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## **Christianity, Polygyny and Homosexuality in Nigeria: A Theopeotics Culture of Acceptance and Rejection**

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### **Abstract**

*This study, a descriptive survey research, presents the concepts of plural marriage and homosexuality in Nigerian context. Polygyny in Africa is regarded as a veritable sexual ethics devoid of adultery or concubinage, but an instrument for social status and economic strength. Homosexuality is a forbidden sexual ethics in African societies, and is seen as genocide targeted at exterminating a tribe or human race. Polygamy and homosexuality which are the crux of this paper could be seen from African Christian spirituality. As we rationally explore other cultures, and borrow according to genuine needs to reinforce ours, this paper recommends that we Africans must have the courage to affirm our cultural heritage, without any indulgence in*

*cultural anachronism and without any morbid and hollow quest for irrelevant cultural authenticity either. We should be proud of our sexual ethics. The method of approach is descriptive with the review of relevant literature.*

### **Introduction**

In recent times, there have been debates on the issue of polygamy and homosexuality in Nigeria. The development has been a major issue of concern to both domestic and foreign scholars and theologians of Nigeria. Homosexuality tends to be more obscure, forbidden and never tolerated in African societies which are under pressure to reproduce in order to survive. That is why polygamy is very much tolerated as a way of adequate reproduction, overcoming barrenness and lack of male child from a particular wife (cf. Gen. 1:27-28, 16:15-16, 25:1-4, 29:1-30 etc).

It is also tolerated for the sake of social status, and for political and economic reasons. It is biblical and it enhances spirituality among polygamists where they are accommodated in a church. Iwe (1985) advocated that Christian churches should give “vocational polygamy” a hearing within the African context (p. 204). This denotes that church has to consider the status, role and significance of plural marriage vis-à-vis time-honoured and honesty practiced institution among many Africans. This should be appraised within the context of African social-economic order, extended family patterns and practice, African traditional social security system and hierarchy of domestic and matrimonial values.

This is one of the reasons why African scholars and theologians should research on this traditional vocational polygamy instead of been unnecessarily shy to say the fact. Certainly African Christians must divest itself of all forms and vestiges of colonial cultural inferiority complex. Here the same prescriptions against homosexual mental colonization are equally valid and efficacious, for both mental and religio-cultural colonization are of the same genus of a morbid social situation.

The Mormons or Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints appreciated African sexual ethics in that the members practiced polygamy which was observed among the African natives until 1890 when American law was forced on them. Sir Joseph Smith (1805-1844), the founder of this religious movement, was a polygamist (Livingstone, 1980). We may ask, “What is the meaning of the Christian Kerygma if the law of monogamy must be

prescribed together with it, and if the external observance of this particular law vis-à-vis American or European civil law on marriage, no less than faith itself in Jesus Christ, is made a condition sine qua non for admission into the Christian fellowship? External conformity to this legal prescription has become so overwhelmingly important and finally decisive in practice that it seems almost to have become a substitute for the real conversion of faith in Jesus Christ, which alone leads to the newness of the Christian life. So there is really a problem, which this study is to investigate and proffer solutions. Nigeria and Africa would be used interchangeably.

### **Conceptual framework**

Polygamy is the idea of a man marrying more than one wife (Nmah, 2004). It is contrary to monogamy, which virtually all the Christian churches advocate. On the other hand, homosexuality (sexual relations between people of the same sex), incest, bestiality (sexual relations with an animal), sexual immorality, and other impure practices, are all an abomination to God. Men (gay) or women (lesbians) who feel sexual attraction only towards their own sex are a heterogeneous group (Bayley, 1996). In the course of a single year, one gay man may have hundreds of casual sexual contacts with different partners picked up in gay bars, or by purchase of sexual favours from male sex-workers (known as ‘rent boys’). This kind of behaviour helped to spread HIV rapidly in the developed world (Bayley, 1996).

The concept of independency, according to Barrett (1970) has four related meanings as regards customary parlance: (1) independence; (2) a territory not under the control of any other power; (3) in ecclesiastical usage, the principle that the individual congregation or church is an autonomous and equalitarian society free from any external ecclesiastical control; and (4) the polity based on this principle. The term, especially the third definition, is therefore a good description for the widespread phenomenon in which large numbers of former adherents of mission churches have succeeded in order to assert their cultural right to freedom from a larger ecclesiastical control, and in which others have founded new movements and organizations independent of direct or indirect control from the Western world.

Theopoetics connotes African worldview of her hermeneutics (that is her science of interpretation and termination) in terms of her relationship with God through her daily life experience (especially through her daily songs, dance, marriage, and other heritage). The word is derived from Greek and

English words denoting Greek-theos-god or Greek god Hermes, whereas poetics is an adjective of African poets and poetry. Poetics is a plural form of poetic.

### **Christian mission encounter with Nigerian culture of polygyny**

At the time missionaries from Europe and America set foot in Africa, they were perplexed and confronted with the question of whether or not the marriage customs associated with polygamy were consistent with membership in the Christian church. A majority of the missionaries came to the conclusion that they were not, which was not applicable to the homosexuals in America and Europe. Immediately this decision was taken the missionaries were faced with what many Nigerians felt to be questionable alternatives-divorce, fatherless children, destitute women, and prostitution.

In the Anglican Church in the early and mid-nineteenth century, the bishops from India led by bishop Milman of Calcutta and Bickersteth of Exeter were not prepared to set hard and fast rules, and advocated the baptism of polygamists under certain conditions (Webster, 1968). In 1857, Henry Venn, general secretary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) and a powerful force reckoned with among the evangelicals in the Anglican church, issued a memorandum which laid down the policy that polygamists should not be accepted into membership in the Church. The bishops in Africa, with the exception of Colenso of South Africa, supported the CMS view. Bishop Crowther and James Johnson, the two most prominent men in the church in West Africa supported Venn's decree and opposed any compromise on the issue of polygamy.

To Webster (1968), there was no reference to polygyny in Africa at the first two conferences of the bishops of the Anglican Church held at Lambeth 1867 and 1878. The third Lambeth Conference (1888) adopted three resolutions as regards to polygamous pattern of marriage in Africa, Nigeria inclusive namely:

- (1) that baptized converts who took a second wife to be excommunicated;
- (2) polygamists are not to be accepted; and
- (3) Wives of polygamists might be baptized under certain conditions.

Prior to the Lambeth pronouncement, the debate on polygamy in Nigeria had not been one in which the European missionary stood on one side and the African upon the other. The two groups called the polygamous marriage a cancer eating up and destroying our social system. The issue of polygamy had not been thoroughly discussed. Africa was not adequately represented in the episcopate, and no recommendations were made as to the alternatives.

The Wesleyan Methodist missionaries welcomed the Lambeth resolutions in the interest of a united front and in 1895 it passed a resolution in the Lagos Synod that no man be recommended for membership or continued in full membership unless a monogamist. All missionaries were, however, not in sympathy with this resolution. W.H. Findlay, secretary of the CMS 1900-1910, averred that as a missionary in India he had baptized polygamists. In 1917 a schism in the Lagos Methodist Church provoked the synod to reaffirm its policy as laid down in 1895. It was impossible to enforce such a ruling on individual and independent churches except through draconian procedures. In 1910 the dependent churches of Baptist mission were warned that, "All financial aid shall be withdrawn from any church that has polygamous members"(Webster, 1968, p.226). Our contemporary society is not the first to be threatened with withdrawal of aid.

In 1914 the independent churches agreed to milder resolutions: "Believing that monogamy is the ideal state of family life, we declare our adherence thereto." In 1916, the mission refused to build schools near independent churches suspected of tolerating polygamous members and in 1920 threatened to withdraw fellowship from these same churches.

The year of the Lambeth pronouncement on polygamy coincided with the beginning of the African church movement in Lagos. Between 1888 and 1920 it developed into five major denominations- the Native Baptists 1888, the United Native African (U.N.A) 1891, the African Church 1901, the West African Episcopal 1903, and the United African Methodist (Eleja) 1917. In 1913 some of these organizations set up the African communion to provide for inter-communion and joint action on issues which affected the movement as a whole.

At this point, some African churches started to indigenize the liturgy. Indigenization did not mean a rebuilding of the structure of the church, only the addition of an African curlicue to its already heavy gothic nature. By accepting polygamists into the church through baptism, the African churches

took a significant and vital step towards indigenization. As long as the church ignored polygamy, it was forced to ignore discussion of social morality, for the majority of social bonds existed through polygamous relationships. The social position, economic status, ethnic composition and previous religious experience of the leadership of the African churches partly determined their policy towards African social customs in general and polygamy in particular. Since the spread of Christianity preceded secular development, and since salvation was possible regardless of marriage custom, the proper role of the church was to remain flexible, tolerating polygamy until such time as the economic and social conditions of the people made it possible to attain the ideal-monogamy.

### **Christian mission and homosexuality in Nigeria**

The early encounter between the American and European missionaries on one hand and Nigeria on the other did not experience negative effects since in Nigeria then it was not known to Africans. For the missionaries, it was not a sin. But homosexuality tends to be more hidden and less well tolerated in societies in Nigeria which are under pressure to reproduce in order to survive. To homosexuals, negative attitudes and behaviours towards homosexual people were accepted in community tradition, but supported by remarkably few biblical statements, and some texts can be interpreted in more than one way. No sayings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth have any direct relevance. The biblical tradition rests on two accounts of the complementarities of men and women at creation (Gen. 1 and 2, which are widely separated in time and have different sources), and on six other texts which either appear to or actually do, make negative statements about same-sex genital acts. Some biblical scholars, however, question the relevance of these texts to all homosexual relationships, as the forms of attention is not always on homosexuality as such, but rather on social injustice and hostility to strangers (Gen. 19), condemnation of pagan cults (Lev. 18: 22 and 20: 13), homosexual lust when persons choose to act contrary to their “natural” inclinations (Rom. 1: 26-27) and homosexual exploitation of children (1Cor. 6: 9-10, 1Tim. 1: 9-10).

At present Christian theological ethical positions on homosexual orientation and its genital expressions lie along a four-point scale, ranging from severe rejection to relaxed approval. But it is often strangely influenced by cultural stereotypes about gay people. The different positions depend upon alternative

ways of interpreting scripture and in society and upon different understanding of the meaning of human sexuality.

Within the Christian churches homosexuality oriented people have been excluded, marginalized and persecuted in the great majority of cases (Boswell, 1994). New reflection by the churches in this area began only under the influence of a shift in social attitudes towards sexuality in countries where Christians make up the majority of the population, birth, marriage, divorce, remarriage and burial were after the subject of Canaan law and ecclesiastical rites. Thus a considerable part of the responsibility for public morality and especially for the regulation of sexual relations lay with church officials.

Conflict between church and state are often touched off when state laws, which apply to all citizens whatever their religious and ideological convictions, do not from the outset accord with the moral principles and canonical provisions of the churches. In the question of divorce the secular authority has for the most part prevailed, but in questions like abortion or homosexual relations conflicts continue to arise (Lienemann, 1998).

Many Africans would feel constrained to view the introduction of a liturgy for heterosexual marriage (or same-sex couples) as the prelude to a new splitting of the church and thus as a “casus confessionis” (a challenge to the existence of the Church). It is obvious and probably inevitable that we should speak of sexual moralities in plural in this context.

### **Polygyny and homosexuality: A culture of theopoetics acceptance and rejection**

Some Africans believed that the blindness of the mission society’s policy on polygamy was a God given opportunity for the African Churches. It was the duty of the African church to provide a spiritual home for the polygamous pagan, disillusioned with this old gods but refused admission by the mission. By 1921 the African churches counted 100,000 adherents of the total Christian population of Southern Nigeria of 500,000. The twin attractions of African leadership and toleration of polygamy had proved effective. After 1920 the mission churches, reacting to the success of the African church movements, began to accept or tolerate a kind of concealed polygamy among the laity. The weapon of mass ex-communication was less frequently used. Today there is every indication that many mission Churches are tolerating as much polygamy as the African Churches. Had the mission Churches insisted

upon a strict observance of the monogamy rule they would have been smaller and the African Churches proportionately larger today.

Polygyny has always been a normal and sanctioned institution in the majority of African societies. In most cases, however, polygamy has been a necessary element in the economy, a matter of prestige for men, a guarantee of security for women, and a foundation of family, clan and tribe. Augustine held it was not an offence if the object was the multiplication of the race (Barrett, 1970). Calvin proscribed polygamy and regarded the patriarchs as guilty of sin; Luther and Melancthon, however, held that monogamy was not obligatory under every circumstance, but that whatever was permitted by the law of Moses remained lawful still. Luther held also that the Christian was at liberty under the gospel to have more wives than one. The council of Trent forthwith anathematized all who held this view, and the matter attracted little further attention until the expansion of missions across the world began in the nineteenth century.

To Barrett (1970), polygamists with their families therefore could not be fully received into the church. Many missions refused baptism to husbands, wives, and children; other accepted the two latter, while a very few permitted the baptism of the polygamous husband and his family in the first generation only. Christians who lapsed into polygamy were excommunicated or otherwise disciplined. The brutality with which the missions enforced monogamy in many areas of Nigerian societies came as a profound shock to African society. Reaction to this inexplicable attack by the mission was inevitable, but no African missionary to enforce polygamy in Europe or American. That would have been to commit "missionary suicide. A further cause of antagonism was the hypocrisy of many members of the mission churches, ostensibly monogamous but actually living in concubinage. But in most cases, the experience of missions among the Akan of Ghana is typical; despite consistent condemnation by the churches for over a century, the incidence of polygamy did not fall in the slightest (Barrett, 1970). To Barrett, the independent churches have always been noted for their leniency towards traditional marriage patterns. Polygamists are accepted for baptism, though further polygamous marriages are usually forbidden and only monogamists can hold sacred office. There are of course exceptions to the latter rule. Prophet Harris permitted polygamy, and was always accompanied in his travels across some West African countries by three or four of his white-robed wives; Isaiah Shembe, messiah of the Nazirite Baptist Church ( South

Africa) had four wives; Josiah Oshitelu, founder of the Church of the Lord (Aladura) had seven; and Johane Maranke, founder of the African Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe; left sixteen wives on his death in 1963. Typical of the majority attitude is that of the African Church of Israel in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), what in 1945 broke off from the seventh-day Adventist mission with the expressed reason “to help polygamists to enter heaven” (Barrett, 1970, p.118).

But polygamy was adopted form of marriage from the time of Lamech, (Gen. 4:19), and may be concluded that it is not forbidden in scripture. Abraham, Jacob, David and Solomon among others were polygamists as recorded in the holy Bible and yet they were regarded as saints or God’s chosen servants and friends. In Africa, polygamy is practiced mostly among traditional rulers such as Oba ,Emirs, ndi Eze, Ndidems, and among some title holders including some renowned farmers (Nmah, 2004). It is a matter of prestige to these people. That is to say that polygamy could be determined by economic, political, religious and social factors. Africa by and large still remains a continent of polygamy, which has become a built-in-value for societies. Nmah citing Hillman stated that economic change in recent times has undermined the economic basis for polygamy. Still the practice finds reason for its continuity and expression in new forms.

In Judaism originally polygamy was common, but by a decree of a famous Rabbi of 11<sup>th</sup> century it was prohibited to western Jews and today it is applied to all the Jews. During the post exilic period, polygamy was only experienced among some high and powerful Hebrews. In view of this, Islam appears to be the only revealed religion from among others which needs no apology for its teaching on polygamy. Certainly there is today among church leaders in Africa a new openness and at least a willingness to discuss the recurring suggestion that the churches may have been mistaken in their previous policies regarding plural marriage. In 1969, Tanzanian government stated that Christian marriages in Tanzanian should be legally recognized as potentially polygamous (Nmah, 2004).

What is the meaning of the Christian kerygma if the law of monogamy must be presented together with it, and if the external observance of this particular law, no less than faith itself in Jesus Christ, is made a condition sine qua non for admission into the Christian fellowship? External conformity to this legal prescription has become so overwhelmingly important and finally decisive in practice that it seems almost to have become a substitute for the real

conversion of faith, which alone leads to the witness of the Christian life. The theological problem here is a very old one; and it may perhaps be formulated in the question addressed to the people of Galatia: “Was it through observance of the law that you received the spirit, or was it through faith in what you heard?” (Gal.3:2).

So there is really a problem. An increasing number of African church leaders have come to see this problem in its true theological and anthropological dimensions. Nmah (2004) citing bishop Josiah Kibira of the evangelical Lutheran church in Tanzania averred,

Our greatest ethical problems are divorce and polygamy and, intertwined, with them, the question of church discipline. The church should not simply stress laws without first making certain that these rules are a help rather than a detriment to those in need (p. 82).

Although members of African Christian communities may tend to abandon this custom, the fact remains that the vast majority of the African populations are not Christians, and the traditional religio-ethical values are still very much in force among most of the peoples. Social change is inevitable always and everywhere, and the pace of change is manifestly rapid in many parts of Africa. But the vitality of traditional African cultures should not be underestimated. The efforts to work out what is called, “African socialism” exemplify this. We the Africans must interpret the gospel within our context in order for it to be meaningful to our souls.

In Leviticus 18 and 20:10-21, God gives us a list of those practices which are impure and on which he has pronounced a severe judgment. Gays and lesbians today try to argue that their practices are a reasonable alternative lifestyle. The truth is that these practices are an abomination to God (Lev.20:13). The Bible says that when people practice sexual perversion, God gives them over to their sin, and they bring God’s judgment upon their lives (Rom. 1:24, 26). We need to remember that God totally destroyed the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in judgment for the sin of sexual perversion (Gen.19: 1-25). God has not changed.

Homosexuality is one of the prophecies concerning conditions in our modern society. A society that is characterized by lawlessness, open wickedness, murder, brutality, occult practices, stealing and sexual sins that will increase greatly (2 Tim. 3: 1-4; Matt. 24: 10-12; Rev. 9: 21). The conditions in our

contemporary society is similar to the conditions before the flood in the time of Noah with respect to selfish living and indifference to God (Matt. 24: 37-38; Luke. 17: 26-27); or that of the days of Lot (Luke 17: 28-29), which included the homosexual practices of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18: 1-13). Such homosexual practices are becoming common today. Homosexuality and other sexual sins are the main cause of the AIDS epidemic in the world.

Human sexuality has never been a part of public discourse among Africans. In the traditional setting kindred family system prevailing patterns of behaviour, especially sexual behaviour, followed a rigid code reinforced by customs, symbols and communal rituals. Because homosexuality was never spoken or heard of in this situation, it is difficult to find much written documentation on the issue of homosexuality in Africa. As of today few radical groups (especially among white settlers in South Africa, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia) struggling for social justice in Africa concern themselves with discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference. Most African churches have generally speaking refused even to acknowledge the existence of homosexuals. Misconception and prejudices abound about any behaviour that is out of the ordinary/or custom. Homosexuality in African continent is a sin. In South Africa per se, science and technology, new economic patterns, the growing influence of the media and the diminishing influence of religion have brought about vast changes in the people's mores, beliefs and lifestyles. A once-rigid code of conduct is being subjected to critical scrutiny.

For homosexuals in Africa, there are the feelings of being left out, and being invisible in various social settings. There is also the torture of trying to make a relationship or a living arrangement acceptable and presentable especially in South Africa, so to speak. Argument on homosexuality and polygamy must be based on four planks: linguistic and customary marriage differences; socio- religious differences; socio- economic differences; and socio- political differences.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Nmah (2004) and O' Donovan (1996) opined that polygamy is a difficult problem among Christians in Africa. But it is indeed relevant in African situation where it is applicable. The men and women who can cope with this system of marriage should be allowed to contract it since it has obvious advantages. Since it includes the commitment and responsibilities of

marriage, it is not the same issue as sexual immorality or adultery. There are strong cultural arguments in support of polygamy in African society as:

- i. Having several wives is a symbol of power, wealth and influence in traditional African societies for many centuries.
- ii. Having several wives usually ensures that he will have many male children to continue his name.
- iii. Closely related to the continuation of one's family is the idea that by having many children and grand-children, one will be remembered and honoured long after death. This is very important in traditional African society.
- iv. In agricultural societies, several wives is a way to ensure having many children and hence the necessary labourers for farming, cattle herding and house chores.
- v. Since it is common practice for many African wives to refuse sexual relations with their husband for up to two years after the birth of a child, having several wives is a way for the husband to avoid sexual immorality.
- vi. Having several wives increases happiness and meaning in life as part of African community values.
- vii. There is a belief in many tribes that it is very bad to be a single woman and have no children. As a result, many African women prefer to be one of several wives rather than to be single.

O'Donovan (1996) argued that Abraham took another wife apart from Hagar (Gen. 16:1-3) for reasons similar to those of the traditional African. And from that time on, he said, there was no peace in Abraham's home. But we can equally understand and infer that there are many husbands (Christians *per se*) who are monogamists yet they do not have peace in their various matrimonial homes too. Many a times immorality characterized their marriage. Cases abound in traditional and church panels.

As the West attempts to assert its values and to protect its interests, non-western societies confront a choice. Some attempt to emulate the West and to join or to "band-wagon" with the West. According to Wilson (1982) and Weber (2000), secularization theory holds that Christianity, with its value centered on the promotion of Western education, intrinsically brings about

rationalization-independent in thought – which naturally reduces the significance of organized associations such as African socio-religio-cultural values.

The Bible, the primary narrative and fundamental normative source for the church's own self-understanding and ethical practice, as well as for its relationship to the larger society, has considerable material for reflection and appropriation on the subjection of human sexual behaviour. According to Hanigan (1998), starting with the two creation stories in the opening chapters of Genesis (Gen.1:28; 2:18-24), and in concluding a variety of narratives found in the historical books such as Gen. 19:1-14, 34:1-5, 38:1-26, 39:1-20; Ruth 4; 2 Sam. 11-12: 15; 1 Kings 11:1-13), the holiness codes in Leviticus (Chapter 18, especially v.22) the ten commandments (Ex. 20: 14, 17), the Song of Songs and the practical moral advice of the wisdom literature (Pss. 127 and 128; Prov. 5, 31:10-31; Eccl. 9:9-10), and the prophetic analogy between marriage and the Israelite covenant with God (Isa. 54:4-10; Ezek. 16; Hos. 1-3; Mal. 2:10-16). The Old Testament is thought to shed considerable light on marriage and family as central to the divine purpose for human sexuality and its responsible uses in relation to God's covenant with Israel.

The NT is likewise eloquent in its testimony to marriage and family as the embodiment of the divine purpose for human sexuality and its proper use in light of the already and not-yet present kingdom of God proclaimed in and by Jesus Christ. The gospel passages on marriage and divorce (Matt, 5:31-32, 19:1-9; MK. 10:1-12) are all taken with great seriousness in a true church. The Pauline instructions on licit and illicit sexual behaviour (1Cor. 6:12-7:40) as well as the great Pauline analogy of the mystery of Christ union with the church to the human material union (Eph. 5:21-23) are prominent among NT passages which provide fuller insight into the divine plan for human well-being and the gospel call to holiness in regard to sexual activity.

Given Catholic teaching on the created dignity of every human person as the foundation of human rights (Hollenbach, 1979) and its understanding of sexual orientation, a homosexual orientation is in and of itself irrelevant to the question of rights (Pedicord, 1996). Homosexual persons share the same human dignity and may claim the same human and civil rights both in church and society as the heterosexual individuals. Nor does immoral behaviour deprive anyone of human dignity and human rights, though it may be reason to define more narrowly or even curtail some civil rights. People who commit

crimes find their civil rights curtailed by the state in various ways, most notably by being imprisoned. In the church mortally sinful behaviour limits one's access to the sacraments. The rejection of homosexuality or its condemnation in Africa is not an abuse of individuals' fundamental human rights. America and Europe are not Africa. We are poles apart both culturally and politically despite globalization. Homosexuality is a foreign culture. When men or women decide to defy nature, they pay dearly for it. We must guard jealously our cultural values from being eroded, bastardized and undermined by foreign influences in the name of human rights, western civilization or similar nomenclatures. If by saying no to permissiveness (done overtly or covertly) we incur the wrath of some foreign powers, so be it. We must never compromise our religious beliefs and moral values on the altar of foreign aid. Animals do not mate with same sex. But one he goat or cock can mate with many ewe or hens. To my mind, a 14-year jail term proposed by Nigerian national assembly is too small. All those involved in homosexual practices should receive capital punishment. If an African man can not contract pluralistic type of marriage in America or Europe, hence no American or European has any right(s) be it civil or human rights in African land to contract or practice homosexuality. Evil can never be the right of any body. The right a homosexual has in Nigeria is the right of repentance. This is because if the church or African society were to give him lawful status, that means the church or African continent has permitted him to remain in sin and not to repent. It is our desire in African Christianity and as Africans not to lose anyone, but that desire cannot come at the expense of truth.

We love Jesus and Jesus loves us too. We do not want western or American paternity, but Philadelphia in a matter of Christian fellowship irrespective of our cultural backgrounds. Here lay the crux of the whole matter: in the phrase "to share and sympathize." In regard to this one small facet only-love as close contact with others involving listening, sharing, sympathizing, sensitive understanding in depth as between equals, and making allowances-missions in many African tribes had failed. There was, so it appeared, no contact, no dialogue, no making of allowances for African culture, no comprehension, no sympathy extended to traditional society or religion. To Barrett (1970), this failure of the version of Christianity proclaimed by the missions has been threefold, and can be elaborated briefly around three themes which we may term Philadelphia, Africanism and biblicalism. Failure to practice the first led to inability to understand the second theme which in turn led to a serious misunderstanding of the third.

We can recommend here that:

1. Churches have a duty above all to commit themselves to overcoming any discrimination contrary to human rights, including discrimination against the polygamists because it is African culture.
2. Churches in Nigeria most not tolerate homosexuality because it is a taboo in Nigerian culture. African pattern of marriage has a pressure of procreation.
3. Sexual ethics should be the object of church instruction, youth work and family education and counselling. The development of appropriate teaching materials, differentiated according to age groups, basic social conditions and cultural background, would be very desirable.
4. The men and women who can cope with this polygamous system of marriage should be allowed to contract it since it has obvious advantages.

Again, since a Nigerian could not be allowed to marry more than one wife at a time in America or Europe and yet those Africans in diaspora respect this law of the land in respect of sexual ethics, it is also imperative that these foreign nations should reciprocate as regards African traditional marriage ethics as practice in Africa.

A sincere, studied and sustained effort must be made by the Africans to revive all the sound and functional elements of their cultural institutions and values. The God of Abraham and of our race gave us a culture. To abandon it in a childish quest for a foreign one would not only constitute a gesture of ingratitude to Him, but also a standing case of indictment against His benevolent cultural dispositions among the races of the world.

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