

PASTORAL MINISTRY AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES
POSED BY CONTEMPORARY HUMAN SEXUALITY

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ABSTRACT

This is a study on the pastoral ministry and the ethical challenges posed by the contemporary human sexuality. It grew out of the writer's concern on the seeming failure of traditional Christian moral instruments to check the growing trend of sexual immorality in the ministry.

Convinced that the problem has to do principally with the fact that persons, including pastors, are sexual beings, the study, using the library and field work research methods, critically examined and pastorally responded to the invalidating ethical queries and their consequent challenging theological concerns, raised by the post-modern sexual culture on how pastoral ministry is done.

The study affirmed that the pastoral ministry is human in a sense. They are influenced internally and externally by the ethical challenges raised by the contemporary human sexuality. Though secularization is majorly accountable for these challenges, it has experientially proven to be incompetent to improve on the old Christian sexual ethics it criticizes. A deeper reflection on the biblical motif of creating male and female in the image of God, especially at creation, fallen, redemption and glorification states of human experience and history seems to explain the perceived incompetence of secularization and suggest that all queries today on human sexuality can be adequately answered by the church. The church, therefore, led by the pastoral ministry should not fail the explicit and implicit hope reposed in her by the contemporary sexual culture in Nigeria and should also not fail her biblical purpose on earth to evolve a relevant sexual ethics for today. Rather than compete with the globalized sexual culture to drive the society, the pastoral ministry should

relevantly and adequately seek to drive the sexual culture in line with the purpose of her existence.

From the general pastoral perspective, individual Christians and Christian homes currently subjected to moral tensions created by secularized and hypersexualised culture of today would find in this a renewed faith in the Christian Scripture for daily victorious living and on the Son that sets free, and sets free indeed! Pastors and their families, church leaders and workers would particularly find the study quite revealing and empowering for their personal life and ministries. The wholistic approach of the study as reflected in its recommendations, if followed, is capable of preserving the social and spiritual transforming power of the pastoral ministry, keeping it faithful to the Lord and relevant to generations until the Lord comes back.

5.2 Conclusion

The ideals of freedom and justice embraced by contemporary human sexuality are by nature transcendent and have remained elusive to human history since the fall. The fallen state of human sexuality is demonstrated in the evil experiences characteristic of a life of bondage and injustice either sexual or nonsexual. This fact points to the need for the Gospel of Jesus Christ to save human sexuality. The 'liberation' culture brought with it the "tyranny of experts" making it elusive. It is the view of this work that relevant Christian education, particularly with the biblical reflections on human sexuality like those discussed in this study as its premises is needed for the true liberation.

The many areas of service and training challenges for the pastoral ministry opened up by contemporary human sexuality have affirmed the need for renewed adequate equipping of pastors to cope with these challenges today. Consequent on this is the need also to develop ministerial sexual ethics to foster a healthy Christian fellowship within and outside the church.

The attitude of no sense of responsibility to God concerning the way people live their lives as sexual beings has crept into the pastoral ministry and corporate worship. If the comment of Busola Oke, one of Nigeria's popular gospel musicians is to be taken serious, then something must be done about Christian worship. She, when told that the dance in her video music *Asirimola* does not 'look gospel,' queried if there is any dance for gospel. She referred to Kirk Franklins' (an American gospel singer) micro

mini wearing dancers and compared other Nigerian gospel singers who do not make up, wear long skirts, etc to her dog! "The way I serve my God is different" (Interview with Busola Oke 51-52).

Finally, this study concludes that the challenges posed by contemporary human sexuality to pastoral ministry in Nigeria, though secular in context, are implicitly and explicitly pastoral in context and intent. In order not to betray the apparent trust reposed on the church by the society, the pastoral ministry should lead the church to, and in an intensively sustained manner, evolve relevant and dynamic biblical sexual ethics, driven by the purpose of the church. If our culture or society would be inevitably driven by human sexuality, then the human sexuality should be relevantly and adequately driven by the biblical purpose of the church.

5.3 Recommendations

The writer makes the following recommendations to the pastoral ministry in line with the above conclusions:

1. Redirect the prosperity content of the gospel prevalent in the country today to focus more on harmonious quality of being male and female as at the creation state. Enough of the financial aspect, afterall, money and sex are the two major pitfalls of human endeavours today.
2. Develop appropriate theology of sexuality to back all evangelistic and missionary endeavours for all cultures especially on marriage (since all cultures marry) and make sexuality in any particular culture a target for the gospel message.

3. The above mentioned theology of sexuality should answer questions on the role of the Holy Spirit, reason and experience on repentance, regeneration and sanctification. The testimony of the transformed Corinthians in I Corinthians 6:9-11 should be repeated today among heterosexuals and homosexuals.
4. Specific sexually oriented social misconducts and subgroups, like prostitution, commercialization of the women body in advertisement; etc, should be targeted by specialized outreach ministries.
5. Revision of the holiness content of discipleship programme to reflect the contemporary understanding of human sexuality which goes beyond genital sex and include all that we are and do as sexual beings living together in a community. This is understandably a very broad task, but anything short of it will bring the ministry back to the old taboos.
6. The age-group Christian education programmes should be strengthened in the areas of biblical understanding of our sexuality as exposed, for example, in this study. Though the physiological education of sex is desirable, it should not be taught with the ethical neutrality that secular education claims to be teaching it. The fact of nonsexual uses of sex should be stressed with their ethical consequences for each age group. Attention should be given equally to all age groups-childhood to senior citizenship.
7. Though gender functions are appropriately taught in gender groupings, masculine and feminine behaviours as constructed by the society should not be imposed on any gender. For example, cooking should be taught in boy's group and fixing electrical appliances in girl's group, after all best cooks and headgear experts in Nigeria are also known to be men!

8. Young men and ladies should be taught the skills of sexual relationship in order to avoid the life destroying sexual behaviour and experiences prevalent today among youths.
9. The Christian ideals of marriage should be sustained as taught in the Bible but with contemporary reflections on romantic love. Efforts should be made by the pastoral ministry through special study groups to resolve emerging ethical tensions related to marriage and procreation like those discussed in chapter four of this study.
10. The consistent conclusion of contemporary theological reflections on the human love, eros, is that it is the starting point to the Christian maturity to agape love. What is needed is the skill to handle the genital sexuality appropriately in relationships. This skill, the pastoral ministry should lead to develop and teach.
11. An expanding course on sexual ethics, incorporating global influences on African Christian theology on sexuality be introduced and taught serially throughout the years of training in theological institutions. The course should address the issue of gender stereotyping in the ministry.
12. An intentional mentoring approach of discipleship on sexuality should be adopted for resuming students and be sustained preferably throughout the ministry of pastors. Mentors could be taken within and outside the training schools but should be men and women of proven character.
13. Spiritual clinics on sexuality should be organized periodically to provide healing on sexually related hurts, offences, conflicts and behaviours. The

healing could be a combination of spiritual deliverance, physical healing, mental healing and relational healings.

14. Training schools should keep confidential records of the sexual problems of graduating students and make it available whenever they are needed by the church or denomination. This should be done redemptively.
15. Screen students for psychological competence and advise them of the results (Hardman-Cromwell 7). This should be done periodically.
16. The commissioning, on denominational levels to start with, theological study group or groups to recommend a ministerial code of ethics with special reference on the sexual conduct of pastors should be effected.
17. The ethics on sexual conduct should meet those of other professions as a minimum standard and make ample reference to the sexual being (character) of the pastor.
18. The ethics should seek to demythologize the pastor as a sexual being and promote a fulfilling marriage life between the pastor and spouse.
19. Specific theological and ethical position should be taken on homosexuality, bisexuality, and other sexual orientations different to heterosexuality with the view to preserve the sanctity of pastoral ministry.
20. More female pastors should be trained to take up more counseling work in our local congregations since the membership of these congregations are mostly women.
21. Church members should be educated to accept fully the ministry of female pastors as they do for the male pastors. This should be demonstrated in the pastors' fellowship by giving female pastors the opportunity of leadership.

22. Efforts should be made by the pastoral ministry not to encourage the cultural low view of single persons. Marriage as a prerequisite for ordination should be reviewed, for example, and the church should specifically enrich her ministry to the single generally.
23. A board should be established by the church in Nigeria to set theological and Christian ethical standards to be met by all Christian musicians and artistes in the country.
24. Each local congregation should also make up what it considers moderate dressing or make ups and advise her members to comply. Care should be taken to minimize the negative influence of the western culture.
25. The effects of gender segregation, sitting together of couples and the presence of singles during corporate worship should be studied and a policy advise on it be given to churches in each denomination.

The aforementioned recommendations are not exhaustive neither do we pretend that the study is. We do hope, however, that a wholistic sensitization on the ethical challenges posed by contemporary human sexuality is achieved to some degree.