). It may be difficult to say categorically whether God approves of or disapproves of polygamy in the Old Testament considering the various events on marriage and family life in the Old Testament. There is a kind of dichotomy to the debate. If one looks at the blessings God bestowed on Isaac and Joseph, the sons of the first wife and first love of Abraham and Jacob, respectively, one is tempted to say that they were blessed and honoured by God because they were products of monogamy. However, if one looks at the favour which Jacob, Solomon and some other polygamists received from God, it will be difficult to tell whether God approves of or disapproves of polygamy. Samuel Waje Kunhiyop notes that biblical data on polygamy is mostly descriptive rather than prescriptive. The data does not clearly say whether polygamy is commended or prohibited.<sup>24</sup> Viewing levirate custom as a cause of polygamy in the Old Testament, Kunhiyop says:

If this custom was a frequent cause of polygamy, then it follows that to be polygamous in the Old Testament was not equated with committing adultery. If polygamy, which was culturally and legally recognized, was adulterous before God, then it would contradict the holiness of God to have permitted or even allowed it as an exception through levirate marriage. The only plausible explanation here is that polygamy was not adulterous before God, but rather a legally and culturally accepted form of marriage, which God permitted and even sanctioned in the case of the levirate marriage.<sup>25</sup>

### 2.2.1.3 Marriage to kinsman

According to T. Alton Bryant, three distinct ideas represent the word 'kinsman' in the Old Testament. This is someone who has the right to redeem; a near relative; and a neighbour,

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<sup>23</sup> O. J. Baab, 1962. Marriage, in *The interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, K-Q* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 281.

<sup>24</sup> S. W. Kunhiyop, 2004. *African Christian ethics* (Kaduna; Baraka Press & Publishers Ltd.), 317.

<sup>25</sup> S. W. Kunhiyop, 2004. *African Christian ethics* (Kaduna; Baraka Press & Publishers Ltd.), 326.

acquaintance or friend.<sup>26</sup> It may mean that they have an ancestor in common or they have marriage affiliation. However, roles in kinship system have changed over time, and the roles of any particular kinsman will depend on the nature of the existing relationship between two or more people. There is a very strong kinship relationship and lineage in the patriarchal narratives, from Abraham to the twelve sons of Jacob. Jacob married Leah and Rachel, the daughters of Laban. Laban was Rebekah's brother. Hence, Jacob was Laban's nephew and at the same time son-in-law to Laban (Gen. 28ff.). This might be a taboo among some races but Niebuhr observes that, "Eastern custom, then as now, gave brothers the main share in defending sisters' honour and settling as to their marriage (Gen. 34:13; Judg. 21:22; 2 Sam. 13:20-29)".<sup>27</sup>

Margaret Piel notes that, in some cases, relatives extend to a great range of relatives so that a whole group of related persons is recognized. This can be likened to an extended family system in Africa. Although one has one's biological parents, there are other fathers and mothers as well as many brothers and sisters. The affinity could be so strong that it is difficult, at times, to say whose sibling is who. One has to belong to a group of people. This fact gave birth to fictive kinship. This provides a substitute for the missing kinsman so that necessary duties can be carried out.<sup>28</sup>

William M. Taylor identifies three duties of a *goel* or kinsman redeemer in Israel. Firstly, when an Israelite, through poverty, sold his inheritance and was unable to redeem it, the *goel* would purchase it. Secondly, when an Israelite had wronged anyone and sought to make restitution, but found the party whom he had wronged was dead without leaving a son, the next of kin would represent him and receive the penalty. Thirdly, the *goel* had the right to execute justice on behalf of his murdered brother, and hence he was called the avenger of blood.<sup>29</sup> William M. Taylor opines that Ruth was instigated to make her claim on Boaz as a kinsman redeemer. Naomi remembered that Boaz was one of the *goelim* who, according to Moses' law,

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<sup>26</sup>T. A. Bryant, 1967. Kinsman, in *the New Compact Bible Dictionary*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 309.

<sup>27</sup>R. Jamieson, A.R. Fausset and D. Brown. '*Laban*', in a commentary: critical, experimental, and practical on the Old and New Testaments, Part One (Genesis-Deuteronomy). CD ROM Version, PC Study Bible Version 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>28</sup>M. Piel, 1977. *Consensus and conflict in African societies: an introduction to sociology* (England: Group Limited), 138.

<sup>29</sup>W. M. Taylor, 1891. *Ruth the Gleaner and Esther the Queen* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square), 65.

was to buy the land which belonged to Elimelech and which she would have to sell to live on.<sup>30</sup> Boaz would purchase Elimelech's inheritance but he was obliged to take Naomi to be his wife.

#### 2.2.1.4 Concubinage

Concubinage was a common form of marriage in the Old Testament. T. Alton Bryant defines a concubine as a woman who was united lawfully to a man in a relation inferior to that of the regular wife.<sup>31</sup> This definition is tenable. A number of prominent figures in the Old Testament had concubines. These included Abraham (Gen. 25:6), Nahor (Gen. 22:24), Jacob (Gen. 35:22), Gideon (Judges 8:31), David (II Samuel 5:13), Solomon (I Kings 11:3) and Rehoboam (II Chronicles 11:21). It is evident that an individual could have one or more concubines. Abraham had concubines though it is not clearly stated whether there were others apart from Hagar (Gen. 16:1) and Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6). David had many concubines (II Samuel 5:13) and Solomon had three hundred concubines (I Kings 11:3).

One reason for concubinage was for bearing of children in situations where the regular wife did not bear any child. Children, among the people of the Bible, were greatly desired (Gen. 15:2; 30:1; I Samuel 1:11; Psalms 127:3, 128:3) in order to enjoy the advantages that could be brought to a home through children. This was the case of Hagar, Sarah's maid, and Bilhah, Rachel's maid (Gen. 30:5). Zilpah, Leah's maid, became Jacob's concubine, not because of childlessness of Leah but because Leah desired more children after a brief stoppage in her child-bearing (Gen. 29:32-35). Where the legitimate wives bore only female children, the concubine could probably be a medium for providing a male child. Concubinage could also be for political and economic reasons. Solomon had many concubines for political and economic reasons. Most of his concubines were foreigners, who contributed to Solomon's peaceful reign in contrast to David's reign. Besides, by taking the daughters of the surrounding nations as concubines, Solomon was able to form alliance with them, receiving gifts and also importing the materials needed for his temple-building project.

M. Stephen Davis notes that there were three names for concubine in the Old Testament. These were *amah* (a sold slave girl), *sipgah* (a girl taken as a slave during war), and *pilegesh*, which ranked socially below *amah* and *sipgah*. *Pilegesh* means nothing more than ordinary

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<sup>30</sup>W. M. Taylor, 1891. *Ruth the Gleaner and Esther the Queen* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square), 61.

<sup>31</sup>T. A. Bryant, 1967. Concubine, in *The New Compact Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 116.

prostitute. Their major household duty was bearing of children (Gen. 22:24; Judges 8:31; 1Chronicle 1: 32)<sup>32</sup>. The concubine did not have the same status as a wife. Her children were, however, legitimate, like those of the regular wife/wives. Sarah's superiority was displayed when she asked Abraham to send Hagar away despite the fact that Hagar was the first to bear Abraham a child (Gen. 21:9-21).

The question is: if God's ideal in creation account was monogamy, why would God allow concubinage? If prominent figures were involved and were not rejected, can one then conclude that polygamy and not monogamy was the ideal? Andrew Olu Igenozza advances three reasons for concubinage. First, he notes that the Babylonians and the Assyrians influenced the Israelites. The code of king Hammurabi of Babylon and the Assyrian marriage contract in the 19th century B.C. suggest that a wife was expected to present her slave to her husband so that the slave girl could bear children for the family.<sup>33</sup> This may not be correct since Abraham was originally from Babylon; therefore, the question of Israel being influenced by Babylonian and Assyrian cultures does not arise. Second, Igenozza does not see all cases referred to as concubinage as a state of many wives. In the case of Abraham's concubine, Keturah. Igenozza claims that D. Stuart Briscoe's opinion that Abraham's relationship with Keturah happened during Sarah's lifetime and that she functioned at the same time with Hagar may not be correct.<sup>34</sup> This argument is based on the chronological arrangement of the death of Sarah (Gen. 25:1-2) and the marriage of Keturah and Abraham. In other words, Abraham probably married Keturah after Sarah's death. Igenozza may be correct. However, even if there is an argument against the chronological arrangement, Igenozza's observation of the phrase  $hV'pai xQ:iYIw: -h'2r'b.a; @s,YO\ddot{O}W:$  in Genesis 25:1 must be taken seriously. He is of the view that the phrase must be translated, "And Abraham afterwards took a wife." If this is correct, Keturah's marriage to Abraham was normal since the monogamous ideal of the creation account does not "exclude remarriage after the death of one's spouse"<sup>35</sup> It is imposing the meaning that is not there. Igenozza also affirms that the practice at that time did not put God's original standard of one man

<sup>32</sup> M. S. Davis, 1987. Polygamy in the Ancient World. *Biblical Illustrator*, vol. 14, No 1, 36.

<sup>33</sup> A. O. Igenozza, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: Nigerian Publications Bureau), 109.

<sup>34</sup> A. O. Igenozza, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: Nigerian Publications Bureau), 108.

<sup>35</sup> A. O. Igenozza, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: Nigerian Publications Bureau), 110.



one wife aside. Despite the fact that Ishmael was Abraham's first son, God did not fulfil His eternal purpose in Ishmael but in Isaac, Sarah's son.<sup>36</sup>

The Mosaic Law (Exodus 21:7-11, cf. Deut. 21:10-14) which allowed concubinage was also very weak. The law states that a female slave has the privilege of becoming her master's wife since the master was free to have sexual relationship with her. However, if the master took no delight in her, he should allow her to go freely without selling her, and without a letter of divorce. The penalty for any adulterous act with a concubine was not death. The penalty was scourging and the taking of the trespass offering to the Lord. Eventually, the man would be forgiven (Leviticus 19:20-22).

### 2.2.1.5 Levirate marriage

In Jewish tradition, the widows were looked upon with sincere pity. Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller say that the widows "were protected by special legislation, along with the fatherless and the stranger" (cf. Deuteronomy 16:11, 26:12; 27:19; Zechariah 7:10).<sup>37</sup> This is evidently true. During harvest times, the widows were permitted to glean in fields and orchards (Deut.24:19f). They were also allowed to participate in community sacrifices and feasts. In fact, the oppression and injury of widows would incur God's punishment (Psalm 94: 6; Malachi 3:5). The Jewish tradition has an important institution called the levirate marriage. This is found in the Deuteronomic codes:

If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not be married outside the family to a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in to her, and take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his brother who is dead, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel... (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

The Hebrew word for Levirate Marriage is  $\sim\text{WBW}\rangle$ . Although God established levirate marriage, it had been in operation since the patriarchal age. Genesis 38 also reflects the levirate marriage custom. The case of Judah and Tamar suggests a levirate marriage. S. S. Driver

<sup>36</sup>A. O. Igenoza, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: Nigerian Publications Bureau), 110.

<sup>37</sup>M. S. Miller and J. L. Miller, 1973. Widows, in *Blacks Bible Dictionary* (London: Adams & Charles Black), 815.

observes that the custom of levirate marriage was known among Israel's neighbouring nations.<sup>38</sup> Some scholars argue that Israel's levirate marriage had its origin in Canaanite custom. This is based on Canaanite *mišpāt*. Although the idea may be similar to that of the neighbouring nations, the practice was quite different. In Canaanite custom, a widow that is married belongs to the present husband. She can remarry, whether she is childless or not and the children born into such union belongs to the one who has married the widow. In Israelite tradition, however, the child of such a union is not that of the levir but that of the late brother.

There have been arguments on whether levirate marriage is obligatory for the levir or not. The narrative in Genesis 38 that reflects levirate custom in the Israelite tradition seems to show that the duty of a levir may be refused by the brother-in-law. When Tamar's first husband died (Gen. 38), his brother-in-law, Onan, refused to marry her. The same thing was seen in the case of Ruth, where the nearest kinsman refused the duty. Eryl W. Davies advances three possible causes of such refusal. Firstly, when a man dies without leaving a son, his inheritance goes to his brother. If the brother marries the widow and a son is born, the inheritance goes to the son rather than the brother. The second reason is that such a son born to a levir will not only inherit the deceased property, but he will also inherit some of the levir's property. The third reason, though not in every case, is that, if the levir has his own wife before, it may be burdensome for him to be responsible for the widow and her children. Hence, he has the right to refuse the duty.<sup>39</sup>

Despite all the reasons given above, it seems that the levirate custom is obligatory. Louis Isaac Ravinowitz avers that the refusal of a levir to perform his duty will earn him what can be called a public disgrace. This is done through the *ḥc;ylix'* ceremony, whereby the woman is released from the levirate tie to such a person.<sup>40</sup> The sister-in-law, that is the widow, subjects the brother-in-law to insult by plucking his shoe and spitting in his face at the community court.

Clifton J. Allen declares that the purpose of levirate marriage cannot be separated from the importance of children, especially male children, in Jewish tradition. Ancient Hebrews believed in the continuation of a man's name even after his death. So a levirate marriage

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<sup>38</sup>S. S. Driver, 1965. A critical and exegetical commentary on Deuteronomy, in *the International critical commentary* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 281.

<sup>39</sup>E. W. Davies, 1981. Inheritance rights and the Hebrew levirate marriage, Part 2. *Vetus Testamentum*, XXXI,3, 258-260.

<sup>40</sup>L. I. Ravinowitz, 1971. Levirate marriage and halizah. *Encyclopedia Judaica*, XI, 122-30.

guarantees the name of the deceased in the tribal genealogies and thus ascertains permanence.<sup>41</sup> Also levirate marriage is contracted so that “the name may not be cut off from the court of his birthplace (Ruth 4:10). However there are remarkable differences between levirate marriage as practised before the Sinaitic revelation and its practice in the Sinaitic revelation.

Belkin points out three things about levirate marriage before the Sinaitic Revelation. He asserts that it is the responsibility of the father-in-law to take the widow, if the brother refuses the obligation. It is not necessarily a marriage since the widow would not be regarded as the brother’s wife. Judah, for instance, did not have relationship with Tamar again (Genesis 38:26). Belkin avers that the death of the deceased husband did not say anything more than the fact that the wife was not a widow. She was still the legal wife of the deceased man. Hence, the child of the levirate union belonged to the deceased man.<sup>42</sup> Tamar deceived Judah, hence Judah could not be thinking of marrying her. Judah appealed to his son Onan to perform the duty of a levir. If Tamar’s first marriage status was not broken then Judah could not marry her.

### 2.2.2 Sex and adultery in the Old Testament

Samuele Bacchiocchi observes that Sebastian Castellio (1515- 1563), one of the first Reformed Christian proponents of religious toleration,<sup>43</sup> and some scholars have viewed the Song of Songs as an obscene description of human love, which does not belong in the biblical canon. Conversely, others, like Calvin, have defended the inclusion of the book in the canon by interpreting it as an allegory symbolizing the love of God for His people. The book, however, is not an allegory. It is a romantic celebration of human sexuality. According to some traditions, portions of the book were sung during wedding processions and wedding feasts.<sup>44</sup>

In Patriarchal time, Deuteronomy 22:13-19 shows that the ancient Israelite tradition saw sex within marriage as beautiful and enjoyable. Kiel and Delitzsch aver that, "Marriage must

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<sup>41</sup> C. J. Allen, 1969. Genesis-Exodus, in *The Broadman Bible Commentary, vol.1* (Nashville:Broadman Press),246.

<sup>42</sup> S. Belkin, 1970. Levirate and agnate marriage in rabbinic and cognate literature. *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, LX, 230.

<sup>43</sup> S. Castellio. Internet File, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sebastian\\_Castellio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sebastian_Castellio). Retrieved on November 07, 2013.

<sup>44</sup>S. Bacchiocchi. The marriage covenant: a biblical study on marriage, divorce and remarriage. <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/books/marriage/4.html>. Retrieved on November 07, 2013.

be founded upon fidelity and chastity on the part of those who are married"<sup>45</sup> It is revealed that the wife must be a virgin. In addition, Warren Wiersbe observes that, "the sexual purity of women was important in Israel in order to maintain the integrity of the family line and therefore the integrity of the tribe"<sup>46</sup> At the end of the wedding festivities, the couple were required to consummate the marriage for the first time. A white cloth was spread. Blood on the sheet indicated that the bride had been a virgin and that the man was not impotent. The loss of virginity before marriage brought shame to the girl and her parents. Parents were compelled to preserve their children's chastity, to avoid the grief and shame of the execution at their own door. Israelite tradition placed importance on the virginity of girls and none on boys. Some boys/men must have been responsible for the loss of the girls' virginity. There were regulations against sexual irregularities (Ex 22:16; Lev 19:20, 29; 15:24; 18:19; 20:18; Deut 25:11).

Sexual activities outside marriage is sin and stern punishment were meted out to the offenders. The cases of Shechem, the son of Hamor, the Hivite chief who raped Dinah, Jacob's daughter (Gen.30:21); and Amnon, the eldest son of David, by Ahinoam of Jezreel who raped Tamar his sister (2 Sam 13) are examples. Simeon and Levi revenged the rape of Dinah by putting the Shechemites to death (Gen.34). Amnon was also killed.

In the times of the prophets, during Hosea's time, emphasis of the Sinaitic covenant and exclusive worship of Yahweh by the Israelites had degenerated to the point that Yahweh's worship was being mixed with the worship of the Canaanite deities.<sup>47</sup> For Baal to give rains and material needs of men there must be "unbridled sexual activity, coupled with excessive indulgence in alcohol."<sup>48</sup> Asaju states that for Baal to give agricultural yield there must be indiscriminate sexual intercourse because the level of needed rain for high agricultural yield depended on the level of sexual intercourse.<sup>49</sup> The two authors are right when one surveys the kind of morality associated with the worship of Baal in Israel in 8th century B.C. Amos, the

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<sup>45</sup> C. F. Kiel and F. Delitzsch, n.d. *The Pentateuch, in Commentary on the Old Testament, volume 1* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.). New Updated Edition. Biblesoft/PCStudyBible/Refworks/Keil.JSR

<sup>46</sup> W. W. Wiersbe, 2001. Pentateuch, in *The bible Exposition Commentary: Old Testament* (U.S.A :Cook Communications). C:/Program Files(x86)/Biblesoft/PCStudyBible/Refworks/600334BECommOT.JSR.

<sup>47</sup> T. A. Bryant, 1967. Hosea, in *The new compact Bible dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 233.

<sup>48</sup> T. A. Bryant, 1967. Concubine, in *The new compact Bible dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 233.

<sup>49</sup> D. Asaju, 1999. *Christian foundations* (Lagos: Bahfik & Associates), 78.

prophet, was a contemporary of Hosea who, because of the prevailing moral and ethical degradation, preached ethical monotheism (cf. Amos 5:24). Isaiah's stress on strict monotheism in Judah shows that Israel's loyalty had shifted from the Holy God of Israel and, therefore, a call to repentance.

### 2.2.3 Divorce and remarriage in the Old Testament

#### 2.2.3.1 The interpretation of $\text{rf}^{\text{f}}\text{b}^{\text{f}}$ in Genesis 2:24

The interpretation of the word  $\text{rf}^{\text{f}}\text{b}^{\text{f}}$  "flesh" in Genesis 2:24 is a major consideration in determining whether divorce is implied in the Old Testament. The interpretation relates to whether "one flesh" refers to kinship relationship or not. If it refers to kinship relationship, it then implies that marriage relationship is indissoluble. If otherwise, then marriage in the Old Testament is dissoluble. Chisholm observes that:

The expression "one flesh," used of the relationship between the first man and woman (Gen 2:24), draws attention to the inseparable bond inherent in the marriage relationship. The phrase must be interpreted in light of the man's statement in 2:23: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh," the meaning of which is informed by the idiomatic expression "flesh and bone," a phrase referring to kinship relationships within clan and tribal contexts.... The language of Gen 2:23-24 suggests that the first marriage was regarded as a kinship ("flesh and blood") relationship which, because of its temporal priority, supercedes all such blood relationships, even that of parent-child.... On this basis, Jesus viewed the marriage relationship as indissoluble (Matt 19:4-6).<sup>50</sup>

Paul E. Steele and Charles C. Ryrie, quoting some scholars say:

God said, "They shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). One cannot be divided and maintain wholeness.... Allen Ross says, "To become one flesh means becoming a spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical unity." ... Abel Isaksson points out that the term "one flesh" actually refers to a kinship that is so permanent that even if the husband or wife dies, the other is not free to marry those of the partner's family without committing incest.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> N. P. Bratsiotis, 2002. "  $\text{rf}^{\text{f}}\text{b}^{\text{f}}$  " in *Theological dictionary of the Old Testament* . Coputer File:Libronix Digital Library System, 2.0. U.S.A.

<sup>51</sup> P. E. Steele and C. C. Ryrie, 1983. *Meant to Last* (Illinois: Victor), 64.

J. Carl Laney avers that the one-flesh relationship of husband and wife implies that marital intercourse has made the husband and wife as closely related as parents and children. Therefore, it is not possible to remove the relationship between the wife and the husband in the same way it is not possible to do with blood relations.<sup>52</sup> To Laney,

Becoming one flesh symbolizes the identification of two people with one community of interests and pursuits. Although they remain two persons, the married couple becomes *one* in a mystical, spiritual unity.... The concept of "one flesh" is beautifully illustrated in the children God may give a married couple. In their offspring, husband and wife are indissolubly united into one person.<sup>53</sup>

To reconstitute the first marriage would be a "type of incest", which is explicitly prohibited in Leviticus 18:6-18.<sup>54</sup> Hence, Chisholm, Steele, Ryrie, and Laney's interpretation reveals that "one flesh" refers to kinship or tribal relation, which makes no marriage dissoluble. The reason is that blood relations can never be broken for any reason. Similarly, B. Vawter argues that the phrase 'become one flesh'

should not be too narrowly interpreted as referring exclusively to the physical side of marriage. The flesh of man is his very being itself, his identity, his heart and soul (Psalm 84:2). The union of man and woman in marriage, therefore, is set on the highest and most integral plane: it is a union of persons who together make up a new person.<sup>55</sup>

Von Rad views the one flesh relationship as 'the powerful drive of the sexes to each other'.<sup>56</sup> However, Kenneth A. Matthew has a different opinion. He says:

'One flesh' echoes the language of v.23, which speaks of the woman's source in man; here it depicts the consequence of their bonding, which results in a new person. Our human sexuality expresses both our individuality as gender and our oneness with another through physical union. Sexual union implies community and requires responsible love within that union.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> J. C. Laney, 1990. No divorce & no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 24.

<sup>53</sup> J. C. Laney, 1981. *The divorce myth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House), 21-22.

<sup>54</sup> J. C. Laney, 1990. No divorce & no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 24.

<sup>55</sup> B. Vawter, 1977. *On Genesis: a new reading* (London: Chapman). Quoted by Andrew Cornes, 1993, in *Divorce and remarriage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 60.

<sup>56</sup> G. von Rad, 1966. *Genesis* (London: SCM), 85.

<sup>57</sup> K. A. Matthew, 1996. Genesis 1-11:26, in *NAC* (Nashville: Broadman), 223.

Thomas R. Edgar debunks the above views about divorce and remarriage in Genesis 2:24. He asserts that, "Genesis 2:24 says nothing explicit regarding divorce or remarriage"<sup>58</sup> William Luck avers that the reference to flesh in Genesis 2: 23 points to the meaning of the 'one flesh ' in verse 24. He debunks the proponents of kinship relationship's claim; "It would seem that Isaksson and Heth and Wenham wish to distinguish 'one flesh' from sexuality so as to preclude the inference that sexual misconduct dissolves the 'one-flesh' relationship.... A 'one-flesh' relationship seems to be primarily an organic one, which in the case of human beings would be sexual."<sup>59</sup>

It is wrong to have a narrow view of the statement "the two shall be one flesh" in Genesis 2:24. Could it be that Adam and Eve saw themselves as creatures of the same specie? If this is the case, then Paul's understanding of the two shall become 'one flesh' in I Corinthians 6:16 to mean that any sexual union between a man and a woman has made them 'one flesh' is tenable. Hence, the 'one flesh' is a bond formed by sexual relations, which does not make a marriage indissoluble. It is not a bond formed by blood. This is a major difference between marital and kinship relationship. Kinship relationship is not dissoluble after death, but marital relationship terminates at death. The statement of Jesus in Matthew 19:6 that marriage is not dissoluble is not explicitly stated in the Genesis account.

### 2.2.3.2 Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 has often been taken as a law of divorce. However, while some see the passage as a concession on divorce, some assert that the passage has nothing to do with divorce at all. By the time of Jesus, there were two schools of thought in the attempt to interpret the passage. The Hillel School took this passage as reference to "a variety of items a husband might find objectionable such as barrenness...or some birth defect."<sup>60</sup> It later became so elastic that nearly anything a husband found displeasing constituted a just ground for divorce. By contrast, the Shammai School took the phrase to mean any sexual impurity (usually adultery).<sup>61</sup>

Modern interpreters are divided on the real meaning of  $\text{rb}'\hat{\text{e}}\text{D}' \text{tw}:\hat{\text{a}}\text{r}\rangle$ ], in Deuteronomy

<sup>58</sup> T. R. Edgar, 1990. Divorce and remarriage for adultery and desertion, in Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views, ed. by H. Wayne House (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press), 153.

<sup>59</sup> W. F. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage* (San Francisco: Harper and Row), 18.

<sup>60</sup> J. S. Feinberg and P. D. Feinberg, 1993. *Ethics for a brave world* (Wheaton: Crossway), 312.

<sup>61</sup> J. S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, 1993. *Ethics for a brave world* (Wheaton: Crossway), 312.

24.1. Peter Craig observes that the statement is "so succinct that all the details are no longer clear."<sup>62</sup> The NIV translates the phrase as 'something indecent'. Some scholars feel that the Shammai school is correct and that the term has "sexual overtones—some lewd or immoral behaviour including any sexual perversion or adultery."<sup>63</sup> Another similar interpreter thinks that "it cannot refer to adultery, for that was punishable by death...[But] the word  $\text{tw}:\text{âr}\text{>}$  [ , ('*erwah*, "nakedness") by itself is used elsewhere of the shameful exposure of the human body...therefore, it probably indicates some immodest exposure or shameful conduct connected with sex life."<sup>64</sup> Roland Chia argues that to take Deuteronomy 24: 1-4 as a law on divorce is a 'misreading of the text for which the Authorised Version is by and large responsible'<sup>65</sup>. "When a man taketh a wife and marrieth her, then it shall be, if she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some unseemly thing in her, that he shall write her a bill of divorcement." (Deuteronomy 24:1). According to Roland Chia, the practice of divorce is an assumption based on Deuteronomy 24: 1-4. The passage is a law to restrict remarriage. This is corroborated by the view that the first three verses are stating the conditions, while verse 4a is stating the law.<sup>66</sup> The Feinbergs believe that the Hillel school is correct in their interpretation of  $\text{tw}:\text{âr}\text{>}$  [ , that a variety of items might make a man displeased enough to divorce his wife.<sup>67</sup> Jeffrey Tigay asserts that the phrase  $\text{rb}'\text{êD}' \text{tw}:\text{âr}\text{>}$  [ , is an idiomatic expression which refers to conduct than physical features .<sup>68</sup>

However, Dwight Hervey Small's assertion that God gave commandments for marriage in the Old Testament, but did not make provision for divorce in the original creation will be appropriate.<sup>69</sup> In other words, that Moses later recorded God's allowance for divorce in the Hebrew community (Deuteronomy 24:1- 4) does not imply that God did approve it. Furthermore, there is a problem in finding the right interpretation for the word  $\text{hw}'\text{r}$  [ , , in Deuteronomy

<sup>62</sup>P. Craig, 1976. The Book of Deuteronomy, in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 304.

<sup>63</sup>R. H. Alexander, Divorce, in *Evangelical Dictionary Of Biblical Theology*, 183.

<sup>64</sup>D. J. McLeod, 1993. The problem of divorce(part 2): the teaching of scripture(the Old Testament Texts). *Emmaus Journal*, vol.2, 30-31.

<sup>65</sup>R. Chia, n.d. Marriage, divorce and remarriage: an exegetical and theological enquiry, *Church and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3,124.

<sup>66</sup>J. Tigay, 1996. Deuteronomy, in *The JPS Torah Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society), 220.

<sup>67</sup>J. S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, 1993. *Ethics for a brave world* (Wheaton: Crossway), 313.

<sup>68</sup>J. Tigay, 1996. Deuteronomy, in *The JPS Torah Commentary*(Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society), 221.

<sup>69</sup>D. H. Small, 1986. *Remarriage and God's renewing grace* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 80.



24: 1-4.<sup>70</sup> This is true because the word ḥw'ṛ.[, means “nakedness,” “shameful” or “undefended parts.” The sin of adultery is punishable by death and not divorce.<sup>71</sup>

### 2.2.3.3 Divorce of Malachi 2:13-16

Malachi 2:13-16 has been interpreted in various ways. Against the opinion that God wills permanence in marriage, J. Adams posits that not all forms of divorce can be disregarded. "If God Himself became involved in divorce proceedings with Israel (Jer. 3:8), it is surely wrong to condemn any and all divorce out of hand."<sup>72</sup> According to him:

It is altogether true that God hates divorce. But He neither hates all divorces in the same way nor hates every aspect of divorce. He hates what occasions every divorce—even the one that He gave to sinful Israel. He hates the results that often flow to children and to injured parties of a divorce (yet even that did not stop Him from willing divorce in Ezra 10:44, 11). And He hates divorces wrongly obtained on grounds that He has not sanctioned.<sup>73</sup>

W.C. Kaiser, on the other hand, observes that:

Divorce is nowhere commanded or even encouraged in either testament. It is only permissible, and even that on a rather reluctant basis where there is irreconcilable immorality (a violation of the "one flesh" principle) or where there is irremediable desertion (a violation of the "cleaving" principle, 1 Cor 7:10-16).<sup>74</sup>

Malachi 2:16 calls for absolute rejection of divorce since the reference clause gives no exception. The passage is “one of the most profound texts in the scripture on the subject of marriage permanence”<sup>75</sup> J. Collins observes that the Masoretic Text(MT) and the LXX have a rendering that is quite different from many English translations. In the Masoretic Text, AvêWbl.-l[; ‘sm'x' hS'Ûkiw> laeêr'f.yI yheäl{a/ ‘hw"hy> rm:Ûa'

<sup>70</sup> S. W. Kunhiyop, 2004. *African Christian ethics* (Kaduna; Baraka Press & Publishers Ltd.), 303.

<sup>71</sup> S. W. Kunhiyop, 2004. *African Christian ethics* (Kaduna; Baraka Press & Publishers Ltd.), 305.

<sup>72</sup> J. Adams, 1980. *Marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 23.

<sup>73</sup> J. Adams, 1980. *Marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 23-24.

<sup>74</sup> W. C. Kaiser, 1987. "Divorce in Malachi". *Criswell Theological Review*, vol. 2, no. 1:82.

<sup>75</sup> P. E. Steele and Charles C. Ryrie, 1983. *Meant to Last* (Illinois: Victor), 67.

xL;<sup>a</sup>v; anEáf'-yK`WdGO\*b.ti al{íw> ~k,Ðx]WrB. ~T,îr>m;v.nlw>  
 tAa+b'c. hw"åhy> rm:ísa' (Malachi 2:16) is rendered " For the man who hates and  
 divorces, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of  
 hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless." In the LXX, avlla. eva.n  
 mish,saj evxapostei,lh|j le,gei ku,rioj o` qeo.j tou/ Israhl kai. kalu,yei avse,beia evpi. ta.  
 evnqumh,mata, sou le,gei ku,rioj pantokra,twr kai. fula,xasqe evn tw/| pneu,mati u`mw/n kai. ouv  
 mh. evgkatali,phte (Malachi 2:16) is rendered " But if having hated you divorce, says the Lord,  
 the God of Israel, and iniquity will cover your thoughts (his garments), says the Lord Almighty.  
 So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not forsake." J. Collins opines that the Masoretic Text  
 and the LXX has the probable correct interpretation in opposition to the Western translations that  
 would translate Malachi 2:16, as "I hate divorce...." According to him, the Masoretic Text and  
 the LXX renderings would

...fit into the overall promotion of covenant fidelity as the ideal of  
 marriage, an ideal for which the faithful among the people of God –  
 whether in ancient Israel or in the Christian Church today – will seek  
 all the resources of grace, of forgiveness, of fellowship with the  
 saints, and of the Holy Spirit's enabling power.<sup>76</sup>

Collins therefore upholds the view that Malachi 2:16 teaches the permanence, the creation ideal of marriage.

Malachi 2:16 affirms that God hates divorce. According to Ronald J. Nydam, "Hate is a  
 strong word. The Hebrew verb **an}c\*** means to hate, to feel aversion for, be disgusted with, to  
 separate, (as a result) to divorce."<sup>77</sup> There should be no reason for divorce. Joyce B. Baldwin  
 sees divorce like covering one's garment with violence, "a figurative expression for all kinds of  
 gross injustice which, like the blood of a murdered victim, leave their mark for all to see."<sup>78</sup>

The marriage contract is between God and each of the parties. God is not the witness but  
 the principal party to the contract. The man covenants with God to provide and fulfil the terms of

<sup>76</sup>C. J. Collins. Malachi 2:16. Retrieved on November 06, 2013.

<sup>77</sup>R. J. Nydam, 2005. The messiness of marriage and the knottiness of divorce: a call for a higher theology and a tougher ethic. *Calvin Theological Journal*, 40, 211-226.

<sup>78</sup>J. G. Baldwin, 1972. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, in *Tyndale Old Testament commentaries*. D. J. Wiseman, Gen. Ed. (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press), 241.

his contract with God; so the wife. There are two separate contracts, one is the man with God for the wife, and the other is the woman with God for her husband. Sexual immorality to a marriage is what idolatry is to man's relationship with God. To fault the marriage contract is to dishonour God.

The analogy of man's relationship with God indicates that marriage is meant to be permanent in Malachi 2: 13-16. The penalty for divorce under Mosaic Law is physical death, much in the same way that idolatry is spiritual death. The priests did not apply this penalty equally among the people and they perverted the sanctity of the physical and spiritual contracts. They neither honour God nor taught this sin of hating and divorcing their wives, or of marrying others besides them, which persisted even till the Lord's time. The treachery was through divorce or polygamy, which arose from hatred and contempt of the wife of their youth. This is analogous to the priests not fulfilling their obligation, which results in the hatred of God and his laws. A joining creates a oneness, one flesh, in the same manner that Christians are joined spiritually to our God. The practices condemned by Malachi — such as divorce — are *incompatible* with godliness. This is because,

This "faith-breaking" conduct has an impact that goes beyond one's relationship with God or spouse. Verse 15 suggests that it can even affect the relationship of one's *offspring* with God. Although there is no guarantee that the offspring of *non-divorced* parents will always be *godly*, or that the offspring of *divorced* parents will always be *ungodly*, this passage shows us that the willingness of a parent to do what God *hates* (divorce) has a profound impact on the offspring of that now-broken union.<sup>79</sup>

## 2.3 New Testament background

### 2.3.1 Jesus' teaching on marriage

In his dialogue with the Pharisees on divorce (Matt 19:3ff; Mark 10:2ff., cf. Matt 5:31f), Jesus shifts the point of reference from the Law to the order of creation. Jesus presents the standard for marriage. His teachings at the same time serve as the basis for interpreting the law concerning divorce.<sup>80</sup> In other words, Jesus' appeal to the creation narrative brings into the awareness that God instituted marriage "from the very beginning" and whatever the oral

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<sup>79</sup>D. Hinks, 2003. Malachi 2:15. <http://www.all.wpd>. Retrieved on November 06, 2013.

<sup>80</sup>H. Thielicke, 1964. *The ethics of sex* (New York: Harper & Row), 108.

interpretation of the Pharisees might be concerning marriage, it cannot be placed above the higher plane of the creation narrative. Roland Chia contends that Paul's view on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7:8-9 is too pragmatic and almost utilitarian, lacking any reference to the order of creation. Paul presents marriage as 'an emergency institution for fallen men'.<sup>81</sup> Any explanation of Jesus' teaching without reference to the creation order would present marriage as an escape route for those who are willing to satisfy their sexual urge".<sup>82</sup> Therefore, Mosaic legislation was in some sense "a departure from the creation ordinance and from the practice to which it obligated men."<sup>83</sup> The Mosaic legislation is relative, provisional and 'does not portray how the covenant of marriage is supposed to be according to the intentions of the Creator. Rather it points to a concession, one that is based on the weakness and depravity of man.'<sup>84</sup> Jesus grounds the sanctity of marriage on the authority of God himself.<sup>85</sup> The husband and wife must subject themselves under the command and help of God because marriage is the divinely instituted. Corroborating this, Emil Brunner, observes that:

Marriage is life in community of two persons of different sexes, a community which is complete, based upon the natural foundation of sex love, but only fulfilled in the recognition of the fact that by divine appointment they belong to each other; through whose created distinctiveness the Creator maintains the human race, and through which the sex nature of man, which is disposed of community, can and should realize its personal character<sup>86</sup>.

In Hebrew, a husband is sometimes called "master" (  $\text{lu}^{\wedge}\text{B}^{\wedge}$  ). In Greek, the word used would be "lord" (  $\text{ku}/\text{rio}\$$  ). In these words, one tastes a flavour that is less romantic and personal than it is hierarchical. The role relationship is being stressed by these words. For instance, Peter refers to Sarah calling Abraham "lord" (  $\text{ku}/\text{rio}\$$  ) to show her submission to his

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<sup>81</sup>R. Chia, n.d. Marriage, divorce and remarriage: an exegetical and theological enquiry, *Church and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3, 119.

<sup>82</sup>H. Thielicke, 1964. *The ethics of sex* (New York: Harper & Row), 122.

<sup>83</sup>W. Lane, 1974. Mark in *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans ), 356.

<sup>84</sup>R. Chia, n.d. Marriage, divorce and remarriage: an exegetical and theological enquiry, *Church and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3, 120.

<sup>85</sup>W. Lane, 1974. Mark, in *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans ), 356.

<sup>86</sup>E. Brunner, 1937. *Divine imperative* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), 350.

authority (1 Pet. 3:6). The parties in the marital vows leave their parents and break 'union' with them almost in the sense of divorcing himself and eventually becoming single. Man cannot sustain his family of procreation and the family of origin at the same time. If this was done, the nuclear family would have hierarchical problem. In other words, whose voice should the wife recognize? The father-in-law's or the husband's? Alternatively, in the case of the children, the grandparent's or the father's? <sup>87</sup>

William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham,<sup>88</sup> in agreement with Isakkson,<sup>89</sup> use "cleave" in a covenantal context (Deut. 10:20; 11:22; 13:4; 30:20). God intended marriage to be life-long. "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 10:6-9) God's original purpose disclosed in Genesis was thus life-long monogamy. He only provided Eve for Adam. Marriage brings a man and the woman into a pure and holy union that is similar to the eternal union between Jesus Christ and the Church.<sup>90</sup>

J. Carl Laney notes that permanence is involved in God's act of joining a man and a woman. This joining, which is done by God himself, is an indication that it is a covenant. That they are becoming one flesh indicates that the marriage bond cannot be dissolved.<sup>91</sup> The "then" in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 never sanctioned divorce under any circumstance. Laney's argument is corroborated by his explanation of the "one-flesh relationship" in the creation account along the incest of Leviticus 18:6-18; 20:21. The one-flesh relationship of husband and wife implies that marital intercourse has made the husband and wife as closely related as parents and children. Therefore, it is not possible to remove the relationship between the wife and the husband in the

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<sup>87</sup>W. F. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage: recovering the biblical view* (New York: Harper and Row), 11.

<sup>88</sup>W. A. Heth and G. J. Wenham, 1985. *Jesus and divorce: the problem with the Evangelical Consensus* (Nashville: Nelson), 101.

<sup>89</sup>A. Isakkson, 1965. *Marriage and ministry in the New Temple: a study with special reference to Matthew 19.13 and 1 Cor. 11.3-16*, Trans. By N. Tomkinson with J. Gray (Lund: Gleerup), 24.

<sup>90</sup>R. Eldredge, 2002. *Can divorced Christians remarry?* (Camarillo: Choice), 15.

<sup>91</sup>J. C. Laney, 1990. No divorce & no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 21.

same way it is not possible to do it with blood relations.<sup>92</sup> To reconstitute the first marriage would be a “type of incest” which is explicitly prohibited in Leviticus 18:6-18.<sup>93</sup>

### 2.3.2 Jesus' teaching on sex and adultery

Opinions differ among scholars as to the interpretation of “the lustful eye” of Jesus in Matthew 5:28. While some would view lustful looking as a sexual sin, others would not see it as such. Looking at Matthew 5:28, Kent E. Brower refers to the Old Testament and extra-biblical literature that warn about the use of the eye but they are not explicitly related to lust. These include Ben Sirach 23:4, 5; Job 31:1; Job31:9; Ec.11:9, and several Qumran texts, such as IQS 1:6-7,11QT 59:14 and 1QpHab5:7.<sup>94</sup> He also gives a long list of passages which are explicitly related to sexual lust. These include: Ben-Sirach 9:8; 41:19-22; Psalm of Solomon16:7-8; T. Judah12:3; 17:1; T.Issa 7:1, 4:49-54; T.Benj 8:2; T.Reb 3;10-12, 4:1, 5:1-5, 6:1.<sup>95</sup> Kent opines that in Matthew 5:28 Jesus does not go beyond the Old Testament since “the tenth commandment addresses the inner disposition of the person in the covenant community. For Jesus, then, the law is being intensified precisely in its own direction.”<sup>96</sup>

A careful look at some extra biblical sources reveals that there are supports for and against women as the cause of the sin of lust which Jesus rejects in Matthew 5:28. Ken E. Brower quotes T. Reuben 3:3, 10-12 and 5:1, 3:

The spirit of promiscuity resides in the nature and the senses.... For if I had not seen Bilhah bathing in a sheltered place, I would not have fallen into this great lawless act.... An angel of the Lord told me and instructed me that women are more easily overcome by the spirit of promiscuity than are men. For women are evil, my children, and by reason of their lacking authority or power over men, they

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<sup>92</sup> J. C. Laney, 1990. No divorce & no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 24.

<sup>93</sup> J. C. Laney, 1990. No divorce & no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 24.

<sup>94</sup> K. E. Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol.76, no. 4, 296-297.

<sup>95</sup> K. E. Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol.76, no. 4, 298.

<sup>96</sup> K. E. .Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol.76, no. 4, 302.

scheme treacherously how they might entice him to themselves by means of their looks.<sup>97</sup>

Here, Reuben restricts the cause of adultery to only women since, in his own opinion, women's body is made naturally to seduce, which no man can avoid. This is a major reason why "Jewish men expected married Jewish women to wear head coverings to prevent lust"<sup>98</sup> Paul also used this background with his discussion about head covering in I Cor. 11:2-16. Moreover, a Jewish man in the Old Testament, who was entitled to have more than one wife, cannot be called into question by his wife for violating marriage rules.<sup>99</sup> Guelich,<sup>100</sup> Davies and Allen,<sup>101</sup> like Strecker, believe that Jesus goes beyond the Old Testament realm by apportioning blame to the man.

However, Alice Bach, while commenting on the story of Bathsheba and David, opines that "the objectification of a woman's body" may not be appropriate since God has reasons for creating woman also, in his own image.<sup>102</sup> Kent E. Brower supports Geza Vermes and George Foote Moore by noting that Jesus is not the only one who believes that the heart and not the woman's body is the seat of evil. Geza Vermes cites Rabbinic Literature such as IQpHab 5:7; IQS1:6; CD2:16; 11QTS 59:140.<sup>103</sup> These verses show that the body created by God is good but every lustful look has its root in the heart. George Foote Moore furthermore cites the Mekilta de R. Simeion ben Yohai on Exodus 20:14 thus: "You shall not commit adultery. Neither with hand nor foot nor eye nor mind.... From where do we learn that the eyes and the mind commit fornication.... Do not go about after your mind and your eyes, after which you commit fornication."<sup>104</sup>

Kent E. Brower's view that Jesus does not go beyond the Old Testament commandment is commendable. He has only given the Law the right interpretation as against the interpretations given by the Pharisees. Kent affirms that,

The crucial exegetical point here centres on Jesus' use of the verb *e,piquh,sai*, the verb which is used in the LXX version of the tenth commandment and also in the parallel version in Deut. 5:21 (*ouv*

<sup>97</sup> K. E. Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 76:4, 298.

<sup>98</sup> C. Keener, 2000. *Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 187.

<sup>99</sup> G. Strecker, 1998. *The Sermon on the Mount: an exegetical commentary*. Translated by O. C. Dean, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon), 71.

<sup>100</sup> R. A. Guelich, 1982. *The Sermon on the Mount: a foundation for understanding*. Dallas: Word, 242.

<sup>101</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, 1988. *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1. Edinburg: T & T Clark, 522.

<sup>102</sup> A. Bach, 1997. *Women, seduction and betrayal in biblical narrative*. Cambridge: CUP, 130.

<sup>103</sup> K. E. Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 76:4, 300

<sup>104</sup> K. E. Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 76:4, 300

e,piqumh,seij th/n gunai/ka tou/ tlhs,ion sou). Covetousness breaches the tenth commandment. It stands as the epitome of sinfulness as reflected in Paul's discussion in Romans 7. But even in its Old Testament context, the tenth commandment addresses the inner disposition of the person in the covenant community. For Jesus, then, the law is being intensified precisely in its own direction.<sup>105</sup>

Exodus 20:17 and Deuteronomy 5:12 reveal that the tenth commandment forbids covetousness of the neighbours' wife, his house and possessions. It implies that Jesus' command comes from within the Torah, though greater righteousness can only be achieved by internal adherence to the legal code. It is a matter of inner disposition and not outward action. Jesus' condemnation of the sin of lust allowed Him and His followers to enjoy social contact as male and female. Nevertheless, Jesus would not blame only women for the sin of lust. This, the rabbis of his days refused to do (cf. Matthew 5:28).<sup>106</sup> He did not separate men from women. He "called upon his disciples to discipline their thoughts rather than to avoid women."<sup>107</sup> Lust does not have to be fed but can be controlled. Jesus demanded such control from His disciples, allowing males and females to associate together and to work in harmony with one another. Although such social contact between the sexes would be unthinkable to first-century rabbis, Jesus' teaching about the sinfulness of lust helps to explain the relationship men and women sustain both in His earthly ministry and in the apostolic church.<sup>108</sup> In the early church, women frequently laboured together with men (Acts 16:14-15; Romans 16:3, 12; Philippians 4:3).

### 2.3.3 Jesus' teaching on divorce

J. Carl Laney notes that some scholars discard any ground for divorce because, according to them, the celebrated exceptive clauses are not part of the original teachings of Jesus. Such scholars feel that Matthew inserts the clauses probably or they are an interpolation by the early church.<sup>109</sup> This, J. Carl Laney<sup>110</sup> and William Luck note, is a hypothetical and "hypothetical

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<sup>105</sup> K. E. Brower, 2004. Jesus and the lustful eye: glancing at Matthew 5:28. *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 76:4, 301-302.

<sup>106</sup> J. A. Borland, 1991. Women in the life and teachings of Jesus. *Recovering biblical manhood and womanhood to Evangelical feminism*. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds.(Wheaton: Crossway Books), 106.

<sup>107</sup> J. B. Hurley, 1981. *Man and woman in biblical perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 109.

<sup>108</sup> J. B. Hurley, 1981. *Man and woman in biblical perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 109-110.

<sup>109</sup> J. C. Laney, 1981. *Divorce myth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House), 66.

<sup>110</sup> J. C. Laney, 1981. *Divorce myth* (Minneapolis: Bethany House), 66.



alternative readings must be denied in favour of alternatives in the manuscripts."<sup>111</sup> This must be looked into closely, because no Greek manuscript omits the exceptions.<sup>112</sup>

In an attempt to vouch for the indissolubility of marriage in Mark 10 and Matt.19:3-8, Mark Geldard opines that *porneia* in Matthew 5 and 19 must assume a narrower meaning. He argues against the wider meaning of *porneia* as general sexual irregularity and including both adultery and pre-marital fornication. The wider meaning of *porneia* which makes marriage dissoluble can not be accepted.<sup>113</sup> This is because Matthew 15:19 distinguishes between adultery, *moicheia* and *porneia*. "Thus the indication from this verse is that if Matthew wants to speak of wider sexual irregularity then he uses not just the expression *porneia* (as the advocates of the 'wider meaning' suggest) but rather the words *porneia and moicheia* together."<sup>114</sup> The Pharisees' question reveals that they knew Jesus was teaching indissolubility, because his teaching was in conflict with Moses' teaching on the issue of divorce. Besides Jesus' teaching in Mark 10 and Matt.19:3-8 clearly abrogates the Mosaic concession and affirms the indissolubility of marriage.<sup>115</sup> Geldard argues further that:

... had Jesus allowed divorce on the grounds of general sexual irregularity, including adultery (wider meaning), then he would not have been in conflict with the Mosaic concession at all, but would merely have been opting for a particular interpretation of it: an interpretation along similar lines to that of the Shammaites. But the Pharisees certainly understood Jesus' teaching to be in conflict with Moses hence the trap and Jesus himself explicitly affirms that they are right. His teaching is in conflict with Moses: 'Moses allowed a man to put away his wife, but from the beginning it was not so ... What God has joined together let no man put asunder.' The clear conflict between Jesus and the Mosaic concession itself logically requires that Jesus taught absolute indissolubility. It logically rules out the 'wider meaning'.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> W. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage* (San Francisco: Harper and Row), 86.

<sup>112</sup> B. Metzger, 1971. *A textual commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies), 13-14, 47-48.

<sup>113</sup> M. Geldard, 1978. Jesus' teaching on Divorce: thoughts on the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9." *Churchman*, 92 : 133.

<sup>114</sup> M. Geldard, 1978. Jesus' teaching on Divorce: thoughts on the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9." *Churchman*, 92 : 134

<sup>115</sup> M. Geldard, 1978. Jesus' teaching on Divorce: thoughts on the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9." *Churchman*, 92 : 136

<sup>116</sup> M. Geldard, 1978. Jesus' teaching on Divorce: thoughts on the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9." *Churchman*, 92 : 137

Aidan Mahoney relies on the analogy which is often used by the Old Testament prophets and argues that porneia refers to spiritual harlotry.<sup>117</sup> According to this view, porneia refers specifically to mixed marriages, and Jesus, therefore, prohibits divorce except in cases of marital unfaithfulness. This position must be rejected for two reasons. The semantic restriction to which porneia is subjected cannot be supported by the context and the possibility of mixed marriages being an issue of relevance to the disputants in this passage is very remote.

Another major support for the indissolubility of marriage is the betrothal view. Advocates of the betrothal view either demonstrate the clause's legitimacy and assumption elsewhere in scripture, or show that the clause does not constitute an actual exception, thereby making the Matthean divorce views compatible with other biblical passages that seemingly prohibit the practice of divorce and remarriage.<sup>118</sup> J. K. Tarwater opines that the betrothal practice "rests upon two key truths: the importance of a man not having sexual relationships with his wife after she has had sex with another man and the importance of a bride's virginity."<sup>119</sup> Some scholars claim that any divorce that is done under the betrothal marriage indicates that marriage never took place. John K. Tarwater observes that, while a betrothed couple was viewed as married for moral and legal purposes, the termination of such a relationship because of unfaithfulness was not viewed as a divorce as such, "but rather as an annulment of the marriage itself. In other words infidelity during the betrothal period was not viewed as an act that could end a marriage, but rather as an event that demonstrated that there had never been a legitimate marriage in the first place."<sup>120</sup> David Jones notes that the context of Matthew and lexical support are the reasons for the betrothal unfaithfulness.<sup>121</sup> This, Isakson says, "Linguistically speaking, the most probable meaning of porneia, when used in a statement of a legal nature about a married woman's crime, is undoubtedly premarital unchastity."<sup>122</sup> Frederic Chase, looks at the Septuagint rendering of Deuteronomy 22:13-21 and argues that:

A Jew reading the exceptive clause in St. Matthew remembers a passage in Deuteronomy xxii. 13-21. The passage provided that, if a man marries

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<sup>117</sup>A. Mahoney, 1968. A new look at divorce clauses in Matthew 5: 32 and 19:9. *Catholic Bible Quarterly*, 30.

<sup>118</sup>D. W. Jones, 2008. The betrothal view of divorce and remarriage. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March, vol. 65, 73.

<sup>119</sup>J. K. Tarwater, 2006. *Marriage as covenant: considering God's design at creation and the contemporary moral consequences*(Lanham: University Press of America), 113.

<sup>120</sup>D. W. Jones, 2008. The betrothal view of divorce and remarriage. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March, vol. 65,75.

<sup>121</sup>D. W. Jones, 2008. The betrothal view of divorce and remarriage. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March, vol. 65, 76.

<sup>122</sup>A. Isaksson, 1965. *Marriage and ministry in the Temple*. Translated by Neil Tomkinson and Jean Gray(Copenhagen: Lund), 140.

and after marriage discovers that the woman is not a virgin, he may make his accusation against her known. If, according to the evidence prescribed, "this thing be true," then the woman shall be stoned "because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house ( evkporneu/sai to.n oi=kou tou/ patro.j auvth/j)." It will be observed that the verb used here in the LXX (evkporneu/sai) corresponds to the Greek substantive porneia ( fornication) used in St. Matthew.<sup>123</sup>

Raymond Brown wonders whether there were not rumours and questions about Jesus' virgin birth in the time of Jesus and whether the Jews would not be using this against the legitimate birth of Jesus.<sup>124</sup> When Jesus informed the Pharisees in John 8:41 that Abraham was not their father, the Pharisees refuted Jesus' claim by saying that they were not born of fornication(porneia) which could have been a reference to the assumed fornication of Mary, the mother of Jesus.<sup>125</sup>

James Montgomery Boice claims that "The natural implication of Matthew 5.32 [and 19:9] is that... a man may divorce a woman immediately after marriage if he finds her not to be a virgin, in which case he was allowed by the law to remarry and was not to be called an adulterer-Deut.24:1-4....[The exception clause] is in essence an explanation of Deuteronomy 24: 1-4".<sup>126</sup> "This connection of some indecency with porneia may support the betrothal view, as Stooke-Vaughn notes that "there is remarkable confirmation that in S. Matthew it [porneia] refers to betrothal, for the Syriac has ' a writing of breaking a contract' in the peshito-Kethovo *d'dulolo* - the latter word means breaking a contract. This also occurs in the Sinaitic Palimpsest in S. Matthew xix. as well as S. Matthew v."<sup>127</sup>

Despite the Jewish bias to the interpretation of porneia, Bernard Drachman and Morris Jastrow assert that betrothal, in the time of Jesus was not just a promise. According to them, "when the agreement (betrothal) had been entered into, it was definite and binding upon both groom and bride, who were considered as man and wife in all legal and religious aspects, except that of actual cohabitation."<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> F. H. Chase, 1921. *What did Christ teach about divorce?*(London: SPCK), 27-28.

<sup>124</sup> R. Brown, 1970. *The Gospel according to John* (Garden City: Doubleday), 357.

<sup>125</sup> D. W. Jones, 2008. The betrothal view of divorce and remarriage. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, January-March, vol. 65,81.

<sup>126</sup> J. M. Boice, 1972. *The Sermon on the Mount*(Grand Rapids: Zondervan),137.

<sup>127</sup> F. S. Stooke- Vaughn, 1927. *The solution of St. Matthew v. 31, 32, and xix. 3-9, 15*(Exeter: Eland Bros.),3.

<sup>128</sup> B. Drachman and M. Jastrow (Jnr) 1910. Betrothal, in *Jewish Encyclopedia, 12 vols ed.* (New York: KTAV Publishing House), 17.

Jesus was not a legalist, and his absolute prohibition of divorce served only as a guideline, which the Matthean community revised when adherence to it was no longer possible.<sup>129</sup> Others have argued that Matthew had felt it necessary to align Jesus' teaching with that of the school in the wake of the Rabbinic debates of his day. Still others contend that the exception clause had applied only to incestuous marriages, which were becoming more common as Gentile presence increased in the Matthean community. G. Ewald opines that Jesus can be referred to as a legalist in the sense of setting up absolutes. Besides, there is no internal evidence to prove that Jesus supported the school.<sup>130</sup>

The betrothal view must be taken with all skepticism as it amounts to imposing a meaning or a view which is not explicitly stated in a text. Similarly, it is assumed that a word that has both the narrow and broad meanings, as in the case of *porneia*, must not be denied appropriate interpretations.

#### **2.3.4 Jesus' teaching on remarriage**

What is Jesus' teaching on remarriage after adultery- induced divorce? Carson thinks that Jesus allows remarriage because the exception clause governs the protasis in its entirety<sup>131</sup> Gordon Wenham and William Heth argue that *porneia* includes incest, homosexuality and bestiality, those sexual sins punishable by death in Leviticus 18 and 20<sup>132</sup>. William Heth avers that divorce is advisable under some circumstances. However, like Laney, he opines that there should be no remarriage after divorce because. "It is one thing to speak of an extrinsic or legal dissolution of the marital love relationship, but quite another to speak of an intrinsic or constitutional dissolution of the marital kinship relationship."<sup>133</sup> That is, the one flesh in the marriage union persists after divorce. While we are not encouraging remarriage because of the various complexities involved in remarriage, we will not hold on to marital kinship relationship

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<sup>129</sup> R. H. Stein, 1979. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 22.

<sup>130</sup> G. Ewald, 1991. *Jesus and divorce* (Scotdale: Herald Press), 60.

<sup>131</sup> D.A. Carson, 1984. Matthew, in *Expositor's Bible commentary*. Frank Gaebelin( Ed.), vol.8(Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 417.

<sup>132</sup> G. Wenham and W. Heth, 1983. *Jesus and divorce* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson publishers), 137.

<sup>133</sup> W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce, but no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 83.

of Laney's and Heth's. We will rather lend support to Thomas R. Edgar's view that differences exist between marital kinship and blood relationship.<sup>134</sup>

The different views still make the right interpretation of the divorce and remarriage passages difficult. The available option is to look at the passages in the context of the cultural practices and locate Jesus' teaching within the cultural milieu.

## **2.4 Marriage and Adultery among few ethnic groups in Nigeria**

### **2.4.1 Marriage**

Marriage is one of the rites of passage among many ethnic groups in Nigeria. In most cases, refusal to marry is a sign of ill luck and it is against the mores and norms of the majority of the ethnic groups to remain single. As soon as a man is mature enough to get married, there will be encouragement to do so from members of the community.

On sex, practice is different in cultures, even within the same ethnic group. In some cultures, there should be no physical intimacy between a girl and a boy who are engaged to each other. Among the Yoruba Oyo, Ijebu, Ekiti, Egba and Igbomina of southwestern Nigeria, it is a shameful thing for a man and a woman to be living together before marriage. This is the reason for the *alarina*, the intermediary, who helps to disseminate information either from the girl or from the boy. They should not have sexual intercourse until they are formally wedded. In traditional Yoruba culture, a girl found to have lost her virginity faces shame from the husband and his family. To prove the purity of his wife before marriage, the husband makes a one-yard white cloth available. The white blood-stained cloth is shown to families of the husband and the wife as a proof of the bride's virginity in the morning following the night of the consummation of marriage. A blood-stained white cloth is an indication that the woman has not lost her virginity. Full match boxes or filled jars of palm wine is sent to the bride's parents as a symbol of appreciation for training their child in a godly way and helping to keep her pure for the groom. If otherwise, half-full match boxes or half-full jars of palm wine is sent. The situation is the same among the Igbo people of eastern Nigeria. Premarital sex is not encouraged.

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<sup>134</sup> W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce, but no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 138.

Among the Hausa ethnic group, a husband who discovers that the girl he has married is not a virgin will proclaim her shame to the entire town by breaking a pot outside his house. Among the Fulani and other subtribes of the Hausa, the custom forbids sexual intercourse between young people who are betrothed.

Some other tribes, however, view premarital intercourse as a kind of trial marriage. The Piri suitor cohabits with his fiancée for a period of four months in her mother's compound. Some of them may bear children before marriage, depending on the length of courtship. The young men are usually happy to marry these young mothers. Among the ethnic groups who accept premarital sex, no stigma is attached to the young woman who bears a child before marriage. The child is claimed by the girl's family, except where the father of the child is the girl's betrothed husband and has paid the bride price in full. Kona boys and girls who are betrothed may cohabit. If the girl conceives, the boy has to make additional payments to her father, presumably on the ground that her fertility has been proven. Some ethnic groups practice the custom of placing young women under the care of their betrothed ones before they reach marriageable age; this is common among the Kona, Margi, Mumuye, and Mumbake, as well as the Mosi ethnic groups. The objective appears to be twofold. First, the responsibility for the girl's upbringing and chastity is thrown on the fiancé's family. Second, the appropriation of the girl by her betrothed husband is clearly signified. As a result of pre-nuptial relations, a man can repudiate his betrothal wife at any time without the payment of damages in Hausaland.<sup>135</sup>

However, among the traditional Yagba Yoruba of Kogi state of Nigeria a man and a woman live together as husband and wife before marriage. Among the traditional Ce people of central Nigeria premarital relations are common; no virtue is attached to virginity before marriage. A boy goes to his girl friend's house, builds a hut (*farka*) where he comes to sleep with her.<sup>136</sup> Hence, what is ethically wrong as far as sex is concerned in one culture is ethically right in another. Besides, there is a practice whereby a woman who does not want to marry a particular man is forced to do so either by kidnapping her or by raping her. In some cultures, the parents of the bride are aware of such arrangements. Hence, the issue of premarital sex becoming a sin is not applicable in such a situation.

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<sup>135</sup> F. M. Mugaji. "Hausa cultural marriage". [www.weddingtrendy.com/....](http://www.weddingtrendy.com/....) Retrieved on February 22, 2013.

<sup>136</sup> R.M. Blench, 2011. *The Ce [Rukuba] language of Central Nigeria and its affinities* (Cambridge: Kay Williamson Educational Foundation) , 2-3.

Among the Hausa of northern Nigeria, marriage is a highly valued milestone. It is the backbone of socio-economic and political development and there is harmony when properly maintained.<sup>137</sup> Marriage in the Hausa sense is not limited to the nuclear or extended family alone.<sup>138</sup> Marriage among the Hausa is a microcosm of the wider universe. By implication, therefore, marriages have to be built on solid and reliable foundations as against fantasies, fancies, or passion.

Fatsuma Musa Mugaji lists the various kinds of marriage practices among the Hausa. They include junior levirate marriage, whereby a younger brother may marry his late senior brother's wife or wives; and sororate marriage, whereby a man may marry his late wife's sister. Other types of marriage in Hausaland include cousins' marriage, known as *auren zumunta*. Here, a man or woman may marry anyone from a second cousin onward. Polygyny is very popular, especially among the Hausa Muslims, where sometimes, a man marries as many women as he could. Polyandry is not popular; but it is also practised in some cases. A woman may refuse to pack to any man's house. She has her own house (home) and allows men in.<sup>139</sup> She also bears them children and quite often the children stay with her.<sup>140</sup> Among the Fulani nomads, "wife lending" to a husband's brother or son is regarded as an act of reciprocal hospitality. Other tribes in Hausaland such as the Munshi, Amgula, Yergurn, Rukuba, and Lungu, practice marriage by "wife abduction." Other types of marriage in Hausaland include "marriage by purchase" (women are seen as transferable property) and "marriage by exchange" (one man gives his sister or daughter to a friend for a wife in exchange for a wife for himself). Marriage can also be by "capture," in most cases with the girl's consent, or by elopement.<sup>141</sup>

One major feature that cannot be overlooked in Hausa traditional marriage is the role of the *Mai Dalilin Aure*. The Dilali business is usually done by elderly Hausa women dealing with second-hand items most times though they also sell new items at times. All these depend on availability. They go from house to house to collect, sell and return the proceeds to the women in

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<sup>137</sup> M. H. Kurfi, 2001. Changing patterns of marriage courtship among the Hausas: the case emerging role of marriage brokerage in contemporary Kano metropolis. *Journal of Sociological Research*, vol. 3, no.1, 46.

<sup>138</sup> M. H. Kurfi, 2001. Changing patterns of marriage courtship among the Hausas: the case emerging role of marriage brokerage in contemporary Kano metropolis. *Journal of Sociological Research*, vol. 3, no.1, 49.

<sup>139</sup> F. M. Mugaji. "Hausa cultural marriage". [www.weddingtrendy.com/...](http://www.weddingtrendy.com/...) Retrieved on February 22, 2013.

<sup>140</sup> A. Abdullahi, a trained tailor in Shasha area, Ojo, Ibadan.

<sup>141</sup> F. M. Mugaji. "Hausa cultural marriage". [www.weddingtrendy.com/...](http://www.weddingtrendy.com/...) Retrieved on February 22, 2013.

seclusion.<sup>142</sup> Kurfi observes that the *Dillaliya* was performing another function which was to link suitors. According to him:

After she might have gone into a household and realized that there was an unmarried lady, she would seek for relevant information and possibly collect the lady's picture. The *Dillaliya* upon, arriving another household sometimes at a distant area would advertise the goods that she carried and then opened a chapter of discussion with reference to and in favour of the lady whose photograph would be made available on demand. She would have many photographs of women seeking men to marry but could tactfully introduce the discussions and evidence only when "appropriate." Thus, the *Dillaliya* was multipurpose, providing series of services including selling new and used goods, exchanging goods for other goods; and above all, linking suitors in disguise.<sup>143</sup>

However, Kurfi opines that that there is a change in the pattern of finding suitors and courtship among the Hausa people. Today, both men and women are in the business of finding the best suitors for the unmarried women, bachelors, divorcees, widows, separated and those interested in increasing their number of wives. They are referred to as the *Masu Dalilin Aure* (*Mai* -singular). This stems from the rise of social networking services through websites like Facebook, Twitter, To go, and Linked in, and so on which have provided other channels of social utility that connect people with friends, relatives, and people who could marry each other.<sup>144</sup>

Among the Urhobo of Delta State, Nigeria, marriage has certain processes that must be followed. *Esavwijoto* occurs when parents propose marriage on behalf of their son or daughter at an early age. Pledges of this nature are also made and redeemed as a result of observed exemplary character of a young girl or boy. It could be made as a reward for exceptional valour. Normally, with this type of marriage, love develops between the couple only after marriage has been officially contracted.<sup>145</sup>

*Ose* is a form of marriage recognised as binding, but in which the traditional bride-price has not been paid by the husband's family and accepted as prescribed. Couples may live together or apart, but enjoy full *de facto* conjugal rights and exclusiveness. However, both enjoy limited

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<sup>142</sup> M.A.Y. Lewu, 2009. Hausa settlers in Ilorin Metropolis: an appraisal of Hausa women economic activities. *Lapai Journal of Central Nigeria History*, vol.2, no.2: 75.

<sup>143</sup> M. H. Kurfi, 2001. Changing patterns of marriage courtship among the Hausas: the case emerging role of marriage brokerage in contemporary Kano metropolis. *Journal of Sociological Research*, vol. 3, no.1, 49.

<sup>144</sup> M. H. Kurfi, 2001. Changing patterns of marriage courtship among the Hausas: the case emerging role of marriage brokerage in contemporary Kano metropolis. *Journal of Sociological Research*, vol. 3, no.1, 49.

<sup>145</sup> Marriage the Urhobo way. [www.naamywedding.com](http://www.naamywedding.com). Retrieved on January 21, 2013.



customary legal rights in that the bride price has not been paid. Some notable distinctions of this type of marriage are that such husband will not be allowed to bury and mourn his parents- in-law, like a fully married man.

“Arranged marriage in absentia” is a form of marriage in which the male, who is usually abroad or outside Urhoboland, would request his parents or family to marry a lady of their choice for him. Both potential husband and wife may not have seen or met each other previously. During such a marriage ceremony, the man’s brother or a nominated relative would represent him as husband of the bride. The wife may be required to spend some time with the absent husband’s family before being despatched to her new husband. Love may or may not develop when they meet for the first time. If they like each other, the marriage may be consummated and is likely to survive. In some cases, either of the party may refuse to go ahead with the marriage and calls it off.<sup>146</sup>

Onoawarie Edevbie observes that some people view the bride price being paid as nothing more than a token of appreciation for all of the efforts expended by a family in raising a girl.<sup>147</sup> He avers that speaking of the payment of bride price as a token of appreciation is an understatement. The role of bride price in Isoko-Urhobo traditional wedding is rather unique, as it places a number of obligations, duties and responsibilities on many of the individuals involved in a series of events as they occur before and during the lifetime of the marriage. One prime reason for the demand of the bride price is the need to secure, legitimize and enhance the place of a woman in a home. The proof of payment of bride price remains the sole indicator in Isoko-Urhobo culture of the transition from being an unmarried woman to a position of respect and honour in the society as a married woman. Without the bride price, the place of the woman in Isoko-Urhobo society is not secure, neither do women feel obligated to a man who is yet to make the payment. Hence, until the payment of the bride price is made on her behalf, the woman in Isoko-Urhobo culture is not regarded as legally married to anyone. Thus, an essential purpose of the bride price is to help put a stamp of approval and legality on the living arrangement between a man and a woman, as some would say, to keep the wife in her husband’s home. A man who

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<sup>146</sup>Marriage the Urhobo way. [www.naamywedding.com](http://www.naamywedding.com). Retrieved on January 21, 2013.

<sup>147</sup> Onoawarie Edevbie. A Text for Isoko-Urhobo traditional marriage. [www.org/urhoboculture/marriage\\_family.html](http://www.org/urhoboculture/marriage_family.html). Retrieved on January 1, 2013.

has not paid the bride fee for a woman has no claim under Isoko-Urhobo traditional laws and custom to being called the husband of the woman even if he lives, or has children, with her.<sup>148</sup>

The payment also provides the necessary legitimacy for the place or role of children in many Isoko-Urhobo families. Children whose fathers failed or omitted to pay bride fee are regarded as *emoro* (children born out of wedlock) and are known to have been discriminated against or have been denied family privileges.<sup>149</sup>

*Esuo* describes the final stage of a full marriage according to Urhobo custom.<sup>150</sup> It denotes the completion of all antecedent requirements necessary on the part of the husband. It is the escorting of the bride by her family with her property to the head of the husband's family, and handing her over until her death to the groom's family. A special ceremony is usually performed to invoke the husband's ancestors to also receive her, and bind her over in fidelity to their son – the husband. The entire women receive the bride, eat and dance in the special room prepared for the bride till the dawn of the following day.<sup>151</sup>

Donald Anyanwu avers that among the Igbo people, it is a common practice for parents to arrange marriage for their children.<sup>152</sup> However, Joachim Ifezuo Oforchukwu notes that it is only a privilege for parents to choose a wife for their son, because the son could reject his parents' choice. Hence, some might see marriage as the mutual agreement of a man and a woman to live together as husband and wife. C.A. Obi, nevertheless, sees marriage as a primary structure in Igbo social economy. It is a union between a man and a woman lasting for as long as the couple live. It is a social structure that promotes association and agreement between two families.<sup>153</sup> One area of importance is the involvement of not only the family members, but also of the entire community. Such is the intermarriage between the *dialas* and the *osu*. The former literally means the freeborn or 'sons of the soil.' In other words, they are masters. The latter are outcasts, inferior human beings and people dedicated to the gods.<sup>154</sup> In some places, *dialas* are

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<sup>148</sup> Onoawarie Edevbie. A Text for Isoko-Urhobo traditional marriage.

[www.org/urhoboculture/marriage\\_family.html](http://www.org/urhoboculture/marriage_family.html). Retrieved on January 1, 2013.

<sup>149</sup> Marriage the Urhobo way. [www.naamywedding.com](http://www.naamywedding.com). Retrieved on January 21, 2013.

<sup>150</sup> Marriage the Urhobo way. [www.naamywedding.com](http://www.naamywedding.com). Retrieved on January 21, 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Marriage the Urhobo way. [www.naamywedding.com](http://www.naamywedding.com). Retrieved on January 21, 2013.

<sup>152</sup> D. Anyanwu. Interviewed on 16th March, 2013.

<sup>153</sup> C.A. Obi, Vincent A. Nwosu, et al, 1985. *A hundred years of the Catholic Church in Eastern Nigeria- 1885-1985*(Africana-Fep Publishers Limited),

<sup>154</sup> H. Umahi, 2012. "Apartheid in Nigeria: Igbo men, women who can't freely marry or be married." <http://yemitom.wordpress.com/>. Retrieved on May 04, 2013.

said to avoid contact with their *osu* brethren, even during the Holy Communion.<sup>155</sup> Henry Umahi observes that there is a remarkable improvement in the fortune of the *osu*. The *dialas* would not allow any form of marriage with the an *osu*. Any marriage with an *osu* defiles the family and anything would be done to disrupt any association between a *diala* and an *osu*.<sup>156</sup> A *diala* was ostracized from her family for consenting to marry a man whom the family described as *osu*. He or she cannot buy or sell things in the village market. In fact, his kinsmen will be under obligation not to relate with him in any manner till death.<sup>157</sup>

Though Obi et al opine that the normal age for marriage among the Igbo people is 25 to 28 for the man and 14 to 18 for the girl,<sup>158</sup> Joachim Ifezuo Oforchukwu is of the opinion that the age of marriage in Igboland differs from community to community.<sup>159</sup> Daniel Jordan Smith observes that "Great pride is expressed about the fact that Igbos pay high bridewealth" for marriage rights<sup>160</sup>. If a woman is "childless after a given time, the man becomes free to take back his bride price with which he can seek another woman in marriage"<sup>161</sup>. It can then be said that begetting children is the primary purpose why the Igbo people enter into marriage contract. Umeora Ouj claims that "misconceptions and erroneous beliefs place the burden of infertility solely on women. These beliefs produce the idea that the woman's past 'indecent' lifestyle is held responsible. She is stigmatized"<sup>162</sup>. She explains further that, "in many Igbo cultures, especially where the influence of the Christian religion is minimal, the man is free to take another wife while relegating the first wife to the background. She does not partake in any form of inheritance in the family's properties whatsoever."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>155</sup>Henry Umahi, 2012. "Apartheid in Nigeria: Igbo men, women who can't freely marry or be married." <http://yemitom.wordpress.com/> Retrieved on May 04, 2013.

<sup>156</sup>Henry Umahi, 2012. "Apartheid in Nigeria: Igbo men, women who can't freely marry or be married." <http://yemitom.wordpress.com/> Retrieved on May 04, 2013.

<sup>157</sup>Henry Umahi, 2012. Apartheid in Nigeria: Igbo men, women who can't freely marry or be married. <http://yemitom.wordpress.com/> Retrieved on May 04, 2013.

<sup>158</sup>C.A. Obi and V. A. Nwosu, et al, 1985. *A hundred years of the Catholic Church In Eastern Nigeria- 1885-1985*(Africana-Fep Publishers Limited),

<sup>159</sup>J. I. Oforchukwu, 2010. *A biblical and theological study(analysis) of marriage and divorce among Igbo Catholic Christians(Nigeria)*. A Master of Theology Thesis, submitted at the South African Theological Seminary, 36.

<sup>160</sup> D. J. Smith, 2005. Legacies of Biafra: marriage, 'Home People' and reproduction among the Ibo of Nigeria. *Africa. Journal of the International African Institute*. 75:1, 31.

<sup>161</sup>V. C. Uchendu, 2007. Ezi Na Ulo: the extended family in Igbo civilization. *Dialectical Anthropology*. 31:1-3, 216.

<sup>162</sup>Umeora Ouj, 2009. Pseudocyesis in a Rural Southeast Nigerian community. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Research*. 35:4, 660.

<sup>163</sup> U. Ouj, 2009. Pseudocyesis in a Rural Southeast Nigerian community. *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Research*. 35:4, 663.

Among the Yoruba of western Nigeria, marriage is compulsory. S.T. Ola Akande notes that a Yoruba person faces a serious embarrassment if his contemporaries have been married for a long time, had bore children but he or she remains unmarried.<sup>164</sup> The embarrassment ranges from the social one, in which case the married women in the compound start molesting the ripe unmarried person, to a more spiritual exercise whereby the unmarried will be taken to an Ifa priest for inquiry about the cause of the delay. At times, sacrifices would be made to appease the gods; head-washing (*ori wiwe*) could take place in order to wash away the spirit of delay<sup>165</sup>

Olanihun Adeniyi argued that celibacy is untraditional among the Yoruba. No Yoruba god makes celibacy compulsory. Even the priests of the gods marry and bear children. However, two groups of people became eunuchs forcefully. These were the *ilaris* (kings' attendants) and the slaves. Tradition has it that the *ilaris* were made eunuchs so that they would not be having sexual affairs with the king's wives and daughters. Also, the wealthy who bought slaves could make them eunuchs in order to guard against sexual relationship with the womenfolk in their masters' houses. In the two cases, there is no religious connection.<sup>166</sup> However, Amos Ogunwale notes that this practice has been stopped to a great extent. Investigations revealed that this no longer exists in Yorubaland.

In Yoruba belief, there are two types of marriage. The first one is that in which there is mutual consent of the relatives and the parents. In this type of marriage, the family of the husband-to-be pays the bride-price to the family of the wife-to-be. The bride-price is usually shared among the family of the wife-to-be. The second form of marriage is the one in which widows are inherited by their husband's kinsmen. This is similar to the levirate marriage in Israelite tradition.

Marrying people from other ethnic groups is not easily welcomed. Even within the Yoruba ethnic group, some frown at their children marrying from other Yoruba sub-ethnic group. An Oyo Yoruba man, for example, may vow that his son would never marry anybody from Ekiti, Egba, Ijebu, or Igbomina, which are various sub-groups within the Yoruba race. So many reasons may be advanced for the action. Unlike the Jewish people who would not intermarry if it would affect their worship of Yahweh, it is not for religious reasons among the Yoruba people but for cultural and economic reasons. For a Yoruba man to marry an Igbo

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<sup>164</sup> S.T.Ola Akande, 2004. *Marriage and family life in the Nigerian societies, Vol. 1* (Ibadan: Daystar Press),23.

<sup>165</sup> O. A. Adeniyi. Interviewed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2012.

<sup>166</sup> O. A. Adeniyi. Interviewed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2012.

woman he must have enough money. Marriage to an Igbo lady is much more expensive than marrying a Yoruba lady. But, once the marriage is contracted, an Igbo lady should not think of divorce; and if she decides to divorce, she would return everything that was given to her, her parents, her relatives and the community as bride-price. Some Yoruba people believe that the Igbo people are hostile to widows.

In addition, an Oyo Yoruba may refuse to marry Ekiti Yoruba because, to him/her, Ekiti people are stubborn and hard-hearted. Similarly, an Ekiti Yoruba may not want to marry an Oyo Yoruba because Oyo people are, to him/her cunning, not straightforward, and deceitful. Also, some Yoruba people would not want their children to marry anybody from Ijesa Yoruba. To such people, the Ijesa Yoruba curse a lot to the extent that cursing means nothing to them. Some people think that Egba women are arrogant and they divorce at will, while Ijebu women use charms on their husbands to the extent that such husbands would never think of anything good for his family members.

#### **2.4.2 Divorce and remarriage among few ethnic groups**

It will be very wrong to think those divorce patterns are the same in the Nigerian society. It is rare within the purview of Urhobo traditional marriage. In traditional Urhobo society for instance, divorce was uncommon because they believed that since the ancestors had received the drinks and food given them during the marriage ceremony, it was expected to last forever. In traditional Africa, marriage also contributed to stability in the society. The marriage endures beyond the life of the husband because, on the death of the husband, the wife is passed on to a member of the husband's family for the continuation of the marriage. This custom provides emotional and financial stability for the woman and continuation of the marriage.

Daniel Jordan Smith avers that, among the Igbo, divorce is stigmatized and relatively uncommon.<sup>167</sup> One major reason advanced for this is the high bride-price involved, which must be returned by the bride's family in case of an intention to divorce. Chinwe M.A. Nwoye notes that, "among the Igbo, sexual infidelity does not automatically lead to divorce because it is perceived as a religious offence against the Earth Goddess. Ritual cleansing and propitiations are

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<sup>167</sup> D. J. Smith, 2005. Legacies of Biafra: marriage, 'home people' and reproduction among the Ibo of Nigeria. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*. 75:1, 31.

undertaken. Where such anomaly becomes rampant, divorce is often the result."<sup>168</sup> However, this may not be true always. Henry Umahi observes that some married couples have been forced to divorce because of the *osu* factor.<sup>169</sup>

Among the Ce people of central Nigeria, divorce is an acceptable norm. A woman was free to leave her husband's house if she had problems with him. She was also free to return when she pleases to.<sup>170</sup>

Among the Yoruba ethnic group, divorce is not encouraged but it is a common practice. There could be divorce because of childlessness, inability to bear male children and, in some cases, if either of the spouses fails to respect his/her in-laws.

#### 2.4.3 Concubinage among few ethnic groups

Some people opine that concubinage is a practice and that it is generally accepted among some Yoruba people. They claim that among the Ife Yoruba, *oluku*, "the concubine" has almost every right as the husband or the wife. He/she could take part in the activities going on in the matrimonial home of the concubine. Moses Olugbenga Elugbaju, however, debunked this view. He said that, etymologically, *oluku* denotes the traditional Ife word for a special, a close friend, such as a friend in need. He/she could be approached for any help, and he/she would be ready to render any help at any time. He noted that, as time went on, with moral laxity in the society, and with 'civilization', the word *oluku* became a derogatory name for a concubine. To him, concubinage was and is not an acceptable practice in any Yorubaland, although people engage in having concubines.<sup>171</sup>

According to Samuel Idowu Ogunsakin-Famurebo, one way to deter any married person who engages in having concubines is the use of *magun*. Literally, *magun* means "don't climb". *Magun* is the casting of spell on a woman by the use of supernatural forces on the woman. She

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<sup>168</sup>C. M. A. Nwoye, 2011. Igbo cultural and religious worldview: an insider's perspective. *International Journal of Sociology and anthropology*. 3:9, 311.

<sup>169</sup>H. Umahi, 2012. Apartheid in Nigeria: Igbo men, women who can't freely marry or be married. <http://yemitom.wordpress.com/>. Retrieved on May 04, 2013.

<sup>170</sup>R.M. Blench, 2011. *The Ce [Rukuba] language of Central Nigeria and its affinities*(Cambridge: Kay Williamson Educational Foundation) , 2-3.

<sup>171</sup>M. O. Elugbaju, interviewed on March 2012.

is untouchable for any man until the power is removed. If nothing is done to remove the spell, she would die on the 5th day if no man sleeps with her.<sup>172</sup> In this case, the concubines would need a native doctor or a magician to separate them. But before the coming of the native doctor(s), people around must have known their immoral act and they must have felt the shame.

Nevertheless, in some instances, both men and women keep concubines. The status of a child from such union is quite different from what it used to be in the Roman world. In some traditional Yoruba culture, if a concubine bears a child for another woman's husband, the child has equal rights with the children of the formal wife. As a matter of fact, if the woman decides not to marry another man, she automatically becomes the wife of the man because, according to Yoruba belief, any woman who bears a man a child is no more a concubine. The resultant effect is polygamy. In the past and under the new law in Nigeria, every child is legitimate and has equal rights with the children of the legal wife though the concubine does not.

#### **2.4.4 Levirate marriage among few ethnic groups**

In Nigeria, levirate marriage is a practise in many cultures. "It is another marriage type that grows out of the logic of the retention by the husband's lineage of the reproductive capacity of the wife."<sup>173</sup> Kisembo, Magesa and Shorter observe that:

African marriage has a strong communitarian character. In patrilineal societies, a woman who is married enters the family community of her husband as a worker and bearer of children for the whole group. Her marriage is not only to a particular man of that group, her husband, but in a very real sense to the group itself, she is the "wife" of the whole family - a "our wife". This does not, of course, mean that any other male, besides her husband, has the right of sexual access to the woman, but it stresses her communitarian role in the family. Bride wealth has been contributed by many members of the family, and she and her children belong to the family. When her husband dies, her marriage in the family is still regarded as being in existence and a surrogate or proxy-husband must be found for her from among the male relatives

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<sup>172</sup> S. I. Ogunsakin-Fabarebo, 1998. Contemporary theories on magic: magun's disparate characteristics, in *Orita*, XXX/1-2, 8.

<sup>173</sup> V. C. Uchendu, 2007. Ezi Na Ulo: The extended family in Igbo civilization. *Dialectical Anthropology*. 31:1-3, 208.

of her husband to take the latter's place.<sup>174</sup>

The levirate marriage serves either of these two purposes: firstly, in traditional Yoruba custom, the widow is part of the property that is inherited; secondly, if the widow is still in the childbearing age, she will be married to her husband's younger brother. It is a taboo for the older brother to marry the widow of his younger brother, or a close relation where the deceased has no brother. She could bear children. The status of such children differs in some cases. Kisembo, Magesa and Shorter opine that, in some cases, the children of the marriage belong to the deceased. In some cases, however, the children from such union belong to the surrogate husband.<sup>175</sup>

The levirate marriage as practised in some traditional African culture has its associated problems. For instance, the inherited wife becomes the rival of the wife of the surrogate husband since she and her children are likely heirs to the surrogate's property. In some instances, the children of such union suffer irreparable discrimination, as the children of the deceased do not see the children of the surrogate as someone who has right to share in their late father's property. Likewise, the children of the surrogate do not see them as part of the family. At times, they are left in the care of their poor mothers.

Some churches today look sternly at levirate marriage. In spite of the associated problems, some values are derived from its practice. There are situations whereby even the church of God praises the practice. In the year 2003, a member of a Baptist Church died, leaving two children (girls) behind. The husband's family insisted that they would not allow the widow to leave their household. The younger brother married the widow and a thanksgiving service was held in the church. But the levir never married before. It seems that the church would not celebrate with the woman if the man was already married.

#### **2.4.5 Polygamy as a feature in many Nigerian societies**

Polygamy is a feature in Nigerian society. It will be difficult to see a large percentage of Nigerian men and women who do not have a polygamous background. During the course of this study, the researcher attended a meeting of 102 pastors from 15 ethnic groups in Nigeria. It was discovered that 29 of the pastors were children of first wives, while 50 were children of second

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<sup>174</sup> B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 78.

<sup>175</sup> B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 78.



wives. The remaining 23 were from monogamous homes. It means that more than half of the pastors were products of polygamous homes.

Polygamy in Africa means so many things to different categories of people. Some see it as a “disfigurement of marriage” and has something to do with free love.<sup>176</sup> The Western theologians and missiologists take four traditional positions on polygamy. One, Adam Hasting declares that polygamy is less satisfactory and has nothing in support of the practice of the full spirit of Christianity. It is therefore, appropriate to see it as a tolerated marriage. Polygamy must be undermined in the teachings of the Christians although they should tolerate it as they did for the practice of slavery. They must continue to promote monogamy.<sup>177</sup> Two, some missiologists see polygamy as sin. To them, it is a resultant effect of prostitution and lustful looking, which Jesus preached against. Hence, any Christian who is involved in polygamous marriage, either man or woman, is sinful.<sup>178</sup> Three, to some theologians, polygamy is inferior to monogamy in all areas. Monogamy must be esteemed and those in polygamous marriage must be seen as inferior both physically and spiritually. They need not earn the respect found in monogamous marriage.<sup>179</sup> Four, Eugene Hillman avers that polygamous and monogamous marriages must be put on the same level since each has its advantages and disadvantages. No absolute judgment can be passed on either of the forms of marriage.<sup>180</sup> S.O. Abogunrin also observes that some missionaries saw polygamy as sexual immorality or sexual indulgence for the man. Hence, he could not be a true Christian. He could not be a leader or church officer. He could not be baptized; only his first wife could partake of the Lord’s Supper. Eventually, because the missionaries would not admit the polygamists, many polygamists, their wives and their children found their ways out of the church. Some went back to the African Traditional Religions while some became Muslims. In fact, this gave birth to some Indigenous Churches in Africa.<sup>181</sup>

Undoubtedly, polygamy in traditional Nigerian society is an acceptable practice. Kisebo, Magesa and Shorter assert that “the institution of polygamy in traditional Africa was

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<sup>176</sup> B. Kisebo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 63.

<sup>177</sup> A. Hasting, 1973. *Christian marriage in Africa*(London:SPCK),79. Cf. B. Kisebo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman),82.

<sup>178</sup> B. Kisebo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 82.

<sup>179</sup> B. Kisebo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 82.

<sup>180</sup> E. Hillman,1975. *Polygamy reconsidered*(Maryknoll : Orbis Books),206. Cf. B. Kisebo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 82.

<sup>181</sup> S.O.Abogunrin, 2000. “Revisiting the story of Jesus and the adulteress in the context of the Church’s life in Africa”, in *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol.XV, No.1, 20.

certainly not merely a means of satisfying male lust. It had a number of well-defined social functions and advantages, and it certainly helped to stabilize the institution of marriage and to integrate the family with society.”<sup>182</sup> This opinion corroborates Abogunrin’s view that cultural, sociological, economic and political reasons paved way for polygamy in African societies. Economically, more wives meant more hands to harvest and to work with the man on the farm. Culturally, nobody should remain unmarried, including the disabled. The levirate marriage is another reason for polygamy in Yorubaland. The more the wives a man had, the more important he was in the society. In fact, some polygamists believe that being a monogamist would lead to low moral standards.<sup>183</sup> The civil war was a reason for polygamy. The belief was that when there was an outbreak of war, there would be men to help fight and besides, there would always be some men left. Another reason for polygamy was the high rate of children mortality and because of the importance the Yoruba attach to possession of children. The infant mortality rate could be due to natural occurrences, ignorance and poverty. He must find a solution to his problem. Since polygamy is an acceptable practice in traditional Yoruba culture, the marriage of the subsequent wife or wives also attracts fun fare and celebrations. Among the Igbo people, the woman-to-woman marriage is a harbinger of polygamy. It is a situation whereby a woman, mostly one of the husband’s wives pays the bride-price for another woman for giving children to the family. Here, the older wife plays the role of a husband since she pays the bride-price on behalf of her husband. She assumes control over the new wife and her offspring.<sup>184</sup> Victor Chikenzie Uchendu avers:

The concept of paternity, which is central to the legitimacy of children, is given a broad interpretation. A legitimate child is not necessarily fathered by the social father, rather it is a child who can lay a claim to a social father and social fatherhood is validated by bridewealth payment. This interpretation of legitimacy places a premium value on marriage as an institution, particularly on those processes of the marriage institution, which are designed either to transfer the potential offspring of a woman’s womb from her husband or to retain it in her lineage<sup>185</sup>.

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<sup>182</sup> B. Kisémbó, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 63.

<sup>183</sup>A. O. Igenóza, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a Biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: Nigerian Publications Bureau), 43.

<sup>184</sup>R. J. Cardigan, 1998. Woman-to-woman marriage: practice and benefits in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 29, 2.

<sup>185</sup> V. C. Uchendu, 2007. Ezi Na Ulo: The Extended Family in Igbo Civilization. *Dialectical Anthropology*. 31:1-3, 215-216.

There are three major pastoral approaches to the “problem” of polygamy in Africa. The three deal with who among the polygamist is eligible to partake of the Holy Communion and be baptized. The first is the Liberal Approach, which proposes poly-marriage and not poly-sex. This is a situation whereby the polygamist chooses one of his wives and lives with her as husband and wife. He will not divorce the other wives but he would be living with them as brother and sisters. There will be no sexual relationship between him and his “sisters”. In this case, all the wives and their husband can be baptized and partake of the Holy Communion since the husband is having one sex partner.<sup>186</sup> The Limited Toleration approach assumes the indiscriminate admission of polygamists into the church. The husband and the wives can be baptized and also partake of the Holy Communion.<sup>187</sup> The third approach is that no known polygamist, whether divorced or not, should be allowed to partake of the Holy Communion or be baptized.<sup>188</sup>

The three approaches are not without faults. In the first instance, it is not so easy for a man in poly-marriage not to be involved in poly-sex. Kisembo, Magesa and Shorter observe that, a supporter of the approach, Englebert Kofon, also pleads for leniency in cases where poly-sex comes in. This situation they call “a smack of hypocrisy and double link.”<sup>189</sup> Even in a situation where the husband remains faithful and is not having poly-sex, what happens to the sexual right of the wives who assume the status of sisters? Will they not be involved in prostitution or adultery? Besides, can the other wives be Christians in the real sense of it? Every African man likes to be acceptable and enjoy every benefit available wherever he is. He would rather leave a gathering where he is not fully accepted than be there and be isolated. This is why many polygamists dropped Christianity for other religions. Indiscriminate admission of polygamist will not also solve the problem if the biblical creation ideal of marriage is to be upheld. There will always be an abuse of the privilege, as those who are not polygamists before may decide to be one since in the church, there is no discrimination of any kind.

Abogunrin, while seeking to proffer solutions to the problem, claims that monogamy is taught in the Bible, although nowhere in the Bible is polygamy explicitly rejected, except in the case of those seeking the office of bishop, elder and deacon. In his own view, there were

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<sup>186</sup> B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 90.

<sup>187</sup> B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage*(London: Geoffrey Chapman), 91.

<sup>188</sup> M. Makanzu, 1983. *Can the church accept polygamy?* (Accra:Asempa Publishers), 74.

<sup>189</sup> B. Kisembo, L. Magesa and A. Shorter, 1977. *African Christian marriage* (London: Geoffrey Chapman), 91.

polygamists in the Early Church and this is the reason for the leaders to be husband of one wife. He mentions the problems associated with polygamy. These include the bearing of children that the polygamists will not be able to cater for. Such children constitute a nuisance to the society. But, in his opinion, polygamists must be welcomed into the fellowship of the children of God with love and respect.<sup>190</sup> He, therefore, encourages churches in Africa to admit polygamists because of the following reasons:

- 1). Half of the “official” monogamists have other wives outside. They do not bring them in but they have houses for them outside. 2). The general belief is that women are far more than men. Therefore men must be allowed to marry them and bring them home; instead for these women to be living immoral lives outside a matrimonial home.<sup>191</sup>

The solutions proffered by Abogunrin are useful since he does not shut his eyes to the problems of polygamy. This researcher also holds the view of Abogunrin to a large extent, especially when one considers circumstances surrounding polygamy. Many official monogamists are hypocrites and pretenders. They have extramarital affairs yet they hold notable positions in the church of God. Unfortunately, such hypocrites are enemies of church growth and development. How? The church preaches against adultery, even to the unbelievers who are well aware of these monogamists’ hypocrisy. Also, many monogamists are ardent sinners, yet are full members of the church.

Bahemuka, while assessing polygyny, social change and women’s response in East Africa, observes the following:

Polygyny is not as prevalent as previously due to the changing attitudes of women. Due to social change, sequential polygyny is on the increase and the idea of concubines and mistresses are widely practised in urban centres. Women who are economically independent are less prone to become victims of polygyny. Changing division of labour and mode of production is helping to reduce incidents of polygyny. Christianity, with its stress on monogamy, has done much in changing people’s attitudes towards polygyny. There is still a need to make Christianity practical in

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<sup>190</sup> S.O.Abogunrin, 2000. Revisiting the story of Jesus and the adulteress in the context of the Church’s life in Africa. *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol.XV, No.1., 23.

<sup>191</sup> S.O.Abogunrin, 2000. Revisiting the story of Jesus and the adulteress in the context of the Church’s life in Africa. *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, Vol.XV, No.1, 22.

Africa by making it a live message of Good News and Not simply Do's and Don'ts.<sup>192</sup>

These observations are right. Polygyny is decreasing in Africa, not only because of Christianity, but also because of the poor economic condition. Besides, some of the reasons advanced for polygyny are being taken care of by technological advancement. There is much to do in cases of the enormous do's and don'ts within the tradition of the selected churches.

The tradition in the selected churches is that polygamists do not have the right to be full members of the churches. The implication is that they cannot hold leadership positions in the church; they cannot partake of the Lord's Supper and, in some cases, they cannot be baptised. This is a serious problem. Africans believe in social identity and inability to identify fully as a member of any group one belongs to is a thing of shame to the polygamist involved. One salient question the church is yet to answer is "which is important, the money or the soul of the polygamists"? The church accepts the money of the polygamists, yet they do not see them as full members. How does an intending convert handle a situation whereby he/she sees a church rejecting a member while another church is accepting the same person? This is the situation in the selected church. Are all monogamists true Christians? Are all polygamists sinners? How should the church handle polygamists who exhibit genuine conversion experience?

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the various works done on marriage in the Old Testament, as well as the background to Jesus' teachings in the New Testament, and gives information on marriage among the Jews in the time of Jesus Christ. It also looked into the various views and practices among few ethnic groups in Nigeria. We discovered that there are different interpretations from various quarters on what constitute marriage. The contemporary church is not left out. There is the need to affirm what exactly Jesus teaches about the issues of marriage, and situate it within the context of the Christians in Ibadan and in the Nigerian society. There is the dire need to seek logical answers concerning the various questions raised in this chapter bearing in mind the complexity of marriage as an institution.

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<sup>192</sup>J. M. Bahemuka, 1990, Polygyny, social change and women's response in East Africa. *African Christian Studies*, Vol. 6, No.1, 39.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses Jesus' teaching on marriage. It looks at the background to Jesus' teaching on marriage taking cognizance of the variant readings in the Synoptic Gospels. The chapter also examines Jesus' view on monogamy and the issue of celibacy, and how it is being practised today. Conclusions are drawn from the investigation.

#### 3.2 Jesus' teaching on marriage

##### 3.2.1 Background to Jesus' teaching (Genesis 18:18-25; cf. Mark 12:18-27; cf. Matthew 22:23-33; Luke 20:27-40)

It is evident that the institution of marriage was an important thing in the time of Jesus. In Matthew 19:3, the Pharisees asked the question, "... Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" The question was based on the teachings circulating on divorce (the Hillel and the Shammai Schools) in the time of Jesus. However, instead of debating on the law or taking sides with either of the Rabbinic schools, he focuses his attention on the creation account in order to present his view on marriage. In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus says:

Haven't you read,"...," "That at the beginning the Creator '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 man not separate.

Mark's version of the statement reads:

But at the beginning of creation God 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'. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. (Mark 10:6-9).

The Greek rendering of Matthew 19:4 reads: ο` δε. avpokriqei.j ei=pen( Ouvk avne,gnwte o[ti ο` kti,saj avpV avrch/j a;rsen kai. qh/lu evpoi,hsen auvtou,jÈ the avne,gnwte is in the aorist active which has the indicative voice of something that the Pharisees were well

aware of. It can also be rendered: have you not recognised or have you not recited? In other words, Jesus was bringing it into their awareness that they knew the answer already, but they had come to test him.

Daniel Patte is of the opinion that the Pharisees already knew the answer based on Jesus' reply. They were only interested in what is allowed or forbidden because they did not recognize God's wonderful gift of an ideal marriage.<sup>1</sup> In other words, God created everything at creation and marriage as an institution is also created together with the rest of creation. Therefore, if it was good at creation, then it is authentic and normative. Jesus quoted two Old Testament passages, Gen. 1:27 and Gen 2:24, to answer the Pharisees. Here, Jesus "passed over all intervening history and what might have happened or had been sanctioned in this interim period and took his questioners and listeners back to creation."<sup>2</sup>

The expression "that at the beginning, the Creator made them male and female" means that God created man and woman from the beginning and it will be difficult to think that this act of God is purposeless. In Matthew 19:8b, there is another reference to the creation account in Genesis. That the man and the woman were created together at the beginning implies that they were dependent on each other. They are sexual beings and one is incomplete without the other. Man will therefore "leave... and be united to his wife and they both will become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7-8).

In Matthew 19:29, Jesus gave a long list of people, which his disciples are to leave for kingdom's sake. He never mentioned leaving ones husband or wife. It connotes that God Himself has ordained that a man should leave his parents and together with his wife form a new union. This also stresses the legitimacy of the institution called marriage. The term 'flesh' refers not only to the physical union of the spouses. It rather refers to the entire personality.<sup>3</sup> Jesus' quotation of Gen. 2:24 implies that "whatever marriage meant right from the beginning is still valid and binding, especially in view of the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ."<sup>4</sup> The husband and wife are "one flesh" which no man should separate (cf. Matthew 19:4-6). Paul also

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<sup>1</sup> D. Patte, 1987. *The Gospel according to Matthew: a structural commentary on Matthew's faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 264.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Hawthorne, 1993. Marriage and divorce, adultery and incest, in *Dictionary of Paul and His letters*. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, Eds.(Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 595.

<sup>3</sup> A. Balmain Bruce, 1990. The Synoptic Gospels, in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* ( Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 245-246.

<sup>4</sup> E. Mueller, 2012. *Jesus and divorce & remarriage in Matthew 19*. [www.adventistbiblicalres./Jesus\\_divorce.pdf](http://www.adventistbiblicalres./Jesus_divorce.pdf). Retrieved on May 20, 2010.



emphasizes the permanence of the marriage union by repeating the law of Christ. To him, couples must remain till death do them part (Romans 7:1-3).

The Sadducees also came to Jesus with a hypothetical question about marriage. In this case, there was a reflection on the levirate marriage, a practice regulated, but not initiated, by Moses (cf. Gen. 38:8). Based on the Mosaic legislation in Deuteronomy 25:5-7, the Sadducees asked the question, "... at the resurrection whose wife will she be since the seven were married to her?" (Mark 12:23; cf. Matthew 22:28; Luke 20:33). This is found in recognized texts, such as *S B C D W sy<sup>p</sup> sa bo*, while a few manuscripts, such as *A Θ λ ϕ it vg sy<sup>s</sup>*, add *when they rise*.<sup>5</sup> It is most likely that the recognized texts are the most appropriate since the manuscripts are not without errors either mistakenly or intentionally. The question evidently is unanswerable because it was designed to ridicule the belief in resurrection and, at the same time, render it invalid. It is even not compatible with the divinely revealed precept of levirate marriage.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, "Jesus did not deal with the problem on the ridiculous terms in which it was raised, but points instead to the transformation of human existence which is involved in the resurrection life."<sup>7</sup> Sheman E. Johnson opines that the Sadducees "cite a purely hypothetical case which could scarcely have arisen in later Judaism."<sup>8</sup> Even in case of domestic difficulties, levirate marriage will make for these difficulties if there is resurrection.<sup>9</sup> In Mark 12:25, Jesus denied the presupposition that marriage endures after life (cf. Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:35). In other words, sex plays no part in the after life. There is no continuation of the earthly relationship after death. There will not be physical necessities in the after life. They do not die. They do not marry (I Cor. 2:9). Leslie F. Church notes that "Much of our business in this world is to raise and build up families, and to provide for them. Much of our pleasure in this world is in our relations, our wives and children; nature inclines to it. Marriage is instituted for the comfort of human life".<sup>10</sup> In the resurrection there is no marriage. The intimacy experienced here on earth is a symbol of

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<sup>5</sup> B. H. Throckmorton, Jr., 1992. *Gospel parallels: a comparison of the Synoptic Gospels* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 162.

<sup>6</sup> E. J. Mally, 1968. The Gospel according to Mark, in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), 49.

<sup>7</sup> H. C. Kee, 1971. The Gospel according to Mark, in *The Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 637.

<sup>8</sup> S. E. Johnson, 1951. The Gospel according to Matthew, in *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol. II I(USA :Pierce and Smith), 521.

<sup>9</sup> S. E. Johnson, 1951. The Gospel according to Matthew, in *The Interpreter's Bible Commentary*, vol. II I(USA :Pierce and Smith), 521.

<sup>10</sup> L. F. Church (ed), 1992. *Zondervan NIV Matthew Henry Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 293.

the reality to be experienced in glory. The joining that is done by God himself is an indication that it is a covenant, making the man and the woman to become one flesh.<sup>11</sup> In Matthew 19:6, w[ste ouvke,ti eivsi.n du,o avlla. sa.rx mi,aÅ o] ou=n o` qeo.j sune,zeuxen a;nqrwpoj mh. cwrize,tw ("So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."). It is here affirmed that, when a couple is married, God is joining them together.

In the parable of the great Banquet (Luke 14:20), and the admonition of Jesus to the Rich Ruler (Luke 18:29-30), Jesus impressed it in the mind of his hearers that the kingdom of God is more important than earthly pursuits. It is a cost of discipleship to leave everything, including family members to follow Jesus and enter eternity (Luke 14:26). This leaving, however, must not be seen in literal sense because even when Peter said "We had left all we had to follow you!" (Luke 14:28), he was not divorced (Luke 4:38). Peter and other disciples later in life were preaching Christ in company of their wives (I Cor. 9:5).

### 3.2.2 Jesus and the issue of monogamy

There are serious arguments, disagreements and differences among Christian denominations as to the number of wives a Christian can have. While some agree that monogamy is implied in the teachings of Jesus, some believe that Jesus did not condemn polygamy. To such people, Jesus' silence indicates that he approved of polygamy. We must understand that, except in few cases, most cultures in Africa practice polygamy (husband of two or more wives) rather than polyandry (a situation whereby the wife is living under the same roof, at the same time with two or more husbands).

From all indications, Jesus, like in the creation account, emphasized monogamy. In the answer he gave the Pharisees (Matthew 19:3-9 and Mark 10:1-12) it is evident that, for Jesus, monogamy is the universal standard for all generations. He refers to Genesis 1:27(cf. 5:1-2) and 2:24:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

This is the written account of Adam's line. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and

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<sup>11</sup>J. C. Laney, 1990. No divorce & no remarriage in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 21.

female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man." (Genesis 5:1-2)

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).

Scholars' views on this Genesis passages seem to present an apparent contradiction. The contradiction seemingly hinges on the three views: equality, male domination, and male headship. In other words, if God created man and woman in His own image, why the use of man, collectively for the two sexes? Raymond C: Ortlund, Jr. attempts an explanation of the three views :

Man and woman are equal in the sense that they bear God's image equally. In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction. By male domination ... the assertion of the man's will over the woman's will, heedless of her spiritual equality, her rights, and her value.<sup>12</sup>

The evangelical feminism adheres to male-female equality but debunks the idea of male headship/ domination.<sup>13</sup> To them, male headship /domination was imposed on the woman as a punishment at the fall. The woman is absolved of the punishment at the coming of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

Genesis 5:2 gives the generic use of <d\*a\* , Adam, which is an affirmation of equality, as is 1:26-27. Gilbert Bilezikian writes:

... the designation "man" is a generic term for "human beings" and ...encompasses both male and female. This fact is made especially clear in Genesis 5:2 where the word man designates both male and female: "He created them male and female; at the time they were created, he blessed them and called them 'man.'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> R. C. Ortlund, Jr. 1991. Male-female equality and male headship: Genesis 1-3. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem(Wheaton: Crossway Books), 86.

<sup>13</sup> R. C. Ortlund, Jr. 1991. Male-female equality and male headship: Genesis 1-3. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem(Wheaton: Crossway Books), 86.

<sup>14</sup> R. C. Ortlund, Jr. 1991. Male-female equality and male headship: Genesis 1-3. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem(Wheaton: Crossway Books), 86.

<sup>15</sup> G. Bilezikian, 1985. *Beyond sex roles: a guide for the study of female roles in the bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 22.

He argues further that "..., there is no basis in Genesis 1 for confining the image of God to males alone."<sup>16</sup> Genesis 2:18 and Genesis 5:2 reveal that human's divine image allows us to uniquely relate to God. God's image is equal in men and women!<sup>17</sup> Constable affirms that:

"Man" refers to mankind, not Adam individually (v. 27). "Them" indicates this generic significance. God created (cf. vv. 1, 2) mankind male and female; they did not evolve from a lower form of life (cf. Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). Adam was not androgynous (i.e., two individuals joined physically like Siamese twins) or bisexual (i.e., one individual possessing both male and female sexual organs). There is no basis for these bizarre ideas in the text. God formed Eve from Adam's rib, not from half of his body or from his genitals.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, one thing emphasised subtly in Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 5:1-2 is the idea of oneness in marriage. Henry F. Lazenby asserts that:

The image is found in the type of relationship that was designed to exist between male and female human beings, a relationship where the characteristics of each sex are valued and used to form a oneness in their identity and purpose. When God created human beings as male and female he formed them to exhibit a oneness in their relationship that would resemble the relationship of God and his heavenly court.

By ruling as one, male and female fulfill the purpose of God for which they were created. United as one humanity, male and female are one with God and his heavenly court. And it is this unity between male and female, and between humanity and God, that is destroyed in the Fall described in Genesis 3.<sup>19</sup>

Human beings are "di-sexual". It implies that, "Neither, alone, exhibits the complete divine Image. And, if it takes the complete Image to form the authority that delegates rule of the earth, then it requires integration of the divided Image to accept and implement this delegated rule.

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<sup>16</sup>G. Bilezikian, 1985. *Beyond sex roles: a guide for the study of female roles in the bible*(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 22.

<sup>17</sup>F. Brown, S.R and C.A. Briggs. A Hebrew and English lexicon of the Old Testament. CD ROM Version, PC Study BibleVersion 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>18</sup> T. L. Constable, 2013. *Notes on Genesis*. <http://www.soniclight.com>. Retrieved on June 02, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> H. F. Lazenby, 1987. The Image of God: masculine, feminine, or neuter? *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30:67, 66.

This is to say that both sides of the Image must be present and working in harmony."<sup>20</sup> Hence, the image of God is distributed into genders, male and female. "Male and female he created them" clearly confirms the dual sexuality of man. According to Ortlund, "Moses doubtless intends to imply the equality of the sexes, for both male and female display the glory of God's image with equal brilliance . . . in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. This is consistent with God's intention, stated in verse 26, that both sexes should rule: '. . . and let them rule.'<sup>21</sup>

In spite of the gender equality, which pleases the feminist movement, the idea of male headship propounded by some scholars concerning Genesis 2:24 should not be taken wantonly. Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr. sees a paradox in Genesis 2: 24. It is unbeatable that God created male and female in His image equally, but He also made the male the head and the female the helper.<sup>22</sup> In other words, the male-female equality in Genesis 2 does not constitute an undifferentiated sameness.

We ourselves can feel intuitively the importance of distinct sexual identity when we see, for example, a transvestite. A man trying to be a woman repulses us, and rightly so. We know that this is perverse. Sexual confusion is a significant, not a slight, personal problem, because our distinct sexual identity defines who we are and why we are here and how God calls us to serve Him. . . . God is not interested in unlimited equality among us. The woman is the man's helper.<sup>23</sup>

In the New Testament accounts of the new creation, Paul declared, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"( Gal 3:28). This inclusiveness and equality reflects Jesus' teaching in Matthew 12:48-50, where he asked the question, "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" and then pointing to his disciples answered the question saying, ". . . whoever does the will of my Father in heaven *he* (αὐτοῦ) is my brother and sister and mother." Thomas F. McDaniel avers that:

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<sup>20</sup> W. F. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage: recovering the biblical view* (New York: Harper and Row), 8; see also Karl Barth, 1976. *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3/I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, ET), 207-20.

<sup>21</sup> R. C. Ortlund, Jr. 1991. Male-female equality and male headship: Genesis 1-3. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 87.

<sup>22</sup> R. C. Ortlund, Jr. 1991. Male-female equality and male headship: Genesis 1-3. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 89.

<sup>23</sup> R. C. Ortlund, Jr. 1991. Male-female equality and male headship: Genesis 1-3. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 89.

The pronoun *he* (auvto,j) is here gender inclusive, embracing “my brother, my sister, and my mother”—evidence that women were among Jesus disciples. With these definitions in focus the Twelve male disciples (maqhtai,) would all be “brothers” and the unnumbered female disciples (maqh,tria), like Tabitha (also known as Dorcas who is named in Acts 9:36), would have been “sisters.” Mary Magdalene,<sup>17</sup> Joanna, Susanna, and the other women who, out of their personal resources, provided for Jesus and his twelve men (Luke 8:1–3) would no doubt be identified also as *sisters* and *disciples* (maqh,trial).<sup>24</sup>

However, this gender equality in Galatians 3:29 did not become normative in the early church, because of the gender distinction which reflects in Jesus’ having both maqhtai, “male disciples” and maqh,tria “female disciples.”<sup>25</sup> This could be because Paul was gender biased:

In Galatians 3:26 he tells the church members, “in Christ Jesus you are all *sons* (ui`oi`) of God through faith” and in Gal 4:7, “you are no longer a slave but a son (ui`o,j).” Ten times in the letter to the Galatians Paul called the church members “brothers” (avdelfoi,), as if there were no women in the church. On the other hand, Paul recognized Phoebe as a deacon ( dia,konoj) at the church of Cenchreae (Rom 16:1) and Junia as a kinswoman and an apostle (avpo,stoloj) in Romans 16:7.<sup>26</sup>

Paul consciously offered an alternative interpretation to the literal meaning of the Hebrew texts from Genesis cited above. Moreover, he made no mention of Genesis 1:27b and 5:2:

It is assumed that Paul surely recognized the ~d'a' in Genesis 1:27b and 5:2 as the collective noun which included the male Adam and the female Eve. This ~d'a' was the equivalent of the gender inclusive Greek a;nqrwpoj. But Paul made no reference to Genesis 1:27b and 5:2, and interpreted the ~d'a' in Genesis 1:27a as the proper name Adam, and thus the male Adam alone was in the image of the God.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.

<sup>25</sup> T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.

Paul stated that God was at the top, then Christ, then man (o` avnh,r) who is in the image of God, and at the bottom was the woman who is not in the image of God. <sup>28</sup>Here is his statement:

But I want you to understand that the head of every man (avndro,j) is Christ, the head of a woman (gunaiko,j) is her husband (avnh,r), and the head of Christ is God 19. . . . For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God (eivkw.n kai. do,xa qeou/ u`pa,rcwn); but woman is the glory of man. For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a woman ought to have a “veil” (evxousi,an = “authority”) on her head, because of the angels.<sup>29</sup>

“God made them male and female; for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”(Matthew 19:4-5). It seems that the perfect will of God is that only two become one. God fashioned only one woman for man and she should be her only help meet. “By pointing to the order in the beginning Jesus in unequivocal terms declared that what God expects from human beings is to disown the evil that has crept in as the result of fall and adopt the principle of monogamy.”<sup>30</sup>

It is true that customs and practices are recorded in the Old Testament that fall far short of this ideal, such as polygamy, concubineage, the wife considered to be the property of her husband, the husband seen as the master of his wife. Nevertheless, the accounts of monogamous marriages of significant persons such as Noah, Isaac and Joseph, the numerous narratives of husbands treating their wives with love, respect, equality and faithfulness, and the many statements indicating that domestic happiness and prosperity are tied directly to monogamy, fidelity and respect show that the ideal was never lost and that many of God’s people strove to make this ideal a reality in practice (cf. 2 Kings 4:8-25; Psalms 128;

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<sup>28</sup> This is the notion in I Cor 11:3–10.

<sup>29</sup> T. F. McDonald, n.d. Clarifying New Testament Aramaic names and Shem Tob's Hebrew Gospel of Matthew. [http://tmcDaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4\\_ShemTob.pdf](http://tmcDaniel.palmerseminary.edu/Volume4_ShemTob.pdf). Retrieved on May 13, 2013.

<sup>30</sup>J. Kunjukunju, 1990. *Marriage and divorce: an orthodox Christian perspective*. Isthologic. Com/.../hol\_marriage\_and\_di.... Retrieved on May 17, 2012.

Proverbs 31; Eccl. 9:9; Mal. 2:14; cf. also Sir. 25: 1 & 26:1-4, 13-18).<sup>31</sup>

The clearest evidence that monogamy is God's ideal is from Christ's teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:3–6. In this passage, Jesus cited the Genesis creation account, in particular Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, saying 'the two will become one flesh', not more than two. The word 'flesh' (*basar*) refers to human existence as a whole. Another important biblical teaching is the parallel of husband and wife with Christ and the Church in Ephesians 5:22–33, which makes sense only with monogamy—Jesus will not have multiple brides. It is observed that whenever the Mosaic Law had provisions for polygamy, it was always the conditional: 'If he takes another wife to himself ...' of Exodus 21:10 is never an encouragement. God put a number of obligations of the husband towards the additional wives, which would discourage polygamy. This could have been one of the reasons why polygamy was not known among the Jews after the Babylonian exile, and monogamy was the rule even among the Greeks and Romans by New Testament times.

Furthermore, monogamy is assumed in the Gospel of Luke. Andrew Olu Igenozza sees a parallel between Noah and Zechariah. Throughout the narratives about Noah, he and his sons are described as monogamists (Gen. 6-11; Note Gen. 7:7, 13, 18). Zechariah, the husband of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was also a monogamist. Zechariah and Elizabeth were described as righteous (*di,kaioj*), and blameless (*a;memptoj*) in Luke 1:6, just as Noah was a righteous (*di,kaioj*), and blameless (*te,leioj*) man who walked with God (Gen. 6:9, LXX).<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth, like Sarah and Rebekah, was barren but she did not take to Sarah's option of giving maids to her husband. She rather took to Rebekah's example, who, though barren for twenty years, did not give her maids to Isaac (Gen. 25). In the face of the bareness, even when the angel came to give the news of the expected baby, Zechariah was still faithful to his one wife. Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well advanced in years" (Luke 1:18). Zechariah would not tread the part of Abraham and Jacob in order to bear children, and more children respectively. We accept that the full implication of blamelessness of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke's estimation may not be fully known. But it is reasonable to suggest that it included grasping and maintaining the primordial monogamous life

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<sup>31</sup> G. F. Hawthorne, 1993. Marriage and divorce, adultery and incest, in *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Gerald F. Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, Eds. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 594.

<sup>32</sup> A. O. Igenozza, 2005. *Polygamy and the African churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: The African Association for the Study of Religion), 214-217.



(Gen. 1:27 and 2:24). In Luke 14:20; Luke 14:26 and 18:29-30, the term “wife” is consistently put in the singular form, emphasizing the monogamous ideal of marriage. “With the dawn of New Age, monogamy as the divine ideal of marriage is being<sup>33</sup> recovered and it should be fully accepted and adopted by the people of God.”<sup>34</sup>

In spite of Jesus’ reference to the creation ideal of monogamy in marriage, Paul says, “Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, and able to teach...” (I Tim. 3:2). It also has its parallel in Titus 1: 5-9. This passage has been given series of interpretation. Some are of the opinion that every other person can be a polygamist except the Church leaders. To some the statement is an open-ended one in which case the leader must have at least one wife although he can have as many wives as he could. Yet others are of the opinion that, to be a leader in the Church, the leader must send all other wives away, except only one. Lastly, some teach that the passage impresses it upon the leader that, in his lifetime, he must marry only once; there should be no remarriage after the death of his wife.

In solving the aforementioned problems, we must consider certain things. Firstly, Paul was addressing a group of Christians who were caught up in the customs and traditions of their time. At the time Paul was writing this letter, polygamy was against the Roman law but concubinage was a common practice, even among people of lower social status. It was easy to dissolve relationships in a concubinage than in a formal, legal and official marriage. Paul therefore, was prohibiting having concubines and the temptation of being involved in illicit sexual relation since it was easy to end.<sup>35</sup> Secondly, it is logical to interpret I Timothy 3:2 in accordance with whatever interpretation is given to the one-husband wife of I Timothy 5. In the early Roman Empire, there was the idea of wives who were *univirae*. A *univira* was a woman who has never been orphaned nor widowed. She was believed to be a source of good fortunes to her husband. Such women, at times, were unwilling to remarry after the death of their husbands. They would never thought of breaking relationships with their husbands.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>33</sup> A. O. Igenoz, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: The African Association for the Study of Religion), 214.

<sup>34</sup> A. O. Igenoz, 2005. *Polygamy and the African Churches: a biblical appraisal of an African marriage system* (Ibadan: The African Association for the Study of Religion), 215.

<sup>35</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991. ... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament*. (Peabody : Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.), 89.

<sup>36</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991. ... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.), 93.

remarriage does not make a woman unholy. One-husband wife does not mean that she is the only wife. If she marries a polygamist and remains his wife until death, she cannot be said to have two husbands. Besides, if the husband dies and she remarries, and later becomes a widow the second time and is now 60 or more, she is still a one-man wife. However, Paul was not discouraging widowed women from remarriage, especially younger widows. Rather “spouse of one partner” would mean “a faithful and loyal spouse who is a good current marital partner.”<sup>37</sup> They are not partners of another person (cf. Deuteronomy 24:2). Such partners would rule their children properly (I Tim 3:4-5, 12; Titus 1:6) and guide against false teachings about homes and forbidding marriage (Titus 1:11; I Tim. 4:1-3).

“A husband of one wife” must not only be interpreted in terms of marital status and history alone because many men are husbands of one wife, yet are “womanizers”. They engage in sexual relationships outside their homes. If the Greek phrase *mia/j gunaiko.j avnh,r* is translated “one woman man”, there is a genitive of possession whereby “one wife” is given a special emphasis. The phrase can, therefore, be translated “a husband belonging to one wife only.” This one wife only should also be viewed as one wife at a time because if Paul gives room for remarriage on the death of the spouses (Rom. 7:2-3; I Cor. 7:3a), then the case of bishops and deacons cannot be different. In such cases, the leader is still a monogamist.

Few years ago, a pastor lost his wife to a terminal disease, cancer. He and his wife managed the disease for about six years. The pastor remarried exactly six months after the death of the wife. His church members, and even the larger body of the church, the Convention, would not take it lightly with the pastor. To them, the pastor was wicked and he had no human feelings. The pastor answered with only one sentence. He said, “To you, I lost my wife six months ago, but to me my wife died six years ago.” The pastor told the congregation that for about six years before, he never had sexual intercourse with his wife nor anybody. Eventually, many reasoned with him and he continued his pastorate in another church. The contemporary church must be dissuaded from thinking that church leaders do not have the human nature that could lure them to temptations. Besides, the leader may be guilty of the other moral issues listed in I Timothy 3:4, if there is no woman to help him guide his children when he is away from home, doing God’s work.

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<sup>37</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991. ... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament*. (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.), 95

Jesus must have preached the good news to the polygamists. Most often, he associated polygamy with the wealthy and, whenever he had the opportunity, he showed them the way of the kingdom. It was possible that there were polygamist converts in the Early Church.

We must say that, in most cases, the polygamous home is not perfect. No woman, whatever her status, whatever care she is being given by the husband, wants to share the love and attention of her husband with another woman “even though in some cultures she may actually ask her husband to take another wife to share the workload or the burden of having frequent sex.”<sup>38</sup> Even Hillel one of the great Jewish Rabbis said " The more flesh, the more worms; the more riches, the more worry; the more wives, the more witchcraft (cf. M.Ab 2:7)".<sup>39</sup>

Among the Yoruba of West Africa, a traditional Obatala priest must be a monogamist. The reason is that Orisanla says that most of the problems in the world are caused by polygamy and for the world to know peace every man must be a monogamist. Although a polygamist expects that he will find happiness or satisfaction in the practice; it is not so, most times.

The Celestial Church of Christ tolerates polygamy in the Church, while the Baptist Church will not allow full membership for any polygamist. This is greatly influenced by the teachings of the missionaries and Western culture of today. In a letter which Dr. Charles E. Maddy, a one-time Executive Secretary of the foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Richmond Virginia, U.S.A., wrote to Pastor and Churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention in 1938, saying: "polygyny is a heathen practice of the jungle."<sup>40</sup> S. T. Ola Akande opines that “this viewpoint appears to be over-stressed. Polygyny is neither a way of life, not a religious experience. It is not entered into as an act of worship nor are there any religious rites that accompany its consummation.”<sup>41</sup> The polygamists were so irritating to the Church that, in 1888, the Third Lambeth Conference adopted three resolutions:

- i. Baptized converts who took a second wife should be excommunicated.
- ii. Polygynists were not to be accepted into church membership.
- iii. Wives of polygynists might be baptized under certain conditions.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> I. Gaskiyane, 2000. *Polygamy: A cultural and biblical Perspective*( Carlisle: Piquant), 29.

<sup>39</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991.... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 88.

<sup>40</sup> S. T. Ola Akande. *The Church, the cult and the African heritage*. Unpublished Essay, 94 & 95.

<sup>41</sup> S. T. Ola Akande. *The Church, the cult and the African heritage*. Unpublished Essay, 95

<sup>42</sup> J. B. Webster, 1968. *Christianity in tropical Africa*. C. B. Baeta, Ed. (Oxford: University Press), 225.

In 1933, the Anglican Bishop of Lagos, at the fifth synod of the Anglican Diocese of Lagos, warned against any association with African Churches:

I think we compromise our principles when we go to their religious gatherings, attend their weddings... and other functions... (this) is likely to lead... people to think we are one with them in their teaching and practice with regard to polygamy and other like matters.... Let these “African Churches” take the teaching of Christ as their standard with regard to marriage instead of basing it on the custom of the country and we shall be glad to receive them back into fellowship and communion.<sup>43</sup>

The Nigerian Baptist Convention, at her 22nd session held at Ogbomoso from April 28 to May 3, 1935, also resolved that no known polygamist should be allowed to hold office in the churches or act in the capacity of a lay preacher. They felt there was the need to take courageous steps on polygamy, though with sympathy and love. At the 24<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Convention in 1937, the delegates adopted this motion:

Recognizing monogamy as the ideal state of family life according to the New Testament, this Convention places on record its adherence hereto. No known polygamist shall be allowed membership in our churches, to hold any office in the Church, to act as a lay preacher, or to participate in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.<sup>44</sup>

For anybody to have full membership as a polygamist, many of the missionary-related Churches in Africa gave the following conditions:

1. If a polygynous man wishes to become a Christian and wishes to be baptized, his marriage to his many wives must first be dissolved before he can be received into the Church.
2. After the dissolution, he is free to choose one wife who will be his only wife and best helpmate, and then send the rest away. A wife who is thus put away must be compensated by the man. If she remarries, his obligation to her ceases.
3. If the wife of a polygynist wishes to be baptized and consequently accepted into the church, she must dissolve her marriage with the man. The church will decide to baptize her provided there is no evidence that she intends to marry another polygynist.

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<sup>43</sup> Report of the Proceedings, second Session, Fifth Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Lagos, 1933, 10-11. Quoted by S. T. Ola Akande in *The Church, the cult and the African heritage*. Unpublished Essay, p. 102

<sup>44</sup> The constitution and Bylaws of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, 1987, Revised edition, 2.

4. The first wife of a polygynist who was married before she and her husband become Christians could, under certain circumstances, be baptized and received into the Church. This concession has been criticized on the assumption that the first wife is a party to the polygynous relation since she has remained in the home without attempting to quit.<sup>45</sup>

The conditions given above led many missionary-related Churches to indirectly send some polygamists out of the Church. Some of these polygamists joined African Churches, while some left Christianity and joined Islamic religion. Others went back to African Traditional Religion. Some divorced their second wives but retained their children. Some even left the wife and her children. In cases where only the first wife and the husband were granted full membership, the other wives and their children felt cheated and then became church goers rather than being born-again. Such women became despised and social outcasts; they suffered emotional pains with their children and economic insecurity.

The issue of polygamy must be handled with care if people are to be drawn to Christ and not turned away from Him. Truly,

Polygamy is not the will of God, but divorce is a greater moral and social evil than polygamy. Polygamy is an accommodation to man's culture and sinful tendencies but divorce destroys a family. To require a converted polygamist to send away all but one wife in order to be "morally pure" is to oppose the will of God concerning the family. Permanent stable family units are the foundation of a morally stable culture and nation.<sup>46</sup>

S. T. Ola Akande told the experience he had concerning the issue of polygamy in the Nigerian Baptist Church. He said that, in 1954, as a third year student at the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, he was on vacation job at the First Baptist Church, Sekondi, Gold Coast (now Ghana). After one service where he preached very well, he was called by the pastor of the church along with Revd J. A. Soyoooye, to tell them and the Executive Committee (EC) of the Church on the decision of the Nigerian Baptist Church on polygamy and polygamists in the Church. This was done in the presence of Rev. D. A. Sanyaolu, Revd M. O. Oyarinde from Kumasi and Revd H. R. Littleton, a Southern Baptist missionary based in Kumasi. S. T. Ola Akande was told the following:

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<sup>45</sup> S. T. Ola Akande. *The Church, the cult and the African heritage*. Unpublished Essay, 107 and 108.

<sup>46</sup> I. Gaskiyane, 2000. *Polygamy: A cultural and Biblical Perspective*(Carlisle: Piquant), 45.

- i. That no polygamist would be baptized
- ii. To ask the Executive Committee members who were polygamists to leave the EC
- iii. That none of the wives of the polygamists would be baptized
- iv. That they should never be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Revd S. T. Ola Akande said that during the meeting, he observed the following:

- i. That polygamists were the financial backbones of the church
- ii. That they used to attend services regularly
- iii. That they were highly committed and kept the church going.

He said that he suggested the following solutions:

- i. He advised the Executive Committee members not to rush at taking decision
- ii. They should ask members of the EC who were polygamists to withdraw their membership voluntarily annually
- iii. They should be replacing them with baptized monogamists of the church.

These suggestions were rejected outright by the members of the church. They, according to him, therefore, took the following steps:

- i. Revd J. A. Soyoooye wrote to Littleton, Sanyaolu and Oyerinde to tell them that Rev. S. T. Ola Akande would destroy the Churches in Ghana because of the suggestions he gave the Executive Committee
- ii. Revd J. A. Soyoooye recommended that the Baptist Churches in Ghana, which had given Revd S. T. Ola Akande scholarship, to withdraw the financial support for the remaining one year at the Seminary
- iii. Revd. S. T. Ola Akande's hope of returning to serve as a pastor in Ghana must be withdrawn
- iv. Revd S. T. Ola Akande must be reported to the Seminary authority that he was a troublemaker for the Convention Churches
- v. Embargo must be placed on Revd. S. T. Ola Akande against serving in any Baptist Church in Ghana.

The Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho through her Faculty according to S.T. Ola Akande, took the following steps:

- i. In January, 1955, S. T. Ola Akande was invited to defend himself

- ii. The Faculty decided that S. T. Ola Akande would not be recommended to go back to Ghana but would be open to invitation from any Church in Nigeria which wanted to have him as her pastor.

After his Seminary training, S. T.. Ola Akande assumed the pastorate of First Baptist Church, Fiditi, Oyo State, Nigeria from Jan. 1956. In April 1959, S. T. Ola Akande was considered for Convention scholarship to the U.S.A. There were serious oppositions, as many vehemently rejected the move because “Rev. S. T. Ola Akande is too soft on the issue of polygamy in the Nigerian Baptist Convention.” This opposition was, however, overridden. Years later, Akande became the General Secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention from 1979 - 1991.<sup>47</sup>

On May 1, 2014, the Nigerian Baptist Convention amended her principle on polygamy. Article IV (Declaration of Principle), Section F of the Nigerian Baptist Convention constitution states that:

The Convention recognizes monogamy, the union of natural man to natural woman, as the ideal state of family life according to the New Testament. This condition places on record its adherence thereto. However, no person who has confessed Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord shall be denied baptism, church membership and participation in the Lord's Supper; but no member of the Church who is a polygamist shall hold any Church office or position<sup>48</sup>

With this amendment, polygamists who confess Christ must be baptized. If any of the wives also confesses Christ, she must also be baptized. The same goes for partaking in the Holy Communion:

The biblical condition for receiving Holy Communion is self-examination and self-judgment (I Cor. 11:28). It is a decision for the individual to make to avoid the judgment of God (I Cor. 11:27). It is not a decision for the church to make. The Church's responsibility is to offer the Holy Communion and to warn its members of the consequences of taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. It is then up to each individual to make his or her own self-judgment and decision about taking the Lord's Supper.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> An interview with Revd S. T. Ola Akande on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 2012 in Ibadan, Oyo State.

<sup>48</sup> The Constitution and Regulations of the Nigerian Baptist Convention amended at Ibadan, Oyo State on the 1st Day of May, 2014(Ibadan: Baptist press (Nig.) Ltd.), 6.

<sup>49</sup> I. Gaskiyane, 2000. *Polygamy: a cultural and biblical perspective* (Carlisle: Piquant), 51.

### 3.2.3 The issue of celibacy (Matthew 19:10-12; cf. Deut. 23:1; 1 Cor.7:1-9)

In Matthew 19:10-12, another issue which relates to marriage is found:

The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry. Jesus replied,” “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”

This is Jesus’ third answer in Matthew 19:3-12. The first problem in this passage (Mt. 19:10-12) relates to the antecedents of “this word.” Is “this word” referring to the word of Jesus or the word of the disciples? Daniel Patte opines that Jesus was referring to the answer he gave to the Pharisees on divorce and remarriage.<sup>50</sup> This means that Jesus was saying that not everybody could meet the ideal marriage requirement, which he had taught him or her. Patte is not right at all as this implies that Jesus was destroying all he had taught in the previous passages. It would, therefore, no more be obligatory to follow divine principles, thereby making room for an excuse to violate God’s will and ideal. There will be the breaking down of moral values and ideals since the answer which Jesus had given in the previous passages would be difficult to sustain. Donald Hagner<sup>51</sup>, David Hill,<sup>52</sup> William Lillie,<sup>53</sup> Heinrich Meyer<sup>54</sup> and Francis Nichol<sup>55</sup> are of the opinion that “this word” refers to the words of the disciples of Jesus in verse 10. This view is appropriate. Jesus does not reject the opinion of the disciples but he declares that it has been given to some not to marry.

The second problem deals with the set of people Jesus was referring to. Some argued that the passage is directed to the divorced people, that there should not be any form of remarriage after divorce. Yet, some scholars opine that Matthew is asking everybody to remain unmarried

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<sup>50</sup> D. Patte, 1987. *The Gospel according to Matthew: a structural commentary on Matthew’s faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 267.

<sup>51</sup> D. A. Hagner, 1995. Matthew 14 - 28 in *Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B* (Dallas: Word Books Publisher), 549.

<sup>52</sup> D. Hill, 1990. The Gospel of Matthew, in *the New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 281.

<sup>53</sup> W. Lillie, 1961. *Studies in the New Testament ethics* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd), 125.

<sup>54</sup> H. A.W. Meyer, 1983. *Critical and exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew* (Peabody: Hendrickson publishers), 340.

<sup>55</sup> F. D. Nichol, ed. , 1956. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 5.* ( Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association), 455.



for the kingdom's sake. R. T. France claims that Jesus' demand is binding only on Christians.<sup>56</sup> Again, the view that Jesus encouraged everybody to remain unmarried for the kingdom's sake may not be right. There are instances where Jesus called different disciples to different tasks. In Matthew 10:1, Jesus sets the Twelve apart from the other disciples. In Matthew 16:17-19, Jesus affirmed that Simon Peter had a special revelation from God, which would eventually lead to a greater task on the part of Peter. The same is true of the parable of the Faithful and the Unfaithful Servants of Matthew 24:45-51 (cf. Luke 12:41-48). Some have said that Matthew 13:11 is an analogous to Matthew 19:11-12. They said Jesus claimed in Matthew 13:11 that the secrets of the kingdom have been given to his disciples and not to other people. Craig Keener opines that:

Matthew 13:11 (cf. 11:27) is not analogous to the saying in 19:11-12, because it is a statement about what already has taken place, rather than a call to a way of life. If it were analogous to 19:11-12, then 19:11-12 would imply that all believers already have the grace to avoid marriage, but the "let him accept" calls for action, whereas 13:11 does not.<sup>57</sup>

The disciples of Jesus were not concerned about Jesus' teaching about marriage. Their concern was Jesus' "prohibition of divorce except on the narrowest grounds, absolving their right to get out of an intolerable marriage and removing the threat that could keep the wife subordinate."<sup>58</sup> Most of the disciples were Jews who already knew that "no one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the Lord" (Dt. 23:1). Marriage was the norm in the Jewish society. Moses and some of the prophets of the Old Testament married (Isa. 7:3). Ezekiel and Hosea married though their marriages faced some hardship (Eze. 24:16-18; Hos. 1-3). They never divorced. Jeremiah did not marry and God gave reasons for the action (Jer. 16:2-4). He obeyed specific directions of God.

The most widely cited reference to celibacy among the Jews in Rabbinic times were a few of the Essenes. Nevertheless, there is disagreement as to whether the Essenes were celibates in all periods. Josephus indicates that there were both celibates and married Essenes (Josephus J. W. 2.8.2 & 120-21, 13). The Damascus Document and Temple scrolls indicate that many

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<sup>56</sup> R. T. France, 1990. The Gospel according to Matthew: an introduction and commentary, in *the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 282.

<sup>57</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991, .... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), Inc., 45.

<sup>58</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991, .... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers), Inc., 46

Essenes who lived in cities were married, while the *Rule of the Community* shows that most of the Essenes lived in their desert community and were married. They were rarely found in cities.<sup>59</sup>

In the time of Jesus, some Rabbis abstained from sexual intercourse in order to devote time to study the Torah for a month only, but others for a week only (T. Yebam 8:7). This was done with the permission of their wives. Divorce was recommended in cases where the husband withheld intercourse for more than two weeks (M. Ketub 5:6). In cases, where the wife is considered unreliable, there would be temporary celibacy. B. Sabb. 33b, a Mishnah document tells of a second century Rabbi who intentionally hid himself in order to avoid sexual intercourse with his wife.

Jesus teaches that God instituted marriage. Although not married, Jesus blessed marriage by His presence and a miracle in Cana of Galilee (John 2. 1:11). He did not condemn anyone because such a person was married. Even Paul, whose marital status we are not sure of, teaches a lot on marriage. He encouraged that marriage should be honoured by all (Heb. 3:4). He teaches that a Christian is not to marry an unbeliever (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Nevertheless, if a Christian marries an unbeliever, he must remain married to such an unbeliever (I Cor. 7:12-14) but a Christian is free if the unbeliever chooses to leave (I Cor. 7:12-16). What Jesus said is clear and beyond arguments. Some people are born impotent and have no choice in the matter and some, of their own volition, choose celibacy for the sake of being able to have more time for God's work and are given enabling grace to do so (cf. I Cor. 7:25-31). Paul sees such instances as a special gift from God (I Cor. 7:8).

### **3.3 Man as a sexual being**

That all human beings are sexual beings cannot be denied. Sexuality is the centre of human personality. It is basic to humanness, as seen in the Scriptures and experiences.<sup>60</sup> Sex can be defined in terms of gender differences or sexual relations. It refers to the physical differences between a man and a woman. Each sex has roles to perform. Some cultures believe that the female gender is the homemaker while the male gender is saddled with the responsibility of providing food, clothing and shelter for members of the family. Generally, the woman carries pregnancy and feeds the new baby. However, things are changing with modern civilization and

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<sup>59</sup> C. S. Keener, 2000. Marriage, in *Dictionary of New Testament background*. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, Eds. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 682.

<sup>60</sup> J. Stott, 1999. *New issues facing Christians today* (London: Marshall Pickering), 382.

technological advancement. Today, with implantation, men can carry pregnancy and perform the duties accorded women. While “the physical differences may be obvious and universal, the psychological differences are not.”<sup>61</sup> This may be why some males exhibit female characteristics, while some females exhibit male characteristics.

Every individual has the biological attributes and potential. Again, though “psychosexual development is universal, it takes many forms and tempos. People in different cultures construct their scripts differently; and different, social and economic groups have different patterns.”<sup>62</sup> Hence, what is sexually acceptable in some cultures may not be acceptable in another. For instance, it may be right in some Western cultures for a man and a woman who are not spouses to greet each other by hugging and kissing; this is not acceptable in many African cultures. The same is true of different religions. The meaning and organization of sexual activities, its modesty and posture is subordinate to social and psychological factors.<sup>63</sup>

Also, expressions about sexual feelings, nature and desire change from time to time; they are not static. Therefore, there is a shift from the description of sex in heterosexual form. This shift has been described variously as sexual deviation,<sup>64</sup> sexual abuse or distorted sexuality.<sup>65</sup>

### 3.3.1 Sex from different perspectives

Sex takes different perspectives from one individual to the other and from one culture to the other. The prudish views sex as dirty. It is, therefore, strictly for procreation only. To them, sex is unavoidable. People with this view are usually filled with guilt, shame and fear when it comes to their sexuality.<sup>66</sup> In some African cultures, it is not normal for a woman to demand sex, and, if this would be done, it must be for procreation. The prudish plus view aims at protecting the sacredness of sexuality. However, this is not so, as many people in this category are often guilty of illicit sexual activities or extra-marital affairs.

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<sup>61</sup> E. E. Maccoby and C. N. Jackling 1977. What we know and don't know about sex Differences, in *Human Sexuality: Contemporary Perspectives*. Edited by Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borosage (California: Mayfield Publishing Company), 27.

<sup>62</sup> W. Simon and J. Gagnon, 1977. Psychosexual development, in *Human sexuality: contemporary perspectives*. Edited by Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borosage (California: Mayfield Publishing Company), 12.

<sup>63</sup> W. Simon and J. Gagnon, 1977. Psychosexual developmen, in *Human sexuality: contemporary perspectives*. Edited by Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borosage (California: Mayfield Publishing Company), 17.

<sup>64</sup> R. J. Stoller, 1983. Sexual deviations, in *the New Encyclopaedia Britannica in 30 volumes, Vol. 16, 15<sup>th</sup> edition*, ( London. Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.), 601.

<sup>65</sup> L. B. Smedes, 1994. *Sex for Christians* ( Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 27.

<sup>66</sup> Sex. Internet File. [http://www.christian\\_sex.pdf](http://www.christian_sex.pdf). Retrieved on January 30, 2013.

The playboy perspective opines that sex is all about feeling good and all about having fun. To the proponents of this view, sex is such a great aspect of human beings that must be enjoyed. It is "a powerful force and influence in our lives, marketers and advertisers use it to sell everything with untold promises of power and fortune. We are saturated with sex on our TV's and computers, in plays, in magazines and movies."<sup>67</sup> This approach allows short-term pleasure at the cost of long-term pain. Sex can become an addiction to some. It breeds unwanted babies and there is the risk of venereal diseases or AIDS.

In the permissive type, some people become the object of other's pleasure. An individual holds to his or her right to sex. Some are easily used and abused, tossed about and thrown out.<sup>68</sup>

Mary S. Calderone carried out a research on the societal attitudes concerning Non-marital intercourse, masturbation, homosexual or bisexual behaviour from 1910-1970+. The results of her investigation are given in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Non-marital intercourse, masturbation, homosexual or bisexual behaviour from 1910-1970+.**

**Non-marital Intercourse**

	1910-30	1930-50	1950-70	1970+
Aging	U	U	(P)	D?
Adult	(P)	(P)	(P)	D
Adolescent	U	U	(P)	P?
Child	U	U	U	U

**Masturbation**

	1910-30	1930-50	1950-70	1970+
Aging	U	U	(P)	D
Adult	U	U	(P)	D
Adolescent	U	(P)	(P)	D
Child	U	(P)	(P)	D

<sup>67</sup> Sex. Internet File. [http://www.christian\\_sex.pdf](http://www.christian_sex.pdf). Retrieved on January 30, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Sex. Internet File. [http://www.christian\\_sex.pdf](http://www.christian_sex.pdf). Retrieved on January 30, 2013.

## Homosexual or Bisexual Behaviour

Aging	U	U	U	P?
Adult	U	U	(P)	P
Adolescent	U	U	U	P?
Child	U	U	(P)	P?

Code U = Unthinkable

P = Permissible

D = Desirable

(?) = Probably equivocal<sup>69</sup>

Calderone's investigation shows that, 1910-1950, non-marital intercourse was unthinkable among the aging, adolescents and children though probably permissible among adults. 1950-70, it was difficult to tell whether it was permissible among the aging, adults and adolescents though unthinkable among children. By 1970 onwards, however, non-marital intercourse was desirable among the aging and adults, most likely permissible among adolescents and still unthinkable among children. Today, non-marital intercourse, while not acceptable in many cultures and organizations, is mostly permissible. In Nigeria, for instance, National Action Committee on AIDS (NACA) preaches "Abstinence Till Marriage" (ATM) for young adults in order to curb the menace of HIV/AIDS. However, to avoid being infected with HIV virus, condoms are distributed freely to young adults during anti-HIV/AIDS campaigns. Besides, there are instances, whereby some parents take their teenage children to Family Planning Units. To them it is better to help their children prevent abortion of unwanted pregnancy than to lose them through abortion, which sometimes can also lead to removal of their wombs.

1910-30, masturbation was unthinkable among the four groups of people (aging, adult, adolescent and children). It was unthinkable among the aging and adults, though probably permissible among adolescents and children from 1930-50. From 1950-70, masturbation was permissible for all age groups, though the extent could not be told of the aging. By 1970+,

<sup>69</sup> M. S. Calderone, 1977. *Eroticism as a Norm*, in *Human sexuality: contemporary perspectives*. Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borosage, Eds. (California: Mayfield Publishing Company), 46.

masturbation was desirable for all groups. Homosexual and bisexual behaviour was unthinkable from 1910-1950 for any group.

### **3.3.2 The use and abuse of sex**

#### **3.3.2.1 The use of sex**

One major purpose of sex is the perpetuation of the human race. Genesis 1:28 says, "And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth"(Genesis 1:28). This purpose cannot be fulfilled without the coming together of the man and the woman. In Africa, sex is seen mainly to be for procreation. Many husbands become polygamists because their wives could not see any other reason for sex apart from procreation.

Regular sex might be a safeguard against sexual temptation (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:1-2). There are three powerful drives in man, which must always be met. These are hunger, thirst and sex. It is a common saying that a hungry man is an angry man; this also applies to desire for sex. If the three needs are not met on time, there is a problem. In many cultures of the world, the stealing of food in order to satisfy ones hunger rarely carries any penalty. The same goes for thirst. In fact, anybody who refuses to give water to the thirsty is accursed. The moralistic societies view sex as a thing that God has created only for procreation. To them, any discussion of sex apart from procreation is evil. To such people, there should be no sex for pleasure. Sex is something which only men must enjoy because women must not desire it. Anybody that engages in sexual activity apart for the purpose of procreation is a sinner.<sup>70</sup> Some are of the opinion that circumcision of the girl child in some African societies aims at preventing premarital sex. However, these may not be true in all cases. There are reasons to affirm that Africans also enjoy sex for pleasure. This is allegedly common in the Arab world and in northern Nigeria. Some men have more than one wife to meet their sexual need.

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<sup>70</sup> J. C. Coleman, 1988. *Intimate relationships, marriage, and family*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition ( New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), 101.

### 3.3.2.2 The abuse of sex

The right to enjoy sex within marriage is constantly threatened by distorted views of sex. This also culminates in sex abuse. The first one is prostitution. The term prostitute comes from the Latin *prostituere*, meaning “to expose” and implying the offering of one’s body for sale *passim et sine dilectu*, meaning “indiscriminately and without pleasure.”<sup>71</sup> Some have given it the term transactional sex just to reduce the shame it brings to the one who engages in sex for money. In Nigeria today, they are called commercial sex workers. Some prostitutes were interviewed in the course of this research. The major reason they gave for their act was to overcome difficulties which arose either because of the loss of their parents or economic hardship. Whatever the reason might be, prostitution is a form of sex abuse. It brings shame; and leads to alienation. As a matter of fact, some would not want to interact with a prostitute. Abogunrin notes that economic problem have made many African girls to become prostitutes, both at home in Africa and in Europe.

The Church needs to look into the issue and devote more time and attention to sex education. Christians should know how to deal with the problems and issues when they come. Christians must always ask the question: “How would Jesus have dealt with this issue?”<sup>72</sup> He encouraged Christians to be open, be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and open their minds to God. Churches can help a lot by meeting the needs of the young people in their midst. Thousands of young people are in institutions of higher learning struggling. Churches must be ready to help them. The government of the day must intensify her effort to see that these young graduates are employed gainfully.

The second form of sex abuse is rape. Sexual activity is supposed to take place between two consenting adults who are married. Most people define rape as forced intercourse with women. “The fear of sexual assault is real. Its intensity in women can best be likened to the male fear of castration.”<sup>73</sup> However, some define rape as a sexual assault between grown men and little girls. To such people, rape with an adult is impossible because there cannot be vagina penetration unless the penetration is accepted either consciously or subconsciously by the

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<sup>71</sup> H. A. Katchandourian and D. T. Lunde, 1980. Sexual dysfunction, in *Fundamentals of human sexuality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 463.)

<sup>72</sup> S. O. Abogunrin, 2003. Revisiting the story of Jesus and the adulteress in the context of the Church’s life in Africa. *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, vol.XV, No. 1, 25.

<sup>73</sup> G. Greer, 1977. Seduction is a Four Letter Word, in *Fundamentals of human sexuality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), 280.

woman. This may be logical, but that a woman accepts the situation as it is has not erased the fact of a forced sex. In 2005, a group of armed robbers invaded the house of some female students of Osun State College of Education, Ilesa. They raped all the women in the hostel except a girl who claimed to be a virgin and who resisted all attempts to be raped. She was killed in the process. This means that, even if victims have consented, it may be that, in most cases, the victims are powerless. This was the case of Dinah, who was raped by Shechem (Gen. 34). Definitely, Dinah was forced into the act.

The causes of rape have been traced to many factors. The first factor may be described as the carefree attitude on the part of the parents. Some parents believe that there is nothing bad in the siblings of the opposite sex coming very close and doing things together. To them, the least that could happen is for the siblings to be thinking sexually or lustfully towards one another. Hence, brothers and sisters sleep on the same bed; even as adults. It is absurd even in many cultures today that a father would offer her daughters who are virgins in order that there might not be problem. This was the case of a father who gave her daughters out to armed robbers who went to rob the house. In most cases, close acquaintances are the perpetrators of the act.

One is aware of the reality of so many contending influences on the youths outside the home; yet, the carelessness on the part of the parents cannot be ignored. In 2008, a 21-year-old lady went to see a pastor in one of the churches in Ibadan. She was not a Christian but she has come to narrate her ordeal in the hand of his father. Her father started having sexual intercourse with her since age 13. The girl willingly consented to the father's proposals because the father would always tell his daughter that he wanted to give her some supernatural powers, and that, for these powers to be effective, the girl must not tell anybody, not even her mother. The mother never suspected anything until the girl reached age 21 in the year 2011 and she started having some strange illness. An HIV/AIDS test was conducted and it was discovered that the girl was HIV positive. It was then the mother knew that the father had been having sexual intercourse with the girl for seven years. The mother was a business woman and travelled a lot.

The second factor is that there is the "commodification" of women folk's body. This is a situation whereby the woman's body is taken as a product that can be used in selling and buying activities. It seems difficult to advertise without using the nakedness of women and girls. Many sexual assaults ensue because of the exposure of sensitive parts of female body, such as the breasts, the hips, and in some cases, the hairdo. Unfortunately, it is not easy to identify victims of



rape. This is because in many African societies offenders and victims are stigmatized. Therefore, most cases of rapes do not result in conviction. It is even difficult for the victim to prove his or her innocence. Hence, many victims are thought to have consented to the act.

The third form of sex abuse that needs our attention is masturbation. Masturbation is from the latin verb *masturbari*. It is derived from “hand” (*manus*) and “to defile” (*stuprare*) or “to disturb” (*turbare*). Alternatively, “*mas*” is derived from *mas* (“male seed” or “semen”). This alternative derivation of masturbation cannot be interpreted as if only males masturbate; both males and females do so. Masturbation is self-stimulation of one’s genitals to the point of orgasm.<sup>74</sup> Derek Llewellyn-Jones observes that “studies in several countries have shown that almost all young males masturbate by the age of 21. As the person gets older and sexual contacts are more readily available, the frequency of masturbation diminishes, although it continues throughout life.”<sup>75</sup> Some of the reasons advanced for masturbation are, (i) it serves as a substitute in situations where it is not possible to have sex with the opposite sex; (ii) some have argued that it humiliates an unyielding spouse; (iii) it is good for relaxation in cases where sleep is not coming on time and (iv) self-stimulation is good where a woman is not satisfied.<sup>76</sup> Derek Llewellyn- Jones opines that masturbation has several positive values and that all objections declared against masturbation “are emotional and not factual.”<sup>77</sup> Derek may be right to a great extent, but some problems are attached to masturbation. Masturbation could be a source of guilt and anxiety in young people. In the first instance, such people will be afraid to present themselves as a sexual being to their immediate families, the parents, probably because the parents feel that they are not mature to be engaging in sexual activities. Secondly, fantasies are associated with it. He/she believes that he/she is doing the real sexual activity. Thirdly, there is the general disapproval of the act in many societies. Some societies see such act as inhuman.<sup>78</sup>

There are instances whereby some spouses would not allow their partners’ access to sexual intercourse. They propose that, in such cases, masturbation may be necessary. To them,

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<sup>74</sup> H. A. Katchadourian and D. T. Lunde, 1977. Masturbation in *Fundamentals of Human Sexuality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston), 292.

<sup>75</sup> D. Llewellyn- Jones, 1998. *Every woman: a gynaecological guide for life* (Ibadan: Safari Books Limited), 56.

<sup>76</sup> H. A. Katchadourian and D. T. Lunde, 1977. Masturbation in *Fundamentals of human sexuality*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winstand, 292.), 305

<sup>77</sup> D. Llewellyn- Jones, 1998. *Every woman: a gynaecological guide for life* (Ibadan: Safari Books Limited), 57.

<sup>78</sup> W. Simon and J. Gagnon, 1977. Psychosexual development, in *Human sexuality: contemporary perspectives*. Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borosage, Eds. (California: Mayfield Publishing Company), 18.

masturbation has no medical problems.<sup>79</sup> However, Masters and Johnson observe that masturbation causes the following health problems: the development of gay feelings; cutting a person off from their emotions; causing the person to hurt other people, because the only emotion they can feel is the high-level emotion of a human being in pain; causing of Tourette's Syndrome; causing the attention span to decrease; causing strong aggressiveness; development of mental anxiety and loss of mental power or mental acuity.<sup>80</sup> If masturbation would cause all of the aforementioned problems, then it should be discouraged. It is a form of sex abuse.

### 3.3.3 Sex in the Old Testament and in Pauline writings

God gives sex and it is good. God created human sexuality as part of the gift of life. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female, he created them." The male and female must relate in order to exhibit their full maleness and femaleness. This is realized through sexual intercourse. The different organs in each of the sexes cannot function effectively unless there is interaction between the opposite sexes. In other words, man is a sexual being. Sexuality begins at birth and "human beings start to cope and manage their libido at every stage of individual, social and cultural development."<sup>81</sup> Man was the last and highest order of creation. But with all the other animals on earth, he would have been lonely without a help meet. God created them male and female whose bodies are capable of sexual intimacy. This is made possible with the provision of sexual organs.

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed (Gen. 2:21-25).

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<sup>79</sup> D. Llewellyn- Jones, 1998. *Every woman: a gynaecological guide for life* (Ibadan: Safari Books Limited), 57

<sup>80</sup> What health problems does masturbation cause? Internet File. <http://www.SteadyHealth.com>. Retrieved on January 06, 2013.

<sup>81</sup> W. Simon and J. Gagnon, 1977. Psychosexual development, in *Human sexuality: contemporary perspectives*. Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borasage, Eds. (California: Mayfield Publishing Company), 9.

The sexual human beings that God created were “very good” (Gen. 1:9, 11, and 21). In other words, God created sex. Sex is not evil. It is part of the gift given to man by God. Without sex or bringing together of the man’s semen and the woman’s egg, there can be no fertilization, which would result in a new life.

God did not only create sex, he also commanded it. In Genesis 1:28, “God bless them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.’” However, God’s approval of sex is within marriage. God provided Adam a helper who would meet his needs (Gen. 2:18). They were not ashamed of their nakedness because God had purpose for their sexual organs. The writer of Hebrews 13:4 says, “Let marriage be held in honour among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous.” Every man who desires to marry could do so because it is the gift of God to man. The Leviticus code claims that it is a shameful thing to have sexual intercourse before and outside marriage (Leviticus 18-21). Sexual intercourse should not be between blood-related people (Lev. 18:1-20). The writer of Proverbs and Apostle Paul agree that not exercising this God-given potential could be dangerous (Proverbs 5:1-8; I Cor. 6:9-10; I Thess. 4:3; Ephesians 5:3-7; Col. 3:5-6). Paul therefore, advises that men should marry, rather than burn with passion (I Cor. 7:9). According to Paul, it is good to have sex within marriage rather than struggling with sexual asceticism. Sex must be between male and female. Homosexual relationship is sternly condemned (See Lev. 18:22; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; I Tim. 1:9-10). Adultery and fornication are evil acts (Lev. 20:10; Exodus 20:14. Cf. Matthew 5:32). Adulterers will not enter the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-11).

Sex in marriage has no restrictions except on mutual agreement between husband and wife (I Cor. 7:2-6). “Frequency of sex and variations of sexual technique simply are not moral issues, except in the sense of consideration for one another. In other words, married couples are free in the Lord to do whatever is mutually satisfying and contributes to the relationship.”<sup>82</sup> That man is a sexual being span through the Bible. Sex needs must be met. Paul says, “now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” (1Corinthians 7:1-2). This shows that sex is a gift from God and the urge and desire for it differs from one person to the other. However, while it is not sinful to be sexually active, to be sexually immoral is highly condemned.

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<sup>82</sup> R. Foster, 1985. *Money, sex and power* (New York: Harper & Row), 138.

### 3.3.4 Prognosis for sexual sins: plucking of the eye and cutting of hand in Matthew

#### 5:29-30

In Matthew 5: 29-30, Jesus used the hyperbolic expression by referring to body parts which he attributed human ability to through personification. This forms part of Jesus' "hard-sayings" on sexual ethics. Mark 9:43 must be interpreted correctly. Raymond F. Collins opines that one should not take them literally. They reflect Jesus' hyperbolic use of language.<sup>83</sup>

The mention of the eyes is in consonance with the fact that looking plays important role in committing adultery, as indicated through the use of *blepwn* in verse 28. This implies that to adequately deal with adultery, sight, as shown in the sense of seeing, must be seriously dealt with. The sentence in verse 29 begins with a conditional particle *ei*, which does not suggest that only the right eye is capable of becoming source of temptation. The reference to *dexioj ovfqalmoj* (right eye) is very important in this context. According to Morris, "The right eye is considered valuable for a warrior, for he would be grossly handicapped if he lacked sight in this member".<sup>84</sup> This is because the right eye is always left open while the left is covered with shield in the battlefield. Therefore, Jesus was referring to a very important and useful part of the body that must be dealt with. *skandalizw* "to stumble" or "to give offense", occurs 29 times in the New Testament: 14 in Matthew, 2 in Luke, 2 in John and 3 in Pauline letters. In fact, depending on whether someone believes or not, it refers to either a falling away from or rejection of faith. In the passive sense, *skandalizw*, means that someone has not come to faith. As a result, Jesus' disciples and family took an offense at him (cf. Mark 6:3; Matt. 15:12). Also, in the passive, the verb also means "to fall away from faith" (Mark 4: 13-20; Matt. 13:18-23). The use of the word in Mark 14: 29 and Matt 26: 31 has the connotation that the falling away from the faith can be merely temporary, since it was used for the temporary rejection and denial of the faith in Christ. On the other hand, the Johannine understanding of the word has it that it is possible to fall away from the faith entirely (cf John 16:1). In that instance, *skandalizw* does not only imply the endangering of faith, but rather a falling away from the faith.<sup>85</sup>

In the Acts of the Apostle, *skandalizw* means to cause someone to fall away from or to reject faith. In that case, the Christian is encouraged to reject anything that can be an obstacle to

<sup>83</sup> R. F. Collins, 2000. Sexual ethics and the New Testament: behavior and belief. *Companion to the New Testament Series* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company), 22.

<sup>84</sup> L. Morris, 1992. *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press), 118.

<sup>85</sup> H. Giesen, 1994. "Skandalizw" in *exegetical dictionary of the New Testament, vol.4*. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, Eds. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Company), 248.

faith. This is in line with the Synoptic understanding of personifying parts of human body as elements of *skandalon* (cf Matt 5:29, 30; 18:8, 9). The noun *skandalon* refers to "enticement to unbelief", "seduction". It occurs 15 times in the New Testament: 5 times in Matthew, 6 in the Pauline Epistles, and once each in Luke, I Peter, I John, and Revelation. In the New Testament, *skandalon* is often used to refer to an evil doer who is in the habit of misleading the righteous.

One prominent usage of *skandalon* in the New Testament is in the Pauline Epistle, where he considers the *stauroj tou cristou* "the cross of Jesus" as *skandalon* to the Jews and *mwria* "foolishness" to the Greeks. This is a technical usage by Paul as reference to what the Jews and the Greeks thought about the Cross of Jesus, which Paul preached as the only means of salvation. However, it must be understood that the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah and their insistence on the expectation of another eschatological was because they could not imagine israel's Messiah dying an accursed death on a tree or cross (Deuteronomy 21:22-23; cf. Gal. 3:13-14). This was rooted in the fact that the Jewish never expected a suffering Messiah but a glorified, messiah-warrior, who would, with all power and might, deliver Israel from the oppression of Roman imperialism.<sup>86</sup> For the Greeks, the question is how a person can die for the sins he never committed.

Associating the right hand with *skandalizon* "to cause to fall or stumble," implies that even what may be considered as a valuable part of someone's life can be a source of temptation and must be dealt with accordingly. Within this context, *skandalon* means a trap, bait or something set as a trap or snare in the way of somebody. It is always used metaphorically to refer to anything that leads people away from right conducts into sin.<sup>87</sup>

Jesus recommended two things to be done to anything that may cause someone to fall into sin, namely *evxairew* "to tear out" or "to take out" and *ballow* "to throw out" or "to cast out". In this context, it implies to gouge out or to pluck out; an outright removal as well as throwing it away. Jesus did not recommend that it should be kept after removal but to be disposed of far away from having contact with the person. Jesus knew the implication of such decision in a military context, that the removal of the right eye of a warrior would mark the end of that individual since he would not be able to fight well again. That informed the next statement, that losing such vital elements of one's life and body is better than losing one's life

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<sup>86</sup> H. Giesen, 1994. "Skandalizw" in *exegetical dictionary of the New Testament, vol.4*. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, Eds. (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Company), 250.

<sup>87</sup> L. Morris, 1992. *The Gospel according to Matthew* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press), 118.

eternally. Nevertheless, this should not be taken literally, as if Jesus was advising on taking an action that will render human beings useless in the world. Rather, he aimed that whatever action that is capable of hindering entering the kingdom of God must be dealt with violently.

The use of *tw̄n melwn soi* and *ovlon swma sou* “one of your members and the whole of your body” is for comparative purpose. *melej* is used primarily for “member of the body” in the secular Greek. In the LXX, the word is used for the bodily members of men and animals (cf Job 9:28). It is especially used to refer to the parts into which the animal is cut when sacrificed.<sup>88</sup> Here, a member of the body is meant as against the whole body *o`lon to swma* in Matthew 5: 29-30. The pluck out of the endangered and easily tempted body parts should be dealt with in the now, rather than keeping it and suffering for it in the future judgment. Geenna, according to Bauer, Gingrich and Danker (BAGD), refers to the valley of Hinom, a valley used as a dung field with fire burning day and night in the South of Jerusalem. There, according to the later Jewish tradition, the last judgment is to take place. However, in the Gospel, it is considered as a place of punishment in the next life.<sup>89</sup> In essence, Jesus was very much concerned about the future destination of human soul rather than the present and pleasant satisfaction of human desires.

### 3.3.5 Celibacy today and its problems

Traditionally, the Roman Catholic Church is well known to be practising celibacy. The Council of Trent, on November 11, 1563 officially issued Canon IX on the Sacrament of matrimony. It reads:

If anyone says that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or regulars who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the ecclesiastical law or vow; and that the contrary is nothing else than to condemn marriage; and that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> J. Horst, 1978. “*melej*” in *Theological dictionary of New Testament, vol.4*. Gerhard Kittel, Ed. and translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmann Publishing Company), 556-568.

<sup>89</sup> W. F. Bauer, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, 1979. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature*. Computer File: C.D. ROM version by Libronix Digital Library System, U.S.A.

<sup>90</sup> Dogmatic Canons and Decrees 1977. Authorized Translations of the Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Decree on the Immaculate Conception, the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX, and the Decrees of the Vatican Council. Rockfor: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc; 163.

If anyone says that the marriage state is to be placed alone the state of virginity or of celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or in celibacy than to be united in matrimony; let him be anathema.<sup>91</sup>

From 1563, it became a law that a Roman Catholic priest must always be a celibate, an unmarried person. "The Roman Catholic celibacy requirement and obligation to continue in the Orthodox Church are both tied to the notion that those serving in the priesthood must be ritually pure (and thus sexually celibate non sentiment) in order to fulfill the religious office."<sup>92</sup> The priests who were married either left priesthood or divorced their wives in order to be "more blessed" as contained in the sacrament of matrimony.

Two texts of the New Testament are used as foundations for celibacy: Jesus' reference to celibacy – those have "renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:12; and I Corinthians 7). Jesus' answer to the Pharisees on divorce in Matthew 19:10–12 led his disciples to conclude, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." Jesus therefore answered, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given." He identifies three types of eunuchs: eunuchs who have been so from birth, those who have been made eunuchs by men, and those who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus concluded, "The one who can accept this should accept it." (19:12b). Thomas F. McDaniel opines that a look at the *Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew* gives an understanding to the interpretation of Matthew 19: 12b. The *Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew* adds the following to the parable of the sower this interpretation in Matthew 13:23b,

As for the hundred, this is the one purified (trhjm) of heart and sanctified (tXwdq) of body. As for the sixty, this is the one separated from women. As for the thirty, this is the one sanctified in matrimony, in body, and in heart.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, there was for Jesus a hierarchy of good works: the hundred fold speaks of the fruit of *the ascetic life*, the sixty fold recognizes the fruit of *the celibate life*, and the thirty fold acknowledges the fruit of *sacred matrimony*. For Jesus, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, and others—like Origen of Alexandria who actually castrated

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<sup>91</sup>Dogmatic Canons and Decrees 1977. Authorized Translations of the Dogmatic Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Decree on the Immaculate Conception, the Syllabus of Pope Pius IX, and the Decrees of the Vatican Council. Rockfor: TAN Books and Publishers, Inc; 164.

<sup>92</sup>A. J. Köstenberger, 2011. Celibacy, in *The encyclopedia of Christian civilization, Vol. I: A-D*. George Thomas Kuran, Ed. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.), 419.

<sup>93</sup>T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.

himself—the command to be fruitful, to multiply and fill the earth with progeny (Gen 1:28) was superseded by their personal preference for celibacy and continency for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>94</sup>

These two variants in the *Shem Tob Hebrew Matthew* in 19:12,  $\sim ymkx$  “wise ones” and  $\sim yabh$  “those coming,” when conflated, present a tradition in which Jesus taught that those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven are the *wise ones* who, having rightly understood the ways of God, would *come into great prominence* ( $hlwdg\ hl[m]$ ). Whereas in Israelite and later Jewish tradition a father, would be *first* and the childless male would be *last*. However, Jesus, in Matthew 19:28–30, said:

I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.

It is significant to note that there is no specific mention of wife here. This means that marriage is a life-long permanent relationship. It is the same way in Luke 14:26, if the verb  $misew$  “to hate” is corrected to  $evgkatalei, pw$  “to forsake.” Thomas F. McDaniel avers that: Jesus’ original statement as recorded in Luke’s Hebrew source no doubt meant, If any one comes to me and does not *forsake* ( $hnX/ anX$ ) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that the word ‘hate’ is not suggesting a kind of antagonism. The word here means “to prefer” or “to love less”(cf. Gen. 25:19-26; 29:30-31; Mal.1:2; Romans 9:10-13). The Essenes community at Qumran was probably able to act as though they were eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom. Josephus wrote:

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<sup>94</sup>T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.

<sup>95</sup> T. F. McDonald, 2009. *Miscellaneous biblical studies*. [http:// www.MBS\\_1\\_Gender.pdf](http://www.MBS_1_Gender.pdf). Retrieved on June 05, 2013.



These Essenes reject pleasures as an evil, but esteem continence, and the conquest over our passions, to be virtue. They neglect wedlock, but choose out other persons' children, while they are pliable, and fit for learning, and esteem them to be of their kindred, and form them according to their own manners. They do not absolutely deny the fitness of marriage, and the succession of mankind thereby continued; but they guard against the lascivious behaviour of women, and are persuaded that none of them preserve their fidelity to one man.<sup>96</sup>

Jesus' teaching on celibacy is very brief, but his example as a celibate grew in the minds of his disciples and in the first communities of Christians who received the Gospel from the preaching of the Apostles. Moreover, from apostolic times, Jesus' self-sacrifice has been understood, among other ways, in nuptial terms. He is the Bridegroom who lays down his life for his bride, the Church (see Eph. 5:25-32; Rev 21:2, 22:17).<sup>97</sup> Paul, in First Corinthians 7:32 says, "An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided." His frequent identification with Christ in so much of his writing makes it almost necessary for one to see him as a celibate. However, we do not have any proof of this. He asked the unmarried and the widows to imitate him. Every Jewish boy was to marry not later the age of 20. Only the Rabbis were permitted to delay marriage until they were 30 and not beyond that.

Cardinal William Levada gives a list of objections, which Pope Paul VI discovered were raised about celibacy for priests:

1) In the New Testament, we do not find an explicit demand for celibacy on the part of sacred ministers, but rather a "free act of obedience to a special spiritual gift." 2) In the Patristic period the cultural context was different from today; then the emphasis was placed on living in continence, abstaining from sexual relations even if one were married. 3) Some find it problematic to exclude from ministry those who feel called to priesthood but not to celibacy. 4) Others think that maintaining celibacy contributes to a shortage of priests, to the detriment of the proclamation of the Gospel and the sacramental ministry of the Church. 5) Still, others think that if priests were married, the occasions for priestly infidelity would be

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<sup>96</sup> W. Whiston, translator . Works of Flavius Josephus: the wars of the Jews. CD ROM Version, PC Study BibleVersion 5, Bible Soft.

<sup>97</sup> C. W. Levada, 2011. Celibacy and priesthood. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith). Cf. Decree on the ministry and life of priests-*Presbyterorum Ordinis*. Retrieved on April 20, 2013.

removed, and defections from priestly ministry that damage the life of the Church would be reduced. 6) There are those as well who hold that celibacy is unnatural, even physically and psychologically detrimental to mature human development, thus preventing priests from sharing fully in the life and destiny of the majority of humankind.<sup>98</sup>

However, some Popes looked at the Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological aspects of celibacy. The Christological aspect is viewed from four angles: (1) Jesus introduced into history a new form of life that transforms the human condition; (2) Celibacy is seen as transforming reality of the gift of salvation; (3) Christ's celibate life signifies his total dedication to the service of God and humanity; this, the priest after Him need to emulate; (4) Jesus invited his apostles and co-workers to "an even more perfect consecration to the kingdom of heaven by means of celibacy, as a special gift."<sup>99</sup> On ecclesiological significance, some Popes appealed to Ephesians 5:25-27 where Christ offered himself entirely for the Church's sake, to make the church a glorious body. This aspect reveals a life of total dedication and commitment to the service of God. Eschatologically, if the kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36), then believers' heart must be set on the things above (see Col. 3:1, 4). This therefore connotes that priests prepare for their next life.<sup>100</sup>

Nevertheless, many problems are associated with this doctrine. Firstly, the Roman Catholic Church does not admit impotents (whether by birth or manmade) into its priesthood. Does it mean that God cannot use the impotents in His vineyard? Is it not logical if someone who discovers that he could not have sexual relationship with the opposite sex or be a parent to decide to be a priest? Pius Oyeniran Abioye, while debunking everything about celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church, could not see any reason for such a practice at all. Firstly, Jesus would do everything to discourage it; the Roman Catholic Church encourages it. If the priest could divorce his wife because of the decision of the Council of Trent, then the church members should be

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<sup>98</sup>C. W. Levada, 2011. Celibacy and priesthood. [<sup>99</sup>C. W. Levada, 2011. Celibacy and priesthood. \[<sup>100</sup>C. W. Levada, 2011. Celibacy and priesthood. \\[90\\]\\(http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith. Cf. Decree on the ministry and life of priests-<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>. Retrieved on April 20, 2013.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=\\)\]\(http://www.vatican.va/roman\_curia/congregations/cfaith. Cf. Decree on the ministry and life of priests-<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>. Retrieved on April 20, 2013.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=\)](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith. Cf. Decree on the ministry and life of priests-<i>Presbyterorum Ordinis</i>. Retrieved on April 20, 2013.</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

allowed to divorce based on any flimsy excuse.<sup>101</sup> Secondly, Jesus had married men among his disciples. Peter, Jesus' successor, was a married man and he worked relentlessly for the propagation of the gospel. Jesus, though not married, did not ask any of his disciples to divorce in order to propagate the gospel. Thirdly, if the Roman Catholic Church is basing her teaching on Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 7:32-34, the Church may be missing the mark, as Paul in I Corinthians 7:25 remarks that what he says about celibacy is not from the Lord.<sup>102</sup> In 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul asks, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" Even in 1 Timothy 3:2, Paul teaches that, "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." Again, where do we locate Peter's assertion that all believers are priests in 1 Peter 2:5, 9? He says:

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.... But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

In the fourth place, the Roman Catholic Church may not be right by placing celibacy and virginity above marriage. This is evident in the series of sex scandals which were reported in the Roman Catholic Church at different times. Many priests were found to be having secret sexual intercourse with women. Many already had children even while serving as priests.

Father John Shuster, an "ex-priest", laments that the Roman Catholic has allowed political status to disrupt the teachings of the Bible:

The Roman practice of abstaining from marital relations to conserve energy before a battle or a sporting event found its way into liturgical practice. Priests were ordered to abstain from intimacy with their wives the night before they celebrated Mass. The resultant message was that sexuality and marriage were no longer holy.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> P. O. Abioye, 2006. An examination of the biblical basis of the Roman Catholic teaching on human sexuality, in *Biblical view of sex and sexuality from African perspective*, *Biblical Studies Series*, No 5. S. O. Abogunrin, Gen. Ed. (Ibadan NABIS), 83.

<sup>102</sup> P. O. Abioye, 2006. An examination of the biblical basis of the Roman Catholic teaching on human sexuality, in *Biblical view of sex and sexuality from African perspective*, *Biblical Studies Series*, No 5. S. O. Abogunrin, Gen. Ed. (Ibadan NABIS), 86-87.

<sup>103</sup> J. Shuster, 2012. 39 Popes were married. [http://johnshuster.com/thirtynine\\_popes.htm](http://johnshuster.com/thirtynine_popes.htm). Retrieved on June 01, 2012.

It is an unfortunate thing on the part of the Roman Catholic authority to take cognizance of the fact that “when celibacy is imposed, priests will commit sins far worse than fornication”.<sup>104</sup> It is discovered that protestant ministers travel to Rome every year in order to be ordained by the Pope.<sup>105</sup> They are ordained as "brothers" to assist the priest although they must first renounce Protestantism and accept Catholicism. Why is it that the Pope would ordain a married Protestant minister and yet decide not to recognize an ordained married priest? What happens in a situation where the Protestant convert had already bore children? Does it mean that he is now holier than an ordained married Roman Catholic priest is?

Today, many profess to be celibates but they derive enjoyment through masturbation. Some women use vibrators. They find sensual gratification in massage with women and men they cared for. This is so because it is made compulsory for them. Some become celibates after divorce. Some would rather become celibates than to subject themselves to any form of brutalization from opposite sex.<sup>106</sup> Jan Chartier and Myron R. Chartier warn that:

The decision to be married or not married, celibate or not celibate must be free of undue societal pressure. Some cultures and /or sub-cultures have tended to discriminate against persons based upon their marital status. Even some Christians believe that only the married are able to be fully human, even though Jesus and Paul, the very founders of Christianity were both counter-examples of that position. Being married or remaining unmarried, being celibate or sexually active are matters of God’s gifting (I Cor. 7:7), personal choice, or specific orientation. In any event, all of these are Christian options and when practiced within the constraints of the previous rights should not be the basis for different treatment. The Church ought to be exemplary in affirming those with different sexual gifts and treating them equally.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.4 Conclusion

So far, we have been able to see from Jesus’ teaching that monogamy is the ideal form of marriage. Polygamy is practised and allowed in the Old Testament and in many African

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<sup>104</sup> A. L. Barstow, 1982. *Married priest and the reforming papacy: the eleventh –century debate* (New York: The Edward Mellen Press), 112.

<sup>105</sup>J. Shuster, 2012. 39 Popes were married. [http://johnshuster.com/thirtynine\\_popes.htm](http://johnshuster.com/thirtynine_popes.htm). Retrieved on June 01, 2012.

<sup>106</sup> Z. Kwitney, 1977. *On Celibacy in Human sexuality: contemporary perspectives*. Eleanor S. Morrison and Vera Borosage, Eds.(California:Mayfield Publishing Company), 268.

<sup>107</sup> J. Chartier and M. R. Chartier, 1989. Humanity created in God’s image as male and female. *AMERICAN BAPTIST QUARTERLY*. VIII, 1: 88.

cultures. Although practised, polygamy in many cases is not the best. Just like Jesus, church leaders should do everything within their power to win the soul of polygamists rather than send them away from God. In cases where there are polygamists in the church, we recommend that the church allow them full membership though they may not be church leaders. This becomes necessary because no one can be said to have a complete revelation of the will of God on this issue. Ours is a gradual revelation of His will. Paul says, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Corinthians 13:11-12).

Sex is part of God's design for man. However, it must be practised within marriage. Jesus emphasised the heterosexual relationship in marriage. Therefore, all forms of sexual relationship apart from a man and a woman are ungodly and must be avoided by Christians. Celibacy is a tradition in the Roman Catholic Church. It is not binding on all Roman Catholic Church members except the priests. Here, Jesus' teaching must be followed: “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given” (Matthew 19:11).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JESUS' TEACHINGS ON ADULTERY

#### 4.1 Introduction

The question of the Pharisees, addressed to Jesus in Mark 10: 2, is a troubling one today. It is a complicated, confused and controversial issue and opinions on the subject differ. It is disheartening to note that in spite of the attention given to divorce and remarriage, there is no unanimity of thought on what the Scriptures teach on divorce and remarriage.

In chapter three of this work, we looked at Jesus' teaching on marriage. Jesus reinstates God's original heart on marriage from the beginning. This can be summed up in His words, "So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder"(Matthew 19:6). In other words, marriage, by definition, is a miracle from God, whereby two people are made into one indissoluble union. Sex should take place within marriage.

On divorce, according to Luke 16:18, the answer is a "No!" Jesus says, "Every one who divorces his wife and marries commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery." The same is Jesus' reply in Mark 10:11-12: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." However, Jesus' response in Matthew 19:3-6 is different. The Pharisees asked Jesus "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" one observes that of the two Gospels (Matthew 19:3 and Mark 10: 2), only Matthew adds the phrase "for any cause". Matthew's addition of "for any cause" is likely due to "any cause" in the divorce provision of the Hillel school. Jesus reminded them of God's original intention about marriage (Matthew 19: 4-6). Dissatisfied, the Pharisees took Jesus back to Moses' command on certificate of divorce (Matthew 19: 7-9). This made Jesus to elucidate the issue of divorce (Matthew 19:9). He says: "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery." It is this clarification of the exception clause, "except for unchastity,"  $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$   $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\eta\varsigma$   $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  in Matthew 5: 32 and  $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$   $\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\eta\varsigma$   $\mu\epsilon\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  in 19:9, which is not found in the Mark (10:10) and Luke(16.18), that has brought serious debates and arguments among scholars, and this has direct bearing on the interpretation of the divorce passage in various denominations.

This chapter explores the relationship between adultery and divorce. It looks at the authenticity of the parallel divorce passages. There is the need to understand the actual words of Jesus on adultery see how the evangelists interpreted Jesus' answer and attempt drawing some conclusions that will appeal to human situation today. This will eventually lead to a conclusion on what Jesus teaches about divorce and remarriage.

## **4.2 What constitutes adultery according to Jesus**

### **4.2. 1 Lust as adultery (Matthew 5:27-28)**

In Matthew 5: 27 – 28, Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." The general understanding of Matthew 5: 21 – 48 is that Jesus stood in opposition of the Old Testament Mosaic legislation. This may not be true. He came not to oppose the Law but to reinterpret it in order to bring out its true meaning and purpose. He said, "I came not to abolish the Law, but to establish it." The use of the contrastive conjunction *de*, a postpositive in *evgw de legw* implies "but" in this context. However, Jesus' use of the personal pronoun in the first person *evgw* has an intensifying and emphatic influence on what would follow. In other words, Jesus was establishing something important, and not necessarily condemning the previous provision. He was introducing a new pragmatic dimension into its meaning and purpose. Jesus' reinterpretation of adultery's provision is indicated by the use of the masculine gender in the rendition of the participle. This might have been an opportunity not to exonerate men from the sin of adultery, since women have been given greater blame in his days.

However, Jesus is demanding an interpretation that goes beyond its face value in order to understand the import of the text<sup>1</sup>. The seventh commandment states, "you shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Also, the tenth commandment avers, "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbour's." (Ex. 20:17). The same word that is used for "coveting" in the Greek translation of Exodus is the same word which Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991. .... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrick Publishers Inc.) 118.

used for lust in Matthew 5:28<sup>2</sup>. In Jesus' time, women were usually blamed for a man's lust. That is, man would find it difficult to resist the temptation posed by women on his own. Therefore, man should either control himself or marry.

e,piqumew(to lust)( normally takes its object in the genitive and, if the accusative, au,thn is the subject of the infinitive e,piqumh/sai; then the passage should be translated as "the one looking at a woman for the purpose of getting her to lust after him."<sup>3</sup> The use of blepwn with evpiqumia, desire or lust, indicates that the eyes plays an important role in sexual sin, which was not considered as grievous by the Jews and gentiles of Jesus' time.<sup>4</sup>

Epiqumia, as used in the verbal sense with the participle blepwn, conveys a strong desire or inclination with deeper emotional implication. blepw, in the ordinary sense, means to look at or see something without attaching either mental, psychological or emotional affiliation, but when used with evpiqumia, a compound verb of the preposition evpi which can be translated as "around," "with" "about" or "concerning" with qumoj, "passion" "courage," it has deeper internal and emotional implications. This does not mean avoidance of women through

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Keener, 1991. .... *And marries another: divorce and remarriage in the teaching of the New Testament*(Peabody:Hendrick Publishers Inc.) 18.

<sup>3</sup> C. L. Blomberg, 2004. "The most often abused verses in the Sermon on the Mount and how to treat them right", in *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 46, No. 3, 7&8.

<sup>4</sup> In verse 29, there is a replacement ofv blhqh in Nestl- Aland 27<sup>th</sup> editon with avpelqh in D 700mg it sy sc (mea) bo. With the replacement the sense in reading is seriously affected with the two words ballw and evrcorai . With blhqh , the basic idea is that of casting with an agent carrying out the task. However, with avpelqh , it suggests that the going would be intentional. The fact that the use of avpelqh is supported by few and late uncial D and, some other few codices, indicate that caution should be exercised before placing any judgment. The use of avpelqh as use in the later part of verse 30 perfectly fits that verse than verse 29, although both of them make reference to geennan . Therefore, the reading with blhqh should be preferred. The use of blepw "look" or gaze in the context of adultery is an attempt by Jesus to redefine adultery and touch the heart of the matter instead of staying at the peripheral level as indicated in the Mosaic Law. For Jesus, adultery in the physical realm is nothing but an end product of a long process of thought that has its root in the heart.

The verb evpiqumew is a verbal derivative of the noun evpiqumia "desire" or "longing." The verb appears 7 times in the synoptic and Acts, of which 5 are in Luke and 1 in Acts. It occurs 4 times in Pauline letters, and once in I Timothy, Hebrews, James, I Peter and Revelation.<sup>4</sup> The noun is mostly found in the epistles; 34 times with 10 in Pauline letters and 9 in Deutero- Pauline letters. Evpiqumew is derived from the noun qumoj, which can first be translated as "spirit," "courage," "wrath" or "sense," and then as "passion" or "passionate desire." The emphasis of qumoj is on the motif of the desire. The LXX considers qumoj as equivalent of ethical desire for human needs. The word evpiqumew is used only five times to refer to negative desires (cf Rom. 7:7; 13:7, I Cor. 10:6). When used in the negative form it is taken as equivalent of the Hebrew *hāmadh*.

There is a close relationship between the noun evpiqumia and sarx. Since sarx is not an anthropological term but often used strictly in theological sense, to refer to individual position in the subjective power of sin, the desire in evpiqumia should not always be taken for sexual inclination. However, one must not deny the fact that evpiqumia is also used for sexual desire. Epiqumhthj is often used for godless desire (cf I Cor. 10:6). Some associated words with evpiqumew are: ovregomai "strive for" (Rev 9:6); jhtew "strive for" (Titus 3:3; Jam. 4:1ff) with h'donh "evil" desire.



closing one's eyes or never to look at women; rather, any look that will bring about *evpiqumia* needs to be avoided.

Another important aspect of Jesus' statement in this verb lies in the time of committing adultery as conveyed in *evmoi,ceusen avuth.n evn th/| kardi,a*. The use of the aorist indicative *evmoi,ceusen* shows a completed action and points to the end result of the action. In other words, Jesus' was pointing to the fact that whenever the act of *blepwn* and *evpiqumia* are going on, the act of adultery in *evmoi,ceusen* is usually the result. Therefore, lust should not be treated as a simple and trivial matter. In verse 28, *avuthn* is replaced with *avuthj* in N' f' al: P64 N\*pc; Tertius and Clement, where the reading appears as: *to epiqumhsai avuthj h`dh evmoiceusen avuthn e`n th kardia avoutou*. The difference lies in the use of the accusative *avuthn* against the genitive *avuthj*, both of which are personal pronouns to refer to the object of *evpiqumia*. The use of simple accusative *avuthn* as the object of *evpiqumeuw* makes the reading difficult as "to desire or lust her," rather than the objective genitive as "to desire or lust of redundant while in the second, the reading is smooth and straight forward. It can, therefore, be established that the replacement with *avuthj* is a redactorial emendation to smoothen the reading. Furthermore, the replacement as supported by p<sup>64</sup> raises serious concern about this problem. This is because this Papyrus family is a major witness for Matthew's account. This must not be ignored; the early Uncial families that are in support of the replacement are not original. Copies of earlier ones such as N' and f', makes the retention of the accusative *avuthn* to be preferred because it does not only make the reading difficult. It also has a long list of earlier uncial behind, namely B D L W θ. 0233 f<sup>13</sup> Iraneus and other Latin codices

The use of *kardi,a* "heart" in the locative case carries a significant implication. It presents the heart as a place where the whole act of adultery has taken place. This is a graphic picture of a man's heart as a place where all his actions are designed and perfected before hatching them out in the physical. Therefore, according to J. Jeremias, Jesus does not warn his disciples about women but about themselves.<sup>5</sup> For Jesus, women are not evil in their appearance; rather men need to caution themselves in dealing with them. Jesus moved from the physical dimension of adultery to the very root of the matter, which begins in human heart. For Jesus, the physical act and punishment for adultery are something unwanted if the actual root or cause is

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<sup>5</sup> J. Jeremias, 1972. *New Testament theology* (New York: Charles Scribners), 227

adequately dealt with. God knows and sees all human hearts in contents and motifs. Jesus reveals that the real act of adultery first takes place in the mind, which later results in the physical.

Frederick and Keene observe that, in Matthew 5: 27–28 Jesus, extended the concept of adultery in such a way that it gave sexual equality to women. Besides, Jesus was giving protection to "women who, then as now, were in positions of vulnerability within a male dominated society and culture."<sup>6</sup> That is, a man interacting sexually with a woman in a way that she finds upsetting, threatening, or degrading is under the same condemnation as actual adultery itself.

Jesus was not really talking about the physical life; neither was he talking of the physical organ itself, but the passion or illicit affection that animates lust bodily parts. This implies a repudiation of ungodly passions and affections, which may bring contamination to the whole body. Nevertheless, in Mark 9:42-48, Jesus is also saying that whatever in our lives that makes us stumble must be removed as if by surgery. This surgery is not physical because sin comes from the heart (see Mark 7:20-23). Hypocrisy is also implied here. If we are able to do away with those things which are valuable to us, but which do not bring eternal reward, we are heirs of the kingdom of God (Mark 9:44-48; cf. Isaiah 66:24 and Revelation 20:10).

However, is "nonsexual adultery not nonsensical"? Adultery, fornication, and marital sex involve sexual acts. The marital sex is pure; fornication is immoral, adultery is sin because it breaks the covenantal bonds. How then does an act that never involved sexual act be termed adultery? If Jesus, in Matthew 5:27-28, could call an unfaithful thought or lust adultery, a nonsexual act that leads to the breaking of marital vow should be seen as adultery.<sup>7</sup> Jesus, in His discussion of adultery, showed that this can be a sin of the heart as well as a sin of the body. There is the need to control the body as well as the inner thoughts and desires. We can admire a beautiful person or picture but it is possible to do that without sinning. We commit adultery in the heart when we look with the intention of satisfying lustful desires.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> F. W. and H. A. Keener, 1993. The Bible and human sexuality. *American Baptist Quarterly*, vol.XII, Number 4, 312.

<sup>7</sup> W. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage* (San Francisco: Harper and Row), 220.

<sup>8</sup> W. W. Wiersbe, 1971. Matthew 5:27-30, in *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol.1, Matthew-Galatians. CD ROM Version, PC Study BibleVersion, Bible Soft.

In Nigeria, female genital mutilation (FGM) is considered a means to curb sexual sins among unmarried girls. The age to do this varies between 3 months and 17 years or just before the first pregnancy. However, experience shows that FGM may not have curbed sexual sins adequately since teenage pregnancy is a problem, even in Nigeria today. Through the enrolment of girls in schools, the enlightenment and mobilization by human rights groups have brought decrease in FGM. The Nigerian state report of 2002 noted that the bill prohibiting FGM has gone through the lower house, and would go through the upper house before the President could sign it into law. However nothing has been done yet. Some states passed the laws prohibiting FGM, many girls are still undergoing FGM because of cultural beliefs. In the long run, such girls risks serious infections and diseases, such as the HIV, because of the unhygienic methods involved in the practice.<sup>9</sup> FGM has not been able to curb teenage pregnancy among girls in Nigeria.

#### **4.2.2 Divorce and remarriage as forms of adultery (Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18)**

Apart from the lustful looking of Matthew 5: 27-28, Jesus introduced another facet into the issue of adultery in the New Testament. In Mark 10:11, divorcing a wife and marrying another is adultery. This was a new and radical saying, for the Jewish law did not regard the misdemeanours of men, but only those of women, as adultery. Divorce was common among Jews in the first century.

As revealed in Matthew 5: 32, the husband's action in divorcing his wife is capable of making the woman to commit adultery if the divorced woman remarries. Here, male sexual sin is emphasized. Adultery is not thought of in terms of sexual misconducts or violation of marriage vows only. It also means that actions which are illicit could lead others to sexual sins. The two passages in Matthew and Mark reveal that women alone should not be blamed for adultery.

In Luke 16:18, marrying someone who has been divorced is adultery; and in Matthew 5:32, 19:9, divorcing a spouse for any reason except for fornication is practically the same as causing the divorced spouse to commit adultery. The man who divorces his wife actually shares in the guilt of the woman's remarriage by *causing* his wife's future adultery. Jesus said, " But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity,

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<sup>9</sup> E. E. O. Alemika, I. Chukuma, D. Lafratta, D. Messerli and J. Souckova, 2005. OMCT. *Report on the Implementation of the Rights of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by Nigeria*(Right of the Child Committee), 12.

makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"( Matthew 5:32). Does this apply only to a person divorced for a cause other than fornication? On the other hand, to the one who is guilty of fornication? The lack of the definite article would suggest any "divorced" person: either an innocent person wrongly "divorced", or a guilty person rightly "divorced" for fornication. Remarriage of any form for any reason in the list of Jesus is adultery. Matthew has Jesus saying that, if a man divorces his wife, he is causing the wife to commit adultery, presumably by marrying another man. In the second case, he imagines a man marrying a woman who has been divorced, and speaks of this as adultery. Mark places the accent on the act of divorcing a wife, while Matthew looks to the remarriage after the divorce, not by the man who divorced his wife, but by the woman who is divorced and by the man marrying her. Jesus spoke not only of the man who divorces his wife and marries another (Mk.10:11; Mt.19:9; Lk.16:18), but also of the woman who is divorced and the man who marries her (Mk.10:12; Mt.5:32; Lk.16:18).

The only acceptable ground for divorcing a wife is sexual immorality. Otherwise, divorcing a wife "causes her to commit adultery". This is so by placing her in a position where she is likely to remarry, in which she becomes an adulterer. The second marriage of a divorced woman was a moral defilement. She could not marry the first again even after the death of her second husband because the defilement of the wife would be thereby repeated. A divorce does separate a man and a woman from living together. Remarriage is not allowed under any circumstances after a divorce, with the understanding that divorce itself is only allowed under few circumstances. Jesus seems to be saying that God winked at the hardness of the heart of Old Testament Israelites and overlooked their divorces. This would also be true of their remarriages. In his New Testament teaching, Jesus emphasized that this was not the original intention of God for marriage. In Matthew 19:10-11, the disciples concluded that if it is not possible to remarry after a legal divorce it is better not to marry.

#### **4.3 Variance between Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18**

##### **4.3.1 Text in the Synoptic Gospels**

In St Mark's Gospel, some Pharisees asked Jesus whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife, as Moses had allowed. Jesus answered them by saying that Moses had allowed divorce 'because of your hardness of heart.' From the beginning of creation God had made

humans male and female, so man and wife were no longer two but one flesh. 'Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate' (Mark 10:2-9). Mark 10:6-9 and Matthew 19:4-6, clearly affirm that there should be no separation of any kind because man cannot just put asunder what God has joined together.<sup>10</sup> In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery" (Luke 16:18). Both of these Gospels agree with Paul who wrote to the Christians in Corinth: 'To the married I give this command – not I but the Lord – that the wife should not separate from her husband...and that the husband should not divorce his wife' (1 Corinthians 7:10). Mark 10: 20-12 and Luke 16:18 clearly reveal that Jesus in absolute terms rejects divorce and remarriage.

Although Matthew 19:3-12 describes the same incident in Mark 10:1-12 in a similar way, Matthew seems to deviate from Mark and Luke. The first is in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), in which Jesus compared his teachings with a few of the Ten Commandments. In an attempt to contrast the commandment forbidding adultery with his own teaching requiring purity of thought as well as deed, Jesus says on Mosaic legislation concerning divorce: "But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"(Matthew 5:32). Here, Jesus is concerned about his disciples limiting God's holiness to the carefully kept rules that relate only to the outer legal life.<sup>11</sup> In Matthew 19:9, while Jesus was answering the question about whether it was lawful to divorce for any cause, "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9). These two passages consist of what is generally referred to as "exception clause", "except for unchastity." Jesus used wording similar to the Shammaites in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9. That is, the only ground for divorce is adultery.

#### **4.3.2 Reasons for the inclusion of the exception clauses in Matthew**

Three problems arise in the issue of the exception clause of Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19: 9. Firstly, the exception clause is found only in Matthew and nowhere in Mark and Luke. Why is this so? Secondly, Matthew, in the two passages, uses the Greek word *porneia*

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<sup>10</sup> D. L. Bock, 1996. Luke, vol. 2, in *Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books), 1357.

<sup>11</sup> W. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage* (San Francisco: Harper and Row), 83.

and not the Greek word *moiceia*. What exactly is the meaning of *porneia* ? Thirdly, while most scholars would agree that the two passages are stating the same thing, some would not overlook the structure of the two passages.

The context of Matthew 5:31-32 must be viewed with reference to Christ's statement in Matthew 5:17-20. There Jesus clearly expounded his attitude to the Mosaic Law. Jesus declared that he had not come to repeal the Law but to fulfil it (Matthew 5:17-20). In an attempt to make himself clear, Jesus gave some illustrations in Matthew 5:21-48: the relationship between anger and murder (21-22), proper way of giving offering (23-24), dealing with enemies (25-26), oath taking and faithfulness (33-34), and retaliation and love (38-42). Peter Craig avers that:

In precise terms, there is only one piece of legislation in this passage that contained in v. 4a. The first three verses which, form the grammatical protasis, specify exactly the conditions that must apply for the execution of the legislation in v. 4 (the apodosis). Thus, strictly speaking the legislation relates only to particular cases of remarriage: the protasis contains incidental information about marriage and divorce, *but* does not specifically legislate on those matters. The verses do not institute divorce, *but* treat it as a practice already known, which may be either & matter of custom or of other legislation no longer known.<sup>12</sup>

Opinions differ as to why the exception clause is found in Matthew only. J.M. Creed notes that, though it may seem to have been added to make the passage attractive or acceptable to the Jewish audience, it nevertheless "preserves the actual purport of the teaching of Jesus".<sup>13</sup> He maintains that the exception clause is merely the addition of what is implicit in our Lord's teaching elsewhere. The writer inserted it as an interpretation of the words of Jesus. G.E.P Cox<sup>14</sup> and W.C. Allen<sup>15</sup> are of the view that the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 states clearly that a wife who commits adultery is already an adulteress. Hence, if the husband divorces her, the husband is not guilty of making the divorced wife an adulteress. Therefore, the clause is not necessary because it confuses the issues. In this wise, the clause in Matthew 19:9 is just seen as

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<sup>12</sup> P. C. Craig, 1976. *The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 304-305.

<sup>13</sup> J. M. Creed, 1930. *The Gospel according to St. Luke* (London: Macmillan), 72.

<sup>14</sup> G. E. P. Cox, 1952. *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: S.C.M.), on 5.31-32.

<sup>15</sup> W. C. Allen, 1912. *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, 3rd. ed (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), 52.

an interpolation, interrupting the flow of the teaching of Jesus. Nevertheless, this is an assumption on the part of Creed, Cox and Allen. It will be improper to base any conclusion of the reason for the inclusion on assumption.

A group of scholars contends that divorce is implied because adultery destroys the marriage bond. D.E. Nineham opines that marriage union is literally destroyed and dissolved in the case of adultery.<sup>16</sup> A.W. Argyle argues that: "unchastity was the only possible ground for divorce because it destroyed the unity between man and wife".<sup>17</sup> E.P. Gould declares the authenticity of the exception clause "because adultery is the real dissolution of the marriage tie, as distinguished from the formal divorce. Precisely as divorce does not break the marriage tie, adultery does break it".<sup>18</sup> This view seems logical but it weakens the validity of the passage because the internal evidence is lost.

Besides, some scholars see the exceptive clauses in the light of the Church's ability to legislate the authority given to the Church to "bind" and "loose" for whatever reasons on earth (Matthew 16:19 and 18:18). In other words, the evangelist puts the words in the mouth of Jesus. F.V. Filson comments that: "...the Church had to decide what to do when married couples failed to fulfil the purpose of the Creator. 'Matthew', or his source for this teaching, evidently held that the Church must hold divorce to a minimum, but that the spirit of Jesus' teaching could best be realised by permitting divorce where the wife was guilty of unchastity".<sup>19</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield avers that God may not have approved of divorce for any reason, "it may nevertheless be proper for the state, and also the Church to make provision for situations in which because of human sinfulness divorce may be the lesser evil".<sup>20</sup> The original command of God has been obscured because "the permission to allow divorce in certain circumstances seems to be one example of the use of this authority by the early Church".<sup>21</sup> A.H. McNeile states that: "The Christian Church, with its authority to bind and loose... early made the exception to meet a pressing ethical need; and since the need has not ceased, the exception is valid today".<sup>22</sup> In spite of the seeming authority and necessity of the church to find solutions to marital problems, it is improper to use the Early

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<sup>16</sup> N.E. Nineham, 1963. *Saint Mark*(Middlesex: Penguin), 79.

<sup>17</sup> A.W. Argyle, 1963. *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Cambridge: C.U.P.), 112.

<sup>18</sup> E.P. Gould, 1986. *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Edinburgh:T. & T. Clark), 98.

<sup>19</sup> F. V.Filson, 1960. *A Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: A. & C. Black), 110.

<sup>20</sup> C.E.B. Cranfield, 1963. *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Cambridge: C.U.P.), 97

<sup>21</sup> J.C. Fenton, 1963. *The Gospel according to St. Matthew*(Harmondsworth: Penguin), 112.

<sup>22</sup> A. H. McNeil, 1915. *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London :Macmillan), 56.

Church doctrine to validate the claims of the Bible. Rather, the Bible should be used to validate the claims of the Early Church.

The views of Alfred Plummer, Joseph Nemer and John Murray may be correct. Alfred Plummer admits that the clause was part of the original text, which was added by Matthew only.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Nemer claims that the exception clause was part of the original text because no textual variants are listed for the verse. Hence, it was an authentic part of the words of Christ.<sup>24</sup> On this, John Murray argues:

It is apparent that this reading removes the discrepancy between Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18 for the simple reason that all reference to remarriage would be removed from Matthew 19:9 and this text would be identical in meaning with Matthew 5:32. In such a case, the accounts in Matthew would simply affirm that there is one exception to the rule that whoever puts away his wife causes her to .commit adultery, namely, antecedent adultery on the part of the wife herself. But, nothing whatsoever would be said regarding the remarriage of the man who puts away his wife for adultery. On the other hand, the accounts in Mark and Luke would deal directly with the question of the remarriage of the man who puts away his wife.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4. 3.3 The meaning and varied interpretations of porneia

A careful look at several passages in the Old Testament and the New Testament reveals that porneia and moiceia are used alternatively without any attempt to differentiate between them. The Hebrew word,  $\text{h'n'z}$  and the corresponding Greek word porneia are used of any form of immoral sexual activity, illicit sexual intercourse such as adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, sex with someone not a partner in marriage. Such uses are found in Proverbs 29:3; Jer. 3:1; 5:7, 8; Hosea 4:10; Matthew 15: 19; 5:32; Mark 7:21; 1Cor. 5:7; Jude 1:7. However, The Hebrew word  $\text{a:n}$  and moiceu,w usually connote married persons having sexual intercourse with others apart from their spouses (Pro. 30:20; Isaiah 57:3; Jer. 5:7; 7:9; Hosea 4:1, 2; Matthew 5:28, 32, Romans 7:3; 2 Peter 2:14). porneia in the Old Testament and Revelation quite often refers to idolatry, apostasy, syncretism and any spiritual pollution.

<sup>23</sup> A. Plumer, 1928. *An exegetical commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Roxbunghe house), 82.

<sup>24</sup> J. Nemer, 1980. Christ's logia on divorce in Matthew's Gospel. [http://: www.tren.com](http://www.tren.com). Retrieved on January 18,2013.

<sup>25</sup> J. Murray, 1953. *Divorce* (Philadelphia: Maurice Jacobs Press), 48.



The "exception clause" in the Matthew account of Jesus' teaching occurs in two forms:  $\text{parekto} \backslash \text{\$ lo/gou pornei/a}\text{\$}$  ("except on the ground of unchastity") and  $\text{mh} \backslash \text{ e)pi} \backslash \text{ pornei/a} \backslash$  ("except for unchastity"). W.E. Vine opines that, "It is probable that the witnesses (including B D f<sup>1</sup> f<sup>13</sup> 33) that have the former reading have been assimilated to 5:32, where the text is firm."<sup>26</sup> *porneia* is the general term for illicit sexual intercourse, while *moiceia* is the normal word for "adultery". There is a clear distinction between the two terms in Matthew 15:19 (cf. Mark 7:21). The distinction is not pronounced in Gal. 5:19 but in D and a number of later Manuscripts (SS). Nevertheless, *porneia* is broad in application and may also include *moiceia*. In the Septuagint (LXX), *porneia* is used for the sin of married women, as is evident in Gen. 38:24; Hos. 2:2. While *porneia* is used in the exception clauses, it is followed by a verb more strictly implying adultery, *moica,w* (Matthew 5: 32; 19:9; Mark 10:11), or *moiceu,w* (Matthew 5: 27-28, 32, ). *moicali,j*, meaning adulteress, is used as a metaphor of those who at a woman's solicitation are drawn away to idolatry. In James 2:11, *moiceu,w* is used interchangeably with *porneia*. On this note, one assumes that the phrase "except for unchastity" is applied to the married and seems to sanction divorce. If *porneia* is interpreted as sexual relationship of any kind, then Jesus would be understood as allowing divorce in cases of sexual immorality. Views about *porneia* are grouped into five major areas:

#### A. The Consanguinity View

This view is also known as the "unlawful marriage". This is a very rare situation in which divorce is allowed if the two who are married are close relatives. Some scholars hold the view that this is the only situation in which divorce is allowed at all, believing that Christ's use of *porneia*, which includes this type of sexual immorality. Here *porneia* is taken to mean incest, as in Leviticus 18. The insertion of *moiceia* seemingly suggests that the exception clause must be referring to unchastity or sex before marriage. C.E.P. Cox defines the exception clause in light of marriage within the prohibited degrees. To him, no marriage took place and the union should be seen as invalid.<sup>27</sup> To, the proponents of incest or forbidden marriage although sexual intercourse has taken place, the act may not be seen as a "one-flesh" relationship. Such a marriage should, therefore, be dissolved. However, Roland Chia avers that it is difficult to regard Matthew as

<sup>26</sup> W. E. Vine, n.d. *Vine's expository of biblical words*. Merrill F. Unger and William White, Jr., eds. (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd.),

<sup>27</sup> G. E. P. Cox, 1952. *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: S.C.M.), 90.

recognizing incestuous marriages that should be terminated by divorce rather than an affair that should simply be terminated. Divorce is here presented as permission and not something mandatory.<sup>28</sup>

Besides, Paul in 1 Cor 5:1, was referring not to an incestuous marriage, but an incestuous affair. In the same vein, J. Carl Laney asserts that the one-flesh relationship of husband and wife implies that marital intercourse has made the husband and wife as closely related as parents and children. Therefore, it is not possible to remove the relationship between the wife and the husband in the same way it is not possible to do same with blood relations.

#### B. The Preteritive View

This view argues that porneia is whatever *uncleanness* means in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In other words, Jesus was not willing to explain what porneia means. He only left his listeners to base their interpretation on Deuteronomy 24:1-4.<sup>29</sup> However, Luck points out that if Jesus did intentionally avoid controversy regarding the meaning of “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1, porneia could mean anything.

#### C. The Patristic View:

Some of the Early Church Fathers stated that there could be divorce because porneia means adultery. The Church Fathers, however, maintained that there should be no reason for a remarriage unless at the death of one of the spouses, even in the case of desertion by an unbelieving spouse. According to them, any act of remarriage except at the demise of one’s spouse is adultery.<sup>30</sup> William Heth believes that the most recent and probably the appropriate solution to prohibition of remarriage lies in R. Westbrook's discovery of estoppel, which says: "This is the rule whereby a person who has profited by asserting a particular set of facts cannot profit a second time by conceding that the facts were otherwise. He is bound by his original assertion, whether it is objectively the truth or not."<sup>31</sup> This principle would not allow the husband or the wife (widow) to benefit twice. The husband has established that the wife committed

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<sup>28</sup>R. Chia, n.d. Marriage, divorce and remarriage: an exegetical and theological enquiry. *Church and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3, 132.

<sup>29</sup>W. F. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage: recovering the biblical view* (New York: Harper and Row), 94.

<sup>30</sup>W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce but no remarriage in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 96.

<sup>31</sup>W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce but no remarriage in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 86.

adultery and he divorced her. Ryrie does not agree that porneia equals adultery but agrees that the texts do not allow marriage without committing adultery because the exception clause does not come after "marries another".<sup>32</sup> This writer supports the broad usage of the word porneia . it connotes all kinds of sexual immorality.

#### D. The Erasmian View:

This view holds that porneia means adultery or some other sexual offence. In the early sixteenth century, Erasmus, a theologian, after studying the Catholic concept of marriage as a sacrament that transmits grace, and that salvation could not be achieved without Catholic Church's approval, concluded that many thousands of unhappily coupled together would probably perish.<sup>33</sup> The Erasmian view notes that, if the divorce is occasioned by unfaithfulness on the part of one party, the innocent party must be allowed to remarry. William Heth, while quoting Tony Lane opines that, "If Jesus did allow remarriage, presumably it happened. How did it then cease to happen, despite the fact that his teaching was known, leaving no trace either of a period when it happened or of any controversy".<sup>34</sup> Luther also has a similar opinion. He avers that, since the adulterer in the Old Testament was stoned to death, the adulterer in his days and others should be seen "as if ... dead."<sup>35</sup>

#### E. The Betrothal View

According to this view, porneia is translated as a preconsummational breach of chastity. The word porneia indicates a lesser offence than the word "adultery" (moiceia). Because of the differentiation in the Greek, the word porneia, as used in Matthew 5 and 19, must be something other than infidelity during a regular, lawful marriage. The different use of the word "fornication" is given as a reference to pre-marital infidelity during a Jewish betrothal period. The courtship between Joseph and Mary (Matthew 1:18-25) becomes the reference point. In the Jewish custom, the betrothed couple was considered "man and wife" even though they had not

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<sup>32</sup> C. C. Ryrie, 1982. Biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage. *Grace Theological Journal*, vol.3, no.2:165.

<sup>33</sup> W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce but no remarriage, in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 96.

<sup>34</sup> W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce but no remarriage in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 97.

<sup>35</sup> W. A. Heth, 1990. Divorce but no remarriage in *Divorce and remarriage: four Christian views*. Edited by H. Wayne House (Illinois: InterVarsity Press), 97.

yet come to live together. In this Jewish custom, if unfaithfulness was to occur during this period, the man could divorce his "wife" and marry another, because they were not actually married yet. Hence, the "exception clause" was given to allow for remarriage only if the "fornication" occurred during this betrothal period. The Gospel of Matthew was written primarily to a Jewish audience.

But, there are those who hold opposing views. Firstly, they feel that it will be improper to restrict the use of the word *porneia* to "betrothal period fornication", as *porneia* has a broad usage. Hence, the Matthean passages clearly reveal that there can be divorce in cases of any illicit sexual intercourse. Secondly, the betrothal legislation cannot be explicitly referenced in the Bible. Bible readers are only left with what is implied. Charles C. Ryrie opines that, with this view, there is no breakup of a marriage though an engagement can be dissolved if fornication has occurred. However, *porneia* is nowhere else used in the restricted sense of "unchastity during the betrothal period."<sup>36</sup> Ending a betrothal required a bill of divorce. J. F. Brug is of the view that Jesus:

emphasizes that the basic principle is that there should not be any divorce at all. Sin is involved in every case. However, there are circumstances in which someone may be the victim of the divorce rather than a perpetrator, namely, in the case of sexual sin by the other spouse that has broken the marriage. It is significant that the exception clause occurs in Matthew 19, the most complete statement of Jesus' dispute with the religious authorities of Israel. Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11 contain only brief statements of the basic principle without providing a more comprehensive explanation. The other statement of the exception clause is in the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus is not confronting advocates of lax divorce practices, but giving guidance to his followers in how to fulfill the intent of the divine law against divorce. There is no contradiction between these statements.<sup>37</sup>

Luck concludes thus on the view:

But this view unfortunately continues to argue that such betrothal unfaithfulness is the only kind of unfaithfulness entailed in *porneia*. If the proponents of this view were to include postconsummative unfaithfulness the view itself would be destroyed. The integrity of the view depends upon limiting the meaning of *porneia* to the

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<sup>36</sup> C. C. Ryrie, 1982. Biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage. *Grace Theological Journal*, vol.3, no.2:188.

<sup>37</sup> John F. Brug, 2008. Exegetical brief: The betrothal explanation of *πορνεία* in the exception clause. [Brugbetrothal.pdf-Adobe Reader](#). Retrieved on June 22, 2013.

betrothal period. Of course, they might argue that only betrothal adultery is in view in Matthew, but the reference in Matthew 1 is not strong enough to sustain that.<sup>38</sup>

However, Mark Geldard's exposition on absolute indissolubility is in support of the betrothal view. In the first instance, Geldard points to Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 9:3-8 where Jesus refers his audience to the creation ideal and that no man should separate what God has joined together. The exception clause came after the permanence of marriage has been stated. Quoting Montefiore, Geldard notes that the phrase "one flesh" refers to a new family unit whereas in Genesis 2:24, the woman becomes "flesh of his flesh" and the man "cleaves to her". "The Hebrew word here is not sexual in meaning; it signifies to "cling on to" or "stick to" someone, when it is used of persons. It is this word that proves from Scripture the permanency of marriage."<sup>39</sup> It, therefore, implies that, if Jesus was alone among Jewish teachers when he asserted that marriage was intended by God to be lasting and permanent, then Mark 10:1-12 and Matt.19:3-8 affirm Jesus' revolutionary teaching of absolute indissolubility.<sup>40</sup>

Betrothal in the time of Jesus was not just a promise; "when the agreement (betrothal) had been entered into, it was definite and binding upon both groom and bride, who were considered as man and wife in all legal and religious aspects, except that of actual cohabitation."<sup>41</sup> Therefore, the betrothal view is not acceptable. The word *porneia* is used in general terms in the New Testament of many kinds of illicit sexual activity. One example is 1 Corinthians 5:1, which says, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality (*porneia*) among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife."

#### 4.4 Jesus' position on divorce in Matthew 19:3-9; cf. Mark 10:1-12

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<sup>38</sup> W. F. Luck, 1987. *Divorce and remarriage: recovering the biblical view* (New York: Harper and Row), 90.

<sup>39</sup> M. Geldard, 1978. Jesus' teaching on Divorce: thoughts on the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. *Churchman*, 92: 136.

<sup>40</sup> M. Geldard, 1978. Jesus' teaching on Divorce: thoughts on the meaning of *porneia* in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. *Churchman*, 92:136.

<sup>41</sup> B. Drachman and M. Jastrow (Jnr) 1910. Betrothal, in *Jewish Encyclopedia, 12 vols ed.* (New York: KTAV Publishing House), 17.

It is necessary to be careful not to read more into the discourse between Jesus and the Pharisees than what is there. “If all the questions about divorce and remarriage today could fit into the Pharisees’ question, which was set tightly in the matrix of the first century and reflected on the Mosaic law as mutually understood by Christ and the Pharisees in this historical context, then our modern day puzzles could be easily solved.”<sup>42</sup> On the issue, E. G. Dobson says:

The two schools of interpretation prevalent in Jesus’ day, the schools of Shamai and Hillel, both believed that a legitimate biblical divorce allowed remarriage. If Christ had intended to prohibit remarriage, He probably would have made it much clearer than He did in this passage. In both the Old Testament and the prevailing viewpoints of Christ’s day, remarriage was always permitted based upon an appropriate bill of divorcement. Consequently, the people to whom Christ was giving this teaching on divorce presupposed the legitimacy of remarriage after proper grounds for divorce.<sup>43</sup>

In answering the Pharisees, Jesus reminds them of the commitment involved in marriage. He contrasts the traditions and practices of humans with the desire of God for marriage.<sup>44</sup> The Pharisees are debating over the case of divorce, having missed the main points of God’s overall ideal in marriage. Instead of focusing on the putting away of the wife or marrying of another, Jesus emphasizes the results. Divorce and remarriage not based on Scripture is adultery. When the Pharisees raised the concession of Moses (Matthew 19:7, cf. Deut. 24:1-4), Jesus answered that divorce was allowed because of the hardness of people’s hearts (Matthew 19:8).

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew *zn* has been translated in various forms to convey the idea of adultery as implicit in *porneia*. In fact, the LXX translates *zn* as *porneia*, while the verb *porneuo* is translated as *hn'z'* severally and as *vdeq'* once. In its nominal form, *porneia* is always taken as *-yniWnz*. “whoredom” (Gen. 38: 24; Ez. 23:11, 29, Hos. 1: 2). In the Old Testament, there were prostitutes who were allowed as part of the national life. But they were not allowed to practise their harlotry in the open. Prostitutes moved about in veil and were not allowed to practise in open places (Gen. 38: 15). Also, daughters of the Israelites who had

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<sup>42</sup>G. E. Bontrager, 1978. *Divorce and the faithful Church* (Scottsdale: Herald Press), 38.

<sup>43</sup> E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 67.

<sup>44</sup> M. Kysar and R. Kysar, 1977. *The asundered* (Atlanta: John Knox Press), 42.

not engaged in prostitution should not be treated as such. Doing so would bring about severe consequences on those who defile her (I Kings 3:16).

The Old Testament is against cultic prostitution which was introduced into the Jewish religious tradition as an emulation of the Canaanites cultic practices. In fact, it was widely practised during the reign of Rehoboam in the “high places” which he established (I Kings 14:24). Asa and Josiah brought an end to such practices in Israel. In specific terms, Israel was prohibited from engaging in cultic prostitution and the profits made through such forbidden practices should not be used to run the affairs of the temple (Deut. 23:17). Israel’s involvement in adulterous practices of the Canaanites was considered as *porneia* or *פְּנִינָה*, an adherent act to the LORD. This was the focal point of Hosea's prophecy (Hos. 1-3). *porneia* occurs 12 times in the New Testament, twice in reference to “the harlot Rahab” (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25) and used specifically for prostitute. *porneia*, which occurs 26 times in the New Testament: 8 times with other vices, 3 times in the Acts of the Apostle, 6 times in Paul and 7 times in Revelation, usually refers to prostitution, unchastity or fornication. It is used for every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse. However, when used of a married woman, it means the same as adultery.<sup>45</sup> Jesus made reference to this word on two occasions, namely Matt. 5:32 and Matt 19:9 within the context of marriage. In the Acts of the Apostles, the word group appears 3 times in 15: 20, 29 and 21: 25. Apostle Paul introduces the idea that *porneia* is incompatible with the kingdom of God in I Cor 6: 9; Eph. 5: 5. Apostle Paul considers *porneia* and other word groups as vices that are next to idolatry. Specifically, Paul refers to *pornoi*, *moicoi*, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, all of which have to do with sexual immorality.

Yet, its broad sense refers to marital unfaithfulness in form of extra-marital sexual intercourse. This was an attempt to condemn the idea that divorce could be carried out at the slightest offence against the woman. To engage in divorce outside the case of marital unchastity is tantamount to sin against the woman. The verb *poiei/* from *poiew* “I do” indicates a process of caring out a particular thing. This verb as used against the man in this context means and indicates that the man as the subject should be held responsible for the consequences of divorce. The man makes the divorced woman *moich* “adulteress” from the particular infinitive *moiceuqh/nai*. This indicates that the woman is made an adulteress even if it is against her wish.

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<sup>45</sup> G. Fitzer, 1994. *porneia* in *Exegetical dictionary of the New Testament, vol.3*. Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, Eds.(Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Company), 137-138.

The common perspective of Jews on this was that the woman alone would bear the brunt of divorce. She would suffer shame and ridicule while her husband who sent her away would be without any sense of remorse. Jesus did not deny the fact that the woman would bear much of the implication of divorce, but he was quick to introduce the husband's expectation and consequences. He said *kai. ojj eva.n avpolelume,nhn gamh,sh| moica/tai* "and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery." This puts a strong emphasis on the fact that both the man and the woman have serious roles to play in eliminating divorce.

Although staying married is God's will and the standard humans should pursue, we also should keep in mind the reality of sin in this fallen world. In Matthew 5:32, Jesus said, "But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery...." The reference to sexual immorality is based on Deuteronomy 24:1, which lists uncleanness with in his wife. The Hebrew literally means "some manner of nakedness," or "some shameful thing." In Leviticus 18, the word is used repeatedly in reference to sexual sin. The word *porneia* can be translated "sexual immorality". This includes adultery. Therefore, once a couple is legally married, any kind of sexual immorality makes divorce permissible for the offended party. Adultery is a proper ground for divorce.

#### **4.5 Perpetuity of marriage (Mark 10:10-12, Luke 16:18 and Matthew 5:31-32)**

As important as the Old Testament is for believers, the church has its "home" in the New Testament.<sup>46</sup> The Sermon on the Mount points to Jesus' perspective on the Old Testament teachings. Jesus said He did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. The context of this passage (Matthew 5:17-32) includes Jesus' comments on the laws that governed divorce and remarriage. In these sixteen verses there are six instances where Jesus said, "It has been said," and "I say unto you." In each case, Jesus would first cite an Old Testament law and then explain its underlying meaning. In verses 27 and 28, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shall not commit adultery: But I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery already with her in his heart." Here, Jesus did not change the Old Testament law concerning adultery. He only emphasized the intent of the law.

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<sup>46</sup> G. W. MacRae, 1974. New Testament perspectives in marriage and divorce, in *Divorce and Remarriage in the Catholic Church*, ed. Lawrence G. Wrenn (New York: Newman Press), 1.



In verses 31 and 32, Jesus used the same approach with the law of divorce: “It has been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery.” Likewise, Jesus did not discard the Old Testament laws on adultery and divorce. Instead, He reminded His hearers of the intent of the law, emphasizing permanence, faithfulness, and commitment in marriage. Here, Jesus insisted on the permanence of marriage and a standard of sexual conduct which was higher than a mere prohibition of adultery.<sup>47</sup>

Jesus also made statements about divorce and remarriage in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:10-12. In both cases, Jesus presented God’s ideal: one man and one woman, married for lifetime. Jesus made no exceptions in either passage to allow divorce or remarriage. The Greek ἀπολύω (ἀπολύω) has the same force as the Hebrew כְּתוּבָה (kerithuth), meaning absolute dissolution of the marriage covenant.<sup>48</sup> He must have had in mind the complete severance of the marriage bond, since that is the only possible meaning His hearers could have attached to the word. One must examine what Jesus said on another occasion in order to compile a more complete view of His teachings on this matter. The central passage for Jesus’ teaching on divorce and remarriage is Matthew 19. The passage contains all the elements of the Lord’s teaching on this subject. While Mark 10 and Luke 16 include only Jesus’ pronouncement on adultery as it relates to divorce and remarriage, there is an exception in Matthew’s account. The question is often raised on the fact that Jesus made a dogmatic statement in Luke and Mark that divorce and remarriage are adultery, but in Matthew 19 He allowed for an exception. The variance could be as a result of either of the following opinions: one, that every Jew, Roman or Greek, knew that adultery constituted grounds for divorce. Hence there was no need to mention the exception. It was understood.<sup>49</sup> Two,

It is a difficult matter to invade the psychology of writers who lived nearly 2,000 years ago and tell why they did not include something in the text which someone else did in his. Neither Luke nor Mark was personal disciples of the Lord. They wrote secondhand. Matthew was a personal disciple of Christ and has recorded the

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<sup>47</sup> J. Dominian, 1987. Christian marriage, in *Commitment to partnership*. William P. Roberts, Ed.(Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press), 159.

<sup>48</sup> W. M. Foley, 1953. Marriage, in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. James Hastings, ed. (New York: Scribner’s.), 438.

<sup>49</sup> G. E. Bontrager, 1978. *Divorce and the Faithful Church* (Scottsdale: Herald Press), 42.

exception. It will be a new position in regard to judgment on human evidence when we put the silence of absentees in rank above the twice expressed report of one in all possibility present- one known to be a close personal attendant.<sup>50</sup>

From biblical accounts, it is permissible for widows to remarry. If it is permissible for widows to remarry, what about divorcees? To some exegetes, Jesus seemed to imply permission to remarry in Matthew 19:9: "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery." Some people have argued that Mark 10:11-12 (cf. Luke 16:18) forbids remarriage after divorce on the grounds that such remarriage is adultery: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." Some have taken these verses to mean that, unlike Matthew's quotation of Jesus in Matthew 19:9, Mark quotes Jesus in such a way as to prohibit remarriage after divorce for any reason. Nevertheless, Mark's reporting of Jesus' words about divorce draws attention to something unique in the annals of Jewish teaching. Unlike the Old Testament or the Rabbis, Jesus taught that a man could commit adultery against his wife:

In rabbinic Judaism a woman by infidelity could commit adultery against her husband; and a man, by having sexual relations with another man's wife, could commit adultery against that other man. But a man could never commit adultery against his wife. Jesus, by putting the husband under the same moral obligation as the wife, raised the status and dignity of women. Furthermore, Jesus went on to recognize the right of a woman to divorce her husband (v. 12), a right not recognized in Judaism. Matthew, writing for Jews, omits v. 12; but Mark, writing for Romans, includes it.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, unlike Matthew 19:9, Mark 10:11-12 does not reflect on the legal situation created by adultery but on the abrogation of the Mosaic provision for divorce (Deut. 24:1ff) and the practice of divorce among Jews and Gentiles.

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<sup>50</sup> W. W. Davies, 1947. Divorce in the Old Testament, in the *International standard Bible encyclopedia*. James Orr, Ed.(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 865.

<sup>51</sup> L. O. Richards, 1991. Divorce and Remarriage in the *Expository dictionary of Bible words*(Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans), 1113.

Luke puts Jesus' words in absolute terms, not as a general rule. To him, Jesus' teaching condemns all remarriages after divorce without exception. The death of a spouse allows the living spouse to remarry:

As husband and wife, they cleave to each other (consummate their marriage), and thus bond and become no longer two but one flesh (the bond is intrinsic, so that, while they remain distinct, they are a single new reality). That oneness, as something really new, can be brought about only by the Creator, and once it has been brought about, it is not subject to human decision; so divorce should not be attempted (the intrinsic union is not a mere contract, but a covenant). When a couple whose union is covenantal try to break apart and remarry, they cannot really do so (the covenantal bond, which is the God-given union of the spouses themselves, can be dissolved only by death). They end in adultery.<sup>52</sup>

Jesus spoke, not only of the man who divorces his wife and marries another (Mk.10:11; Mt. 19:9; Lk. 16:18), but also of the woman who is divorced and the man who marries her (Mk. 10:12; Mt. 5:32; Lk. 16:18). The one that is attracted to a married person has adulterous desires and gives adulterous effect to them, and the married person who responds has equally adulterous desires.

In Matthew 19:9, Jesus gave his authoritative interpretation of "an indecent thing" in Deuteronomy 24:1. He says that a divorce or an annulment of a marriage is only permissible when the marriage was based on false grounds and, therefore, not valid. On the other hand, to remarry after a legitimate first marriage is to keep on committing adultery against the first spouse (even if both spouses do the same). Jesus answered the Pharisees based on Genesis 1:27, and God's words through Adam in Genesis 2:24. Matthew Henry summarizes Jesus' reply: If husband and wife are united by the will of God, they are not to think lightly of separation. 1) For Adam to put away Eve would have meant putting away a part of himself. 2) If parents may not abandon children, then consider this, that marriage is an even closer union. 3) "One flesh" makes the marriage union equivalent to the perfect union that exists between two members of a body.<sup>53</sup>

Jesus declared, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man divide," as the true meaning of the sixth commandment. The Deuteronomy quotation is attributed to Moses and the

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<sup>52</sup> P. F. Ryan, S.J. and G. Grisez, 2011. Indissoluble Marriage: a reply to Kenneth Himes and James Coriden. *Theological Studies*, 72: 381-382.

<sup>53</sup> M. Henry, 2008. *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary on the Whole Bible* (n.p: Hendrickson Publishers), 1299.

Genesis statement to God. Jesus noted that the legislation in Deuteronomy as having been given because of 'hardness of heart'. Hence, rather than harmonizing the passages, Jesus clearly suggested that the need for the Mosaic legislation arose because of human sinfulness.<sup>54</sup>

#### **4.6 Paul's word "From the Lord" in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.**

On the issues of divorce and remarriage, Paul provides further insights. His primary pronouncements are found in Romans 7 and I Corinthians 7. The passage in Romans 7 has the indication that death is the only means of breaking the marriage covenant; meaning that death releases the surviving partner, but remarriage before the death of one's spouse is adultery.

Integrating the teachings of this passage with the others already studied, one needs to remember an important principle of interpretation: one should not expect in every place the whole circle of Christian truth "... Nothing is proved by the absence of a doctrine from one passage, which is clearly stated in others.... For all things are not taught in every place."<sup>55</sup> One must compare all pertinent passages of Scripture together. In the case of Jesus' teachings, it is seen that Mark and Luke included only the general principle for marriage: one man and one woman married for a lifetime. It was only Matthew who included the exception clause.

Therefore, as one reads Paul's words in Romans 7, one must seek to determine why he does not mention any exceptions. It is important to put Paul's intended purpose into consideration. In the first instance, Paul is not teaching, in this passage, about marriage and divorce, *per se*. He is teaching about relationship of the believer to Jesus Christ. Paul uses the analogy of marriage to illustrate the theological truth that believers have died to the law and are now unified with Christ. This is why Paul does not include all the details of the laws that govern marriage in this passage. He simply takes one dimension he needs to illustrate his theological point.

Paul writes more extensively about divorce in I Corinthians 7:10-11. "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord. Let not the wife depart from her husband; but and if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife." The Greek word for *depart*, *copivzw* (*chorizo*), means to "divide, separate,

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<sup>54</sup> D. J. Moo, 1984. Jesus and the authority of the Mosaic Law. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, vol.20:12.

<sup>55</sup> E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 72.

or put asunder.” In Greek documents of that day, *chorizo* was the technical term used for divorce.<sup>56</sup> Thus, Paul write about divorce, not separation. The modern idea of separation as something less than divorce (whether legal or otherwise) was totally not known as a viable alternative to divorce in the Bible.<sup>57</sup> The expression to “put away” at the end of verse 11 is the Greek *afivemi (aphiem)* meaning to “let go or send away.” In a context of business, it was used to indicate the *cancellation* of a debt.<sup>58</sup> In the Lord’s Prayer, it is translated, “Forgive us our debts”(Matthew 5:12). Therefore, Paul urges the couple to do everything possible to achieve reconciliation.

In I Corinthians 7:12, Paul discusses the marital relationship between a Christian and a non-Christian spouse. By way of introduction, Paul says he is speaking to an issue that Jesus never addressed in the Scriptures. Yet, one understands Paul’s words to be the revelation of God through the Holy Spirit. Paul says an unbelieving spouse is sanctified by his/her Christian partner. By this statement, Paul does not mean the unbeliever is counted as a Christian because of the believer’s faith. But he means the believer is a witness of the love of Christ to the non-Christian spouse.

Evidently there was a problem at Corinth with the marriage whenever one partner became a Christian. Paul admonishes the couple to still stay together if possible. He then goes on to say, “But if the unbelieving spouse departs, let him depart. A Christian brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases” (I Cor. 7:15). Again, the word for *depart* is *copivzw (chorizo)*. The Christian partner who is divorced in such a case is not under *bondage*. The Greek word for *bondage* is *doulew (douleo)*, indicating “one who had been a slave.” When a slave is freed, it means the former owner has no claim on the person. It means that all legal obligations are broken. With respect to marriage, it means the legal marriage covenant is dissolved and the innocent person is no longer obligated to the former spouse. On the basis of the language Paul is using here, he has added an additional circumstance to the teachings of Jesus and those of the Old Testament writers. A biblical divorce can be granted when an unbeliever divorces a believer on the basis of faith in Christ. The Christian brother/sister is no longer bound by the marriage

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<sup>56</sup>E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan : Fleming H. Revell Co.), 76.

<sup>57</sup>J. E. Adams, 1980. *Marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 33.

<sup>58</sup>J. E. Adams, 1980. *Marriage, divorce and remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 76.

and is free to remarry.<sup>59</sup> “In the Scriptures these are the only grounds for divorce apart from sexual unfaithfulness.”<sup>60</sup>

In verse 25 and 26 of the same chapter, Paul addresses unmarried people. He advises them to remain single because of the pressure of the age and the necessity of serving Christ. Paul urges his readers to be for the return of the Lord. In these verses, Paul is not talking to people who have been married, because he addresses it specifically in the next section. Paul speaks to those who have lost their spouses either through death or divorce on biblical grounds. He says, “Are you married? Seek not to be loosed.” He then asked, “Are you loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if you marry, you have not sinned...” (I Cor. 7:28).

#### 4.7 Conclusion

It seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that adultery is the one sin which, by its nature, violates the "one-flesh" relationship. Adultery results in the breakdown of the spiritual and personal bond between divorced couples. There is the violation of the marriage contract by entry into the exclusive physical relationship with another party. Adultery is a serious sin, whether before or after formal divorce, although the records in Mark and Luke do not indicate the effects of this sin against the marriage bond. In adultery, there is such sundering of the divine bond as leaves the innocent party free to remarry.

As long as Matthew 19:9 is translated to include an "except" clause, as it is in most English translations, it can be interpreted as allowing divorce without guilt of adultery where the basis for that divorce is unchastity.<sup>61</sup> In spite of this, one can conclude by looking at the exceptive clauses in Matthew as not corrupting and betraying the original teaching of Jesus. It seems, to Matthew that Jesus teaches a law that did not cover hypothetical situations. Jesus rather established certain principles that would reveal the will of God to his listeners. Jesus did this with the use of figures of speech, as well as through overstatement and hyperbole. In Matthews view, Jesus teaches that divorce is permissible in case of adultery, but not mandatory. Mathew and Paul's permission of divorce meant that they did not believe that Jesus' words were meant to

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<sup>59</sup> D. Doherty, 1974. *Divorce and remarriage* (St. Mainrad: Abbey Press), 38.

<sup>60</sup> E. G. Dobson, 1986. *What the Bible really says about marriage, divorce and remarriage* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co.), 76.

<sup>61</sup> P. H. Wiebe, 1989. Jesus' divorce exception. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol. 32, 3:333.

be an absolute law to cover all situations.<sup>62</sup> Matthew's statement cannot be taken as a specific law to cover all possibilities that might arise. Yet, Matthew's statement can be a guide to the church.<sup>63</sup>

On remarriage, Mark claims that divorcing a wife and marrying another is adultery (10:11). In Matthew, divorcing a spouse for any reason except for fornication is to be guilty of causing the spouse to commit adultery (5:32, 19:9), while marrying someone who has been divorced is adultery in Luke (16:18). By inference, remarriage on the part of both partners is the addition of sin to sin.

One truth that cannot be denied is that divorce does happen among Christians. Today, examples of church leaders who divorce their spouses and even remarry abound. One may not be able to erase the fact that Jesus, at times, used the situation around him to solve the problem at hand. The same he did in the case of the adulteress (John 8:11f). He knew that the woman was guilty but he also knew that those reporting her were also guilty of the same offence. Jesus wanted to bestow grace on the woman but he did not ask the people not to stone her. Rather he said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (John 8:7). This is not to say that divorce is required following an act of adultery. If the adultery is not persistent and the spouse repents, then ideally one should be like God and forgive. In the book of Hosea, there is a vivid illustration of God forgiving Israel of her spiritual adultery again and again. Jeremiah 3:8 notes that God divorced Israel, His chosen bride, but it was only after 700 years of almost persistent spiritual adultery. However, very few people have the grace to forgive and restore the marriage after adultery has taken place. Jesus frowned at divorce in any form. His statement was "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning"(Matthew 19:8). He recommended reconciliation in all cases of marital disagreement between spouses. This became necessary because of the attendant problems that might come up as a result of the action of the divorced couple. One may not support divorce and remarriage because Jesus emphasized the permanence of marriage and because of the problems involved in such acts.

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<sup>62</sup> R. H. Stein, 1979. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol.22, 2: 119-120.

<sup>63</sup>R. H. Stein, 1979. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, vol.22, 2: 120.

There is bound to be problems either in relation to interest, or what constitutes the ideal. One of the ways to have a stable and happy home is to forgive, and on time. Forgiveness is an essential ingredient for answered prayers. In Matthew 6: 14-15, Jesus put forgiveness within the model prayer, which he taught people in 6:7-13. In fact the foundation for verses 14-15 is verse 12, where he said “And forgive us our debt, (ovfeilmata) as we also have forgiven our debtor,” (toj ovfeiletaj).<sup>64</sup> There is a change of word between verses 12 and 14. Verse 12 has the word “debts” (ovfeilmata), while in verse 14 “trespasses” (parptwmata) is used instead. The idea in verse 12 is that every wrong behaviour is a debt, while in verse 14, to trespass is to miss the track. Jesus’ statement in verse 14-15 implies that forgiveness has two dimensions, namely either by God or by men.<sup>65</sup> However, both are interdependent. There is the tendency to trespass against the law of God. In addition, there is the tendency to offend a fellow human being or to be offended by another person. The point of emphasis is that inasmuch as someone desires God’s forgiveness, such a person must first forgive others that have offended him. The divine and human forgiveness are reciprocal with the first step to be taken by man about his fellow human beings. This should start from home.

The only thing that will make the joy of a Christian full is to make heaven (John 3:16). Truly, there is no marriage in heaven, but the way marriage is handled by Christians on earth is a pointer to what the experience of believers will be in heaven. Christians are in the world, but they are not of the world.

<sup>64</sup> In chapter 6:14, there is omission of gar in *D L Pc sa* mss at the beginning of the verse. This will make the reading to be evan avfhte toij avnqrwpoij “If you forgive these men...” The omission of the conjunction “for” will maintain a break in sequence and connection between previous teaching of Jesus in the preceding verses. However, the inclusion of the conjunction serves as a point of connection and a way of making an assertion.

<sup>65</sup> There is a replacement of suranioj with evn toij ouranioj in  $\theta$  700 it. The adjective ouranioj was put in sentence form to read “your father in heaven” instead of “your heavenly father.” The shorter reading should be preferred. There is elongation of verse 14 to read ouranioj ta parptwmata u,mwn. The inclusion is to conform to the previous clause ta parptwmata aurtwn in verse 14. The insertion can be found in *B L  $\theta$  W 0233* <sup>f<sup>13</sup>.33</sup> *M (b) f q syc sa bo*. However, ancient manuscripts such as *A D fl. 892, Lat syp mea b* are without the insertion and that reading should be preferred. In verse 15, ta parptwmata u,mwn is replaced with ta parptwmata aurtwn in *B L W 0233 f.<sup>13</sup> 33M*. The problem centres around the personal pronouns aurtwn and u,mwn. The previous reference to u,mwn in verse 14-15 is an indication that it is not awkward in this context. The change from “your” to “our,” must have been a deliberate attempt by editors of those witnesses. The reading with u,mwn should be preferred. u,mwn avfhsei is replaced with u,min avfhsei in *apc*. The use of the personal pronoun in the dative singular for does not fit this context in line with the fact that u,mwn has been in used throughout the passage. The fewness of witnesses in support of this replacement is an indication for it to be considered as an error. Other witnesses such as *D 1241 pc it vg l* has u,mwn avfhsei u,min. The inclusion of u,min along with u,mwn appears as tautology and an amplification. This should not be preferred.



# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **THE ISSUE OF MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY**

### **AMONG SELECTED CHURCH DENOMINATIONS IN IBADAN**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This study used a qualitative approach that included administration of questionnaire, extensive participatory observations by the researcher in some of the churches under study, focus group discussions and interviews, and one-on-one interviews with church members and church leaders. The methods used became necessary since religious experience is very complex. The methods also provided a thorough examination of how various individuals within the church are influenced by their churches in the interpretation of Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery.

The interviews and observations were carried out in selected churches in five local government areas in Ibadan Metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. The five local government areas (LGAs) used were Ibadan North, Ibadan North East, Ibadan South East, Ibadan North West and Ibadan South West. They fall within Oyo Central Senatorial District. These were chosen because of the large population and the number of churches existing in these areas. They give a better picture of the various Nigerian cultures in Ibadan.

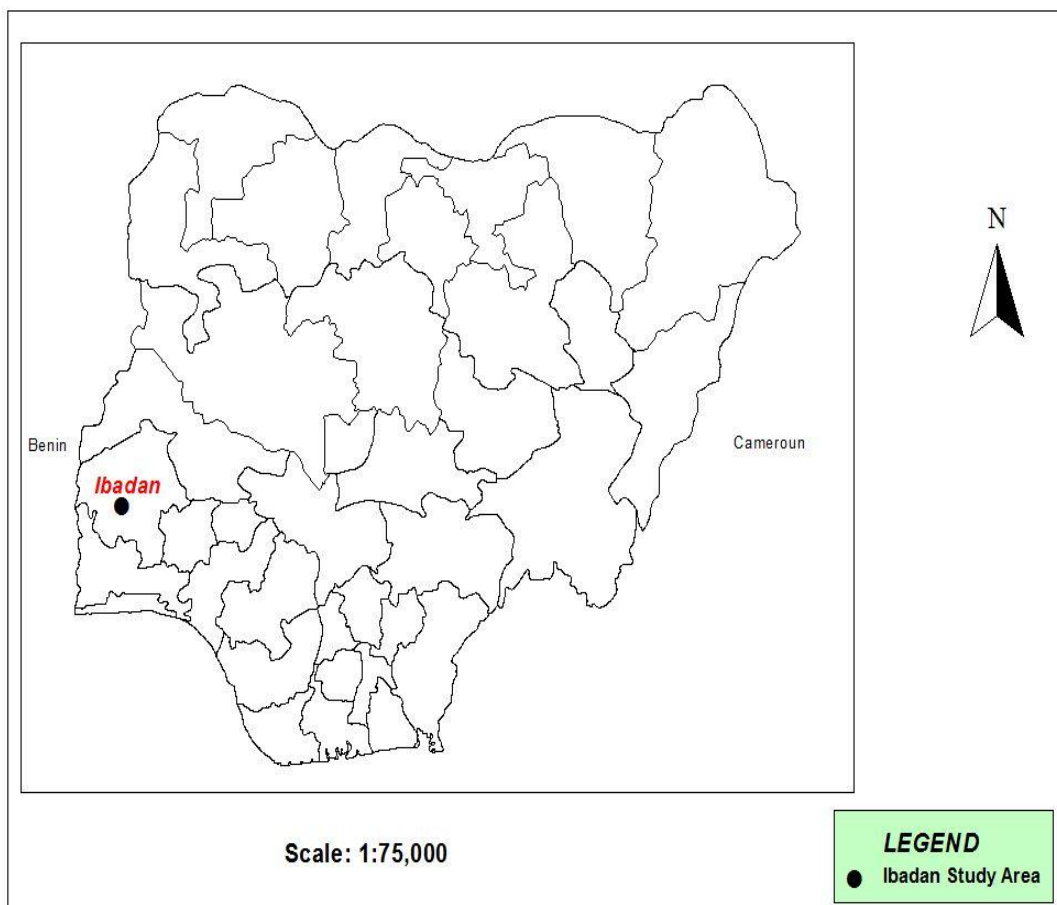
Initially, copies of three open-ended questionnaires were distributed. Seven hundred (700) copies of the first set (for church members) were given to church members, while 519 were filled and returned; one hundred copies of the second set (for pastors) were given to church leaders, while 26 were filled and returned. Two hundred copies of the third set (for divorcees) were given to divorced members in the selected churches, while 9 were filled and returned. In all, 1000 copies of the questionnaires were distributed. Five hundred and fifty-four (554) of these were well filled and returned.

Deliberate efforts were made to identify divorced or separated people in the study areas. They were interviewed differently and independently to enable them volunteer information as freely and objectively as possible since the responses to the questionnaire given out were not satisfactory. In-depth oral interview were conducted to elicit information from the respondents. The interviews centred on the variables that caused the divorce or the separation. One hundred and thirty-four (134) separated individuals and 114 divorced people were interviewed, making 248 interviewees.

Focus group discussions were also carried out in each of the five LGAs. Twenty-five people were used in each of them, making a total of one hundred and twenty-five: 25 clergymen, 40 polygamists, and 60 married and unmarried youths.

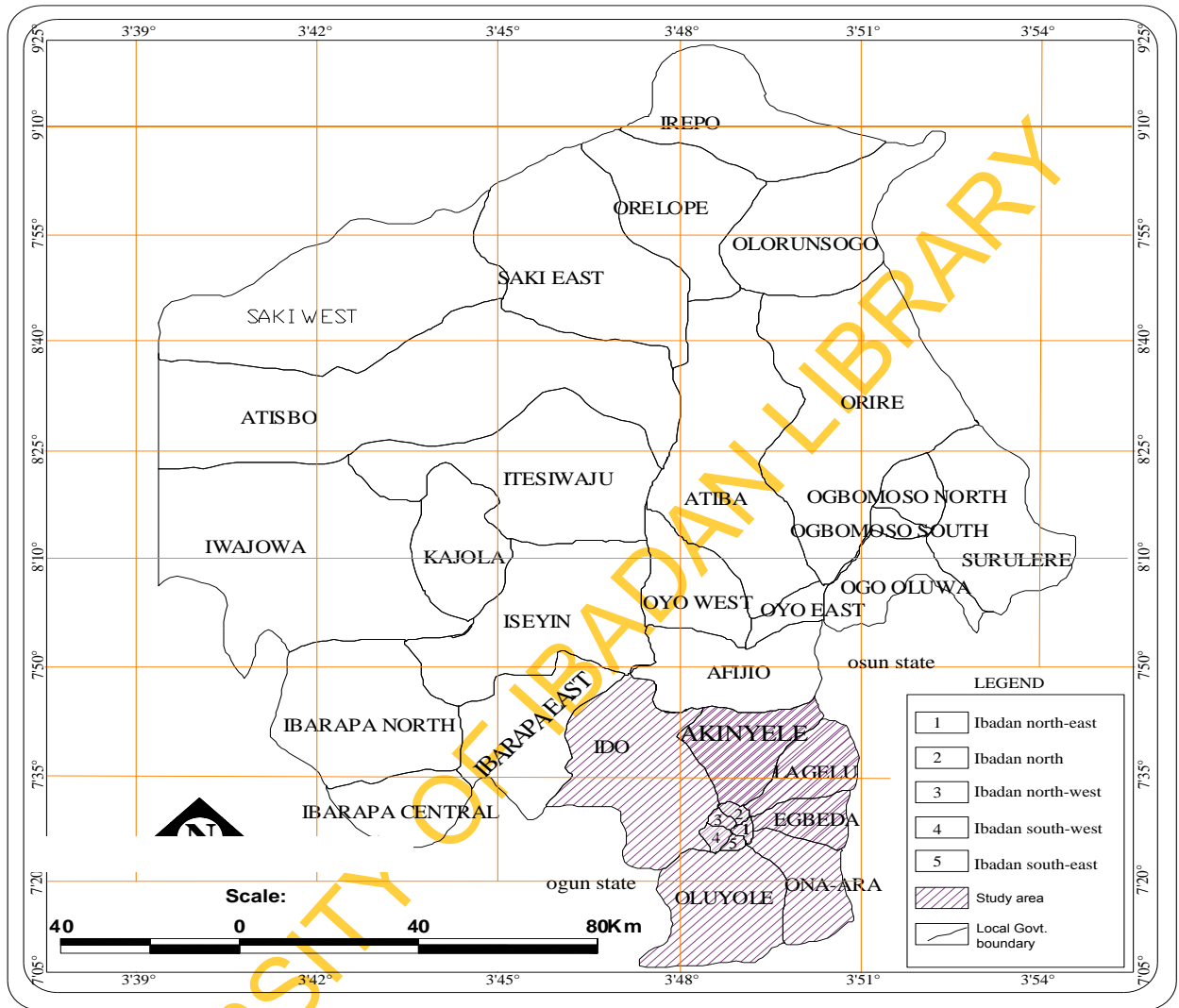
The responses of the church members (519) were subjected to statistical analysis, while the findings in the questionnaire for the divorced people (9), focus group discussions (125), interview with church pastors/leaders (26), and interview with 248 separated/divorced people were content analyzed. Altogether, 927 people were used for the research. The study covered 35 churches of the selected church denominations in Ibadan metropolis: Roman Catholic Church (8), the Baptist Churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (15), and the Celestial Church of Christ (12).

**Fig. 1.1: Map of Nigeria showing Ibadan, Oyo State**

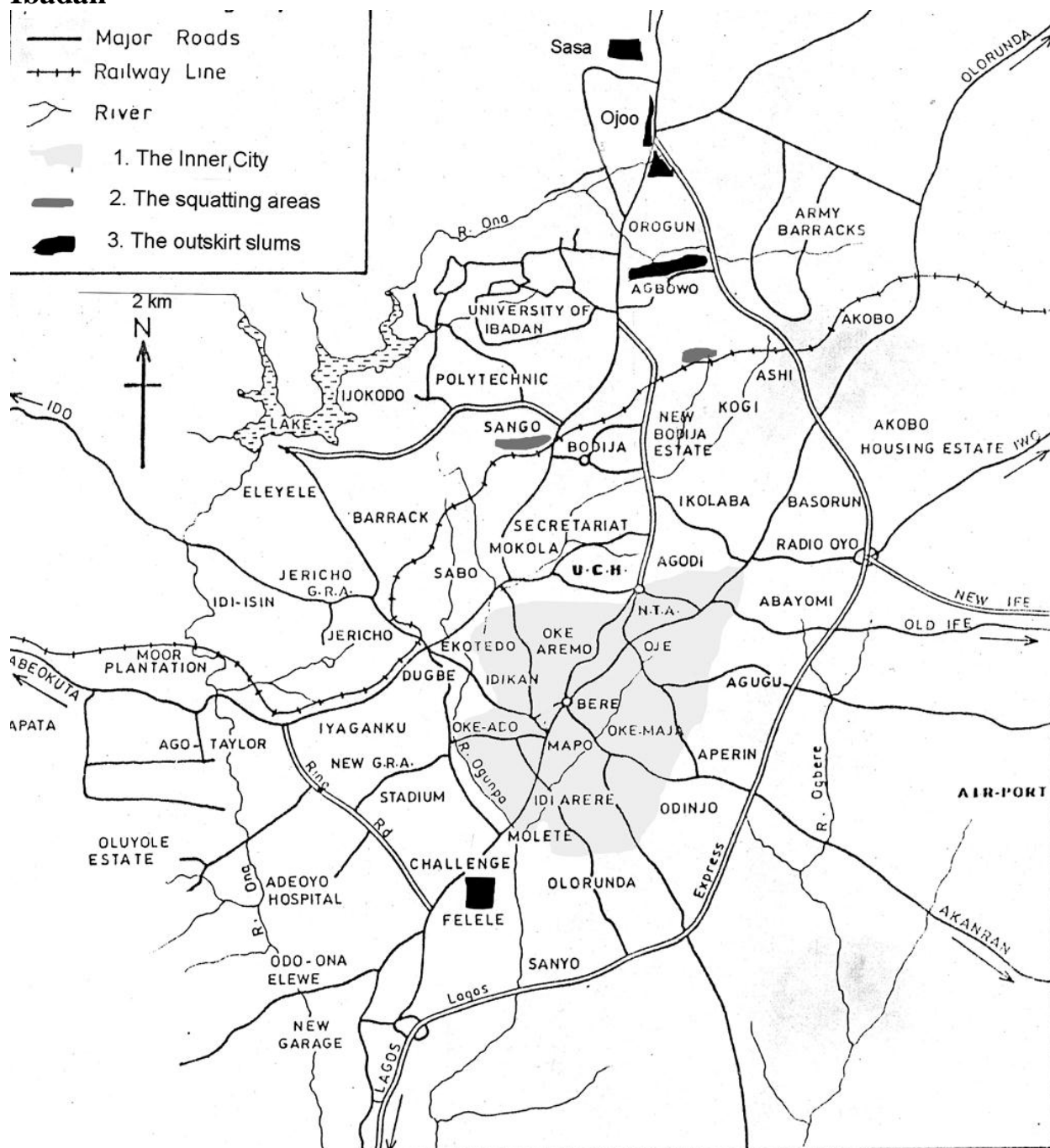


Source: Oyo State of Nigeria (2009)

**Fig. 1. 2: Map of Oyo State showing Ibadan Metropolis**



**Fig. 1. 3: Map of Ibadan**



Source: Oyo State of Nigeria (2009)

## 5.2 Findings and analysis of interviews and observations

### 5.2.1 Report of questionnaire administered on church members

**Table 5.1: Distribution of questionnaire among the local governments**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid East	111	21.4	21.4	21.4
North	92	17.7	17.7	39.1
Northwest	106	20.4	20.4	59.5
Southeast	98	18.9	18.9	78.4
Southwest	112	21.6	21.6	100.0
Total	519	100.0	100.0	

Table 5.1 shows that two hundred (200) copies of a questionnaire were distributed in each of the LGAs. However, 111 were retrieved from Ibadan east, 92 from Ibadan North, 106 from Ibadan North West, 98 from Ibadan South East and 112 from Ibadan Southwest. These totalled 519. It should be noted that, of the 200 copies of the questionnaire given to the divorced/ separated people, 9 were returned. This necessitated the purposive oral interview with divorced/ separated people.

**Table 5.2: Sex of respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	265	51.1	59.0	59.0
Female	184	35.5	41.0	100.0
Total	449	86.5	100.0	
Missing System	70	13.5		
Total	519	100.0		

Table 5.2 shows that the questionnaire was administered on 265 males and 184 females. The missing system reveals that 70 respondents did not indicate whether they were males or females.

**Table 5.3: Age of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-20	40	7.7	8.5	8.5
	21-30	152	29.3	32.5	41.0
	31-40	122	23.5	26.1	67.1
	41-50	89	17.1	19.0	86.1
	Above 50	65	12.5	13.9	100.0
	Total	468	90.2	100.0	
Missing	System	51	9.8		
Total		519	100.0		

The population of this study consisted of persons between ages 20 and above. Those within ages 15-20 were included to test their views on premarital sex. The population of those within 21-50 was the highest (363). These were those in marriage, divorced and remarriage stages. Sixty-five (65) people were above 50 years. The table reveals that 51 respondents decided not to reveal their ages.

**Table 5.4: Marital status of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	280	53.9	56.0	56.0
	Single	210	40.5	42.0	98.0
	Divorced	3	.6	.6	98.6
	Widow	4	.8	.8	99.4
	Remarried after being widowed	3	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	500	96.3	100.0	
Missing	System	19	3.7		
Total		519	100.0		

As seen in Table 5.4, two hundred and eighty married people responded. Two hundred and ten were not married. Only three indicated that they were divorced. Nineteen of the respondents did not reveal their marital status.

**Table 5.5: Nationality of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Nigerian	498	96.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	2	21	4.0		
Total		519	100.0		

Table 5.5 reveals that four hundred and ninety-eight respondents were Nigerians. However, it was deduced from the statistics on the information about the ethnic group of the respondents that the 21 who did not give their nationality were Nigerians also.

**Table 5.6: Number of churches used in each denomination**

Church Denomination	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Baptist Church	15	42.9	42.9	42.9
Celestial Church of Christ	12	34.3	34.3	77.2
Roman Catholic Church	08	22.8	22.8	100
Total	35	100	100	

This table shows that 15 of the churches were Baptist, 12 were Celestial Church of Christ, while 8 were Roman Catholic Church

**Table 5.7: Number of respondents from each denomination**

Church Denomination	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Baptist Church	225	43.4	46.0	46.0
Celestial Church of Christ	159	30.6	32.5	78.5
Roman Catholic Church	105	20.2	21.5	100
Missing	30	5.8		
Total	519	100		

Table 5.7 reveals that the respondents from Baptist Church were 225; those from Celestial Church of Christ were 159; while those from Roman Catholic Church were 105. Thirty of the respondents did not indicate their denomination.

## 5.2. 2 Analysis of findings

### 5.2.2.1 Sex

Table below shows the responses of the participants concerning sex..

**Table 5.8: Responses on sex**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	31	6.0	6.9	6.9
	Disagree	123	23.7	27.4	34.3
	Strongly Agree	214	41.3	47.7	82.0
	Agree	81	15.6	18.0	100.0
	Total	449	86.7	100.0	
Missing	System	69	13.3		
Total		518	100.0		

Table 5.8 indicates that of the respondents, 295(65.7%) agreed that sex should take place only in marriage, while 154(34.3%) opined that sex is not meant only for the married. This connotes that the churches under study teach that sex is meant for married couples only. The response of the minority is an indication that sexual immorality exists to some extent.

**Table 5. 9: Responses on the predominance of sex in contemporary society**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	25	4.8	5.1	5.1
	Disagree	16	3.1	3.3	8.4
	Strongly Agree	212	40.9	43.5	52.0
	Agree	233	45.0	47.8	99.8
	Total	487	94.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	31	6.0		
Total		518	100.0		

Table 5.9 shows that 445(91.4%) of the respondents agreed that premarital sex is predominant in the contemporary society, while only 41(8.4%) respondents claimed that premarital sex is not predominant in the contemporary society. The response of the majority indicates that cultural values about virginity are being brushed aside. During the focus group discussions, 60 young, unmarried adults (males and females) of between 18- 35years were



interviewed about their stance on remaining a virgin until marriage. Twenty-five (41.7%) of them strongly believed that sex is meant to take place within marriage. They claimed that they were virgins as at the time of the interview. Eighteen (30%) of the young adults confessed that they were not virgins at the time of the interview. The remaining 17(28.3%) were indifferent. The reason for their reactions is not easy to determine, but we want to believe that not all of them were virgins at the time of the interview. The adults who were present at the seminar claimed that to lose ones virginity was a thing of shame in many Nigerian cultures, even before the spread of Christianity.

Three reasons were given as to the cause of premarital sex. These were late marriage (Table 5.10), the need to meet financial needs (Table 5.11), and the need for job security (Table 5.12). On whether late marriage is a cause for premarital sex, 364(75.1%) respondents opined that late marriage is a major cause for premarital sex in the contemporary society. Only 121(24.9%) of them disagreed with this view. In the olden days, when virginity was held in high esteem and when many unmarried men and women kept themselves pure until their marriage days, people got married much earlier than today. It was learnt that most women married between ages 18 and 21. The case is different today. Some parents would not want their children to get married until they have secured jobs so that life will not be difficult for the young couples. Likewise, many young people will not want to marry until they have finished their university education. Unfortunately, gaining admission into tertiary institutions is not so easy nowadays, as there is keen competition among applicants to fill the few available spaces. Many unmarried youths may not even gain admission until they are 24 years of age. When they eventually enter the university and spend at least 4 years to study and another 1 year for the national youth service scheme, they are already ageing. There is the temptation and likelihood to get involved in premarital sex.

**Table 5.10: Responses on late marriage as a cause of premarital sex**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	38	7.3	7.8	7.8
	Disagree	83	16.0	17.1	24.9
	Strongly Agree	259	50.0	53.4	78.4
	Agree	105	20.3	21.6	100.0
	Total	485	93.6	100.0	
Missing	System	33	6.4		
Total		518	100.0		

**Table 5.11: Responses on the financial demands as a major cause of premarital sex**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	21	4.1	4.3	4.3
	Disagree	32	6.2	6.5	10.8
	Strongly Agree	301	58.1	61.6	72.4
	Agree	135	26.1	27.6	100.0
	Total	489	94.4	100.0	
Missing	System	29	5.6		
Total		518	100.0		

As revealed in Table 5.11, 436(89.2%) of the respondents agreed that the need to meet financial demands is another cause of premarital sex, while only 53(10.8%) of them disagreed. Some of the respondents averred that it is not easy to get white-collar jobs, which many unmarried youths believe is the only means of livelihood. Hence, these unmarried youths take to illicit sexual acts, especially prostitution. Some parents even encourage their female children to get involved in prostitution in order to meet the family's financial needs. A random observation of the kind of young people who get pregnant before marriage showed that their parents were wealthy and did take care of their financial needs. As a matter of fact, it was discovered during the research, in one of the family planning units visited, that many of the unmarried girls who

got involved in family planning method to guide against unwanted pregnancy were from wealthy homes.

**Table 5.12: Responses on job security as a cause of premarital sex**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	82	15.8	17.2	17.2
	Disagree	209	40.3	43.9	61.1
	Strongly Agree	148	28.6	31.1	92.2
	Agree	37	7.1	7.8	100.0
	Total	476	91.9	100.0	
Missing	System	42	8.1		
Total		518	100.0		

On whether the need for job security is a cause of premarital sex, 185(38.9%) respondents agreed, while 291(61.1%) respondents disagreed. The response of the minority affirms that many unmarried youths will not be involved in premarital sex for job security. The reason might be that the contemporary society advocates self-empowerment for the unmarried youths.

The research probed into the general saying that some cultures do not value purity until after marriage. It was discovered through the oral interview conducted that most cultures in Nigeria advocate purity until marriage. They claimed that to be caught in the act of fornication is a shameful thing.

### **5. 2. 2. 2 Marriage**

Two questions were asked on marriage. The first one dealt with whether their churches teach polygamous marriage. Table 5.13 shows that 400(82.3%) of the respondents denied that their churches teach or encourage polygamous marriage. A total of 86 (17.7%) however declared that their churches teach polygamy. During the focus group discussion, none of the participants agreed that their churches encourage polygamy. All the participants affirmed that their churches encourage monogamous marriage rather than polygamy. For instance, the constitution of the Celestial Church of Christ by implication affirms monogamy. Articles 195, 196 and 197 of the constitution of the Celestial Church of Christ (Nigeria Diocese) declares that:

Celestial Church of Christ respects marriages solemnized in holy wedlock in accordance with covenants entered into between husband and wife before God at his Holy Altar.

All marriages in holy wedlock solemnized in other Christian Churches are recognized by Celestial Church of Christ. All vows made at such Christian marriages are recognized by Celestial Church of Christ as inviolate because anyone who covenants with God but fails to honour it sins before God (Ecc.5:4-6).

All marriages solemnized in Celestial Church of Christ shall be in accordance with the Marriage Act under which our church is licensed.<sup>1</sup>

If all marriages solemnized in CCC shall be in accordance with the Marriage Act of Nigeria under which it is licensed, then, monogamy is implied. The Nigeria constitution recognises monogamy. It was discovered, however, that the Celestial Church of Christ grants polygamists among them full membership. They serve as leaders and take active part in the running of the church affairs.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 5.13: Responses on churches' teaching on polygamy**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	86	16.6	17.7	17.7
	No	400	77.2	82.3	100.0
	Total	486	93.8	100.0	
Missing	System	32	6.2		
Total		518	100.0		

The second question focused on whether polygamists should be accepted or given full membership. A total of 330(70.2%) of the respondents stated that polygamists were not accepted in their churches, while 140(29.8%) affirmed that polygamists are accepted in their churches and are given full membership (Table 5.14).

<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Celestial Church of Christ, Nigeria Diocese, 1980. First revised edition. Nigeria: The Board of Trustees for the Pastor-in-council, Celestial Church of Christ, 51.

<sup>2</sup> Findings in some Celestial Church of Christ churches reveal that some of the leaders were polygamists.

**Table 5.14: Responses on the status of polygamists in the church**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	159	30.6	30.6	30.6
	No	360	69.4	69.4	100.0
	Total	519	100	100.0	
Missing	System	0	0		
Total		519	100.0		

### 5.2.2.3 Adultery

While attempting a definition of adultery, 313 (64.3%) respondents agreed that adultery is sexual relationship with a married/ unmarried person, while 174 (35.7%) disagreed (Table 5.15). This suggests that adultery is more than having sexual relationship. Thus, rape, masturbation and a lustful look are all forms of adultery. Adultery is more than sexual intercourse; it involves everything that humiliates, seduces and lures a person into sexual immorality.

**Table 5.15: Responses on people's understanding of adultery**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	83	16.0	17.0	17.0
	Disagree	91	17.5	18.7	35.7
	Strongly Agree	153	29.5	31.4	67.1
	Agree	160	30.8	32.9	100.0
	Total	487	93.8	100.0	
Missing	System	32	6.2		
Total		519	100.0		

Table 5.16 reveals that 372 (64.3%) respondents agreed that keeping secrets from ones spouse is a major cause of adultery. However, 136 (26.8%) respondents did not agree that keeping secrets against ones spouse is a major cause. The respondents in the majority view were mostly men. They claimed that the moment they catch their wives keeping secret with any man, their belief would be that she is having sexual relationship with such a man, even if the man is a

pastor. Three of the respondents claimed that they divorced their wives because they were not aware that their wives were building houses while the church leaders and some men in the church knew. They would not believe that any man would keep such secrets without having sexual relationship with their wives.

The issue raised by these men led to an inquiry into why some women /wives keep secrets with other men and not their children, or not other women around. The first reason given by the women was that they would prefer to keep some secrets with their pastors who are men because they are their spiritual leaders. They opined that such a pastor would not disappoint them. They claimed that, most times, their children are aware of their actions. Some women averred that they had trusted their husbands before, but such husbands betrayed them. Five women narrated how they gave money to their husbands for the acquisition of plots of land to build houses but their husbands did not buy the land. They did not return the money. One of the women said that she decided to confide in her pastor because, after her husband refused to buy the land three times, she bought one and gave the documents to her husband. She narrated that it was when she wanted to start building the house after two years, that she discovered that her husband had sold the parcel of land, and the process of transfer perfected because the document was with the man. Some women also noted that, if their husbands were polygamists, they would never let him know they were building any house until such was completed.

The women were asked what would be their reaction if they were sent packing because they were keeping some secrets from their husbands. The majority of them declared that they were ready to leave. According to them if their husbands rejected them, their children would not.

Some pastors claimed that sometimes it may be necessary for women to confide in their pastors or elderly men around them especially because of the aforementioned reasons highlighted by the women. They, however, suggested that if such would take place the pastors must be very sure that the problems are real and that such women are not guilty of infidelity.

**Table 5.16: Responses on the danger of keeping secrets from ones spouse**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	59	11.4	11.6	11.6
	Disagree	77	14.8	15.2	26.8
	Strongly Agree	170	32.8	33.5	60.2
	Agree	202	38.9	39.8	100.0
	Total	508	97.9	100.0	
Missing	System	11	2.1		
Total		519	100.0		

Table 5.17 shows that 352 (69.5%) respondents viewed financial limitation as one of the reasons why people take to adultery, while 155 (30.5%) disagreed. Financial problem may cause adultery in two ways. The first is poverty. Some homes were rich at the beginning but along the line, there was loss of job. Consequently, the needs of the home could no more be met. This situation affects children a lot. Many girls take to prostitution locally or are taken to Europe for the same trade.<sup>3</sup> Some wives today also take to adultery all in an attempt to meet family needs.

Riches and abundance of wealth aid adultery. In Nigeria, the coming of the Obasanjo-led administration in 1999 led to a review of the salary and wages of government workers and this made things better, to some extent, for them. Unfortunately, this led to the collapse of many homes. Some men started having extramarital relationships, which led to polygamy in some cases. Similarly, some women became so arrogant that they no longer respected their husbands who, in turn, found solace outside the matrimonial homes. Nevertheless, the view of the 155 (29.9%) respondents who believed that financial limitation is not a cause should not be disregarded because some take to adultery because they derive pleasure in it. These people see extramarital affairs as a must. They believe that extramarital relationship is a normal thing. They put no blame on their spouses. This position may be a result of cultural influence on the issue of adultery. A group of 25 married women, aged 55-70, were purposively interviewed. The question posed was about some of the reasons why women of nowadays break away from their husbands. Eighteen (72%) of these women believed that women of nowadays have no reasons to

<sup>3</sup> S.O. Abogunrin, 2000. Revisiting the story of Jesus and the adulteress in the context of the church' life in Africa. *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, XV, NO. 1, 23.

break away from their husbands save for jealousy. They narrated how they worked for their husbands' concubines and even prepared beds for their husbands and the concubines. Some of these women granted the interview in the presence of their husbands and the husbands did not deny all that the women said. However, the women said they did these not because they loved it but because of their children. In fact, it was deduced during the interview that some have not forgiven their husbands even at the time of the interview.

**Table 5.17: Responses on financial limitation as a cause of adultery**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	60	11.6	11.8	11.8
	Disagree	95	18.3	18.7	30.6
	Strongly Agree	262	50.5	51.7	82.2
	Agree	90	17.3	17.8	100.0
	Total	507	97.7	100.0	
Missing	System	12	2.3		
Total		519	100.0		

As seen in Table 5.18, lack of sexual satisfaction on the part of either of the spouses is seen as a major cause of adultery. A total of 400 (81.1%) respondents indicated that lack of sexual satisfaction is a major cause, while 93 (18.9%) respondents disagreed. This majority view expresses what is happening in most homes. There is the case of a man who was having extramarital relationship. People were surprised at this occurrence because he was a deacon in a big church. The church committee invited the man, and the man told them the truth. He agreed that he was having sex outside marriage. When asked why, he said his wife must be on sit before he answered the question. The woman arrived and the husband asked her when they had sexual intercourse last. The woman, to the amazement of the church committee, said, “six years ago.” She was asked why? The woman said that she was turning down her husband’s sex proposal because he refused to sponsor the burial ceremony of her father. The deacon waited for six years without sexual intercourse before moving out.



The question that we need to ask is what could have been the cause of lack of sexual satisfaction among couples? Is it cultural orientation? Is it Christian teaching about sex and sexuality or the individuals involved? The answer is all of the above. Culturally, there are two positions about sex: the moralistic view and the naturalistic view. The moralists view sex as something that is meant strictly for procreation, sex is evil and sex for pleasure is forbidden. Women have no sexual rights and, therefore, are not supposed to have any desire for sex.<sup>4</sup> The naturalists, on the other hand, see sex as a normal activity, which every individual must cultivate and enjoy. Men and women can discuss sex freely. Each has the opportunity to exercise his or her sexual right.<sup>5</sup>

Most cultures in Africa tend towards the moralistic view about sex. Among the Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa and many ethnic groups in Nigeria, it seems to be a taboo for a woman to demand sex from her husband. The husband would see her as too demanding or idle. Similarly, many cultures believe that sexual relationship must take place in the night when most women are already tired and bored. Any form of rejection by the wife leads to rape and, at times, being beaten by the husband. Hence, some women face physical and sexual abuse, which causes distress in some women. "Distress is trance inducing because it causes mental fixation and diminishes the possibility of choice."<sup>6</sup> Men in such situations cannot get sexual satisfaction. Hence, they go out to have sexual satisfaction. However, women complain to husband's relatives or friends when they feel sexually abandoned. This is also one of the many home issues, which pastors deal with today.

Unfortunately, the Church seems not to be helping the situation. At times, the Church finds it difficult to discuss sex in practical terms. No home can stand without sexual satisfaction, yet most wedding sermons just gloss over the issue of sexual relationship among couples. It is regarded to be too sacred a thing to be discussed openly.

Some pastors interviewed attributed adultery in the church, to bad examples from some church leaders. These pastors also viewed sexual deprivation and lack of sexual satisfaction as major causes of adultery. This is partly true. Some leaders are into adultery, hence they no longer preach against adultery. Besides, some preach on it as a cover up. In addition, fasting and prayer

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<sup>4</sup> James C. Coleman, 1988. *Intimate relationships, marriage, and family*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), 101.

<sup>5</sup> James C. Coleman, 1988. *Intimate relationships, marriage, and family*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), 101.

<sup>6</sup> John Bradshaw, 1992. *Creating love: the next stage of growth* (New York: Bantam Books), 31.

are not sinful; they are integral parts of the Christian worship. Nevertheless, these acts must be done in a way that will not jeopardize homes in different churches. Some men interviewed said that their wives attended churches where they fast a lot and attend vigils all Fridays in a month. They claimed that their wives deny them of sexual intercourse because they feel that it is a sin to have sexual intercourse during this period. But, have they forgotten that it is a sin to deny their spouses of their rights? Some even go to the extent of sleeping in the church for weeks and even months, leaving their spouses at home.

To solve the problem of lack of sexual satisfaction, 71.6 % of the respondents counselled that couples must see sexual relationship as a responsibility and a right. This will make them to rise up to the task and adultery will be curbed. They opined that one of the spouses should learn to either ask or demand sex from the other, especially when one partner seems not to be interested in it. They warned that sex must not be seen as sin, hence fasting and prayer must not be an obstacle to sexual relationship with one's spouse. According to 60% of the respondents, women must cultivate the habit of neatness. They must be tidy and make themselves attractive to their husbands. Respondents advised pastors to intensify their efforts in preaching, teaching and counselling couples on the need for mutual love and self-discipline. Punishment and suspension from church offices is recommended in some cases of adultery. For example, the Nigerian Baptist Convention disciplines an adulterous leader either by suspension, dismissal or even by withdrawal of preaching license.<sup>7</sup> Respondents from the Roman Catholic Church also attested to this. During the course of this interview, members of the Celestial Church of Christ agreed that adultery is bad but there is no instance of punishment meted out to people involved in it.

**Table 5.18: Responses on lack of sexual satisfaction as a cause of adultery**

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<sup>7</sup> Books of Report of the annual Convention sessions of the NBC have many of these.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	37	7.1	7.5	7.5
	Disagree	56	10.8	11.4	18.9
	Strongly Agree	242	46.6	49.1	68.0
	Agree	158	30.4	32.0	100.0
	Total	493	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	26	5.0		
Total		519	100.0		

Table 5.19 reveals that 225(47.9%) respondents agreed that different religious beliefs are the causes of adultery, while 245(52.1%) disagreed. It is even amazing to note that a large percentage of adulterous activities and sexual immorality take place in churches that are tagged “spirit-filled.” Some churches see nothing bad or immoral in hugging the opposite sex or even kissing such people. The regular acts of hugging or kissing of co-members can lead to a state of familiarity and emotional feelings. This may eventually leads to adultery.

While explaining how adultery can be curbed, the respondents advised that sound biblical teaching, preaching, seminars, lectures and workshops should be organized for couples and singles. They also advised that awareness programmes and health talk on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) be done from time to time, and that sex education must be given by churches to teenagers on the evil associated with adultery and fornication. Furthermore, they warned that church leaders must aim at quality members and not quantitative growth all the time. Members must be born-again, be committed to Jesus Christ and his teachings and follow the Ten Commandments strictly since Jesus has not come to destroy the Law.

**Table 5.19: Responses on the differences in religious beliefs as a cause of adultery**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	93	17.9	19.8	19.8
	Disagree	152	29.3	32.3	52.1
	Strongly Agree	162	31.2	34.5	86.6
	Agree	63	12.1	13.4	100.0
	Total	470	90.6	100.0	
Missing	System	49	9.4		
Total		519	100.0		

On whether insecurity on the part of either of the spouses is a cause of adultery, Table 5.20 shows that 281 (59.8%) agreed, while 189(40.2%) disagreed. Insecurity is a serious threat to marriage. Apart from financial insecurity, which has been discussed in Table 5.3, there is the fear of spiritual attacks, job security and status security. A man caught his wife in the act of adultery about seven years before. He caught them in the "very act". Since then, for about three years, the husband and the wife had different cooking utensils and foodstuffs. At a point, the pastor was notified and the husband opened up. Unfortunately, the man told the pastor that he was already into a sexual relationship with a widow because he found it difficult to trust his wife again. In other words, there was a feeling of insecurity on the part of the husband.

Some take to adultery for social security. This we see in cases where the social status of either a man or a woman is far above that of his/her spouse. Some husbands are well educated, while their wives are illiterates. In such situations, if care is not taken, they may not be compatible. The spouse of a higher social status feels that his or her spouse is not presentable enough in some quarters. Some spouses would even feel their partners are not presentable because of the spouse' size and/or weight.

To tackle the problems attached to job and social security, 74.3% of the respondents claimed that contentment is very important in the home. Spouses must take note of each other's limitations, talk about them, improve on the situation and, if possible, cope with and manage it. They added that spouses must be committed to each other, stay very close to each other, live together, be open to each other and cooperate with each other, no matter the situation.

**Table 5.20: Responses on the need for security as a cause of adultery**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	57	11.0	12.1	12.1
	Disagree	132	25.4	28.1	40.2
	Strongly Agree	208	40.1	44.3	84.5
	Agree	73	14.1	15.5	100.0
	Total	470	90.6	100.0	
Missing	System	49	9.4		
Total		519	100.0		

As shown in Table 5.21, 335 (68.5%) respondents were of the view that not everybody is involved in lustful looking, while 154 (31.5%) claimed that everybody is involved in lustful looking. In December 2009, a programme was going on in a church in Ibadan South West Local Government Area, and a pastor introduced the guest speaker. He felt obligated also to introduce the wife of the guest speaker and he said, “she is elegant, radiant, and very beautiful, matches her husband well, knows how to dress ....” As he was introducing the wife, some people became uncomfortable and furious. They felt that the pastor was looking at the woman with lust.<sup>8</sup> Some, however, liked the introduction. This researcher at the beginning also was not comfortable with the introduction but later believed that the one introducing the guest speaker was innocent. The question is how can we know when somebody looks at another person lustfully? While discussing common mistakes in relating to the opposite sex, Mary Whelchel writes:

... many singles over react to any attention, from someone of the opposite sex, especially if that someone is attractive to them; if a man looks at us twice, we women can read all kinds of things into it. if a woman happens to sit by a man at a social function, he thinks she’s sending him come-ons. There we like the person and respond positively, or we think he or she is being pushy and run the other way, depending upon whether we’re attracted to that person or not.<sup>9</sup>

Truly, many times we misinterpret people’s actions, especially when they affect the opposite sex. This makes it very difficult to define lust accurately. We are not talking of lust in terms of “strong desire” as discussed in Chapter 4; rather, we are talking about sexual fantasies which Jesus refers to as mental desire.

<sup>8</sup> It was an interdenominational graduation ceremony.

<sup>9</sup> M. Whelchel, 1999. *Common mistakes singles make* ( Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company), 42.

This excitement which leads our minds to imagine or plan sexual involvement with the people we are thinking about .... These fantasies can become substitute for intimacy, especially when the fantasizing person is unable or unwilling to engage in sexual communication with a real person. Engaging in sex before marriage leaves at least two people abused. Mental lusting primarily influences the one who lusts. According to Jesus, both are wrong.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus knew, possibly, that many people engaged and are still engaging in lustful looking. In our on view, lustful looking has two damaging effects. First, it kills the spiritual man. That is, it alienates man from God. Second, it may develop to the point of physical abuse. Many would not insert the penis into a female's vagina, yet they are involved in immoral touching of the sensitive parts of the opposite sex. Many girls, and even boys have been defiled through this act. Jesus is right by saying that it is better to lose one's right eyes or right hand than for one to go into hell (cf. Matthew 5:27-30).

In Jesus' clinic for sexual sin, the doctor's recommendation is always surgery now-no waiting period, no half measure, no consideration of side effects ... An adulterous affair may generate genuinely tender feelings, truer and more affirming than either party knows in his or her marriage. Jesus' solution: End the affair immediately and decisively; cast it away like throwing out an eye-with all the hurt and finality that such an act will involve.<sup>11</sup>

Jesus is strongly warning us, "Don't fiddle with half-measures; the entire hand must go; the eye must go."<sup>12</sup> Any sexual attachment that will result to disobeying God must be thrown out, whatever the personal price may be."<sup>13</sup>

To deal decisively with lustful looking in the contemporary world, the respondents (59.4%) opined that all forms of indecent dressing, wearing of revealing clothes, pornographic films, unwanted or routine visit among opposite sex, as well as lustful jokes and touchings must be stopped. Christians will not be closing their eyes or be running away from other people but there will always be the need to enlighten and counsel people about proper and godly dressing and jokes.

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<sup>10</sup> G. R. Collins, 1988. *Christian counselling: a comprehensive guide* (U.S.A.: W. Publishing Group), 250.

<sup>11</sup> M. Fackler (ed), 2006. *500 Questions & Answers from the Bible* ( Uhrichsville: Barbour publishing, Inc.), 134.

<sup>12</sup> M. Fackler (ed), 2006. *500 Questions & Answers from the Bible*. ( Uhrichsville: Barbour publishing, Inc.),134.

<sup>13</sup> M. Fackler (ed), 2006. *500 Questions & Answers from the Bible*. ( Uhrichsville: Barbour publishing, Inc.),134.

In a tempting world there are many things which are deliberately designed to excite desire, books pictures, plays, even advertisements. The man whom Jesus here condemns is the man who deliberately uses his eyes to stimulate his desires, the man who finds a strange delight in things which waken the desire for the forbidden thing. To the pure all things are pure. But the man whose heart is defiled can look at any scene and find something in it to titillate and excite the wrong desire.”<sup>14</sup>

**Table 5.21: Responses on whether everybody is involved in lustful looking**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	114	22.0	23.3	23.3
	Disagree	221	42.6	45.2	68.5
	Strongly Agree	107	20.6	21.9	90.4
	Agree	47	9.1	9.6	100.0
	Total	489	94.2	100.0	
Missing	System	30	5.8		
Total		519	100.0		

#### 5.2.2.4. Divorce and remarriage

##### Result of interview with Church members

##### i. What is divorce?

A total of 371 respondents gave their understanding of what divorce is. Out of these, 89 (14.3%) indicated that divorce is a legal dissolution of marriage in a court. To them, there can be divorce in cases, where either of the parties refuses to consummate the marriage (refusal of sexual intercourse) adultery, rape and sodomy. Nevertheless, 405 (65.1%) respondents were of

<sup>14</sup> W. Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 1*, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press), 147.

the view that divorce is separation between husband and wife. This group opined that there may not be any legal ending at all. Each spouse has the right to quit and be living separately

ii. What are the reasons for divorce?

(a) Differences in educational and social status had the highest frequency—202 (12.3%). These two things have rendered some spouses incompatible, not spiritually but physically. Inferiority complex and low self-esteem ensue in most times. Such people feel too weak to overcome their deficiencies. They complain, argue, and do not tolerate others; they are hypersensitive and are unable to compliment expressions of love.<sup>15</sup> Unless there is proper counselling, the situation may deteriorate to the extent that divorce sets in. But this can be overcome if proper steps are taken and if, as Jesus said, there is no hardness of the couples' heart.

(b) A 74 (4.5%) respondents viewed not being-born again, absence of Christ in the home and not being rooted in the word of God as some of the reasons for divorce.

(c) Altogether, 33 (2.0%) indicated that absence of love and care can be reasons for divorce.

(d) A sum of 362(22.0%) respondents saw adultery, marital unfaithfulness, promiscuity and infidelity as being responsible for divorce. They claimed that any spouse that is involved in adulterous practices exposes his or her partner's life to the risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. They added that, in order to prevent such transmission, there is the need for divorce. If this is proven well in the court of law, the marriage will be dissolved.

(e) A total of 96 (5.8%) respondents opined that childlessness, lack of a male child, one- sex children and impotency are reasons for divorce.

(f) Some respondents—191(11.69%) saw physical assault, lack of respect, bad behaviours, harshness, nagging, jealousy, pride and anger as causes of divorce. Jealousy and possessiveness are rampant in homes where the husband sees the wife as his property; where the wife is not ready to respect the husband.

(g) Lack of sexual satisfaction and deprivation are also reasons for divorce. As it has been said earlier, it is so serious that the constitution permits divorce after two years of separation. Yet, many spouses use it as object of punishment for their spouses. Some 'Christians' would deprive their spouses of the enjoyment and the satisfaction because, according to them, they are fasting.

(h) Similarly, 69(4.2%) of the respondents viewed interference from friends, family and in-laws as a reason for divorce. Africans marry into the large family and not just their spouses. When

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<sup>15</sup> W. Barclay, 1975. *The Gospel of Matthew, vol. 1*, (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press), 320.



problems come, they rally round the husband and the wife and help seek solutions. However, some family members and in-laws are wicked and they love to dictate or lord it over the husband and the wife. If the husband and the wife are not matured emotionally, their home would collapse.

(i) Also, 156(9.5%) respondents affirmed that poverty and bad finance can lead to divorce. If finance could cause adultery, it could also cause divorce. But, the question is: "what is the cause of poverty or bad finance in the home?" Gary gives four major causes of financial problems: (1.) distorted values— this includes devoting our lives to material things, being covetous, desiring to get rich quickly, pride and resentment; (2) unwise financial decisions leads to impulse buying, carelessness, speculation, consigning, laziness, wasted time, neglect of property and credit buying ; (3) lack of budget; and (4) lack of giving to God, other believers and to the poor.<sup>16</sup> If the spouses are not complementary in this area, there will always be problems and the marriage may collapse.

(j) Besides, 2 (0.1%) respondents were of the view that the husband has the right to divorce one of his wives if he becomes born again.

(k) Also, 29(1.8%) respondents viewed religious belief as a cause of divorce. This comes in two forms: (1) those whose religions are different. One party may be a Christian, while the other is a Muslim or African Traditionalist. In such cases, there will be different doctrines, tenets, beliefs, and attitudes towards issues. For instance, a Christian woman who marries a Muslim man may have to accept polygamy. Likewise, a Muslim man who marries a Christian woman may be asked to accept monogamy. This is not so most times. There may be friction always at home on such issues and this may affect children. Many have divorced on this ground.

(l) There is also the problem of differences in religious denomination in the home. This results to differences in doctrines, and may eventually lead to friction in the home. However, it must be pointed out that there are many Muslims who practise monogamy, just as there are many Christians who practise polygamy. In the same vein, there are homes where the husbands are Muslims and the wives are Christians, or the other way round. The marriages have remained stable. The same is the case of interdenominational marriages.

iii. On what ground can a Christian divorce his/her spouse?

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<sup>16</sup> G. R. Collins, 1988. *Christian counselling: a comprehensive guide* (U.S.A.: W. Publishing Group), 528-531.

There were 421 respondents and their responses are grouped into three:

(a) A total of 15 (3.56%) respondents argued that if either of the parties backslides, there may be the need for divorce. This sounds good but where will such Christian situate the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19: 3-9 and Matthew 5: 31-32, which is assumed to allow divorce only on grounds of adultery, or, Mark 10: 9 that echoes the permanency of marriage union.

(b) a total of 284(67.2%) respondents claimed that sexual deprivation, impotence, consistent infidelity and adultery are strong grounds for divorce among Christians. This is a genuine case for divorce, especially if one considers the exception clause in Matthew 5: 31-32 and Matthew 19: 3-9 as interpreted literally. These vital human problems relate to the innermost parts of human hearts. Experience has shown that some situations truly warrant divorce. This was made real during the oral interview session with two divorced people. The first one, a woman narrated how faithful she was to her husband. She later found out that her husband started extramarital affairs with another woman just when the marriage was two years. The wife had three children, while the woman outside had four children. The husband kept it a secret for sixteen years, when he was sick and was diagnosed to have been infected with HIV virus. After series of enquiry, it was discovered that the man contracted the disease from the woman outside. The wife also became a carrier now. The wife eventually divorced her husband.

The second was the case of a man whose wife packed out of her matrimonial home after fourteen years of marriage, leaving her four children behind. Her reason was that her husband moved the family out of their four-room rented apartment to a two-room rented apartment. Almost everybody supported the husband because at that time he had lost his job. The church pastor and some church members appealed to the woman not do so, but the woman would not listen. The man waited, begging and appealing to the woman to come back home. The woman refused. The man waited for two years and because, according to him, he did not want to be committing adultery with women around, sued for divorce. The church would not support divorce for any reason, and the church did not stop him from being a Sunday school teacher, despite the fact that it was boldly written in the church document that a divorced person would not be allowed to perform such duties.

The two situations discussed above reveal that the original intention of God for marriage is that it should be permanent. Those involved affirmed that divorce or separation was not the

best. It can be inferred that God according to Moses, permitted Israelites to divorce because of the hardness of their hearts.

(c) A total of 122 (28.97%) of the respondents claimed that there should be no divorce among Christians no matter the situation. This is an indication that only few would not consider divorce for any reason. This implies that members in the Roman Catholic Church and Baptist Church where no divorce is emphasised, succumb to divorce in some situations.

## 2. Responses of divorced people (Report of structured questionnaire)

Of the 200 copies of the questionnaires that were prepared to be filled by the divorced people, only 9 of the respondents agreed that they were divorced. Of these, two were males, while the remaining seven were females. Many of the divorced people who refused to fill the questionnaire might have done so because of the stigma attached to divorce in the Nigerian society. They are not living with their spouses yet they feel that they are not divorced.

### i. Kind of marriage contracted?

Three of them did church marriages which were duly registered in the registry and when it was time to dissolve the marriages they went to court in order to do so. The remaining 6 said they did traditional marriage and they indicated that, when they could no more tolerate each other, they parted ways.

### ii. Reasons for dissolution?

(a) A total of 4(36.4%) respondents indicated that their marriages were dissolved because of marital unfaithfulness mainly, adultery.

(b) Also, 6(54.5%) respondents said that their marriages were dissolved because their spouses were not caring enough. They neglected the payment of house rents and children school fees. Some men claimed that their wives gave themselves to too much outings. Truly, the New Testament emphasizes the importance of being responsible Christians (1 Timothy 5:8), but, Jesus would not encourage divorce for every little thing. He knew that the attention of some Jews of his time had shifted away from the sanctity and solemnity of marriage. They saw divorce as a solution to marital problems. However, just like in many traditional African cultures, in Jesus' day, polygamy was not seen as a violation of marriage sanctity. Some divorcees then were in polygamous homes.

(c) Only 1(9.1%) respondent indicated that the marriage was dissolved because of different religious beliefs. This respondent was a woman. She said that her husband was a Muslim and that there was no agreement of a second wife. Hence, when the husband got the second wife, they parted ways. She claimed that their marriage was not a legal marriage. However, under the Nigerian law, all forms of marriages are legal, whether contracted under marriage act, or native law and custom.

iii. Do you hold any office in your Church?

A total of 4(44.4%) respondents indicated that they were holding offices in their church, while 5(55.6%) of the respondents said that their churches did not allow them to hold any office in the church. They would go to the Church and worship, and they would go along well with the church leaders and members.

iv. Attitude of the church towards divorced members.

All the respondents indicated that their churches do not encourage divorce. It means that the churches are against it. They affirmed that their Churches are preaching and teaching against it. They also indicated that the church continued the process of reconciliation even in the case of the woman whose husband was not a Christian. The church is doing well here. The church has taken Jesus' teaching on forgiveness seriously. The divine and human forgiveness are reciprocal.

v. Effects of the divorce on your spouse.

A total of 4(44.4%) respondents indicated that they knew nothing about the ex-spouses' movement, while 5 (55.6%) indicated that they knew their movements through their children, friends and some former in-laws. These set of people said that the effects were negative, viz:

- (a) Late night keeping.
- (b) Children are not well taken care of.
- (c) No rest of mind.
- (d) Some have refused to attend churches.

vi. Effects of the dissolution of marriage on children

All respondents, except one, gave the following negative effects:

(a) Exposure of children to environmental danger: In the respondents' view, single parenting does not perfect the complementary nature of marital relationships. Where the father is strong, the wife might be weak and vice versa. In order to fill the gap, some divorced people look up to

people around them, leaving them, at times, to whoever can be of help to them. The children see such people as parents, but this 'foster parents' may not see it in the same way. This is probably one of the reasons why some stepfathers rape their stepdaughters, while stepmothers are ready to destroy the lives of their stepchildren.

(b)It debars their progress.

(c)They may not perform well academically.

(d)No fatherly care: All the women lamented that they were not strong like men in rearing their children; hence, the children were taking great advantage of their weakness to disobey their orders.

(e)Only one of them, a man, said that the children had no feeling of their mother's absence. He said that the children are even happy that she had left because the woman was always bringing her concubine to their matrimonial home.

v. Any possibility of reconciliation despite all odds?

Seven (77.8%) respondents said yes, while 2 (22.2%) respondents said no.

### 3. Report of structured oral interview with 248 divorced/separated church members.

The divorce statistics (Table 5.22) came from a structured oral interview purposively conducted with divorced members in the churches under study. The study aimed at interviewing many divorced members in the churches. However, the divorced members were not willing to open up. Some would not even grant the interview. Two hundred and forty-eight people participated in the survey. One hundred and forty-three were separated from their spouses. One hundred and five remarried even while their former spouses were still alive. The statistics reveals that there were cases of remarriage in the Baptist Churches in spite of the Church's principle of no remarriage.

Findings revealed that divorce and remarriage after divorce is very low in the Roman Catholic Church. This may be because the Vatican used to excommunicate parishioners who legally separated. Marriage is a sacrament. Any member who divorces legally would not partake in the mass during worship. The Celestial Church of Christ had the highest number of separated people (80). It also had the highest number of remarriage after divorce (69).

Churches are right by not encouraging divorce. They need to continue to preach and teach against it. However, churches must be very careful of the way they treat divorced people and separated people so as not to make them citizens of hell.

**Table 5.22: Divorce rate among selected church denominations in Ibadan**

	Separated	Divorced and Remarried	Divorced based of Restitution	Total	Percentage of Membership Divorced
Roman Catholic Church	10	02	0	12	5%
Baptist	53	34	0	87	35%
Celestial Church Of Christ	80	69	0	149	60%
Total	143	105	0	248	100%

#### **Views of church leaders on divorce**

Altogether, 46% of the church leaders and pastors sampled said that they would never allow divorced members to take active leadership roles in Church activities, while 30.7% said they would allow them to take active roles. Two serious reasons were advanced by these leaders: such people would be a bad influence in the church for the youths; and the church must not allow it. But, let us consider the following two cases: Case (A): In the Nigerian Baptist Convention, divorced or separated people are not allowed to take active roles in the church, not to talk of being deacons or deaconesses. However, there was the story of a Baptist pastor who, owing to reasons known to him and God, backslided. He was involved in all forms of immorality to the extent that he was sent packing from the church. The church loved the wife but she must follow the husband when he was leaving the church. They got to another town and the wife joined a Baptist church and even pleaded with the church to win the soul of her husband for God. The church tried everything within her power to rehabilitate the husband, all to no avail. The wife continued to experience assault and battering from the husband. He was no more taking care of the children, no more consummating the marriage but having extra-marital affairs. The woman vowed not to leave her matrimonial home despite the horrible experiences. One day, the neighbours of the couple went to the church leader and informed him that this one-time pastor was fighting with his wife. The leader took some church members and leaders with him. When

they got there, with what the leaders saw, they asked the woman to pack out for a while. The woman decided not to leave. It was the leader and the church members who packed the property of the woman and the woman started living separately but she continued to plead for reconciliation. The husband attested to it. Later, it was time for the church to select new sets of deacons, this woman was among them and the whole church could not stop her from working for God. The woman is still working and serving God as at time of this study.

Case B: A husband was into adulterous living. The church insisted that the woman should remain in her matrimonial home: there should be no separation or divorce. Later, the woman died, leaving two children behind. It is possible that the death could have been averted if the church had allowed the woman to leave first, and then allow the process of reconciliation to continue. Churches should be objective in dealing with divorce cases. There may be the need to treat each problem on its merit.

Churches will do well to condemn divorce, but it should continue to show love to these divorced people. A total of 77.8% of the church leaders indicated that they are ready to reconcile divorced people with their spouses despite all odds.

**Table 5.23: Response on the status of divorcees in the church**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Missing system	2	23.1	0	0
No	12	46.1	60	
Yes	08	30.8	40	
Total	26	100.0	100.0	

### 3. Responses regarding remarriage

The first question posed concerning remarriage dealt with people's understanding of what Christian marriage is. Three hundred (57.8%) respondents indicated that it is a legal union, ordained by God between a Christian woman and a Christian man with the Trinity as the foundation of the home. They opined that, except for sexual unfaithfulness, the bond cannot be broken, as taught by Jesus Christ. Even in this case, there is always the need for the grace of God

to forgive. However, 219(42.1%) averred that, although marriage is a legal union, it can be broken for other reasons beyond sexual unfaithfulness.

The second question looked into the grounds on which the churches under study accommodated remarriage. Results revealed that RCC and BC officially disallowed remarriage on grounds of broken covenantal marriages, and divorce caused by desertion, adultery and unbeliever partnership. The RCC offered remarriage in cases of invalid marriages. The CCC accommodated remarriage on grounds of childlessness, adultery and desire for a male child. The BC accommodated remarriage on no grounds.

While 36.4% of the respondents indicated that those who are divorced must marry to avoid promiscuous living and to avoid depression, which may come because of loneliness, 57.8% of them opined that remarriage is not biblical. Yet, 5.8% insisted that there can be no remarriage for any other reason than death. They said it is a sin. Some of them believed that children of the first marriage would suffer. Some even gave instances whereby those who divorced came together again. Some of them said there is no need for a divorced person to remarry because he/she does not know what he/she is going to face in the new relationship. Many of the second or third marriages do not work. Many of them end so soon. Research indicated that some members in the RCC and BC are indisposed towards their churches' teaching on remarriage. Table 5.22 reveals that some members in RCC and BC have divorced and remarried on the grounds accommodated in the CCC.

Churches are too dogmatic when talking about remarriage. They often misinterpret Jesus' teaching to mean no remarriage in all circumstances. Church leaders must study the situation on ground before concluding whether there can be remarriage or not. The story of Pastor S who was based in U.S.A. shows this. About 10 years before, Pastor S came to Ibadan for his wedding ceremony which was well attended by a lot of people, church leaders and workers inclusive. After the wedding Pastor S travelled back, giving the assurance that he would come and pick his newly wedded wife. The processing of travelling documents started. The first year, the wife could not go. The same thing went for second, third, fourth and fifth year. In the sixth year, it was confirmed that Pastor S had married another person and the union was blessed with children. The wife in Nigeria contacted the husband and he confirmed that he entered into another relationship three years after his wedding in Nigeria because it was clear that the Nigerian wife could not join him in the U.S.A. The Nigerian wife sought for divorce and it was



granted with the consent of Pastor S. She remarried and was still a worker in the church before she finally travelled to the United Kingdom.

Opinions differ concerning the woman's action, but she was ripe for remarriage at that time. The two years set aside by the law had lapsed and the husband was already caught in marital unfaithfulness. She had waited enough to contract a new marriage. Since then, Pastor S refused to come to Nigeria because he has transgressed against the law of the land and even the law of God. He also neglected his aged parents and did not see them until they died.

Remarriage among Christians is necessary especially in cases of irretrievable marriage breakdown. However, the foundation is very important. Young people should avoid rushing into marriage so that they would not rush out so soon. Remarriage is not always pleasant, not always the best and may, sometimes, require transition and adjustment. James C. Coleman observes that:

Arrival at the stage of remarriage involves a number of successive transition, which may have progressed from first marriage, to separation, to one-parent household, a courting period, living together without marriage, and finally to remarriage and the structuring of a new family. This process requires a redefinition of individual identity and involves major changes in family structure and function.<sup>17</sup>

### **5.3 Summary of the findings in the focus group discussion**

The need for focus group discussion arose after the questionnaires had been administered and analyzed. Purposive sampling of 25 people from each of the local government area under study was carried out. Altogether, 125 people were used for the focus group discussion. Each group had a period of discussion, with the researcher stood as the moderator of each group. During the interaction, it was discovered that in practice, none of the churches under study aligned with Jesus' standards.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

From the various findings, it was gathered that the denominations under study hold the sanctity of marriage in high esteem. The institution is seen as ordained by God and therefore must not be trivialized.

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<sup>17</sup> J. C. Coleman. 1988. *Intimate relationships: marriage, and family* ( New York: Macmillan Publishing Company), 440.

Roman Catholic and the Baptist Churches feel that polygamists should not be given full membership. However, the two denominations collect the tithes and offerings of the polygamists, yet they are not given full membership. In some cases, the polygamists are the financiers of these churches. Their children are active in the church. As a matter of fact, cell groups (house fellowships) are held in some of their houses. Some of them are in the evangelism units of the churches. Can the church affirm that the tradition of not granting polygamists full membership is more important than the spiritual gifts God has given these polygamists? The church forgives, accepts and gives repentant armed robbers and murderers full membership. Their offences are capital ones involving death penalty. Why should the church not forgive these polygamists? Where is the place of grace, which the church universal preaches? Should the church continue to lose members to other religions because of the mistake that has been made as an unbeliever? Johnson Lim rightly states that:

The nature of our past sins determines the nature of our present ministry.... Christ called the church to be a redemptive community. The church Father Augustine said that the church is a hospital for the sick, and not for those who are well. This is an indictment against the church of Jesus Christ. The church is the only institution that constantly shoots itself in the foot!<sup>18</sup>

In the Baptist Church, polygamists may not be given full membership but they serve as Sunbeam Leaders, Girls Auxilliary Advisers, Lydia Directors and Royal Ambassador Leaders.<sup>19</sup> They are doing it very well. However, when it comes to full membership, they are denied the opportunity. It was also discovered that the first wives are denied full membership in the Baptist Church even when the church knows that the first wife does not have any hand in her husband's decision to become a polygamist. She would not be a Sunday School teacher and become a deaconess. Yet she is a dedicated and committed church member. Why should the innocent bear the punishment of another man? The church needs to review her stand on membership status of polygamists.

The research revealed that some children from polygamous homes have left the Roman Catholic and the Baptist Churches because they felt unaccepted. Many joined some other denominations while others dropped Christianity for other religions.

In some cases, the church does not allow divorcees to remarry. However, the focus group discussants revealed that some divorced members remarried secretly and were bearing children.

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<sup>18</sup>J. Lim, 2006. Divorce and remarriage in theological perspectives . *Asia Journal of Theology*, vol.20, no.2, 277.

<sup>19</sup> These are organizations seen to the upbringing of children from ages three to till marriage.

The church never knew but some members knew. Such divorced members are full members and the church collects their money. By implication, the soul of such divorced members does not mean much to the church. By living hypocritical life, they are far from the Kingdom of God. Should the church not rethink her stand on divorced members in cases of irretrievable broken relationship, such as when the spouse of the divorced has remarried? What of divorce caused by deceit? An example is the case whereby the husband is impotent but did not disclose this before marriage. What happens when, after marriage, the husband discovers that his wife's womb had been removed before marriage and she did not tell the husband before marriage? Under no circumstance should the church encourage divorce. It is good that the church is coming up with teachings and doctrines that show the love and grace embedded in the teachings and life of Jesus Christ, but the church should give serious attention to the problems of individual.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 6.0 Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate Jesus' teaching on sex, marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the Synoptic Gospels and its relevance in light of the various teachings among selected denominations in Ibadan. The study looked at the various problems facing the contemporary Christians homes, especially in the light of the different interpretations given to Jesus' teaching in various church denominations.

Chapter two surveyed the works of some scholars about the aforementioned issues. There are two basic positions on divorce and remarriage. The first position holds that marriage is a covenant and, once entered into, it cannot be broken. Hence, all forms of divorce and remarriage are regarded as ungodly and therefore sinful. Those who believe that divorce could take place come with three different positions; divorce is permissible in some limited circumstances, but remarriage is never allowed; divorce and remarriage are allowed only on the grounds of adultery; divorce and remarriage should be allowed on any ground. Some of the positions do not adequately represent Jesus' teaching.

Chapter three, focuses on Jesus' teaching on marriage, based on the creation ideal. He emphasized monogamy though he did not condemn anybody for being a polygamist. Everybody has the right to marry. Celibacy is a gift from God. However, it was never enforced nor taken as a prerequisite for the kingdom of God. It is noted that sex honourable within Christian marriage.

Having identified Jesus' teaching on marriage, the study looked at what adultery means according to Jesus. It began with a discussion of the exception clauses in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. A straightforward reading of the texts reveals that Jesus allowed divorce for the reason of adultery. A thorough exegesis of Matthew 5:32, 19:9, Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18 indicate that Jesus forbids remarriage for any reason. Jesus condemned adultery but, in Jesus' teaching, death penalty may not be the best approach in cases of adultery.

Chapter five looked at the various interpretations given to the various teachings of Jesus on marriage by the selected churches. Findings revealed that the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist Churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention did not encourage polygamy, divorce, and remarriage. There were sanctions against erring members. The Celestial Church of Christ may not encourage polygamy, divorce, and remarriage; there are no legislations against them. Members who are polygamists, divorced and remarried are full members and they hold leadership positions. However, in spite of the position of Roman

Catholic Church and the Baptist Churches of the Nigerian Baptist Convention on marriage and adultery, their members in Ibadan metropolis divorce and remarry. In such cases, the divorced and remarried members are not granted full membership. In sum, in practice, none of the churches aligned with Jesus' standards.

### **6.1 Recommendations.**

The study recommends the following to the various church denominations in Ibadan metropolis in order to enhance effective interpretation and proper contextualisation of Jesus' teaching on marriage, adultery, divorce and remarriage:

- The sanctity of marriage institution must be maintained at all times. There should be strong teaching on the permanency of marriage among young unmarried people and married people, making special references to Jesus' teaching on marriage in the Synoptic Gospels.
- Proactive support of marriage should be of utmost importance by church leaders. In other words, there should be active intervention at the first sign of trouble. Churches should not relent to meet the need of troubled homes when necessary. This will go a long way in reducing cases of divorce.
- Responsibility should be put on the shoulders of the parents, the church, the preachers, and the elders to prepare young people for marriage.
- Churches can design male-female (M-F) activities, such as M-F classes, M-F workshops and M-F mentoring in order to create forums, through which young people can interact and express their feelings on issues about marriage, sex, divorce and remarriage.
- Young people should be guarded against sexual abuse and sexual immorality. This can be done if parents provide the needs of the young people, monitor their movement and in fact provide sex education at the early age. Sex education at the early age becomes necessary because of the development of information technology that has made information dissemination possible without much difficulty. Young people are exposed early in life to issues about sexuality and are more informed than their parents are.

- That Human Right Activists must be ready to help victims of rape. They will be of help in making sure that victims are vindicated without any stigmatization in society. This will encourage victims to be coming out to confront the rapists. They should also help to counsel and rehabilitate the victims. This will minimize all attempts to revenge by the victims.
- The parents and the government of the day must tackle premarital cohabitation, which is common in recent times among students in institutions of higher learning. In most cases, schools do not have enough space for students' accommodation. The students, either for lack of fund to rent houses or because of the exorbitant prices charged on the available rooms, result to living together.
- All that could lead to divorce or broken homes must be looked into before marriage. For instance, cases of blood group incompatibility must be resolved before contracting marriage.
- All efforts should be made by churches to relate Jesus' teaching on divorce and remarriage to everyday life of members, irrespective of their ethnic/cultural backgrounds. One major cultural determinant of divorce among some believers in Ibadan metropolis is childlessness. Inability to bear children or inability to bear a male child should not be a cause of divorce among Christians. Jesus held all sexes in high esteem (John 4:7-30; 8:1-11). Every follower of Jesus must be willing to abide by Jesus' teaching.
- All marriages in Nigeria should be legalized and formalized since such marriages need legal separation. This allows for reliable statistics on divorce and remarriage in Nigeria. Hence, all churches in Nigeria must register with government to conduct wedding so that government will approve divorce for such marriages. Nigeria should use the civil and cultural provisions in its systems to deal with difficult marriages.
- In cases where divorce has occurred, churches should not devalue or insult divorced people. There is no need of driving them away. They had better remain in the church than being sent out of the church to become unbelievers. One way of rehabilitating divorced members is setting up of single-parenting classes. This would go a long way in helping the divorced on the proper way of bringing up their children. It would help the children to overcome the psychological trauma facing the children in broken homes. It could guard against divorce on the part of the children of divorced parents.

- Special attention should be given to those who have difficult marital circumstances, which are not specifically addressed in Scripture. Such cases as physical abuse, emotional abuse, and chemical addictions could be dangerous to life, both physical and spiritual. Believers enmeshed in these circumstances are to be carefully led through the application of scriptural principles and prayer as they come to decisions consistent with Scripture and their own consciences.
- Churches need to deal with professing believers who willfully violate their marital vows sternly to serve as deterrent to other believers.
- Churches should recognise that the divorced and remarried believers have great potential for service to the church and must not be viewed as second-class saints. Instead, they are to be instructed in the Spirit's work of preparation and gifting for service through their personal lives and marriages.
- In case of irretrievable dissolubility, the innocent partner is allowed to remarry. This may not be a popular view among many Christian circles but experience has shown that, in some cases, such innocent partners grow to be having multiple sex partners because they are not allowed to remarry. In some cases, they have secret, private affairs with married people thereby destroying happy homes “ignorantly”.
- Where divorced and polygamists are truly born-again, they be granted full membership and be allowed to hold leadership positions in the church. This becomes necessary in the light of the fact that if churches could be collecting their tithes and offerings, the church should also allow them to use the various spiritual gifts and talents God has given them.
- The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) should hold a summit on Jesus' teaching on marital issues and come up with one voice. Decisions can be published and made available to all church denominations in Ibadan metropolis. This will possibly limit wrong interpretation, application, and confusion among Christians and even new converts.

## 6.2 Suggestions for future research

This study is, by no means, exhaustive. The researcher assessed works that have been done by scholars, and interviewed church leaders and members. Also numerous divorced and polygamists who were dedicated church members were interviewed. However, there is room for further studies in this area. One area of interest that future researchers could explore is

ethnic/cultural background as a factor in compliance to Jesus' teaching and church tradition. In addition, study that focuses on the high rate of divorce among each Christian denomination, not only in Ibadan, but also in Oyo State, Nigeria, could be conducted.

### 6.3 Conclusion

Christians in Ibadan must stick to the covenant fidelity. “As Yahweh loved the people of old unflinchingly, so Christ loves the people of the new dispensation and so should the couple themselves love in loyalty, service and obedience.”<sup>1</sup> To follow Jesus is to abide in him. It is then that man will ask for what he wills and it will be given to him. Jesus says it is by this that the believers’ joy will be full (see John 15:6-11). Although human law allows couples to divorce, in God’s eyes, a couple remains married even if they legally divorce.

Besides, to keep within Bible-based prescriptions, the churches should align with the teachings of Jesus in theory and practice, but should be pragmatic in applying Jesus' principles. In other words, the church should look critically at the context involved, treat difficult cases with the aim of providing solutions and generating dedicated Christians, not sending people away from the church and, probably, from Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> B. Chidili, 2001. Marriage without love. *Asia Journal of Theology*, Vol.15, no.2, 425.



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## Appendix

### UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

#### DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

#### QUESTIONNAIRE ON JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY IN LIGHT OF THE VARIOUS TEACHINGS OF SOME CHURCH DENOMINATIONS IN IBADAN

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is intended to examine the compliance to Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery by some church denominations in Ibadan. It is only meant for research purpose, and your truthful and factual response is solicited. All responses will be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes. Thank you and God bless.

#### SECTION A: BIO-DATA

SEX: MALE  FEMALE

AGE: 15-20  21-30  31-40  41-50  50 & Above

NATIONALITY..... ETHNIC GROUP.....

MARITAL STATUS: (a) Married  (b) Single  (c) Divorce  (d) Widow  (e) Remarried after divorce  (f) Remarried after being widowed

Name of Church.....

#### FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

**Instruction:** (a) Circle any of the option that is applicable or best gives your opinion.

(b) Explain where necessary. Thanks

STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD), DISAGREE (D), AGREED (A), STRONGLY AGREED (SA)

#### ADULTERY

1. All about adultery is having sexual relationship with a married or an unmarried person. SD D A SA
2. Marital unfaithfulness is a major cause of adultery. SD D A SA
3. Some take to adultery because of financial limitations. SD D A SA
4. Lack of sexual satisfaction on the part of one's spouse can lead to adultery. SD D A SA

5. Different religious beliefs. SD D A SA.
6. Insecurity on the part of either of the spouse. SD D A SA.
7. Everybody is involved in lustful looking. SD D A SA
8. List what can be done to curb adultery among Christians.

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**DIVORCE**

1. In your own understanding, what is Christian marriage?

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2. What do you understand by divorce?

.....

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.....

3. What are some of the reasons for divorce?

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.....

.....

4. What, in your own view, are the grounds under which a Christian can divorce his/her spouse?

a. ....

b. ....

c. ....

d. ....

e. ....

## REMARRIAGE

1. What is your understanding of Christian marriage?
2. My church accommodated remarriage on the following grounds (tick the appropriate option):

S/N	Reasons for Remarriage	Agree	Disagree
1.	Broken covenantal marriages		
2.	Divorce caused by desertion		
3.	Divorce caused by adultery		
4.	Divorce caused by unbeliever partnership		
5.	Divorce caused by invalid marriages		
6.	Divorce caused childlessness		
7.	Desire for a male child		

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## QUESTIONNAIRE B

### DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

#### QUESTIONNAIRE ON JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY IN LIGHT OF THE VARIOUS TEACHINGS OF SOME CHURCH DENOMINATIONS IN IBADAN

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is intended to examine the compliance to Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery by some church denominations in Ibadan. Kindly tick the appropriate responses to the following questions. Any information provided in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially and shall be used only for academic purposes. Please, supply the necessary information.

Thank you.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Sex: (a) Male [ ] (b) Female [ ]
2. Age: (a) Below 20 [ ] (b) 20-30 [ ] (c) 30-40 [ ]  
(d) 40-50 [ ] (e) 50-60 [ ] (f) Above 60 [ ]
3. Nationality..... Ethnic Group.....
4. Marital Status: (a) Married [ ] (b) Single [ ] (c) Divorce [ ] (d)  
Widow [ ] (e) Remarried after divorce [ ] (f) Remarried after being widowed  
Name of Church .....

#### A GUIDELINE ON THE INTERVIEW WITH SOME PASTORS/CHURCH LEADERS

##### Section A

##### ADULTERY

1. Adultery is part of sexual immorality condemned by the teachings of Jesus, yet some members are involved in it. What are the common excuses given by members for their involvement?

2. How do you rehabilitate such members?

##### DIVORCE

1. From your experience as a pastor and counsellor in the church, what are the contributing factors for the increase in broken homes?
2. Do you allow divorcees to take active and leadership roles in church activities?
3. State your efforts in restoring broken homes
  
4. There is the common saying that one should forgive and forget; what does this mean? How do you handle this in the case of divorced members in your church?
  
5. Love is reciprocal, they say. But in Matthew 5:43 – 48 Jesus teaches “love, even your enemy”. How practicable is this type of love among contemporary Christian homes?

### Section B

1. Number of Polygamists in my church (please tick the number):

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

2. Please circle the option that best describes your church's stance on the under listed issues(Y= Yes, N = No).

- a. There is written guidelines on the issues about sex, marriage and Adultery (Y, N).
- b. The church conducts wedding for pregnant intending couples (Y, N).
- c. Polygamists are granted full membership in my church(Y, N).
- d. Polygamists hold leadership positions in the church(Y, N).
- e. Polygamists partake of the Holy Communion/Lord's Supper(Y, N).
- f. My church does not allow divorce on any ground(Y, N).
- g. My church allows divorce on grounds of adultery(Y, N).
- h. Divorced people are full members in my church(Y, N).
- i. Divorced people take active and leadership roles in my church(Y, N).

- j. Remarried couples are full members of my church(Y, N).
- h. Remarried couples partake of the Holy Communion/Lord's Supper(Y, N).

**QUESTIONNAIRE C**

**DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES, FACULTY OF ARTS**

**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON JESUS' TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND ADULTERY IN LIGHT OF THE VARIOUS TEACHINGS OF SOME CHURCH DENOMINATIONS IN IBADAN**

Dear Respondent,

This questionnaire is intended to examine the compliance to Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery some church denominations in Ibadan. Kindly tick the appropriate responses to the following questions. Any information provided in this questionnaire will be treated confidentially and shall be used only for academic purposes. Please, supply the necessary information.

Thank you.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

- 1. Sex: (a) Male [ ] (b) Female [ ]
- 2. Age: (a) Below 20 [ ] (b) 20-30 [ ] (c) 30-40 [ ]  
(d) 40-50 [ ] (e) 50-60 [ ] (f) Above 60 [ ]
- 3. Nationality.....Ethnic Group.....
- 4. Marital Status: (a) Married [ ] (b) Single [ ] (c) Divorce [ ] (d) Widow [ ] (e) Remarried after divorce [ ] (f) Remarried after being widowed
- Name of Church .....

**A GUIDELINE ON THE INTERVIEW WITH SOME DIVORCED PEOPLE**

- 1. When did you get married?
- 2. What kind of marriage (Church, traditional, mosque, registry)?
- 3. For how long have you been divorced?
- 4. How did you secure your divorce?
- 5. Can you tell the reasons for the dissolution of your marriage?
- 6. Which church do you attend?
- 7. Do you hold any office in the church?

8. Explain your church's attitude towards divorcees?
9. What are the effects of divorce on your spouse?
10. What are the effects of your being divorced on your children?
11. If you have the opportunity, will you like to reconcile with your spouse, despite all odds?

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