

**EVALUATION OF THE CONCEPT OF AFRICAN  
THEOLOGY FOR MARRIAGE WITH EMPHASIS ON  
YORUBA SOCIETY**

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**Abstract**

The advent of Christianity in Nigeria affected the ways of life of the citizens in general. Among those areas of influence is Marriage and in tune with the aim of Gospel which is creating a godly standard for the people for an eternal driven living. Recent experience among Yoruba culture reveals that there is an urgent need for the evaluation of our newly emerging marriage culture which must be in accord with the Scripture. This article therefore looked into the general concept and origin of marriage, which the African concept and worldview on the subject was considered. It was further brought to the fore by examining the kind and process of marriages conducted by the Yoruba tribe of Western Nigeria, where most pre-marital and marriage activities were explained. The paper compared notes between traditional and modern marriage system in order to fairly assess any inadequacies to be addressed. There was a peep into the Old Testament and New Testament opinion on Marriage along with the views of the Church fathers. This leads us to the issue of divorce where some opinions and concerns were raised. This article was wrapped up by exposing some shortcomings in modern marriage and the havoc caused by divorce before offering recommendations that could address the raised issues.

**KEYWORDS:** MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, CHRISTIANITY, YORUBA

## **Introduction**

It is easy to classify Africa as a developing continent although every continent then and now is bedeviled with societal problems. Among these problems are: disorderliness, robbery, immorality, disrespect, laziness, idleness, poor attitude to work, conflict, indiscipline, high rate of divorce, selfishness, just to mention a view. All efforts to address these decadence points directly to the fact that root-cause is the defective family system in the affected continents. The heart rending issue is that Africa holds the ace in the ranking of decadence. Looking back at the days of yore before the advent of western lifestyles, Africans have been having a well nurtured family system whose values are built on marriages strictly stemmed on rich culture and traditions.

In line with Diop's observation that even after about three centuries of Christianity, the church in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular has not developed a theology which bears the distinctive stamp of African thinking because the continent is spoon-fed by the west all along.<sup>1</sup> Idowu is of the opinion that the exclusion of African experience, culture and perspectives reveals why African Christians including their Nigerian counterparts have been unable to grapple spiritually and intellectually with questions relating to the Christian faith.<sup>2</sup>

This paper is dedicated to look at the theology of African marriage system using the Yoruba of South-west Nigeria as a case study and to compare same with what is obtainable in the west and the Scripture. This will take us a little deeply into the issue of marital relationship management and divorce. This is to enable us exploit and contribute to the expected positive change of narratives in African societies. The main objective of this paper is to point out the fact that the institution of marriage in Yoruba land is as sacrilegious as it is stated in the Scriptures. The scope is on the Yoruba marriage traditional system, though references may be made to other societies in Africa. Even at that, it must be said that there are more than one marriage systems among the Yoruba people.

### **The Concept of marriage**

Like many social terminologies, marriage is an essentially contentious concept. Marriage and the idea of marriage are universal but there is no one generally acceptable definition of marriage. The history of human society is nothing but the description of the evolution and diffusion of various institutions designed toward perpetuation, maintenance and survival of society.<sup>3</sup> The institution of marriage occupies a unique place in the realm of institutions and it is this institution which is instrumental in perpetuating human society through regulations of conjugal and filial ties. Wimalasena, in his work titled Analytical Study of Definitions of the Term “Marriage” remarked that the institution of marriage is as old as creation of the world. As a social institution, it

has taken different forms in different societies from time immemorial.<sup>4</sup> There were various definitions of the term “marriage” presented by various scholars and a few of these shall be considered briefly.

Marriage differs, of course, from other sex relations by the fact that it is a legal institution. It is also in most communities a religious institution, but it is the legal aspect which is essential”.<sup>5</sup> The fundamental basis of marriage is defined as “a personal association between a man and a woman and a biological relationship for mating and reproduction. As a social, legal and religious institution, marriage has undergone any number of modifications and changes; nevertheless, its basic realities remain the same. It is further defined as a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws, indirectly concluding that where there are no children, there is no marriage.”<sup>6</sup> The origin of marriage was traced to the Middle English, marriage which was also a derivative of Old French marier which means to marry. Marier is also derived from a Latin word maritare, meaning to be provided with a wife or husband<sup>7</sup> under the recognition of custom or law.

Anthropological handbook notes and quoted that marriage is: “a union between a man and a woman such that children born from the woman are the recognized legitimate offspring of both

partners”.<sup>8</sup> However, marriage can be seen in other cultures as an intended temporary or permanent union between a man and a woman that is socially, culturally or legally recognized. Marriage is a public matter involving some overwhelming interests. There are three different types of marriage which are; traditional, court and white marriages. White marriage is done in the Churches and Mosques where clergies preside over the affairs. Court marriage on the other hand is done under the law of the state, whilst traditional marriage is the local form of marriage. This shall be the focus of our discussion in this paper. However, it is common to see some people taking part in all these forms of marriage.

### **African Conception on Marriage and Family**

Marriage occupies an important position in the affairs of Africans, especially as the family is the logical product or outcome of marriage. A family consists of a man, his wife, and child or children. Since the family is the basic unit of any political and social organizations, the process of erecting it should be and was given serious attention among the traditional African societies. Marriage, for Africans, though is purposely for procreation, is more than that. Marriage serves other purposes.

Marriage is the focus of existence and the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet unborn; All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history are repeated, renewed and revitalized.<sup>9</sup>

Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress

and not just a spectator. The family is not just a component of the man, the wife and their children. The departed souls, relatives and the unborn generations are regarded as members of the family. That is why marriage is not the union, or the joining of a man and a woman for the purpose of becoming husband and wife. Marriage is basically a family or even a community affair. The involvement of the departed souls in African traditional marriage makes it a sacred affair.

According to William<sup>10</sup> marriage in African tradition is the joining of two families through the union of one man and one woman and their children, always to the exclusion of all other men as regards the woman, and in monogamous societies, to the exclusion of all other women as regards the man. Mbiti revealed further that African traditional conception of marriage is teleological because it is primarily for procreation and can be dissolved on the ground of childlessness.<sup>11</sup> Yoruba tradition attaches importance to child-bearing as unfruitful marriage is not only regarded as a misfortune but also a curse since the couple have not contributed to the continuity of the family flow and therefore, of the society.<sup>12</sup>

### **African Marriage and Polygamy**

In an agrarian society, especially in the past, the manliness of a man was measured by his farm produce. The higher the produce, the greater the respect accorded a man. Many hands in the farm led to greater output and to save cost on labour<sup>13</sup>, whilst polygamy was openly encouraged to assist in the farm work. Also, leadership

roles and chieftaincy titles were reserved for men who had many wives and children under them as this is seen as evidence of leadership prowess. Africans also believed that if they have many children, some of them would outlive them even if some of the children should die untimely.

### **An Analysis of a Traditional Yoruba Marriage System**

There are different forms of traditional marriages systems among the Yoruba people of the South Western Nigeria. Like other traditional African cultures, Yoruba do lay much premium on marriage because they know that if the foundation (the home front) is weak, the entire building (that is, the society) will be negatively affected; So nothing can be built on nothing, in order to build a strong and stable society, the family must be well-founded. In the same perspective, Yoruba believed that an untrained child would make nonsense of the parent's wealth or inheritance, so they make efforts to train their children right from birth on how to be responsible and relevant, not only to themselves and family but also to the entire community. Young adults are taught to be hard working, morally upright and above all, to family focus and responsible.

Once parents get convinced that their sons are matured to marry, they do make arrangements for befitting wives for them. The above position is a departure from that of who opines that the decision or intension to marry comes from the man.<sup>14</sup> A man does

not know when he is ripe for marriage in Yoruba – land, it is the parents, after close observation of some fundamental changes in their sons that would determine when it is time to marry<sup>15</sup> because among the Yoruba, marriage is the affair of the family and not the concerned individual. This is because the people regard marriage as something that will unite the families of both husband and wife and make them one. Once a child is ripe for hoe, he is given a hoe, if he is ripe for cutlass; he is given a cutlass; sometimes without the knowledge of their son to get him a befitting suitor. They do engage the service of a marriage agent locally referred to as a-go-between. ('alarina') who is usually a trusted member of the family<sup>16</sup> who conveys the messages of the intending in-laws to the parents of the lady. Gifts are exchanged if the parents of the lady accept the proposal. At the earlier part of the arrangement, the lady might not even be told. Then, the parents of the young man and the young lady would carry out investigation about both families, making sure that there is no record or trace of serious disease or crime or both on each other's family and dynasty. Then, they would make divine consultation from their local priest for guidance believing that life is dynamic and is subject to change. It was after the positive results of these investigations that the man's family will seek the opinion of the lady's parents for a possible contract of marriage with their son.<sup>17</sup>

### **Pre-marriage Counseling in Africa.**

Girls do attend non-conventional schools and seminars where



women teach them what is involved in marriage, and in some ethnic groups even learn secret codes and languages so that they can communicate with other married women. In the Yoruba village setting, there are seasons and times when the elderly women of the village gather with their damsels and give tutorials with advice on civility, collection of gift from opposite sex and self conduct. Among the traditional Yoruba people, one lesson they give to their daughters is that: marriage is a training school. They also teach their daughters that good wives do not act contrary to the husband will and interest. Men are also not left out in marriage education. Men are taught to be caring to their wives. They are taught to be responsible to them. Above all, they are taught to provide for their homes. The African man is formally trained in hard work and caring to be able to take care of his family. According to Ogungbemi, “To the Africans failure to cater for the needs of their women (children) is morally unjust.<sup>18</sup>” All this pre-marriage educations are needed for adequate preparation before the African daughters or sons enter into marriage and build a home, they must know that marriage is not a trial and error affair. Marriage is not the act of trading with man or woman because marriage is not a bed of roses, and it brings a lot of responsibilities on the parties to it.<sup>19</sup> When the parents of the young man and the lady have agreed to be engaged in marriage through their children, and they have told their children about it, which is symbolized through payment of 'Proposal agreement fee' locally termed 'owo ibasoro' (literarily translated to mean interest conveyance fee).

### **Period of Courtship.**

After this stage, the prospective husband and wife are then allowed to pay and exchange visits, talk, eat and walk together. This period is devoted to studying each other with sex restrictions as they are not allowed to sleep in the same room or on the same bed to avoid sexual temptations. The impression that parents forced whom to marry on their children should not be created by this arrangement. We can imagine some of them protesting initially but their parents know more than they do, so, they could easily convince them. Where they do not protest, it is a sign that the children have been properly brought up to know that their parents know what is good for them and that they love them. This can be likened to the Jewish system of courtship experienced by Joseph and Mary in the Scripture.<sup>20</sup> It is after this process that marriage date is fixed.

### **The marriage ceremony**

On that day, gifts in cash and kinds will be collected, and there will be a lot of merriments, display and dancing. The high point of the ceremony is the payment and collection of the bride price commonly locally called 'idano'. The bride price is divided into two, with one part going to the mother side and the other to the father side of the families. Bride price is not the money collected for the sale of the girl. As a matter of fact, girls are not sold in marriage among the Yoruba people. In case of divorce, it will be paid back. Also, it is both in cash and in kind. The money paid by

the groom side is endless from the time of the marriage to death. Men are always debtors to the family of their wives. The bride price therefore does not amount to the sale of the girl. It is just part of the fundamental financial appreciation by the groom and his family for sharing with them love of given their daughter in marriage to them. Which according to William is just to show how serious the intending in-laws are about their proposal, or a demonstration of love that the family of the lady have for their daughter?<sup>21</sup> As earnest of their good faith, and an expression of the degree of honour and esteem held for the woman's family, they make a series of presentations consisting of items of wealth, however locally expressed which include but not limited to livestock, hunting implements, money, honey, live she-goat, new clothes well packaged in baggage, bitter kola, salt and so others. Prayers are offered by both families using each of the brought items as a point of contact. They use the money to ask God to keep them blessed financially. The honey symbolizes goodness of God in their marriage; the she goat is for fruitfulness, bitter kola for longevity and salt for relevance among the living because without the salt, soup will lose its taste. After this event, the bride is handed over to the head or representative of the head of the family of the groom. On arrival at the home of the husband, before entrance, water is used to wash her feet by the committee of the senior wives of either the husband if the woman is not the first or only wife of the husband's siblings, symbolizing that she is gladly welcome to the bridegroom's family.

After five days or thereabout, the husband is allowed to sleep with her. If the lady is a virgin, she becomes a source of pride, not only to her parents but also to her community. If she is not a virgin, she brings shame to them. This is probably one of the reasons parents in the past monitored and trained their daughters very well. Lack of virginity may put an end to the entire marriage, because some African societies regard sex as the most important factor in marriage and, therefore, premium is placed on virginity. Girls on marriage are expected to be virgins and are rewarded for virginity<sup>22</sup>. This is one of the traditional values that have been neglected today, even among the most religious people. In its place, sex education is being recommended. Parents now teach their children the rudiments of using various available protections options during sex, instead of promoting abstinence from premarital sex. The implication of this is that, young brothers and sisters made fun with one another. Our quest for sustainable development then becomes slimmer on daily basis. Early sex does not only lead to immorality, but also to early pregnancy, abortion and school drop-out.

### **Roles and responsibilities of couples under African marriage**

Roles and responsibilities of husband and wives under African culture and tradition in the marriage contract varies considerably because it is based on a continuum between the long-held male dominant/female submission view and it is different from the

western shift toward equality (without sameness) of the woman and the man.<sup>23</sup> There is considerable debate among many Christians today—not just Protestants—whether equality of husband and wife or male headship is the biblically ordained view, and even if it is biblically permissible. The divergent opinions fall into two main groups: First, those that believe in [Complementary roles between the couples where the](#) husband is the head and wife must adhere to submission. The second is the [Christian Egalitarians](#) who believe in full partnership equality in which couples can discover and negotiate roles and responsibilities in marriage<sup>24</sup>. It is pertinent to point it out here that the African model believes that that Ephesians 5 presents a historically benevolent husband-headship/wife-submission model for marriage. Although there are some concerns over reconciling the following:

(a) How these [New Testament household codes](#) are to be reconciled with the calls earlier in Chapter 5 (cf. verses 1, 18, 21) for mutual submission among all believers.

(b) The meaning of "head" in v.23. It is important to note that verse 22 contains no verb in the original manuscripts, which were also not divided into verses as now displayed in the Scriptures we read today.

Since there are various church denominations, African marriages seems to drift now in the denominations the couple and their parents belongs and where there is conflict, the pastors joining the couple mostly use the conjugal scripture during the wedding to be the guiding rule which is mostly that 'the man must love the wife

and the wife submitting to the husband.

### **Traditional Versus Modern Marriage**

Westernization, modernization and Christianity have all affected African culture.<sup>25</sup> One area of the impacts of these is on the marriage system that has adversely affected the concept of African family configuration which hitherto consist the father, mother and their children and the extended family members. In many cases it is in practice no longer that the very closely-knit web that clearly defined couples and individual marital obligations and values are being ignored; to that extent society is on the way to atomism. The family steadily contracts into man, wife, and children<sup>26</sup>.

Today, parents play little or no role in the choice of whom to marry. The decision is now for the individuals involved, and that of the church or mosque that they belong to. When these two groups or either of them must have made the decision, parents may or may not be informed. When they do, if they raise any objection and refuse to participate in it, even for good reasons, the church and the court are ready to grant their prayers. Marriage is thus seen as the union of a man and a woman, with or without the support of their parents. In some cases rented fellows played the role of parents as witnesses. Many are marrying complete strangers and this contributes immensely to issues of separation and divorces in African modern marriages.

Another area of departure today from the traditional African culture of marriage is the motive for marriage. An essential ingredient of marriage is love. A look at wedding cards reveals that a man and a woman decide to marry each other because they love or claim to love each other. The foundation of their marriage is therefore love. This is a good foundation but what do people call love? A deep look into the traditional marriage in Yoruba land in the past reveal that marriage was not based on love but on responsibility. The people loved each other but their marriage was not found on love. A man who gets to know his wife-to-be few days to their marriage cannot claim to make a choice of his wife based on his love for her. The same can be said of the lady. People married in the past because they wanted to shoulder responsibilities. The man had been taught what it takes to be a husband and a father. The wife has learnt the roles of a wife and a mother at home, and both of them prepared for the task ahead of them. It is a shame if the lady, returning to live with her parents after marriage failure, just as it is a worse shame for the man, who failed to live up to responsibility at home.<sup>27</sup>

Traditionally, people accept their places at home. No competition, no supremacy and no struggle. Yoruba women were taught that the husband is the head of the wife before getting married, women had known this and they are prepared to accept this position. Then, there was no feminist to advocate the equality of man and woman where the new western culture advocates that when the woman is

grinding pepper, the man should be cooking the rice after all since love symbolizes division of responsibilities.<sup>28</sup> The Western marriage theology being spread today among African women about one man one wife may not be a bad idea if packaged with responsibility and honour required of the parties to the union. However, what they learn is that men should love their wives and not be harsh with them for they are weaker vessels. They never learn that in all things, women should submit to their own husbands. They never learn the example of Sarah.

An interesting aspect of Yoruba traditional marriage is division of labour. It is the sole responsibility of the man to make provision for the needs of the family, whilst the woman offer supports in other areas outside housekeeping responsibilities. I have heard that the wife will slap her husband with soup spoon if she meets him in the kitchen because that is not his area of jurisdiction. A wife enshrines the moral force of the society; being more mysterious than a man, she is more sacral, and is the object of many taboos and rites, and is often revealed as the innermost secret of male religious societies<sup>29</sup>; little wonders King Solomon sees good wife as a Favour of God.

### **The Bible on marriage.**

Marriage is believed to have started from the Garden of Eden.<sup>30</sup> In the second creation story; God says that “it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.”<sup>31</sup> This suitable helpmate was formed from the rib of man and thus woman was “flesh of his flesh.”<sup>32</sup> Woman, then, is man's equal in dignity and the



one closest to his heart. Because man and woman were created for one another, “a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh.”<sup>33</sup> The Song of Solomon shows how the love of a man and a woman mirrors God's love for his people. Because marriage is placed within the saving mystery of Jesus Christ, Christians recognize it as a sacrament. It is a means through which husbands and wives grow in love for one another and for their children, become holy and obtain eternal life. The Apostle Paul in one of his quotes used the word marriage not only to describe the kingdom of God reflecting relationship between Jesus and believers but to define also the nature of the 1st-century Christian church. His theological view was a Christian development of the Old Testament parallel between marriage and the relationship between God and Israel. Paul's primary issue was that marriage adds concerns to one's life that detract from their ability to serve God without distraction.<sup>34</sup>

Some scholars have speculated that Paul may have been a widower since prior to his conversion to Christianity he was a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, positions in which the social norm of the day required the men to be married. But it is just as likely that he never married at all.<sup>35</sup> Yet, Paul acknowledges the mutuality of marital relations, and recognizes that his own singleness is "a particular gift from God" that others may not necessarily have. He wrote that it is better to marry than to burn with passion"<sup>36</sup>, even as marriage is a basic requirement for leadership appointment in the Church as bishops,<sup>37</sup> deacons, and elders.<sup>38</sup>

## **Marriage and early Church Fathers.**

It is a different game as the early Church fathers unlike Jesus and Apostle Paul placed less value on the family and saw celibacy and freedom from family ties as a preferable state; this is highly in contrast with African traditions and culture.<sup>39</sup>

Augustine believed that marriage was for the actual process of generation, which involves the ardour of lust and this process of carnal concupiscence is no longer counted as sin but an instrument of nature in the regenerate even without marriage.<sup>40</sup>

Both Tertullian and Gregory of Nyssa were church fathers who were married but saw the institution as stressful, an ultimately rooted in misery and a state of bondage that could only be cured by celibacy.<sup>41</sup> Tertullian on the other hand forbid divorce and sees the second marriage, as a species of fornication<sup>42</sup> Jerome advocated celibacy and virginity as preferable alternatives to marriage.<sup>43</sup>

Some other church fathers have their like St. John Chrysostom celebrated virginity over marriage where he likened a celibate to an angel.<sup>44</sup> The position of Cyprian the Bishop of Carthage, is the most vague that the first commandment given to men was to increase and multiply, but now that the earth was full there was no need to continue this process of multiplication.<sup>45</sup> This view of marriage was reflected in the lack of any formal liturgy formulated for marriage in the early Church unlike liturgies to celebrate the Eucharist, Baptism and Confirmation.

### **Issues of Divorce in Marriage.**

It is common knowledge that whenever the concept of marriage is in thought, divorce is surely inevitable in such thought. Wherever there is institution of marriage, there is the provision for divorce where there are irreconcilable differences among parties in marital relationship.

### **Concept of divorce and remarriage in Africa.**

Divorce is the legal dissolution of a marriage. A male divorcee is called divorcé, while a female divorcee is called divorcée. Divorce is the dissolution of a marriage by judgment of a court or by accepted custom. It can also be called a total separation.<sup>46</sup> It is also a legal way of ending marriage.<sup>47</sup>

Divorce in Africa is a persistent event which effects into immediate and continuous results. Majority of the countries in Africa are referred to as developing countries because they suffer economical, social, developmental and technological reproach causing extreme poverty and declining moral and ethical values contributing directly and indirectly to the increasing rate of divorce. However, divorce is not loudly pronounced in our marital setting but it happens when relationship becomes irreconcilable. The family value system that used to contribute substantially to conflicts resolution is no longer functional and effective. The extended family structure eventually broke up in the process; and there was a shift towards the nuclear family system characterized by less involvement of members in the resolution of marital

conflicts. It can be argued that, perhaps the most important factor in divorce's increase in the twentieth century has been the greater social acceptance of divorce. In particular, this increased tolerance has resulted from relaxation of negative attitudes toward divorce among various religious denominations. Although, divorce is still seen as unfortunate, it is no longer treated as sin by most religious leaders.<sup>48</sup> Once divorce is perfected, the amount paid as dowry on the wife being divorced will be returned by the father or the representative of the father is deceased. A divorced couple may remarry to another individuals and after many years come back to resume their marriage. It is a tradition in Yoruba land that a divorcee who gave birth to some kids in her moribund marriage with her ex-husband must come back to the home of her ex-husband for the compulsory forty days mourning rite after his death. There is a belief in the land is that whoever born a child or children for each other are more than concubines.

Divorce may arise due to any of the following reasons:<sup>49</sup>

- Suspicion or confirmation of adulterous relationship between the couple.
- Acts of irresponsibility and negligence of duties by the couple.
- Unfriendly relationship between the wife and the in-laws
- Wife's excessive attachment to her mother and extended family members.
- Inability of the wife to tidy up the house, dress smart and prepare good meal.

- Persistent physical assault and fighting among couples.
- Wife's barrenness leading to rejection, loneliness and self-pity.
- Lack of self control, discipline and impatience by the couple
- Lack of love, harshness and callousness.
- Parental interference and dominations of either of the couple.
- Total breakdown of communication (deliberate hiding of information).
- Lack of care and attention (having no respect and attention).
- Lack of appreciation by either of the couple.
- Joblessness with no serious effort to be gainfully employed.

### **The Scripture on divorce and remarriage**

The Old Testament shows how sin affected the goodness of marriage as God established marriage without any intention of divorce. However, Moses allowed divorce because of the people's "hardness of heart" (see Deuteronomy 24:1 and Matthew 19:8). In the New Testament, just as believers are new creations in Christ, healed of sin and its effects. Paul wrote that marriage bears witness to the indissoluble love of Christ for his Church. Thus, husbands should love their wives, "even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her."<sup>50</sup> Wives, too, are called to love their husbands as the Church loves Christ.<sup>51</sup>

The Old Testament also shows how God taught his people to revere once more in the institution of marriage. God's covenant with his people was an image of the exclusive and faithful love of husband and wife. The prophets helped the people see that God had not

intended husband and wife to be separated.<sup>52</sup>

Marriage vows are unbreakable so that even in the distressing circumstances in which a couple separates, they are still married from God's point of view. There is no time in history when the marriage bond stood in greater peril of destruction than in the days when Christianity first came into this world says Williams.<sup>53</sup> At that time the world was in danger of witnessing the almost total break-up of marriage and the collapse of the home. Theoretically no nation ever had a higher ideal of marriage than the Jews had. The voice of God had said, "I hate divorce".<sup>54</sup> Stagg writes<sup>55</sup>: "Divorce always represents failure...a deviation from God's will.... There is grace and redemption where there is contrition and repentance.... There is no clear authorization in the New Testament for remarriage after divorce." Stagg interprets the chief concern of Matthew 5 as being "to condemn the criminal act of the man who divorces an innocent wife.... Jesus was rebuking the husband who victimizes an innocent wife and thinks that he makes it right with her by giving her a divorce". He points out that Jesus refused to be trapped by the Pharisees into choosing between the strict and liberal positions on divorce as held at the time in Judaism.

## **Conclusion**

The quest for order in the society cannot be fruitful until the issue of marriage which is the foundation of the society is revisited in the line of the Scripture, as marriage within a tribal cultural framework

yield better result under perfect spiritual ethic and traditions. Africa would probably not have had so much problems confronting it today if the various families had lived up to expectations, because, we refused to keep our good traditional values along with our new found faith built in Christ Jesus through the Scripture, as it has been shown in this article. Our society has been disconnected from its roots and we are approaching the Scriptures with western life's spectacles.

One wonders aloud the basis of women liberation in Africa. By far, traditional Africa provided a better way for strong and stable society through marriage sustainability and mutual understanding. Parents should stop creating the impression in the psyche of their wards that they can walk of their marriages and relocate to their parents' home.<sup>56</sup> Cases of broken homes abound in our society today. Single mothers are common, courtesy of the feminists or the so-called women liberators. Unfortunately, some of these women liberators face more challenges at home more than the people they are liberating but as for them they do endure the challenges. There are untold hardships on the children from broken homes and this portends danger for the future of the society and the sustainable development in Africa. One of the good things about the past is the traditional marriage system, and it is believed that something good can be taken from it to add value to Christian marriages in Africa.

## **Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended that First, married men and women

should see marriage as a responsibility and not a matter of fun and should be fully determined to face it. Secondly, there should be adequate knowledge of one another and the family being married from to promote harmony and mutual respects among stakeholders. Thirdly, the family members should restrict themselves, desires, controls and interference in the home of the new couples. Fourthly, the roles of the Churches should also extend to treat and handle marriage with caution with contextual consideration of African culture and traditions on the family and parental roles in marriage which is in agreement with the Scripture. The churches should involve the extended family in the wedding programs and stop playing the parents to the couples whose real parents are mostly not parties to the life time relationship called marriage. Finally, adequate provision must be made for the children which are the products of the failed marriage to ensure that they do not suffer for the offences they did not commit. The family and Church must re-design their roles in the above respect to secure the future of the children, family and the society in general.



## ENDNOTES

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