

**THE IMPACT OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION
ON SELECTED CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES IN NIGERIA**

BY

**BASSEY, SUNDAY BENJAMIN
DTS/CGA/2022/2023/06**

APRIL 2025

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NIGERIA**

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DTS/CGA/2022/2023/06**

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This Dissertation has been approved, having satisfied the conditions for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Church Government and Administration of Dynamic Theological Seminary, Kwale, Delta State, Nigeria, Affiliated to Harvest Bible University, Los Angeles, California, United States.

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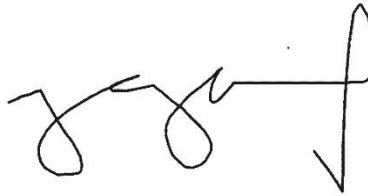
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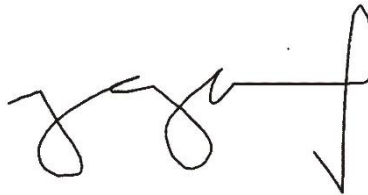
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DEDICATION

This PhD research work is humbly dedicated to The Lord God Almighty, who gave me everything I needed to start the study and bring it to successful conclusion. To Him be all the honor and glory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My deepest appreciation is to God, the Alpha and Omega, who made it possible for me to undertake this PhD course in the first place, and provided me with health and the resources that enabled me to complete the research study in good time and success, in spite of a major tragedy that I faced.

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research study.

I truly acknowledge the Foursquare Gospel Church in Nigeria, for its constructive spiritual development, which, through some of its Abuja District and Zonal Churches, consolidated my desire, resolve, and drive towards the study.

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ABSTRACT

This PhD dissertation is on *Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*. The study was necessitated by the need to halt the listless performance of marriage in Nigeria, a multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multiethnic country, with low literacy rate; where a large percentage of the population can hardly read and write. Consequently, the concept of Christian marriage has been misunderstood and bastardized. The study is designed to reequip the Nigerian Christian population, and the society at large, with sufficient understanding of the true nature of Christian marriage, in order to practice it correctly, to reap the full benefits of the goodness God created marriage to deliver to mankind. Consequently, eight churches and seven marriages have been analyzed. The results of the study will help set Christian marriage on correct course, whereby adultery and divorce will decline, family values will increase, domestic violence and abuses will ebb, prostitution will reduce, along with other problems; while the church will be better administered to receive greater impact from God, and exert same upon marriages and families to ignite revival in the body of Christ. The methodology employed in the study is historical and qualitative, relying on interviews, observations, historical records, and more, for data collection and analysis. The theoretical framework adopted for the study is based on David F. Mullin's work, *The Effects of Religion on Enduring Marriage 2016*, that supports the impact of Church Government and Administration on marriage for effective performance. Among the recommendations submitted by the study, is the urge to Nigerian Churches to unite in reforming Church Administration generally, in order to endear the body of Christ to God, bring about spiritual revival in Christendom, and positively impact Christian marriage for better performance within Nigeria.

Key words: Impact, Church, Government, Administration, Marriages and Nigeria.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The meanings of the abbreviations employed in the study are presented as follow:

1. AD/CE - *Anno Domini* (In the year of Lord)/ Common Era (meaning the same thing as *Anno Domini* but in *secular sense*).
2. BV - Bacterial Vaginosis
3. CEOs - Chief Executive Officers
4. CNN - Cable News Network
5. FCT - Federal Capital Territory (of Nigeria)
6. FLDS - Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints (also known as the Mormons)
7. GNP - Gross National Product
8. GOs - General Overseers (of churches)
9. HIV/AIDS - Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome.
10. IMF - International Monetary Fund
11. JEMHAC - Jesus Miracle Harvest Church
12. LDS - Latter-Day Saints (Also known as the Mormons)
13. LGBT - Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Trans-genders
14. PhD - Doctor of Philosophy
15. STDs - Sexually Transmitted Diseases
16. RCCG - Redeemed Christian Church of God
17. TREM - The Redeemed Evangelical Mission

- 18. UNSG - United Nations Secretary General
- 19. UPE - Universal Primary Education
- 20. WBC - World Bishops' Council

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This PhD research study entitled *Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*, is necessitated by the multi-faceted problems marriage has gone through, and is still going through in the Nigerian society, which cannot be allowed to persist. According to a statement in a research work entitled: *The Challenges in Christian Marriages and its Effect on the Church*, “There have been recurrent cases of divorce, out-of-wedlock births, problems of absentee fathers, same-sex marriages, domestic violence, spousal abuses, civil unions, escalation of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and cohabitation of people in unions without marriage contracts in Nigeria currently, according to Browning 2001.”¹

Many a reprobate spouse in Nigeria, may not know that marital scandals do not come in “sandals,” they come strapped up in tough “jackboots,” like Vandals or soldiers of fortune. And when they stamp their boots on the ground, they threaten the survival of marriages and the joy they offer, only God’s wisdom can save the situation.

This study is therefore designed, developed, undertaken, and aimed at offering some solutions to the myriads of disturbing problems that the marriage institution generally is going through in Nigeria, particularly, Christian marriage.

To begin with, the concept of the Christian marriage as practiced in Nigeria is very amorphous, indistinct, and confusing. What really is Christian Marriage in the mind-set of most Nigerian Christians? The problem began right from the point of its introduction, along with the Christian faith, into Africa by some European explorers and traders. The Europeans themselves had not fully distinguished the real nature and character of what they called the Christian marriage. They had not determined whether what they handed over to Africans, and Nigerians particularly, was the Jewish marriage system that is in the Holy Bible, or the European marriage system that the Europeans turned the Hebrew marriage system into, after they had added to it, some slivers of European cultural streaks.

And on taking over the marriage system that the Europeans bequeathed to them as Christian marriage, the Africans including Nigerians, ignorantly admixed into the already adulterated institution, certain cultural and traditional traits and nuances that are typically African, as African traditional marriage system had already been in existence before then.

Consequently, as at the present, when Nigerians speak about Christian marriage, they appear unwittingly to be referring to a certain system of marriage that is neither the Jewish system of marriage that Abraham in the Old Testament of the Bible, showed off when he got Rebecca for his son Isaac as wife, a marriage system that Jesus Christ later reaffirmed or fulfilled in the New Testament

(Matthew 5:17). Nor is it the European marriage system that arrived under the cover of Christian marriage, with the European colonial authorities, along with the Christian religion that they introduced to Africa. Nor, indeed, is it an African marital system *in situ*. Nor is it a mix-grill of all of the above social contraptions. Consequently, “Christian marriage” as currently known and practiced in Nigeria may not be anything different than “groping in the dark” in the name of a wedlock. That being the reason why there is so much brouhaha within the marriage sector of the Nigerian society.

According Childs 1946, “We must clearly distinguish between Christian marriage and European marriage, but too often they are confused.”² Childs 1946, was cautioning his European Christian colleagues in his book, *Christian Marriage in Nigeria*, about their imperialistic cultural tendencies, in forcing their brand of marriage down the throats of some newly converted African Christians. This aspect of the discussion will further be elaborated upon later in the sixth chapter of the study.

Secondly, besides the cultural encroachments upon what is regarded as Christian marriage in Nigeria, there are also in recent times, the problems of importation of some marriage practices possibly from other faiths such as Islam and traditional worship systems into Christian marriage practices. For example, when several cartons or bottles of liquor such as schnapps, brandy, whisky, gin and other types of snide alcoholic drinks; packets of cigarettes known for health

hazards; and so on, are included in a wedding list or bride-price, along with the Holy Bible, as it is often currently done in Nigeria, how Christian is the marriage intended to be? This is incredible confusion, according to Childs 1946.

A wedding list customarily consists of indiscriminate items to be procured by a suitor and submitted as marriage gifts on demand, to the family of a potential bride, during his introductory visit to the bride's family for the purpose of formally asking for her hands in marriage; even when the wedding is intended to be a Christian marriage.

The question becomes even more compelling when the girl's family insists that the hot drinks and tobacco are meant to appease certain Nigerian traditional and cultural deities, and fulfil certain earthly rites. Moreover, when it is realized that the high alcoholic content of distilled liquor, as compared to fermented wines, is unhealthy to the body that was created by God in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-31), is the marriage still Christian under the circumstances? What happens when idolatry is forced into Christian wedlock?

There are, to say the least, lots of incredibly conflicting influences that have been interjected into Christian marriage that need to be identified and disentangled therefrom, to present a clean and holy slate of the Christian marriage for it to deliver the real blessings that it was intended to convey to mankind right from its inception in the Garden of Eden.

The study will examine critically, and show clearly how the impact of Church

Government and Administration on marriage in Nigeria should help clip away the awful, rough, edges in the practices of Christian marriage in Nigeria for the good of the institution and society.

In reality, Christian marriage as practiced in Nigeria cannot be said to be faring well, and it is not surprising that it is so. This is because since its introduction into the Nigerian society, the covenantal union has been bouncing on bumpy routes, jumping from insanely regular chains of divorce cases, to disheartening disharmonious spousal squabbles and abuses, to reckless raising of huge numbers of out-of-wedlock and illegitimate children, to family instability and turbulence that churn out irresponsible and anti-social children who cause myriads of problems within the society, to massive flows of dangerous sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and the list is never ending.

“A hood does not make a monk,” so says a popular proverb. The fact that some Nigerian Christians tag their marriage as Christian marriage may not necessarily make it so. It is both the faith that is in a marriage, and the activities that are carried out within it, that qualify a union as a Christian marriage.

Primarily, amongst the elite Nigerian Christian families, there is hardly any marriage contracted by any of them in recent years, that does not go through at least four levels of ceremonies before the couple can settle down together as husband and wife. Usually, the marriage process begins first with an introduction ceremony, a culturally packed meeting between the families of the

bride, and of the groom, in which the suitor is formally introduced as the prospective husband for the first time, to the family of the intended bride, and *vice versa*.

In Yoruba land in Nigeria, for example, it is at the introduction meeting that a long list of items called *Eru Iyawo*, literally meaning the wife's load, is presented to the suitor to procure and present to the bride's family.

Secondly, another ceremony called the engagement, will follow. Also in the Yoruba marriage ceremonies, engagement ceremony is the actual wedding and there, usually, are no wedding rings or cakes:³ these items being of non-Jewish origin, but possibly European cultural incorporation into Christian marriage, since the Bible does not prescribe them as parts of marriage ceremonies.

In other Nigerian traditional marriage systems such as the Ibibio, the Igbo, or the Ijaw, it is called the traditional marriage ceremony.

In the third phase, court wedding procedures will follow, where the couple-to-be will be issued a legal marriage certificate, before the wedding train finalizes at the fourth phase with a church wedding, otherwise called the "white wedding."

Yet, at the end of the rigmarole of a marital process, and tendentious biases towards culture and traditions, the marriage will be termed Christian marriage, simply because the couple are Christian by faith; not so much because of the divine, or spiritual content of the ceremonies, or practices that brought the marriage into life.

Really, is a marriage qualified as a Christian marriage because those involved in it call it so? Or is it Christian, because the rituals that brought the marriage into existence, and endured with it, are in conformity with what God created, Abraham practiced, and Christ fulfilled (Matthew 5:17)?

This study is an interventionist project aimed at helping to interject into the Christian marriage system in Nigeria, some knowledge, especially among all Christians, towards a better understood and better organized form of marriage, through constructive impact of Church Government and Administration as a regulatory and enlightenment mechanism that will not only help set in proper perspectives the Christian marriage, but will also sensitize Christians in the country about what really the Christian marriage is. It is also aimed at wising up Christians to comport themselves in marriage in a manner that is pleasing to God the Sovereign author of it. Ignorance in marriage is a major infraction against God's law, and is as serious as faithlessness.

Evidently, God created marriage for human happiness. After creating the first man Adam, God saw that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Then he made a partner suitable for Adam. And Eve, whom God made, became Adam's wife (Genesis 2:24-25). And God took her to Adam, thereby completing the process of the establishment of the marriage institution. However, contrary to what the Creator had intended the conjugal institution to be, man has since turned it into a major source of daily sorrows and pains for mankind. Right from the moment of Adam's outrageous and exasperating

outburst: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12), with which Adam threw his wife under the bus before the Almighty God, to the present-day damning, and reprehensible divorce court testimonies rendered day-to-day by some disgruntled, and aggrieved couples around the world, the marriage institution has been accommodating more than enough stresses and turbulences.

Many undiscerning couples always anxiously want to hastily terminate their acrimonious marriages without qualms, while lots more are already piling up mounds of the wreckages⁴ of their own broken marriages, as if they are engaged in a competition of “first to close shop.”

The acts of frustration and despondency are themselves proofs of couples’ incapability to handle the precious institution in a beneficial manner. No wonder therefore, that similar scenarios are being recreated on a daily basis in Nigeria for the country’s tabloid newspapers and other news channels to lap up rapaciously, and disseminate unreservedly, to further weaken the societal regard for the beloved institution.

Nigeria is the field selected for the research project. Nestled in the sub-Saharan part of the western sub-region of Africa on the Gulf of Guinea, it is the operational theater where the study is designed to take place. It is the arena where Church Government and Administration must impact Christian marriage to produce a marriage system that is not only both desirable and productive, but also chaste, holy and beneficial to Nigerians in particular, and mankind in

general.

The Nigerian landscape is well-favored, rich, evergreen, and highly endowed with huge varieties of natural resources including a mosaic of solid and liquid minerals. Nigeria has many natural landmarks and wildlife reserves for touristic attraction, though the country is yet to boast of tourism as a source of foreign exchange earning sector of the economy. That principally has been due to the avoidable internal contradictions and distractions such as constant religious and ethnic conflicts, and the consequent constant security scare, brought about by religious incitements, political jingoism, ethnic instigations and manipulation by deceptive pseudo-leadership.

There are some protected areas such as the Cross River National Park, and the Yankari National Park that have waterfalls, the Agbokim Waterfalls, the dense rainforest belt in the southern expanse, the savannah grassland up north, and some rare primate habitats are dotted around the land. The massive fertile, arable and productive land space literally begs for a little bit of labor and human sweat to be added to it, to enable it disgorge bumper food harvests that could feed the world; yet leadership failure has stalled the blessing.

With an estimated population of 213.4million, and annual growth rate of 2.4%,⁵ Nigeria's economic power potential is as considerable as one of its most recognizable landmark sites, the Zuma Rock, a 725meter-tall monolith that looms on the horizon, on the outskirts of the Federal Capital City (FCT), Abuja,⁶ a picture of which adorns one side of Nigeria's national currency.

The constant conflicts and massive corruption at all levels of society have deprived the country of the benefits of its natural endowments and blessings.

A multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-linguistic country, Nigeria's official language is the English Language that is, itself, a colonial relic. Consequently, the marriage systems that operate within the country are clearly multi-cultural, tradition-infused, custom-leaning, and significantly influenced by the two major religions: Christianity and Islam, that dominate the religious landscape of the country, and boast significant followership.

The marriage systems vary from the customary and traditional marriage, to Islamic marriage, the civil law marriage, and the Christian marriage. While the first two marriage systems are basically polygamous by their nature, the last two are monogamous, heterosexual, and stringently regulated by divine precepts on divorce, and legal injunctions such as the law of bigamy, even though the legal strings on bigamy are rarely pulled on an offender, due to the over-powering influence of local custom and tradition.

With this scenario, one can argue that the marriage systems in Nigeria are tugged, pulled and pushed in all directions by both centrifugal and centripetal forces, both religious and secular; and therefore, the Christian marriage system deserves some rescue efforts, which is what this study is out for.

As the ailing, and weakening marriage institution exerts pressure upon the social structures that prop up and sustain the society, the Nigerian state appears to be fraying on its seams and buckling on its frames.

Consequently, the researcher was motivated to consider an action that could stem the tidal waves of societal decline. On June 20, 2003 Thomas, a young man, former close friend, and former workplace colleague of the researcher, tragically and painfully died of the Acquired Immunity Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), leaving behind five little children without anyone to care for them. Their mother had died from the same disease a few months earlier. Seeing the hapless children struggle and flail for survival left indelible and excruciating marks on the heart of any true, full-blooded human.

Sometime, later in the next year, Silas, another former colleague of the researcher, died of HIV/AIDS, leaving behind an under-age daughter to roam the streets helplessly, scavenging for livelihood. Her mother had eloped with another man to an unknown destination because of the marital problems in the first marriage, and the fear of social stigma resulting from her HIV/AIDS-marred association with her dead husband.

Both men had been divorced from their spouses after scandalous divorce battles that scarred their children for the rest of their lives. Both men had also resorted to life of reckless sexual depravity, and immorality before their death.⁷

It was during that period in the history of Nigeria, that the endemic and epidemic disease reached its apogee in the country and the world at large, leaving the Nigerian citizenry in a state of helpless desperation, especially as the supply of anti-retroviral drugs to contain its spread was next to zero.

The HIV-AIDS was not the only sexually transmitted disease (STD) that was

ravaging the world, and constituted existential threats to Nigeria, resulting from the mishandling of the conjugal institution in the country.

On February 28, 2020, a newspaper publication revealed that in only two months, Abuja, the Federal Capital City (FCT) of Nigeria, alone, had recorded massive 4,000 divorce cases filed in different courts within the city, and the newspaper wondered aloud, whither were family values heading in the city, given such alarming divorce statistics.⁸ This did not include other mouth-gaping figures of divorce cases from the thirty-six state capitals of the federation.

After these awful events and more, that painted ugly scenarios about the burdensome circumstances of the marriage institution in Nigeria, the researcher thought that it was time to proceed with his plans towards ameliorating the lots of the marriage institution in Nigeria, especially the Christian marriage.

The research sample groups for the study, comprise seven Christian marriages, and eight churches selected from different denominations, including The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM), of which the researcher is a member, across the country to give a nation-wide spread to the study. Chapter five of the study deals with the analysis. The fact is that what affects one part of the country affects other parts, since Nigeria is a federal republic, with relative ease in the flow of information throughout the warps and woofs of the tapestry of the society.

Therefore, whatever incidence whether positive or negative that affects a Christian family in one part of the country, affects other Christian families around the country, although with minor differences in the impact in terms of intensity, regularity, repetitiveness, spread or duration of the occurrence. For example, some uncommon national economic fortunes such as, maybe, sudden sparks of price drops, that has never happened in a lifetime, or fully lack of them, such as famine, or food scarcity, may lag in spread, but they usually, eventually engulf the whole country. Swirls of diseases usually affect families pervasively across the four winds of the country. In like measures constant religious crises targeted at Christians, and their reverberating impact on the various population groups, and the Christian population in Nigeria in particular, affect all Christians equally.

The fear for dear life in the absence of adequate security measures, the spread of insecurity, ethnic profiling, tribal wars, cultural stereotyping, socio-economic discrimination, the spread of poverty, scarcity of essential goods and services, and more, are usually pervasive throughout the land.

The usually rare sparks of joy peremptorily interjected into society -- in defiance of the more regular guests, the dim doldrums of life within the fabrics of society -- by a certain unexpected victory seldom scored by the unpredictable Nigerian national football team, the Green Eagles, are usually feverishly shared across the nation. These are some rare, fleeting moments when most Nigerians would jump up in one accord as a united nation to

celebrate in singular spirit of nationhood.

Such celebrations do occasionally intermix with spreads of crimes perpetrated by both official apparatuses, and some unofficial ones such as the bobos, and the vagrants alike. These too, are usually widespread throughout all the nooks and crannies of the country. The minor differences that may exist from-place-to-place are often matters of either the nearness to the locations of the isolated unwholesome incidents, or of the individuals who perpetrate them.

However, generally, the ripples of the short-term and long-term impact of the events do affect the country almost equally. These are some of the reasons why the impact of the roles of Church Government and Church Administration on Christian marriages and family systems in Nigeria, are important.

If the relationship between the Church Government and the Church Administration works seamlessly, married Christians and their families will cherish a sense of relief in the rhythms of life in their routine daily pursuits. Where there is an absence of genuine government care, the Church mechanism can on occasions be looked upon for the rescue, especially by providing spiritual succor, strength and comfort; and of course, by offering correct directions and choices in life.

In the most part, in Nigeria, as in most other African societies, for example, taking a domestic matter to court for determination and adjudication is regarded as being tantamount to betrayal and therefore, a declaration of a life-long domestic war. It is viewed upon as public declaration of enmity “till the

heavens sue for settlement.” Based on African customary ethics, when a husband and a wife appear before a court judge for formal decisions about their wedlock, that is regarded by social custom as taboo, and the greatest crime against each other. Someone is assumed to have crossed the Rubicon, or a redline of irreconcilability, and has evoked an ultimate end of their togetherness.

Whereas, in Christian marriage, though appearance in civil court of unbelievers is not advisable, the Church Government and Church Administration are better equipped than any marriage court, and prayers are the most potent instrument for conflict resolution. In the Christian customs, the appearance of a couple before a church council, or a court of law, if it ever comes to that, over some hitches in their conjugal life, should mostly be regarded by the couple as a part of the learning processes in marriage. They are expected to return home together, put what they have learnt into practice, and move on to ply their marriage on smoother, and better tracks; except if that is not possible. Then they may consider any other option in their relationship. But nothing is impossible with God.

The causes of the problems of marriage in Nigeria are various, including the considerable neglect, and indignities marriage has suffered, besides the customary, traditional and societal influences. There is also preponderantly in-between the various culture-shaped marital systems, the enhanced social malaise by which Christian marriage is undervalued.

The reverential value of Christian marriage is compromised when married people do not respect their status of sanctity, but instead get embroiled, and unequally mingled in unguarded sexual acts of licentiousness, and scandalous drive for money.

The concept of Christian marriage is supposed to command the presence of God that embellishes marital peace, happiness, and harmonious co-existence between husband and wife, and a bed untainted. “In the presence of God,” says the word, “is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11). The presence of God may not be found in a marriage wherein couples are unscrupulously engaged in activities that are repulsive to the Holy Spirit such as abusiveness, fighting, jealousy, trading of unprintable name-calling, cheating, deception, indecent conversations, and so on. Such displays are intrinsically not Christian marriage traits.

It is very dangerous for a marriage to operate without the presence of God. Such a situation will resemble what happened at Aphek, when the Israelites were engaged in a blistering major battle with the Philistines (1Samuel 4:1-21). Prophet Eli had compromised the sanctity of the temple of God to appease his children, and The Lord was very displeased with him. This placed the Israelites disadvantageously, and on the losing side of the battle. Rather than carry out a post-mortem on his decrepit management style of the Church Government and Church Administration, and amend his handling of the affairs of God, Eli ordered the Ark of the Covenant of God to be taken to the battlefield as a mojo,

a good luck charm, or a talisman. He hoped to turn around the fortunes of the battle on his own terms. But the Sovereign God would not have it that way.

The Lord simply deserted the Ark, leaving the wooden and precious metallic carcass devoid of the awesome and invincible power of God, thereby exposing the way for the Philistines to move in and capture the Ark of God.

The church is the spiritually remodeled and regenerated Ark of the Covenant of God, and the Christian marriage is the staple, cradle, or incubator for raising God's soldiers for the battle against the "Philistines" of the present day Nigeria. As will be seen later in this piece, the purpose of Church Government and Church Administration is to help re-inforce the presence of God in the Christian marriage.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

The principal research problem that necessitated the study is the paucity of knowledge regarding the correct way Christian marriage should be practiced in Nigeria, that brought about numerous challenges, including divorce, under-age child marriages,⁹ domestic violence, prostitution, spousal abuse, and more.

Marital success, or the lack of it within Nigeria, is an important social and population marker that Nigeria's National Population Commission, and the National Bureau of Statistics among other institutions, should be concerned with. It is improper to surrender the management of such an important socio-spiritual institution as marriage, to only religious bodies, and traditional

institutions to handle. This is because marriage, and the family, constitute the incubator for the survival of both humanity, and a nation's population. Invariably, countries depend on their populations for national survival. According to Salihu, "People are the world's most important resource."¹⁰

That is why Church Government and Administration becomes a *sine qua non* for putting marriage back on rail to play its role properly within the country.

Other research problems include the following:

- i. There is no institution within Nigeria that is set up by government to manage the affairs of Church Government and Administration. Although there are some other religions that are hardly detachable from the activities of governments, and therefore enjoy government patronage as are the cases in theocratic governments, such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Yemen, Christianity from its inception has mainly been self-sustaining and self-governing. Even though Christ was the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, neither did he attach his salvation ministry to any national government, nor did his apostles do so. However, the Christian Church has thrived independently through the millennia. Therefore, Church Government and Administration in modern Nigeria needs to buckle up, energize itself physically and spiritually in order to sustain Christian marriage in the country.
- ii. There is a lacuna of well-articulated body of knowledge, such as can

be found in appropriate books, literature, journals, reports, and more, that can be easily accessed by intended couples on Christian marriage in Nigeria. Therefore, the onus of enlightening married people about Christian marriage rests on Church Government and Administration in Nigeria, and this study is out to point the direction towards which it can do so robustly.

- iii. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Amended, guarantees in its chapter 4, section 41, some basic human rights and freedoms, including the freedom of worship, and of association. Therefore, in spite of regular religious intimidations, provocations, social segregations, economic sabotage, and the like, which threaten marriage, Church Government and Administration in Nigeria, should not succumb to blackmails and discouragement, but should rather be focused, aware that he who established marriage as a divine institution, is also able to sustain it. Abraham said, “And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” (Romans 4:21). The study supports that.
- iv. Christian marriage as known today in Nigeria, is essentially culture-bound, and some atavistic and mundane practices are interwoven with what ought to be purely Christian marriage. Church Government and Administration has to “cleanse” the Christian marriage so that young people who are growing up and getting married, will have the

marriage of their faith, not an imitation of it.

- v. The problem of research gap with regard to the topic of the work is a major factor in the study. The Nigerian society is still based on oral traditions, scarcity of information and written records, absence of good data banks and national archives of enviable standards, and absence of robust libraries on which scholastic research can rely for foolproof information sources. In that circumstance, a researcher, scholar, intellectual writer or social commentator, must improvise, scavenge, explore, and in some unorthodox ways hunt for the pieces of information needed for important research work. Such was the case for this study. But, be that as it may, the integrity of this work is not compromised.
- vi. Paucity of funds was a considerable problem in the study, as course fees, material costs, high telephone bills, high internet subscription charges, and high transportation costs, presented challenges. Thus, the research data gathering, access to records, and securing of interviews either in-person or via telephone calls, could not be expanded to give the research work a wider spread and deeper reaches.

The key research question is: What is the current level of success of Christian marriages in Nigeria; and how can Church Government and Administration be structured, managed, and plied to impact Christian marriages in Nigeria, to end

or reduce marital instability and family destruction in the country?

The sub research questions are as follow: (i) What are responsible for the high divorce rates, destruction of Christian families, and spousal abuses that have become so rampant in the Nigerian society? (ii) What impact does ignorance about, and misidentification of the nature of Christian marriage by Nigerian Christians have on marital success or failure in Nigeria; and how can the anomaly be corrected? (iii) What impact does obedience to God's laws, observance of the basic Christian marital ethics, including respect for basic godly marital attitudes that are capable of holding marriages firmly together, have on marital sustainability in Nigeria?

Osagie identified some basic godly marital attitudes as the "Ten Pillars of Marriage" set out as:¹¹ Christ-centered marriages, respect, couples praying together, good communication, integrity, honesty, gratitude, humility, mindfulness, and empathy; which must be present in a marriage that is identified as Christian marriage. Based on these pillars, seven marriages were selected for analysis in the study. This aspect is explored further in the fifth chapter of the study, section 5(i). (iv) What impact do mix-cultural practices and influences have on Christian marriage in Nigeria? (v) What impact does godlessness have on the success or failure of Christian marriage?

A research question is the question that the study tries to address. It is concerned with the phenomenon under investigation. Blanche, Kelley and Durheim argue that the sources of research question include extant literature

on the problem, an exploratory investigation on what to study, with particular reference to where there is insufficient research or an undocumented social life on the subject as well as personal speculations and experience.¹² The researcher formulated all the above questions as well as the questions for the research questionnaire used in the oral and telephone interviews and other research investigations.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of the study is to examine the wrong practices Christians adopt in marriage in Nigeria, and the impact of Church Government and Administration on selected Christian marriages in Nigeria, in order to apply the findings towards enhancing the performance Christian marriage in Nigeria to the benefit of couples, country and society. To achieve that, the study will undertake the following:

- i. to critically examine what Christian marriage is, and dig out some of the myriads of problems that are embedded in the circumstances of its being unwittingly misidentified, misinterpreted, and improperly practiced, contrary to its real nature, and to show the correct way forward;
- ii. to establish that the marriage institution is too essential to the survival of humanity, to be left to flounder, when it can be made to do better;
- iii. to stress that the saving grace for the marriage institution rests with

- the Church Government and Administration, and recommend how the church authorities can impact marriage for positive changes;
- iv. to contribute towards enriching the sprouting body of knowledge on the current situation of Christian marriage in Nigeria, within both the Christian faith and the secular intellectual realm; and
 - v. to contribute towards reducing the paucity of research, and increasing public awareness on the subject of the study.
 - vi. to sensitize virtually every Christian about the seriousness of marital problems, especially with regard to the essence of their faith, and help show them the correct way forward.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is particularly important because it is out to deeply inquire into the topic of the study, *The Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*, make its findings available for public benefits, and fill in a vacuum space in the area of the enquiry. Therefore, the significance of the study is underscored by its value and usefulness. This aspect of inquiries into the performances of the Christian marriage in Nigeria has not yet gained robust currency, and pervasive practices, and so the study will hopefully be a crucial addition to the body of knowledge in the area of the subject-matter, in no insignificant way.

Additionally, the significance of the study will be further enhanced in the area of its benefits to society. First, by exposing the misunderstanding people have

had about the Christian marriage in Nigeria, and by seeking to correct the errors being committed in the way the Christian marriage is being practiced. The study will create new awareness amongst the Christian population in Nigeria about Christian marriage. This will lead to proper practice of the Christian faith, and Christian marriage in a way that will enhance marital comfort and stability; build family values, happiness and harmony; keep children happy and protected in their homes under parental care away from the streets; and diminish health hazards and depression usually associated with stressful marriages in Christian homes.

Consequently, there will be peace, order and security in society, giving room for wealth creation, as wealth is never built in chaotic and crisis-riddled cauldrons that carry on as marital homes.

The study will also contribute to proper administration of the body of Christ through the apparatuses of improvement in the Church Government and Church Administration relationships. When the Christian marriages boom as engines for the building of peaceful homes, and social stability, non-Christians and unbelievers will see, and voluntarily accept Christ because in the short-run: attitudes, actions, signs and wonders tend to be, potentially, more persuasive than words. In other words, the study will lead to revival in Christendom in Nigeria, through proper practices in the Christian marriage in the country.

Not the least, the significance of the study will snowball when products of

properly managed Christian marriages and homes in Nigeria, begin to assume leadership positions in the country. They will bring to bear on the country's political and economic administrative systems, the incorruptibility, truth, righteousness, justice, uprightness, godliness and the fear of God, universal love, and faithfulness that most nations of the world are in dire need of, today, to steer them to prosperity: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people," says the glorious word of God. (Proverbs 14:34).

Above all, the results of this study will be useful to the following people:

- i. Church ministers, pastors, leaders, and elders who constitute the Church Administration, whose responsibility it is to administer the church in such a way that its holiness will impact the Christian marriages under their superintendence.
- ii. Young men and women who are ready for marriage, who must have full understanding of what the Christian marriage means, and how they can practice their marriage by keeping to the tenets of the Christian marriage, will win God's approval and blessings. When Mary was betrothed to Joseph, both of them comported themselves in such a decent relationship that attracted God's attention, to the extent that the Lord dispatched angel Gabriel to Mary to announce to her how blessed she was that God had decided to make her a virgin mother of the Messiah. (Luke 1:26-38).
- iii. Christian marriage counselors, who will be better informed and better

armed for their invaluable functions in preparing young people for the holy wedlock that must be handled as Christian marriages, and not tainted with introduction of traditional and cultural practices into what ought to be kept free from idolatry. For example, when it is insisted that a goat must be slaughtered to spill its blood for the appeasement of some ancestral spirits during a wedding, how Christian can that wedding be said to be?

- iv. The Christian flock, who need the necessary information and prompting to help them make amends to the mistakes they have been dwelling upon, just out of ignorance, and chart new courses in their Christian journey, especially in the way they carry on with their marriages, in the name of Christian marriages.
- v. Even unbelievers, will take a U-turn in their pitiable lives, and make new beginnings in the way they manage their marriages so as to encounter Christ to receive “new wine of blessings” for the better part of the next turning in their marriage lives. When Christ arrived at a wedding ceremony at Cana in Galilee, the old wine was already exhausted. He turned water into the new wine that was fresher, tasted sweeter, and promoted the wedding to a new level. (John 2:1-12). Marriage should not be staid; it is always refreshing when God is in it.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This section of the study deals with the extent to which the research work

covers – how far and how wide. In the study, the church, the Christian marriage institution, and the Christian community are the focal points. The study looks from Biblical point of view, at the position of the church with regard to the way marriage is practiced in Nigeria, to determine the extent to which the church can impact marriage, in order to bring about the much desired reforms that are necessary in the way Christian marriages are practiced in the country. To achieve this purpose, eight churches and seven marriages are analyzed.

The study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter examines the preliminary issues that give clearer perspective of the research work. The second chapter covers the literature review of some scholarly works on issues that fall within the areas covered by the study; examines the origin, background and structure of marriage, the subject-matter. The third chapter deals with biblical perspectives of marriage, while the fourth chapter analyzes the impact of Church Government and Administration on marriage. The fifth chapter takes a look at the impact of Church Government and Administration on selected Christian marriages in Nigeria. The sixth chapter dissects the concept of Christian marriage in Nigeria, taking a look at the model of Jewish-cum-Christian marriage that Christ approved. The seventh chapter squares up on the summary, conclusion of, and recommendations by the study.

In the final take, the study has brought to light some new revelations and awareness about some intricate issues that appeared to have been overlooked,

or glossed over by Christian couples in Nigeria. The study has also pointed the church to new directions for its leaders and members to explore for a better future for Christian marriage in Nigeria.

1.6 Methodology and Sources of Data

This research work is based on both primary (empirical method) source, and secondary source otherwise called non-empirical method. The primary source deals with the interview of some married Christians in Nigeria about their experiences on the performance of the marriage institution, and the impact of Church Government and Church Administration on Christian marriage in Nigeria. The Christians selected for interview are from different denominations, and across the country, in order to achieve balanced position in the study.

The secondary source is the library-based research whereby the researcher uses the works of others in the field to answer research questions. In this case, heavy reliance is placed on the scholarly works of others in textbooks, journals, newspapers, periodicals, internet sources, religious books, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, that are available and useful for achieving the aim of the study. Precisely, the work makes use of historical research methodology.

1.7 Conceptual Clarification

In dealing with the subject matter of the study, there are some concepts which must be defined and given clearer views for proper understanding of the

research study. The title of the study is: *The Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*. The concepts used in the topic are conceptually and contextually specific in meanings, and conceptual clarification seeks to clarify the main concepts to give clear understanding about the import of both the topic and the study itself. The main concepts to be clarified here are as follow: impact, church, government, administration, Christian, marriages, and Nigeria; and are analyzed as follow:

1.7.1 Impact

The word “impact” was first used in 1601 as verb, and comes from the Latin *impactus*, past participle of *impingere*, to push against – more at impinge. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines impact as: “(also called collision), in physics, the sudden, forceful coming together in direct contact of two bodies, such as, for example, two billiard balls, a golf club and a ball, a hammer and a nail head, two railroad cars when being coupled together, or a falling object and a floor.” Another useful aspect of the meaning of impact is exemplified by a rather dramatic incident of the coming together in contact, of two cars in a crash.

In natural, physical, and normal circumstances, when there is an impact between at least two objects, at least three things must happen simultaneously in response: first, there is always an identifiable mark, dent or imprint, left on either the one, or the other, or all of the impacted objects, thereby registering a significant change of circumstances regarding the objects involved.

Secondly, there is in most cases a walloping sound, noise, or tremor that causes environmental alert, warning the world around the incident, that something significant, outstanding and notable has happened in the area. Thirdly, there is observable contortion, crater, or bruise at the location, area, or environment where the impact occurred. According to Ali Al'amin Mazrui 2014, "When two elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers." The Kenyan-born American academic was emphasizing the tell-tale mark left on the ground, when a powerful impact occurs between two humongous, angry critters. President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, was also quoted as having remarked on the old Kiswahili proverb, while Kofi Anan, former Secretary General of the United Nations (UNSG), was later quoted as having said that when elephants made love, it was the grass that still suffered. Whether in fight or in lovemaking, it is the impactful contact of powerful forces and the outcome of it that is underscored. In this case, it is the impact of the meeting of two gigantic animals that scorches the green turf.

According to Manala, "The words, effect, power, impression, and influence, are the essence of the term, impact. The encounter between Christianity and African traditional cosmologies produced a new situation, a situation with unique characteristics."¹³ One of the characteristics was the introduction by European missionaries into Africa, a marriage system that was intended to be Christian by nature, though it was not exactly so. However, the Christian Church still succeeded in altering the developmental course of the African

society in a number of ways.

The impactful results that Church Government and Church Administration intended to impinge on the Christian marriage in Nigeria, could have been awesome, had the Christian marriage not been “doctored,” as will be seen. The impact would have been effective and glaring. The impact being the result of the meeting of celestial-cum-terrestrial powers into one force, ought to have been tremendous, had the Church not been compromised as it currently is. The combination of the Church Government and Church Administration constitutes a socio-spiritual machine imbued with the supreme divine power and authority that should be highly impactful, and irresistible to human enterprises. When the resultant power from such an impactful institution as the Christian church meets another socio-spiritual institution such as the Christian marriage, the results will be titanic in character, and amazing for humanity to perceive. These are two powerful institutions namely, the Christian church and the Christian marriage, that are inseparably conjoint like Siamese twins because they were both made in Heaven, but are managed here on earth by human beings, who have introduced their own foibles into the daily administration of them.

It was therefore, not accidental when one of the frontline apostles, Paul, openly compared the two institutions together. He said, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as

Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkles or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” (Ephesians 5:22-28). This is one of many remarkable points of impact, where the power of the word of God, coming out of the arsenal of the Church Government and Church Administration, would hit at certain absurd practices that pass for Christian marriage practices in Nigerian.

When love and submission in marriage are not mutual and sacrificial, there is a big question about the Christianity in the marriage. Paul’s impactful analysis is the heart of the matter of the Christian church, and a matter of the heart of the Christian marriage.

1.7.1.1 Is Marriage an Illustration of Christ and the Church?

In addition to his teachings, sermons, and parables that underscored the importance of marriage amongst men and women, Christ also demonstrated physically, his respect and support for the marriage institution. He visited a wedding ceremony at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-12), where the ceremony ran out of wine supply for guests. Christ then turned water into wine for the guests,

thereby kick-starting his miracle ministry, a metaphor for marriage.

But in his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul advised them to submit themselves to one another in the fear of God. He urged wives to submit themselves to their own husbands, as unto the Lord; adding that the husband was the head of the wife: even as Christ was the head of the Church, and was the savior of the body. Moreover, Paul said that as the Church was subject unto Christ, so should wives be to their husbands in everything. He also admonished husbands to love their wives, even as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:21-26).

However, there have been some varying views by some theological scholars regarding Paul's teaching about the nature of the Church as being modelled after marriage, with husbands being to their wives, what Christ is to the Church; and wives being to their husbands what the Church is to Christ. The differences of opinions have been more in the interpretations of the meaning of Paul's doctrine, than in the truth and reality of God's creation and salvation plan for mankind.

According to Rosser 2013, a highly regarded Bible scholar, in her work, "Is Marriage Really an Illustration of Christ and the Church?" there is a contradiction between Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians to make their marriage illustrate Christ and the Church on the one side; and the call by Jesus Christ himself to Christians to see marriage as a union of husband and wife who have left father and mother, and have cleaved together, and they two have become one flesh, who should never be put asunder because God had put

them together; on the other side. In Christ's teaching, Rosser sees husband and wife in a relationship of equal partners in marriage, and not a relationship between a Lord and a serf as Paul teaches. She adds that the picture in Paul's teaching is opposite to the type of partners Christ teaches about. She stresses that the contradiction is a distraction that could discourage non-Christians from receiving salvation through conversion, because they would be shooed away by the hard stuff in the doctrine.

Rosser further explains that her marriage was a union of best friends and she and her husband had been extremely at ease with, and happy in it, as they could confirm that they were cleaving together as one, though they were still struggling to achieve a marital status that could have fully illustrated Christ as the Lord, and the Church that must be obedient to him. Then she argued that Paul's idea of a husband that is head in marriage as "Lord" and "God," and a wife that must cower beneath him in obedience, and submission, troubled her heart in her marriage because both she and her husband were only human. She said, "Are Christian wives really supposed to show the world a picture of human obedience, while their husbands are a picture of their Lord and God? Is marriage a place where a man and a woman illustrate divinity (the man) relating to humanity (the wife)?" Rosser contends that non-Christians are hardly drawn to Christianity by this picture – they are often disgusted. "But this is certainly what this marriage-as-illustration teaching implies,"¹⁴ she argues.

Whatever intellectual opinions different schools of thought may field on important biblical doctrines, they are free to have their say, but the word of God remains as unshakeable as Mount Zion. Perhaps, it is opinions like this that the Church Government and Church Administration may look at critically, through its large goggles, to determine whether such opinions are worth their while in Christian marriages in Nigeria.

Furthermore, in February 1990, this researcher watched with abated breath, utter dismay, and unbelief, an inter-racial marriage ceremony in Lagos, Nigeria, between a young Nigerian man and a beautiful young Ukrainian lady in which the bride openly challenged, and resisted the idea of obedience, and submission to her husband-to-be. Right at the altar, in front of a jam-packed church assembly hall, the bride demonstrated her revulsion, repulsion, and bluntness. Most attendees at the wedding ceremony were mouth agape when an uncomfortable drama ensued right in front of them, when the lady stood her ground, and the following discomfiting incident unfolded like an embarrassing scene from a Hollywood dramatic skit:

Officiating minister: Anastasia Dimitro, do you promise to take Asien Johnson to be your wedded husband?

Bride : I do.

Minister : Do you commit yourself to his happiness?

Bride : I do.

Minister : Do you promise to love him?

Bride : I do.

Minister : Do you promise to honor him?

Bride : I do.

Minister : Do you promise to obey him?

Bride : (silent).

Minister : Do you promise to obey him?

Bride : (silent).

Minister : Do you promise to obey him?

Bride : Excuse me?

Minister : Do you promise to obey him?

Bride : (Looking agitated and bleary eyed) Obey who? This one?
(Her face stony, and lips pouted).

That was such a twitch of pride by Anastasia, between the cheering humility of divinity, and the baneful humiliation of humanity, even in the very presence of the God of all flesh, the creator of the marriage institution. Yet, Sarah the “mother of many nations” (Genesis 17:16) was extolled for obeying Abraham her husband, and addressing him as “My Lord” (1 Peter 3:6), instead of, “This one?” If Anastasia was Sarah’s daughter as the Bible says she was, why did she choose to do otherwise, and not as Sarah had done as an example, by showing obedience?

Were it possible, the Church Administration, for impact, would have forewarned and forearmed Anastasia, the daughter of Eve, by means of

premarital counseling for that special occasion of her life. It is not too much of an administrative assignment for the church to prepare brides and grooms ahead of their wedding day. As a matter of fact, that is what is expected of churches in Nigeria to do to preempt and forewarn them of the questions they would have to answer at their marriage vows, at the altar, to forestall any abominable, self-deprecating show of shame.

The occasion of the exchange of marriage vows at the altar is comparable to that very moment in the beautiful Garden of Eden, when God was on the “potter’s wheel,” creating Eve and delivering her to Adam. Any misbehavior by either the bride or the groom at the wedding altar is a mother of all misbehaviors, and should be discouraged.

1.7.2 Church

The term church, was first used as noun and adjective before the 12th century, and as verb in the 14th century. Its etymological origin is from Late Greek, *kyriakon*, and from Greek *kyriakos*. A dictionary definition of church is that it is a building for public and especially Christian worship.”¹⁵ Church can also be defined as the gathering of believers who assemble for the purpose of worshipping God. J. H. Newman defines church as, “The whole body of Christians, it is the whole body gathered together from all ages.”¹⁶ Also, church can be understood to mean: “The clergy or officialdom of a Christian worship.”¹⁷ In whatever way it is looked at, whether as the gathering of people, or an architectural edifice, any talk about church must have central

reference to God in consideration.

In the Bible, among the many definitions of church, one of the most interesting, which is very relevant to this study, is the one given by Jesus Christ himself, the founder of the institution. It goes as follows: “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20).

For an assembly of people to qualify as a church no matter how few the number of people may be, the gathering must be in the name of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and God must be in their midst. It is only in the assemblage of people with God in their midst, and for the purpose of worshipping God, that the problem of Church administration arises. The gathering must be administered by the leadership, or officials of the church, as deftly as possible, to make the assembly physically and spiritually conducive for God to participate therein, and for the church to fulfil the most major of its purposes, including the following, which is herein stated: “That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27).

A well-administered church is not necessarily determined by its architectural beauty, the wealth that its leaders and members muster, or the popularity and number of congregants it packs. After all, Jesus Christ the Church founder and the Messiah of the universe, who was crucified on the cross for the church, was born in a nondescript manger. So, it is not about grandiose and titanic displays

of grandstanding. Instead, it is all about the spiritual purity, holiness, righteousness, uprightness and humility. For greater details on the concept of the church, it may be necessary to turn to the fourth chapter of the study.

The focus of the study is on the impact of the Church Government and Church Administration on selected Christian marriages in Nigeria. Suffice it say that the purpose of conceptual clarification is served here by stressing the impact the church must exert on the Christian marriage in Nigeria, to function appropriately and in line with its divine mission, and purpose on earth.

1.7.3 Government

The concept of government is discussed here in in-depth. The word as used here is a noun derived from the verb govern, which was first used in the 14th century. It is from Middle English, from Anglo-French *governer*, from Latin *gubernare*, meaning to steer, govern; and from Greek *kybernan*. Government is defined by the dictionary as; “the body of persons that constitutes the governing authority of a political unit or organization such as: (a) the officials comprising the governing body of a political unit and constituting the organization as an active agency; (b) capitalized: the executive branch of the U.S. federal government; and (c) capitalized: a small group of persons holding simultaneously the principal political executive offices of a nation or other political unit and being responsible for the direction and supervision of public affairs...”¹⁸

The last definition conforms with the meaning of the term as it is intended to

be understood here, as pertains to its use in this work.

Other words that are closely synonymous with the meaning of government as intended in this study include the following concepts: administration, direction, governance, management, guidance, control, regulation, stewardship, supervision, and so on.

The concept of government as appertains to its role in church affairs and the impact it must have on Christian marriage in Nigeria, is for the purpose of regulating, guiding, directing and controlling the latter, in order to shape it back into its original form and nature, for the benefit of the Nigerian society as a whole in particular, and mankind in general. The impact of government on society is usually far-reaching and tremendous. Government is the sovereign authority here on earth, and the only power that is above government is God. Government is the soul of the society or a country, and it is the be-all, and end-all. Government is the lifeblood of any society, and the prime mover that determines whether a society exists and prospers or not. What governments do, good or bad, and get away with, individuals cannot try, and survive.

Several scholars, philosophers, social scientists, sociologists in particular, and social commentators have contributed to the discourse on the concept of government. Amongst them are: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Machiavelli, Karl Marx, and a lot more, and their ideas have had an enormous effect on the way society of today is being managed. Part of the importance of government

is that there must be an administrative system in place that exercises authority, formulates various policies, makes and keeps law and order, produces and distributes or allocates resources, collects taxes, undertakes social reforms and development, and generates productivity efforts, for a country to exist.

Therefore, the type of government that carries out such functions and more, must impact either positively, or negatively the society that it administers, and even beyond. And most citizens are always very interested in the type of government that is in place. This is because government policies are the determinants of the conditions, and standards of living of the citizens.

1.7.4 Administration:

Moreover, for the purpose of contextualization of the concept of administration, the term can be defined as: “performance of executive duties, the act or process of administering something, the execution of public affairs as distinguished from policy-making, a body of persons who administer,”¹⁹ and so on. Administration is very important to the survival of any organization, and the church is no exception. As a matter of fact, if any organization needs good administration to ensure its survival and success, it is the church that needs it most. This is because the all-powerful august personage, the Sovereign God, who is represented by the church here on earth, is a very organized, thorough, and knowledgeable being. The awesome power of his glorious wisdom in creativity, is evidenced by the creation of the heavenly and earthly abodes, together with all their hosts and contents that, for millennium after millennium,

have had no need for any re-engineering. He is neither at ease with any disorganized system, and sinful individual, nor is he at peace with any corrupt and haphazard institution.

When a person or an institution is in a state of disorganization, he, she, or it is dwelling in sin, corruption, disorderliness, and is doomed in perdition. That is why administration is looked upon for the rescue, because if well-run, administration is meant to set things right, up, and running. The following are the functions of administration:²⁰

- i. **Planning:** Planning involves deciding in advance what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who should do it. It maps out the path through which the organization is to go, and where it wants to be. The planning function involves establishing goals and arranging them in logical order. Administration engages in both short-range and long-range planning and decision making, based on choices or options. The pastor and his council determine the church's policies that will yield optimum results.
- ii. **Organizing:** It involves identifying responsibilities to be performed, grouping responsibilities into departments or divisions and specifying organizational relationships. The purpose is to achieve coordinated efforts among all the elements in the organization. Organization must take into account delegation of

authority and responsibility and span of control with the supervisory units. Even in a newly begun ministry, the pastor cannot sink and swim alone. He needs a teamwork that will assist him in some of the administrative processes for faster and more far-reaching results. Above all, the pastor must need a prayer team. Even Jesus Christ, the power above powers, had a prayer team whom he expected to tarry the night at the darkest hours of his tribulations. However, being humans as they were, they disappointed the Lord and slept all night long, instead of tarrying for at least an hour with him (Matthew 26:40).

- iii. **Directing:** Directing is leading people in a manner that achieves the goals of the organization. It involves proper allocation of resources and providing an effective support. Directing requires some exceptional interpersonal skills and the ability to motivate people. One of the crucial issues in directing is to find the correct balance between emphasis on staff needs and emphasis on economic production. In ministry, time is in essence and the pastor's shrewdness in allocating it, matters.
- iv. **Controlling:** Controlling is the function that evaluates quality in all areas and detects actual or potential deviations from the organization's plan. This ensures high quality performance and satisfactory results, while maintaining orderly and problem-free

environment. Controlling includes information management, measurement of performance and institution of correcting actions. Many pastors, who are favored with the rare powers of signs, wonders, and miracles, suddenly assume indiscreet administrative styles, by becoming aloof, but God is not an author of confusion.

- v. **Budgeting:** It incorporates most of the administrative functions, beginning with the implementation of a budget plan through the application of budget control. Budgeting also looks at prioritization of policies that are at the heart of the organization's goals achievement. Christ was not a budgetary horror. It was Judas Iscariot the purse-keeper that was. The Lord never demanded extra-budgetary expenditures. Even when he needed to pay tax, he did not call on Judas, he sent Peter to withdraw the fund from a fish, a decision that beat all modern bank managers in human history.
- vi. **Staffing:** This means filling job positions with the right persons at the right time. It involves determining staffing needs, writing job descriptions, recruiting and screening people to fill positions. Here, job performance and maximum productivity are essential. Just imagine the deft staffing skills the Lord Jesus displayed in the process of recruiting staff for his ministry. Perhaps a pastor may wish to take a cue therefrom.

Although, church administration may not fit snugly into the administrative

molds of administration of secular organizations, such as production factories; profit-making commercial enterprises; science, engineering and construction corporations; which are all profit-driven and governed by human rules, the church is governed by divine rules that are even more efficient and more rigid than the former, but are yet attenuated by grace. This does by no means suggest that there is untrammelled laissez-faire in church administration. Far from it. That was why Apostles Paul asked, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:2). Then he replied with a resounding “God forbid.” Church administration is more effective, and more efficient, because of intense prayers and spirituality that are involved in it. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles of Christ on the Day of Pentecost, the church leaders were instantly imbued by the spirit with new administrative skills they never learned.

1.7.5 Christian

The concept “Christian” can be used as both noun and adjective. It was first used in the 14th century, and comes from Latin *Christianus*, and from Greek *Christianos*, from *Christos* – Christ. The concept Christian is defined as “One who professes belief and teaching of Jesus Christ, and a member of one of the churches of Christ separating from the Disciples of Christ in 1906.” The disciples of Christ were first called Christians in Antioch during the Apostolic era (Acts 11:26). Used as an adjective to qualify the concept of marriage in the study, “Christian” becomes an identifying mark to distinguish from other

types, the specific type of marriage being investigated by the study; and a qualifying identity for the study to realize the quality and the exclusivity of the institution set out for restructuring in Nigeria; through the impact that the machinery of the Church Government and Church Administration must have on marriage.

1.7.6 Marriages

According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, marriage is “a legally and socially sanctioned union between one or more husbands and one or more wives that accords status to their offspring and is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs, and attitudes, that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners.”²¹ Another definition of marriage is that it is “the legally or formally recognized union of two people as partners in a personal relationship (historically and in some jurisdictions, specifically a union between a man and a woman).”²²

The second definition offers itself to the researcher, and may be understood as the type of marriage intended for the study, that is, the union between a man and a woman.

By another definition, marriage is “the state of being united as spouses in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law.”²³ Other names for marriage include wedlock, matrimony, conjugality, union, and the like.

Marriage is the most romantic of all human relationships ever created by God, and it is so beautifully glamorized by the word of God that the book of

the Song of Songs stands out in its captivating romanticization of the virtue of love which is the fundamental characteristic that embodies marriage. In (Song of Songs 4:10-11 and 16), Solomon has this to say: “How fair is my love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! And the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit.”²⁴

1.7.7 Nigeria

The concept of “Nigeria” as one of the terms used in the topic of the study, is the country that serves as the operational arena for the research. It is the field where the activities of the Church Government and Church Administration must impact some selected Christian marriages to alter for better results, the activities and functions of the marriage institution. Officially, Nigeria is called the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is situated on the southern coast of western Africa, extending about 1,050 kilometers from north to south, 1,130 kilometers east to west, and covering an area of 923,678 square kilometers.

The national Federal capital city is Abuja, a new city that became functional from 1990 when the Federal Government institutions moved their seats into

it. Facing the Bight of Benin on the southwest and the Bight of Biafra on the southeast, both of the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria is bounded by Niger Republic on the North, Lake Chad on the northeast, Cameroon on the East, and Benin Republic on the west. The population is estimated at 213 million,²⁵ the largest of any African state.

The great diversity of peoples and cultures in Nigeria is largely the result of the country's location at the point of transcontinental migration routes. Nigeria has a rich and varied cultural heritage, deriving from its indigenous ethnic elements as well as from Arabic and western European cultural influences. There lie the causes of the multifarious problems that beset the Christian marriage institution in the country, and this study is out to utilize the *modus operandi* of the machinery of the Church Government and Church Administration to impact and salvage the Christian marriage out of the quagmire.

Nigeria has a developing, mixed economy based largely on petroleum production and agriculture and this has stalled the economy from growing. As a result, the government introduced a variety of severe austerity measures and a program to expand non-oil exports particularly in the agricultural sector. The gross national product (GNP) declined through the 1980s as revenues from petroleum exports dropped, but remained significantly higher than those found in most other countries in western Africa.²⁶

Agriculture accounts for one-fourth of the GNP and employs more than half of

the work force. Nigeria's production in meat products, staple food crops, such as corn, maize, sorghum, taro, yams, cassava, and rice, has barely kept pace with the growing population, and food imports have continued to be high, with consequent high cost of living.

About one-sixth of the country's area is forested, and there is potential for exploitation, but illegal deforestation is a major problem and most of the wood cut is used for fuel. The fishing industry is being developed, and duties are being imposed on fish landed by foreign vessels.

With regard to government and social conditions, Nigeria is a federal republic of 36 states plus the Federal Capital Territory. The 1999 Constitution as Amended allocates power between the federal and state governments and sets up presidential form of government similar to that of the United States and France. Before 1999, portions of the older versions of the constitution were often routinely modified or suspended after every *coup d'état*, the national assembly was dissolved and replaced by a supreme military council. Nigerian politics are characterized by instability and a tendency for political parties to proliferate, reflecting the regional and ethnic diversity of the country. Health conditions are relatively poor in Nigeria, as in most African countries.

The enrolment ratio for primary school increased greatly from the 1970s to the late 1990s, when educational development was undertaken with the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program as one of its central features. However, expansions at the secondary and tertiary levels of education have not

expanded to keep pace with the primary level. Currently, there are 170 universities in Nigeria, 79 are privately owned, 43 are owned by the federal government, while 48 are owned by the various state governments.²⁷

1.8 Theoretical Framework

For an important study such as this to be reliable, dependable and contribute to knowledge, it is necessary to examine some of the theories, and schools of thought developed by various scholars that are relevant to the research work. The subject of the impact of Church Government and Administration on marriage has generated a lot of debates, and many scholars and theologians are still searching for common ground but have not yet arrived there.

Although there are varied positions assumed by different scholars and theologians, two major positions appear to be more pronounced, namely, those who support the influence of the church on marriage on the one side, and those who believe in secularization of marriage on the other. Some of the debates, schools of thought, and theories are examined here-within.

The first school of thought to be considered here is that of the Roman Catholic Church, as enunciated in its canon law and theology, that emphasizes the preponderance of the church in marital matters. According to the Diocese of Dallas, in its *Tribunal* of June 2, 2020, it is stated thus: “The Catholic Church, in its canon law and theology, describes marriage as a lifetime, exclusive partnership between one man and one woman, who give and receive mutual help and love and, from their union, bring forth and rear children. Marriages

always are presumed valid (by the church) until proven otherwise. If one or both parties is unbaptized, the marriage still is presumed to be valid and a good and natural bond. ... this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.” Furthermore, it is stated as follows: “The Catholic Church believes marriage is lifetime, exclusive partnership between a man and a woman, who give and receive mutual help and love and, from their union, bring forth children. When Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians marry according to the requirements of their Churches, and when people of other religions marry according to the requirements of civil law, the Catholic Church presumes they marry validly.”²⁸ The tone of the Catholic’s canonical enunciation may sound subtle, mellow, and conciliatory, but it does in no way depreciate the exertion of the decisive role of the church in matters of marriage.

Let it be pointed out, however, that most Christian denominations including the Lutherans, do not agree with the Roman Catholic Church on the point of promoting marriage to the level of a sacrament, although they agree on the point of church’s influence on marriage.

The purposes of encouraging the church to exercise impact on marriage include the following, according to (Ephesians 5:25-27): (i) to maintain the purity, dignity, and spiritual strength that marriage was endowed with right from the Garden of Eden at Creation (Genesis: 2:18, 21-25); (ii) to enable marriage maintain strong family values and godliness in its functions in

companionship, and child bearing and rearing; and (iii) to protect and shield new generations of godly people from cultural corruption.

In his contribution in support of the position of the Roman Catholic Church, Mullins 2016²⁹ in his work, *The Effects of Religion on Enduring Marriage*, adds to the recent literature in the study of religion and marriage by examining older couples' use of religion as a cultural repertoire in enduring marriages. His study includes the qualitative analysis of in-depth interviews with 43 married, Christian couples. Couples reported four predominant social contexts that gave sacred meanings to their marriage: prayer, worship service and sermons, first-rite rituals, and communion. These social contexts magnify sacred meanings within religious cultural repertoires by enhancing older couples' perceptions of their marriages as sacred through formal and public recognition of their marriage longevity, lauding their marriage longevity as a blessing from God to be emulated, promoting religious meanings of familism and giving positive marriage outcomes sacred meanings. Negative effects of religion on marriage outcomes occurred among older couples when lived experiences of religion conflicted with their cultural repertoire.

The position of the Catholic Church is further reinforced by the Constructivist Theory that seeks to develop a deeper understanding of the relational system of married couples and God. Posited by Charmaz 2006,³⁰ the constructivist grounded theory technique was used to interview nine married couples from Christian denominations that reported having a strong relationship with each

other and with God together. The theory analyzed emergent categories of behaviors, emotions, and cognitions, and constructed a theory and model of Christian marital couples and their shared relationship with God. A comparison was then made with, and the results and theory were contrasted to existing literature on attachment theory, to theorize a shared attachment to God. The theological concept of kinship covenant was then applied to the results in order to organize and situate the theory into a Christian framework.

What this theory has done is to re-emphasize the inalienable presence of God in marriage, not only as the author of the institution (Genesis 2:18, 21-25), but also as an active party in marriage; thereby strengthening the role and impact of the church, which is the representative of God on earth, as a “regulatory agency” in marriage.

Although, the position of the Catholic Church basically reflects the universal position of the Christian church on the need of the church to exercise impactful role on the marriage institution, the position is further reinforced by the biblical narrative that presents God as the creator of marriage (Genesis 2:18, 21-25), who has supreme knowledge of the nature and functions of the institution, and whose authority must be respected in the way marriage is plied.

The hand of the church is further strengthened over marriage by the biblical injunction in which Apostle Paul compares the relationship between husband and wife, to the relationship between Christ and the church; urging women to submit themselves to their husbands and heads; even as the church does to

Jesus Christ, its builder and head (Ephesians 5:22-33).

On the other side of the debate spectrum, some thinkers who are opposed to the role and impact of the church on marriage, propose secularization of the marriage institution. The idea originated from the drive towards the separation of church and state, which is one of the most vital pillars of democracy so diverse as the one upheld in the United States.³¹ They argue that with hundreds of religions varying in values, practices, and gods, it is essential to protect the rights of both those with and without faith, and this can only be done with a thorough divide between religion and the law.

Unfortunately, through an in-depth analysis of this country's legal and judicial history it is clear that where a tall and impenetrable wall should stand between these two societal facets, a wisp and broken divide exists instead. The Founding Fathers prided themselves on their fierce defense of religious freedom, but in practice favored the Christian faith of a single Holy Spirit. This bias is made apparent through the various acts, state laws and Supreme Court decisions instated over multiple decades. The Christian ideal of marriage as a means for sinless procreation was upheld by the Supreme Court case of *Skinner v. Oklahoma* and the Comstock Laws. The Dawes Act of 1887, along with *Reynolds v. United States*, supported the Christian belief of monogamy as the only holy union.

Multiple Supreme Court cases used Christian religious texts to withhold marriage rights from homosexual couples, and states took years after the

legalization of marriage to implement non-religious no-fault divorce laws. Through each court ruling, and state or federal law enacted, it is unquestionable that the legal unionizing of American citizens in marriage works only to acknowledge those of Christian faith through the upholding of Christian values of monogamy, heterosexuality, chastity, and fidelity.

These undue preferences for a single religion in the legal system is a blatant display of the weakness of the United States' separation between church and state, a weakness that must be both acknowledged and reconstructed. Evidently, the position of the secularists who oppose the religionization of marriage is by no means sacrosanct as their idea is pelted by further debates. Next comes the Fragmentary Theory of Secularization and Religionization that further weakens the position of the secularists. Propounded by Fisher (2016),³² the theory claims that the multi-dimensional changes in the modern family structure may be explained as a manifestation of the simultaneous processes of secularization and religionization.

On the one hand, the rising acceptance of secular alternatives to the traditional family structure indicates that modernization processes weaken religious behavior and authority, as the classical secularization thesis has claimed. On the other hand, ongoing loyalty to the religious family pattern, and even their relative intensification, reflect the opposite trend. Serving as a case study, the changes in the Israeli religious family structure – reflected by civil marriage, cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock children – clearly illustrate how

modernization generates horizontal and vertical fragmental processes in which religion and secularism supplement as well as compete with each other, creating an increasingly divided society in which religiosity and secularism flourish side by side among various groups and within distinct realms.

Be that as it may, the position of this study is that marriage was created by God, and he alone has the supreme, exclusive knowledge of both the nature, and in-depth working of it. Therefore, the church, wherein the unsearchable wisdom of God is embedded and revealed, should be seized with its God-given role as a socio-spiritual institution, in ensuring that marriage, the only other socio-spiritual institution on earth, is plied in the way and manner God established it to be done, to the glory of God and the good of society.

Therefore, the impact of Church Government and Church Administration on marriage is not a mere wish in scholarship, it is profoundly ingrained, and divinely ordained in the nature of both institutions. In support of the position of Mullins 2016, and others, the church in Nigeria must impact marriage for the latter to perform well, to the benefit of society.

1.9 Organization of Study

For the purpose of coherence, cohesion, and proper understanding of the research study by readers, the study has been divided into chapters, and sub-topics.

It is a seven-chapter dissertation. The first chapter deals with the preliminary

issues in the study such as background to the study, statement of problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, scope of the study, the methodology used, conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, and the organization of the study. The chapter gives a bird's-eye-view of what the study is set out to achieve.

The second chapter which deals with literature review, the origin of marriage, the background and structure of marriage, examines as exhaustively as possible, the whole nature of the covenantal institution.

The third chapter examines the biblical origin, perspective, and monogamous nature of marriage, digging into where the deviation from its original format, and the derogation from its sanctity, and respectability came from, and who were responsible for the anomalies.

The fourth chapter is on the Impact of Church Government and Administration on Marriage. Here the nature, and functions of Government in general, and Church Government in particular, as well as the nature and functions of Administration, and of Church Administration are critically discussed, identifying the usefulness of the structures in the day-to-day running of the church for efficient and effective results.

The fifth chapter is focused on the Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian marriages in Nigeria; this being the focal point of the study.

The sixth chapter settles on the concept of Christian marriage in Nigeria,

exploring the question: what is Christian marriage; and examining the effects of Christian marriage on the development of Christianity in Nigeria. It also discusses the model of Jewish-cum-Christian marriage approved by Jesus Christ. Finally, the seventh chapter dwells on the summary, conclusion and recommendations regarding the findings of the study.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW, ORIGIN, BACKGROUND, AND STRUCTURE OF MARRIAGE

2.1 Literature Review

The title of this PhD dissertation is *The Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*. Marriage is a very important subject in human life and has earned enormous interests worldwide, in virtually all human societies, and almost all disciplines of human knowledge. Being the root of the origin of humankind, marriage is embraced by all religions, races, cultures, and societies, which is why it generates quite a huge body of literature throughout the world – from religion to philosophy, medicine, psychology, sociology, economics, law, and the list goes on.

According to *All Pro Dad*, “Marriage is more than a physical union; it is also a spiritual and emotional union. This union mirrors the one between God and His Church.”³³ And, according to *City Journal*, “Marriage is a powerful creator and sustainer of human and social capital for adults as well as children, about as important as education when it comes to promoting the health, wealth, and well-being of adults and communities. For most Americans this is news.”³⁴ It is news to most Americans, perhaps because of the high rate of marital carnage and failures in the country. In the United States marriage has virtually been reduced to the same level of integrity in society that social clubs, and economic or business partnerships are accorded. Marriage is almost no longer “for better, for

worse.” It is now “for better, for best,” to borrow a leaf from a notable Nigerian pastor; meaning that marriage is only serviceable as long as it delivers the sweet things of life, but is abandoned when the hard sides of life set in.

However, as massive as the body of literature that is generated by the subject of marriage may be, very little consideration is given to the practice of marriage in Nigeria, especially Christian marriage as practiced in the country. This has no doubt created some areas of agreements, and disagreements among scholars, theologians, marriage counselors, and social commentators about what the Christian marriage as practiced in Nigeria is, and how much impact the church can have on it – which is the aspect of interest of this study -- leading to some discrepancies, insufficiency of information, lacunas or gaps, which this study is out to fill.

Consequently, a review of some aspects of literature in the research areas of this study is essential to focusing the study appropriately for effective results. To begin with, speaking about Christian marriage in Nigeria, Childs, Stanley H.; in his book, *Christian Marriage in Nigeria*, 1946, has this to say: “The first question therefore that must be approached is: What do we mean by Christian marriage? We must clearly distinguish between Christian marriage and European marriage, but too often they are confused. The revolutionizing of the whole conception of marriage was one of the first tasks which the Christian Church had to undertake, and that task is by no means finished yet in Europe. Our problems in Europe arise largely because we find those ideals so difficult

to accomplish, so that we try to find easy ways of solving our difficulties. Much of what is commonly regarded as European in our marriage conceptions is not strictly European but largely derived from Christianity. In trying to produce the Christian home in Africa, we must not forget or ignore what we in Europe have learnt through our experience. We must not forget the history of the Church, our task is to transform the social conditions, and not least the home life of the people. To do this we dare not ask them to go back to the partial stages through which we ourselves went, any more than, in trying to secure the right social conditions, we ask them to travel the slow way by which slavery was gradually...”³⁵

Childs further remarks that most Christians in the southern part of Nigeria respect and uphold customary marriage more than church marriage, and that Christians who seek church marriage would usually conduct customary marriage first before the church marriage. He adds that the church marriage is often considered as the blessing of the marriage.³⁶

Let the points be quickly underscored that Child's admission of guilt on behalf of his fellow Europeans over their blunders, or intentional acts of sabotage in introducing into Nigeria in particular, and Africa in general as a vehicle of colonization, a religion and its marriage system that they themselves had not understood, is a rare form of self-indictment, and self-incriminating confession. Especially, considering some claims by some Europeans that their colonial invasion of Africa was a civilizing mission. “Civilizing mission” in deed!

If the Europeans themselves did not understand the difference between Christian marriage and European marriage systems, according to Childs, why did they assume airs of spiritual superiority over Africans, while forcing down the Africans' throat a marriage system that was amorphous, incomprehensible, and potentially overwhelming to both the colonizers and the colonized people?

The big questions are: First, did the Europeans intentionally inject familial, domestic, and social instability into the African society via the marriage institution as a diversionary tactic, to keep the Africans perennially horns-locked in marital and domestic battles at home, while being forced to be subservient to colonial authorities? Second, does the on-going turbulence in marital homes and families in Nigeria actually justify the supposed fiendish scheme by the colonizing Europeans, to plant conjugal wars in African homes in order to keep Africans permanently crisis-fatigued at home, and emasculated enough to the point of being servile to the colonial authorities?

Third, can people who are embroiled in serious domestic battles every minute of the day still have enough strength and time for the lofty or mundane things of life such as educational undertakings, economic pursuits, spirituality, stable political order and even struggles for emancipation and freedoms?

These and more of such questions are pointers to the conjugal quandary that has become the bedrock of Nigerian Christian homes, regrettably. And this research study is out to point the way to how to manage the miry situation, get good results out of marriage, and move on to enjoy the harmony, happiness, and joy

that God in-built into the covenantal institution. In actual fact, the revelations made by Childs 1946, about the seemingly sinister, and disruptive in-plant injected into Nigerian society via Christian marriage by the Europeans when they introduced Christianity and its corresponding marital system into Africa, and Nigeria, is an eye-opener for Nigerian Christians.

The Church in Nigeria must rise up and save the institution by doing more to enlighten Nigerians about marriage through stern application of the undiluted words of God from the Bible. On the other hand, the uncanny revelations by Childs 1946, constitute a very helpful point of awareness, and of new beginning for Nigerian Christian couples to begin to build, or rebuild their marriages, based on the suggestions and recommendations submitted in this study. Secondly, Christians have to delve back into the marriage manual, the Holy Bible, in assistance from the Church Government and Church Administration, as the most reliable means of learning the ropes, in rebuilding the originally misconstrued, and mismanaged institution, as per Childs 1946.

Furthermore, on her part, in her work, Rosser, a highly regarded Bible scholar and theologian, posits that the comparison by Apostle Paul, of the nature of marriage regarding the relationship between husband and wife, to the relationship between Christ and the church; is directly contradictory to Christ's teaching, namely, that marriage should be between mutually loving man and woman, who must leave fathers and mothers to cleave together as one flesh, inseparable.

Rosser contends that Paul's urge to women to submit themselves to their husbands, who are lords and heads, just as the church must do to Christ the founder and head of the church, is a teaching that will alienate unbelievers from becoming Christian converts, because the teaching portrays men as overlords in the same realm of divinity with Christ, even when they are mere humans living in the reaches of humanity.

It can be said that Rosser's analysis of Paul's doctrine on marriage appears to be very radical, and more intellectual as an appeal to logic and reason; and more political as a feminist cause idea, than theological; and therefore, much less helpful in furthering the cause of marital success in a society like Nigeria where the institution has suffered tremendous bruises and carnage.

Marriage, like Christianity its faith base, is a concept that is heavily spiritual in content, and most aspects of its nature cannot be rationally, or logically manifested and justified. In such a situation it must be accepted as is, and not as should be. It is the attempts to intellectualize both Christianity and marriage that have seemingly rendered the socio-spiritual institution even more mysterious to Nigerian practitioners, and therefore, more troubling. Here is where the church must come in, armed with the gospel of Christ to impact marriage practices in Nigeria like never before.

Moreover, the success of marriage does not require radicalized interpretation or understanding of what the word of Gods says about the institution, it requires pliant and total obedience to what God wants couples to do within it. It is in

practical marriage that the Church Government and Church Administration has enough room to impact the institution within the Nigerian society, not in the theory of the subject-matter.

Pursuant to further analysis of the versatile, and volatile body of literature that marriage commands, the subject is further reviewed and discussed in the following areas:

2.2 Origin of Marriage

The origin of marriage stemmed from God's recognition, after creating Adam, of the need for team work and companionship in the latter's efforts at taking care of the beautiful Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15), which God had made. Therefore, in the beginning of time God created man, male and female (Genesis 1:27). Then he created marriage between the male and the female (Genesis 2:18).

Adam and Eve were the first couple on earth. Since then, and soon after God saw that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18), and gave Adam a wife, most couples seem to have been carrying on as if marriage was a battlefield, a curse, and not a blessing. But marriage was created to deliver goodness and not punishment or hardship to mankind. "It is not good for man to be alone, God said." (Genesis 2:18). Marriage must be managed and not damaged. Is marriage really a blessing or a curse?

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* has this to say: "The universality of marriage

within different societies and cultures is attributed to the many basic social and personal functions it performs, such as procreation, and provision for sexual gratification and regulation, care of children and their education and socialization, regulation of lines of descent, division of labor between the sexes, economic production and consumption, and provision for satisfaction of personal needs for affection, status, and compassion.”³⁷

In the Garden of Eden, until the enemy, the Serpent, came in-between them, Adam and Eve shared and enjoyed together in full, while tending the Garden in line with God’s instruction to them (Genesis 2:15), the blessings that God built into the institution of marriage. The blessings included: love and companionship that drove loneliness away, mutual help, mutual support, mutual protection, shared ideas, communication, mutual provision of comfort, and what have you. These were blessings that should not be taken for granted by marital partners.

According to Alhaji, “marriage is indeed a blessing given to us by the Lord Almighty which is a legal union between two individuals (a man and a woman) who come to the agreement of becoming husband and wife till death take them apart.”³⁸ Alhaji then went ahead to list out the blessings marriage offered to humanity, which she divided into two groups, some meant for men, and others for women. However, it becomes clear that for the blessings to be activated and enjoyed, somethings must exchange for them. Couples must play their assigned roles and exercise their responsibilities as husbands or wives.

And the responsibilities, roles and blessings that must go *pari-passu*, are as follow:

2.2.1. For the Men:

As husbands, heads of families, and peacemakers, men are to actively show unconditional love to their wives and families. They are to see themselves as burden bearers, offering untrammelled sacrifices in protecting, directing, guiding, being patient with, and providing for their wives and families, to mention only a few of the roles and responsibilities that must be exercised to unleash the blessings entrapped in wedlock. But men are also to be forthright, benevolent, trustworthy, industrious, hardworking, caring, God-fearing, incorruptible, reliable, dependable, knowledgeable, self- respecting, and more. So, when a husband routinely sheds his responsibilities and roles, whom would he blame if the corresponding blessings fail to gush in?

2.2.2. For the Women:

As wives, women are to submissively love and respect their husbands and themselves in such a way as to disarm detractors, see themselves as gentle home builders, and provide stable foundations for their homesteads. They are the cynosure of their husbands and should comport themselves with dignity and unflattering pride. Wives cannot play passive roles in the building of their homes, and expect blessings to pour in through the back door. Wives do not have to be flagrant to enjoy their marriage. Modesty and humility should be a better

name of the game. When a woman's tongue is sharper than her wits, whom would she call upon to tame her husband, who, perhaps in self-defense decides to arm himself with "tranquillizers" that deaden his response-faculties?

2.2.3. For the Society:

The blessings of marriage can neither be circumscribed nor undervalued, because of its snowball effects. There are tremendous blessings or benefits that even the society enjoys from every successful marriage. The blessings range far and wide. From well brought up children growing up as responsible citizens of the nation to add values to the development of society; to the high economic worth of the family resulting from good and stable marriage that is capable of generating multiplier effects on the economy of the larger society; to providing a good model of successful marriage for the rest of the society to emulate; to providing good, honest, and diligent leadership for the society; the list goes on.

2.3 Five Reasons Why Marriage Is Important:

It is an understatement to talk about the importance of marriage, because its importance is obvious, palpable, and self-evident. Without marriage the imagery and likeness of God would not exist to remind the Sovereign Creator of the very likeness of himself, the world would not be, godliness would not exist, humankind would not subsist, God's love and righteousness would not reign, sin and evil would never be found, and hatred, jealousy, racism and xenophobia would not exist. There are more than a thousand-and-one reasons

why marriage is very important, but only five of them will be discussed here as follow:³⁹

- a. **Beginning:** Marriage is the beginning. It was the beginning of human life on earth, starting from the Garden of Eden, and it is the beginning of real life for everyone today. It is the beginning of almost all things in a person's life – the beginning of how to care for a family – and it is a life-long journey of commitment in that respect. For a man, the arrival of a wife brings the real beginning of quite a new experience in life. It is the beginning of learning how to shoulder responsibilities, how to take care of other people, in most times, without any help from a friend. A young man, who hitherto had been under the apron-string of parental care, now instantly assumes his rightful place in life, for the first time, as a real care provider. It is the beginning of learning how to show real love, and give unfeigned love. It is also the beginning of how to run a home, by providing the wherewithal in terms of finances, supervision, personal responsibility, and a solid shoulder for everyone in the home to rest upon. As soon as the curtain is drawn on the wedding funfair, the glittering lights go doused, the sparkling wines are dried up, the skyscraping wedding cakes are all consumed, the impeccably cut wedding dresses are sent over to the dry cleaners, the booming music goes silent, the twerking is over, the sweat-soaked tuxedos and suits are out of sight in the wardrobes, and the clattering of stilettos are back in the closets; then the real new turning

point in life begins. The couple returns to their lonely home, and there is hardly anyone at sight. And for a young woman, marriage is also a beginning of a journey into womanhood. Few things excite a woman more than the thoughts of the beginning of her becoming a mother, owning a home of her own, and controlling her family. There are lots of other considerations that make marriage an important beginning in the life of mankind.

- b. **Oneness:** Oneness is the crux of the Christian faith. And marital relationship is the number one union that compares to the divine relationship that exists between Christ and his father in Heaven. Christ said, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. (John 17:21). Adam said, “This now is bone of my bone, And flesh of my flesh: She shall be called Woman. Because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2:23). No two human beings can bond together better than a husband and his wife, not even mother and child. Oneness in marriage is like a tandem bicycle. It takes two to bike in one accord. The man, regarded by the word of God as head of the family is positioned on the front seat with hands on the steering handle-bars, while the woman is perched on the rear saddle. Both of them must combine the best of their strength and zeal in pedaling the machine to put it in motion. And, once in motion, the speed, balance, smoothness of the cruise, and stability of

the bicycle, surely depend on the commitment, motivation, determination, co-operation, mutual support, and so on that partners decide to complement each other with, or invest into getting the bicycle to work. But, the direction of the bicycle depends on the decision of the person on the front seat, who controls and steers the device, with the consent and support from the rear guard. There will be chaos and disaster, if for any reason, there is a disagreement between the pathfinder and the rear minder regarding the cycling dynamics such as the amounts of efforts needed in the cycling and when to accelerate, slow down or stop the bicycle. The roles of a husband and a wife in their home are analogous to tandem cycling. Couples must work in tandem, instead of at cross-purpose with each other for marriage to work. The man has eternally been assigned the role of headship within the family, and it is a role that he cannot reject, reassign, or resign from. Nor is it allowed for the role to be transferred, usurped, or contested for by any other person within, or outside the family, as long as the *de facto* and *de jure* head of the family is still alive and able to perform his functions.⁴⁰ Similarly, the wife cannot withdraw from her supportive role, come rain, come shine, because her support is “for better or for worse.” Husband and wife are given to each other in special partnership relationship for mutual assistance as they wade through the challenges of this life, just as Eve was given to Adam to help him tend the beautiful Garden of Eden.

- c. **Purity:** Another reason that underscores the importance of marriage is purity. Physical, emotional and spiritual components of marriage are the major aspects of the relationship that couples share together in oneness. They are to be kept and maintained in conditions of purity and holiness in the best form that pleases God. Physical purity, when enforced with unfeigned love in marriage, helps fend off temptation, and vulnerability to conjugal sin. When the flesh is susceptible, weak and manipulable, the spirit is easily compromised, and the marriage is tainted. It is godliness, prayers and love that secure purity in marriage. The importance of marriage is enhanced when purity is upheld in it, because the presence of God in the marriage will not be found lacking, or lagging. It was not until Adam and Eve fell susceptible to sin, did God cease to visit them in the Garden of Eden. A marriage that has lost its purity and innocence is a marriage doomed, and can no longer be called a Christian marriage.
- d. **Parenting:** Parenting is defined by *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as “the raising of a child by its parents; the act or process of becoming a parent.” In another definition, it is stated that: “Parenting is the process of taking care of children until they are old enough to take care of themselves.”⁴¹ Parenting also consists of what the parents do to raise a child. It is the act or process of becoming a parent. It is a life-long pastime that is as joyful as it is rewarding, though it could also be rather challenging and exhausting. Parenting is an undertaking that extends through the whole

life, from cradle to grave. There are four types of parenting based on the work of Baumrind, Maccoby, and John, 2021. They are: permissive parenting, authoritative parenting, neglectful parenting, and authoritarian parenting; and are discussed as follow:⁴²

- i. **Permissive Parenting:** It comprises the following traits: (a) High parental responsiveness and low demandingness; (b) Open communication and letting children decide issues for themselves rather than being given direction; (c) Rules and expectations are either not set, or are rarely enforced; (d) Parents go to great lengths to keep children happy, sometimes at their own expense.
- ii. **Authoritative Parenting:** This involves: (a) high responsiveness, high demandingness; (b) Parents set clear rules and expectations for children while practicing flexibility and understanding; (c) Parents communicate frequently, listening to children and taking into consideration their thoughts, feelings, and opinions; (d) Parents allow natural consequences to occur to teach children lessons, such as failing quiz when they failed to study; but use those opportunities to help children reflect and learn.
- iii. **Neglectful Parenting:** This involves: (a) Low responsiveness, and low demandingness; (b) Parents let children fend for themselves, either out of indifference, being uninvolved, or being overwhelmed;

(c) Parents offer little nurturance, guidance, and attention; (d) Parents struggle with their own self-esteem issues, and have a hard time forming close relationship with children.

- iv. **Authoritarian Parenting:** This involves: (a) Low responsiveness, and high demandingness; (b) Parents enforce strict rules and show little consideration for children's feelings: social, emotional, and behavioral needs; (c) Parents often say "because I said it" when children question the reasons behind a rule or consequence; (d) communication is mostly one-way – from parent to child.

The above parenting models are very useful as a guide for adjustments in the relationships between parents and children, in order to achieve maximum results possible. However, in Christian parenting, love, forgiveness, forbearance, and prayers must be the main anchors for parenting, to set the stage for God to intervene. Rigid application of scientific tools may not fit snugly into human behaviors in relationships. Even within the same family, a parenting model may not be suitable for all children equally. Therefore, in the parenting styles examined here-below, that did bring into greatness, the great biblical characters, one can discern admixtures of spiritual, physical and semi-scientific models:

- e. **Parenting in Christian Marriage:** Christian marriage and Christian parenting are securely conjoint, and inseparably linked. The one can only be divorced from the other by means of intentional human intervention, or

through *force majeure*, the act of God. But, while human act of separating parenting or childbearing from marriage is often seen as unnatural and ungodly, the act of God in that process is beyond human mediation. Therefore, any plans for marriage must necessarily include plans for parenthood, or childbearing, except if one is clearly contemplating childless marriage *ab initio*, which is very common in the western world of modern civilization. That, of course, is a different issue that borders on questions of morality and godliness. Although, parenting in Christian marriage is the focus of the discussion here, which is quite different from parenting in marriage in general, and parenting entirely outside the trimmings of wedlock, let it be said that parenting is parenting. And, so, let it be further said that parenting – whether within or outside marriage, what one can call extra-marital parenting -- involves assisting a human being to grow up into a well-groomed and well-rounded, physio-spiritual human adult in whom God, in his lovingkindness, has enormous vested interest. The snag is that some types of parenting are more preferred than others. The closer a parenting style is to God's parenting plan, the more rewarding parenting is, and *vice versa*.⁴³ So, the preferred parenting model ought to be sanctioned by God, wherein the child is raised within wedlock. Indeed, it is even an excellent parenting plan if the child is raised to absorb the tenets of Christianity in a Christian marriage, just like Samuel was raised up to become a great prophet, when Prophet Eli's biological

children turned out as children of Belial, even right on the temple of God. They blasphemed and desecrated the altar of God, just like it is happening today in many Christian churches. Good parenting is important, but godly parenting is most excellent, in bringing out the best gifts in an individual for a breakthrough in life. One can discern a nexus between spiritual and physical interventions in regard to the parenting processes that mediated the development and upbringing of such great personalities as The Lord Jesus Christ, Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Daniel, Solomon, and Esther, to mention only a few of them. The following few examples will be examined:

Jesus Christ: The birth of Jesus Christ was an unprecedented, groundbreaking type of birth, as it was remarked and celebrated with holy songs both in heaven and on earth by angels. Never before and after Christ, had there been any notable human virgin birth, known as parthenogenesis in scientific terms, which is also described as “birth without fertilization.” However, his birth was not without attracting jealousy as expected in human existence, with King Herod being suspicious of a competitor, and seeking to kill him before he could grow up to become King (Luke 2:9-14). It was his parents’ obedience to God and love for Jesus that protected him all through his childhood. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

From the age of twelve, till he was thirty, he was with his parents at Nazareth and was obedient to them. (Luke 2:40-52). Christ's parental nurture was very significant in his birth, development and ministry. His godly nurture and growth lays a very good example of good parenting and childhood, for Christian families to emulate.

Abraham: Abraham's father's name was Terah (Genesis 11:26-27), while, according to Meir Loewenberg, Abraham's mother was Amathlaah,⁴⁴ whose name is not recorded in the Bible, though her very existence is only hinted in the Torah. That notwithstanding, Abraham's parents gave him good parenting that enabled Abraham, as a young man, to obey and follow his father step-by-step. Together with Sarah his wife, Abraham obediently went with his father out of their hometown Ur of the Chaldees, on the way to Canaan, and they dwelled in Haran until Terah's death. Thereafter, God advised Abraham to continue on Terah his father's original journey plan to Canaan, a city that God promised to give to Abraham perpetually. Abraham then stood out to be recognized by The Lord God, who found him fit and faithful enough to be declared by God as his own friend, through whom the salvation plan for mankind would be successfully implemented. And God identified him as father of many nations.

Moses: Moses was another dedicated man of God, whose strong family values, and godly upbringing helped build him up into greatness. Evidence of good parenting and the fear of God, was found early in Moses that shaped him up with regard to his choices in life. While still in slavery in Egypt, Amram

(Exodus 6:20), Moses' father and his wife Jochebed were able to rise above the storms of slavish oppression to bring up Moses. They succeeded in inculcating in young Moses a great measure of unqualified, strong godly values that would embolden and encourage him to single-handedly apply God's power to challenge and overthrow the very sovereign power of the Pharaohs that had nurtured and prepared him for the enviable role of an Egyptian Pharaoh. But, Moses would turn his back on the lure of worldly power, wealth, glamor, and luxury, to lead his Hebrew compatriots out of slavery in Egypt, under the coverage of the protective hands of God.

David: David, the greatest warrior-king of all times, was second king of Israel, and the man after God's own heart, as the God of Israel described him to Prophet Samuel who went to the house of Jesse the father of David to anoint him, preparatory to his promotion to greatness. David was by all means a product of no mean parental pedigree and strong family value. His father was Jesse, and his mother's name was Nitzevet, according to Talmud, but she is not named in the Bible, although she was an ancestor of the kings of Judah. In his childhood, though he was prodigious, and spirit-filled, killing a lion and a bear with his bare hands to save his father's flock in the wild, David was relegated to the background in a family of eight strong boys, and was treated by his family like an outcast. Being the youngest, he was assigned the roles of a fetcher of water, a hewer of wood, and a lonesome shepherd boy. That probably motivated him to develop early, rugged courage, survivalist instincts, and godly

orientations. David's relegation within the family became embarrassingly obvious when, under God's instructions, Prophet Samuel arrived at Jesse's house to anoint a new king for Israel to replace the first, King Saul. After all the seven robust and well-pampered sons of Jesse who were at home, protected, had filed past the prophet, and God rejected them all, Samuel was forced to ask Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" To which Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him: we will not sit down until he arrives." (1Samuel 16:11). It was that little and insignificant one that was out there in the fields with the animals, God saw; not the broad-chested Eliab and his gang of jealousy-eaten siblings. The prophet's issue of command that no one in the house would sit down until that little and insignificant one arrived, differentiated between the elect and the impostors. Little did Jesse know that under the oppressive task-master's type of routines he had assigned the "youngest one with the sheep," alone in the woods, David had encountered the great God's favor. Solitude breeds creativity. And David did not miss the opportunity offered him by his loneliness in the wild, to acquire some rare skills such as dexterity with the weapons, unfettered courage, grit, and great leadership qualities that equipped him with the needed resolve to gallantly face and conquer vicissitudes, challenges and forces of evil both within and without his family. He would later employ the power of God in his life, and his skills to effortlessly dispatch the Philistine giant, Goliath, thereby launching his way into greatness unprecedented in the land of Israel. The great lesson in

David's parenting outcome is for people to not make huge complaints even when they think they are cheated, bullied, oppressed, discriminated against, or subjugated by others at whatever level. They should rather lean on God and know that every streak of sacrifice they make for the benefit of others has a huge keg of reward that God is using to bless them and to confound the wise.

Joseph: Joseph is another remarkable example of a great product of strong parenting values. The first son of Jacob and Rebecca his second wife, but eleventh son in a family of twelve boys and a girl, Joseph stood out early in his life, as Abraham's great-grandson. "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," so says an old-time proverb. Even though Joseph was born with a divine destiny that was revealed to him in dreams, which he shared with his family to their chagrin, the fabrics of the strong Abrahamic parental heritage made it possible for him to focus on that destiny without compromising. Joseph's first dream had revealed the sun, the moon, and twelve stars, but with one of the stars standing out, while the sun, the moon, and eleven of the twelve stars, rose up to bow down to the one outstanding star.

Moreover, his second dream also showed each member of Joseph's family preparing a sheaf in the field where they were together. But, all other sheaves rose up to make obeisance to Joseph's own sheaf. The dreams were very distressing and disturbing to Joseph's family to the extent that his father upbraided him for being inexorably ambitious. Jacob questioned Joseph his son whether he was expecting his mother, himself as his father, and all his senior

brothers to be worshiping him. Although the dreams earned him his siblings' envy and hatred, Joseph was not distracted by his detractors, from his focus on his destiny. From every outing with his brothers, Joseph would return home frustrated by their misbehaviors, which they perpetrated whenever they were out of their parents' sight. He would rush to his father's side to warn him of the untoward behaviors of his brothers. He realized that his brothers' bad attitudes were clearly unbefitting of the roots and seeds of Abraham. So, there was no doubt that Joseph's stellar character was based on the fear of God that he learned from his parental pedigree.

The godly values Joseph had imbibed would restrain him through the lure of immoral sexual advances contrived by his master Potiphar's seductive wife in Egypt, where he had been sold into slavery by jealousy-driven, wicked brothers. He would also survive through a harsh prison term, and would rise up out of it to become a Prime Minister in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, where his brothers would go to search for food during famine in their homeland, Canaan. They would then end up finally bowing down to Joseph in unison in Egypt in very dire, emotional, and compelling circumstances, in fulfillment of God's design for Joseph's life. However, Jacob, his eleven other sons and their entire households, would eventually migrate, in flight of famine in Canaan, to Egypt, where they dwelt with Joseph, who nursed, and provided for them in confirmation of Joseph's divinely purposed destiny.

Samuel: Yet, Prophet Samuel is another good evidence of godly parenting.

Samuel was a very great prophet of God, whose parents were Elkanah his father, and Hannah his mother. His parents were God fearing, and that helped in shaping their strong parenting culture that molded and shaped Samuel's character as he grew up in the presence of God. But, Hannah was barren in the early parts of her marital life, and suffered intense mockery as a result of that. Therefore, on one of their yearly visits to the temple of God at Shiloh to worship and offer sacrifices to God, Elkanah and his household, comprising his two wives, Hannah, and Peninnah; and Peninnah's children went together. However, in her sorrowful state, Hannah decided to confront God personally with her problem of childlessness. She entered into a plea bargain prayer with God, promising that if God would give her a boy child to clear away her shame, she would return the child to God as God's servant throughout his life. God granted her request, and Hannah gave birth to Samuel, whom she took at his very tender age, immediately after weaning him, to the temple at Shiloh, where Samuel served God throughout all his life, having begun his ministry under the leadership of Prophet Eli. The strong parental foundation and care enabled Samuel to serve God in a strict and uncompromising manner that won him God's favor. And God used him mightily as a respectable go-between in God's relationship with Israel. Samuel would become the one whom God would use as a kingmaker to establish a kingdom for the nation of Israel. It was Samuel who anointed, installed, and guided both King Saul. and his successor, King David.

Hophni and Phinehas: On the contrary, however, in an interesting and drastic

turn of events, Hophni and Phinehas, Prophet Eli's two sons, who served with him as priests in the tabernacle, on the altar at Shiloh (Samuel 1:3), above little Samuel, and in the same Eli's household, made a shipwreck of their callings. The word of God said that The Lord was displeased with Eli because he had greater respect for his children than God, and therefore, was unable to call his children to order when it mattered, even though the young men were desecrating the holy things of God. They abused women at the altar, and disrespected their priesthood so God destroyed both Eli and his children. Speaking about Prophet Eli's family values that contributed, in part, to Samuel's emergence as a great prophet of the Most High God, one is tempted to ask about how Hophni and Phinehas failed as priests? The ready answer would be that it is one thing for a family to be built in God's values, yet it is another thing altogether for individual members of the family to take advantage of the holy facilities available in the family for personal edification. So, the reasons for their failure are very clear. That is why parenting is neither science nor mathematics.

Esther: Esther comes handy as one of the great women of faith, who made outstanding impact, based on her parenting pedigree. The wonderful type of guardianship provided Esther by Mordecai, her cousin (Esther 2:7), that helped her rise from grass to grace, transformed from an orphan to a queen, qualifies Esther for consideration here, as a good product of godly upbringing. Esther was a Jewish orphan girl, (Esther 2:7) whose parents died while she was still little. Her father's name was Abihail, but her mother's name is not mentioned in the

Bible. Mordecai took Esther along into slavery when he was taken captive from Judah to Shushan the Palace in Babylon (Esther 2:5-10, 9:4), by an invading army of King Nebuchadnezzar's. Evidently, Mordecai knew and feared God enormously. Even as a gateman at Shushan the palace (Esther 6:12), he realized that it was wrong for him to bow down to honor Haman the prime minister, a human being, and a hater of the Jews. Mordecai realized as a Jew that only God could be given such reverence. He defied Haman, who took offence and then began to plot to destroy Mordecai, and the whole of the Jewish nation, by hanging him on the gallows (Esther 7- 10). But, God honored Mordecai and avenged him against Haman, who was hanged on the gallows he had built, instead of Mordecai. When Queen Vashti misbehaved, and defied the king, an order was given for her to be deposed, and replaced with a more honorable queen, to be selected from an array of virgin girls within the land, who would compete for Queen Vashti's position. Mordecai saw a good chance for Esther, whose ability he had no doubt about. He persuaded her to enter the competition. She did. It was there that the quality of Esther's upbringing shone out above all other competitors, and got her selected as the new queen of Shushan the palace. Queen Esther would then realize the real reason why God favored her and made her Queen of Babylon. She found herself under the responsibility of using her position as queen to save the Jews from Haman's evil plan to exterminate them out of the surface of the earth. Esther acquitted herself so well in carrying out her charge that Haman was not only roundly defeated in his own evil scheme,

his grand plan to destroy the Jews was overthrown, and they were saved, and in a redounded turn of events Haman was hanged on the gallows he had built for Mordecai (Esther 7:10). Moreover, all members of Haman's family were destroyed, including his ten sons who were hanged on the gallows (Esther 8:12-14).

f. **Love:** Love is the sixth reason why marriage is important, and is defined as:

(i) A strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties; (ii)

Attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers; (iii)

Affection based on admiration, interest. Marriage is designed to mirror the

creator's unconditional love. It is love that will always be there and will not

leave or forsake. When a man and a woman are in love, they will never want to

leave each other, and marriage is made to last forever. Marriage is therefore,

important because marital companionship, commitment, and compassion, are

built on love that lasts forever.

2.4 Original Form of Marriage

In its original and unsophisticated form,

marriage was monogamous, chaste, simple and pliable. Even though Eve,

the first wife and first mother on earth, was unable to tarry long enough in

the presence, and grace of her Creator, the Lord God, to earn some accolades,

to be able to bequeath her full footprints of a proud wife and mother to

posterity to copy from; Sarah, Abraham's wife, and the "mother of many

nations" (Genesis 17:16), could ably present a stainless banner for successive

generations of women to cherish. Thanks to the infallible word of God that exposed her virtues. Neither should women overlook the good example of a wife laid down by Sarah when she called her husband “my Lord” (Peter 3:6), nor should men take undue license of their wives for doing what Sarah did, and abuse them in whatever way. Every couple should passionately strive at achieving the stability of their marriage for the betterment of the institution, society and themselves. How can men and women in contemporary marriages miss the rich lessons in the biblical marriages that can provide safeguards for hitch-free matrimony? God did not intend promiscuity, or divorce to be part of the institution of marriage, and he does not approve them now. This is because he does not compromise his holiness in any aspect of his creation. God is not an author of confusion.

2.5 Periscoping Modern Marriages

“Modern marriage is a legal commitment based on consent, monogamy, fidelity, and most basically, love. Modern marriage is a civil contract that brings both spouses economic and contractual benefits.”⁴⁵ In general, nuptial partnership has been known to be invariably pliant,⁴⁶ and modern marriage may be even more so. Marriage behaves like a chameleon that assumes the changing colors of its environments, or the liquid that percolates into and fills up cozily and effortlessly, all the crevices and nooks of its receptacle. A major characteristic of modern marriage is that those who marry under the arrangement go into it conscious of what their stakes are. Most of the couples

are financially well-off, highly educated, professionals, mature, wised and independent-minded. They hug the marriage contract like their babies, conscious of the protection they expect under it.

Other features of modern marriage include the following:⁴⁷

2.5.1 Decreased Control of The Marriage Contract by The Families:

Under the traditional marriage system, the nuptial is usually arranged between two families of the intended couple, rather than the couple themselves. The marriage is based on male dominance and female obedience. But under the modern marriage system, the partners are masters of their own affairs, and equality between the man and the woman in decision making is upheld. They determine the scope of their wedding, the guests to invite, and plan their own life.

2.5.2 Changes in the Relationship of Man and Woman:

In modern marriage the woman is not a devotee of the man, but a partner with equal rights in the union. The husband neither dictates terms, nor demands the wife to do something, but listens to her as she offers her opinion as well. She feels emancipated, and cowers no longer like a slave of olden days. She can divorce her husband when she thinks the goings-on are no longer what she had expected. Though, sometimes this could be pushed overboard.

2.5.3 Laxity in Sex Relationship

Possibly due to life of luxury and exposure the couple may lead, the rigidity and control usually associated with sexual relationships in marriage may no

longer apply, as couples may begin to indulge in illegitimate sexual dealings – this being a common sight in Nigerian cities, and contributing to the burden of the marriage institution in Nigeria.

2.5.4 Economic Independence

In modern families most women have reached great heights educationally, professionally, and financially. Consequently, they have achieved economic independence and do not necessarily depend on their husbands for daily hand-outs for upkeep of the home. As it is not only the man that leaves the house for work every morning, but the woman also leaves for her job at the same time as the husband, modern marriage is an enviable monopolist in terms of the control of more than a fair share of economically buoyant women. Women in the upper crust of society who are still married, are property owners, and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of companies. But, this should in no way depreciate their responsibilities as housewives. Economic power has emboldened many housewives to venture into flirting with such lofty ideas and ideals as the “Women Emancipation,” the “Me Too Movement,” the “Women’s Rights Are Human Rights Movement,” popularized by Mrs. Hilary Clinton in the 1980s and early 1990s, and more. There are married women at top echelons of political leadership, such as presidents, prime ministers, ministers, senators, and what have you; while they maintain their marriages in a modern style.

2.5.5 Smaller Family

Partners in modern marriage more often than not, opt for small, cute, and mobile families, having been incensed about some burdens associated with large and unwieldy families. Most mothers in modern marriages do not want to be bogged down by a cluster of broods to squander their lives caring for. The smaller, the cozier, they often think.

2.5.6 Decline of Religious Control:

In what seems like a rebellion against the Creator of the marriage institution, modern marriage appears to be anchored more on secularism than religious inclinations. The tenets that once held marriage together in the traditional marriage system, are repulsed. Divorce is strongly an option in modern marriage, and adultery seems not to be frowned at, egoism and selfishness reign supreme, and the beat goes on.

2.5.7 Separation of Non-Essential Functions:

Modern marriage has outsourced most of the functions that once were performed by traditional marriage. When, at the start of everyday, neither the husband nor the wife stays at home to tend the house, then some specialized agencies are commissioned to perform the duties. Gone are the days when the wives did the laundry, and cooked the meals at home. Nowadays, restaurants, and fast food spots are there to fill in the gaps. Even with a washing machine at a corner in the house, someone else will be called in to operate it and clean the other parts of the house for a fee. The babies in the

house are sent to the nurseries, while mommies are drudging it out in offices or factories. Who is thinking of knitting sweaters, cobbling broken shoes, and mending shredded garments at home? Then, who are the retail stores and emporiums offering their discount sales on new shoes and garments for? The *kahunas* in modern homes of course.

2.5.8 Filo-Centric Family:

Modern marriage is mostly filo-centric. A filo-centric family is one that places its children at the center of everything. The children's care dominates the space within the family and their wishes are the family's commands. Usually, filo-centric parental attitudes may spring from a mindset developed when the parents had spent their youthful days struggling for good education to earn good jobs for survival, and decent living, at the expense of early marriage and early childbearing.

2.6 Marriage and its culture of Improvised Relations:

Improvised human relationship develops in a situation in which people who are strangers to each other, try to adjust their attitudes to show a feeling of ease, in spite of some tension and discomfort they may be experiencing within, in the situation they are in. At first contact with each other, a man and a woman may be frazzled, and coy, but they may soon recover from the shock by showing courage, and reconciling themselves with the situation, to save face. According to a research result: "People awakened during deep sleep immediately, often feel groggy and disoriented for minutes after they wake

up.”⁴⁸ That seemed to be Adam’s experience on waking up from a deep sleep into which God had made him fall, to find a woman by his side. He apparently was still feeling groggy, disoriented, and delusional when he declared Eve as the bone of his bone and the flesh of his flesh. “And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the Lord had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, “This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man” (Genesis 2:21-23). Ever since then, this scenario has been repeating itself at every marriage arrangement, where introduced couples are seemingly cajoled, or persuaded to improvise a fine face of acceptance and love. Yet, not long after, they dive into trenches in family feuds.

Evidently, from the foregoing Bible passage, it is very clear that from its original setting, when it first began in the Garden of Eden, marriage has been, in the most part, based on improvisation of relationships. That is to say that most conjugal unions are fudged, not genuine. From the beginning of the first encounter between a man and a woman, to the tying of the nuptial knots, to the exchange of vows, to the signing of the dotted lines, everything is seemingly, or actually stage-managed. Most people seem to get into marriage to escape one situation or another in their lives, not just because they are genuinely on a messianic mission to save or show love to their partner.

How then can one explain the sordid situations that crawl nightly, on the streets of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, wherein supposed men and women of honor seem to throw marital vows aside, and dig into licentious sexual depravity, some for money, and others purely for self-gratification?

It does not seem to matter whether the period of courtship is dragged out to last ten years or more, or simply curtailed to last only a couple of days or hours, the periods of the development of relationships between intended couples are never long enough for them to fully understand each other before they move into the union. After God caused a deep sleep to overpower Adam, the Lord in his sovereign and infinite wisdom did not consider the man's convenience, choice, opinion, and ability before delivering a wife into his hand. Same goes for the woman. Most times, most women go for things they see in men that are flashy, transient and fickle, rather than enduring, and jump at them. A large number of people marry for money rather than relationship or desire to help someone.

2.7 Marriage as a Culture-bound Social Phenomenon

What does it mean to say that marriage is culture-bound? According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Some form of marriage has been found to exist in all human societies, past and present. Its importance can be seen in the elaborate and complex laws and rituals surrounding it. Although these laws and rituals are as varied and numerous as human social and cultural organizations, some universals do exist."⁴⁹ As earlier alluded to, marriage as a

social institution is like a chameleon or the liquid, it assumes the color, texture, and curvature of its current environment, or container. That, perhaps explains the reason why divorcees, widows and widowers are able to easily blend with their new spouses, and new homes with little or no stress.

That also explains why the institution itself has become like a cat with nine lives. It has survived all the bruises it has received since its inception, but is still standing firm. Marriage is currently one of the most, if not the most harassed human institutions. While society's demands on it keeps increasing in leaps and bounds, by the day, as the society gets more sophisticated, infused by the jet-speed in the development of science and technology that keeps advancing, marriage remains stagnant in terms of modernization, and almost moribund, and its patrons still remain neither trained for their roles, nor equipped for their duties. Moreover, new entrants into marriages are mainly young and inexperienced. They only hope luck would shine on the path of their marital travel to make their fairy tale wedding ceremonies not suddenly turn into nightmares.

The journey of a marriage is lifelong and full of challenges. And its beginning is as important as, if not more important than, the rest of the journey and its success. This is because if the beginning is right, the rest of the journey has good chances of success. Marriage does not succeed, it is tended and pruned like a precious plant to succeed, and usually by those who are involved in it. But most partners, from the start of marriage, are usually young and ignorant

about how to ply their trades to make it work. The Latin wisecrack comes handy: *Praemonitus praemunitus*,⁵⁰ roughly translated as, “forewarned is forearmed.” Unfortunately, those who are going into marriage are rarely warned or armed. This underscores the aim of the research study.

Marriage is a solemn contract between two mature, but usually infatuated human beings, normally a man and a woman, who must be fully conscious of their roles and responsibilities as they decide to be joined together in a holy wedlock. A marriage contract is a performing and active one, and not an idle and hibernating covenant. Therefore, marriage partners ought to go into the union well informed, well guided, and well prepared to avoid making a shipwreck of their marital jewel, even before they are able to enjoy the bliss that God has made for them. But how can they do that if they are not taught to do it? The study is designed to show why and how new marriage entrants should prepare themselves adequately to successfully navigate their marriage, through good premarital and post-marital counseling programs.

2.8 Types of Marriage

Conservatively speaking, according *Wikipedia*, “In general, there are two types (of marriage): civil marriage and religious marriage, and typically marriages employ a combination of both, (religious marriages must often be licensed and recognized by the state, and conversely civil marriages, while not sanctioned under religious law, are nevertheless respected.)⁵¹

2.9 Types of Marriages in Nigeria

Broadly speaking, in Nigeria, there are two types of marriages: marriage under the Act, and traditional or customary marriage.⁵² Both marriages have their different ceremonies, rituals, or codes of ethics. However, while the marriage under the Act is invariably monogamous by nature, traditional or customary marriage may admit both monogamous and polygamous practices. In this case, religious marriages fall under customary marriages, based on religious customs. Be that as it may, like a lump of clay in the hands of a potter, marriage being culture-bound, can also be easily shaped by social environments, personal idiosyncrasies, economic conditions, legal systems, cultural and traditional rituals, and what have you. Consequently, Pace, has identified the following twenty-five types of marriages,⁵³ based on different circumstances that condition them:

2.10 Culture-bound Types of Marriage

Culture-bound marriage types are discussed as follow:

2.10.1 Civil and Religious Marriages: These are two different types of marriages often combined into one. Civil marriage is when the marriage is recognized by the state, whereas religious marriage is when it is recognized by a religious body, such as the Church. The Roman Catholic Church could be said to have its own type of marriage because it insists on its members getting formally wedded and baptized in the Church before the marriage can be recognized. In Nigeria it is not uncommon to see Catholic couples who decide

to organize their church wedding after they have been married for several decades, and their children have grown up into mature adults. Question is what had they been doing together all through the years, just testing whether they actually could be married?

2.10.2 Interfaith Marriage

Previously, only people of the same faith did get married, but nowadays, people from different faiths do get into union. In some parts of north-central and southwestern Nigeria, interfaith marriages between Christians and Muslims are commonplace. There, in some interfaith and polygamous homes, the husband goes to the Church with his Christian wife on Sundays, and the Mosque with his Muslim wife on Fridays. Their children grow up to make their religious choices the one way or the other.

2.10.3 Common-Law Marriage

Common-law marriage is when people have decided to marry and live together like husband and wife but do not have a certificate of registry.

2.10.4 Monogamous Marriage

It is the most common type of marriage, falling in line with God's model of marriage, begun in the Garden of Eden between Adam and Eve. It is a marriage between a man and a woman.

2.10.5 Polygamous Marriage:

This is the type of marriage that comes on when people have more than one spouse. It was begun, and popularized by Lamech in the Bible (Genesis 4:19).

2.10.6 Left-Handed Marriage

When two people from unequal social ranking get into marital union, left-handed marriage is the result.

2.10.7 Secret Marriage

A secret marriage is when the marriage is hidden away from the society, family, and friends. Some celebrities sometimes resort to secret marriage for personal reasons. On January 5, 1997, Vaclav Havel, the internationally acclaimed writer, Nobel Prize winning Czech playwright-turned-president, the Czech Republic's professional answer for Nigeria's Wole Soyinka, married a leading Czech stage actress, Dagmar Veskrnova, 43, in a private civil ceremony.⁵⁴ The ceremony was said to have been witnessed by only three family members, and conducted on the roof of his residence, before the arrival of government officials, the press and other members of the public.

2.10.8 Shotgun Marriage

This is when a couple decides to get married for reason of unexpected pregnancy.

2.10.9 Mixed Marriage

Another name for this type of marriage is inter-racial marriage. This type of marriage, once looked upon with suspicion is becoming common. This type of marriage was once a taboo in the United States because of racism.

2.10.10 Same-Sex Marriage

Same-sex marriage is one contracted between two people of the same gender.

It has not yet received worldwide acceptability.

2.10.11 Love Marriage

It is a marriage contracted based on love. When two people meet and fall in love, marriage is usually the logical next step.

2.10.12 Arranged Marriage

An arranged marriage is the opposite of love marriage. It is common in traditional Nigerian society, where parents from two families of the bride and the groom meet to fix marriage behind the back of the couple. The low side of this type of marriage is that sometimes, under-age girls are literally sold into marriage before they can know what has hit them from behind.

2.10.13 Convenience Marriage

It is when two people marry purely for personal convenience instead of love. The convenience could be practical or financial: a *quid pro quo* type of marriage.

2.10.14 Zombie Marriage

When a couple is nice to each other in the presence of other people, but has nothing to do together behind closed doors, and sometimes, even wonder whether they are actually married, it is zombie marriage in practice.

2.10.15 Group Marriage

Group marriage is when more men are married to one or more women. This is different from polygamy because in this case, a group of people is married to each other, while in polygamy a person just has multiple spouses.

2.10.16 Parenting Marriage

This is when two people stay married together for the sake of their offspring.

2.10.17 Safety Marriage

This is when a couple stays married together because something tangible and materialistic is being promised, and expected as a reward.

2.10.18 Open Marriage

It is when two people officially married, are allowed to see other people outside the marriage. It is often an arrangement between two or more spouses.

2.10.19 Court Marriage

This is what comes on when a couple skips the traditional marriage rites and applies directly to the court for a marriage certificate.

10.20 Time-bound Marriage

This is a marriage in which the couple is bound by an agreement to stay married to each other for a specific time period.

2.10.21 The partnership Marriage

The couple in this type of marriage acts a lot like they are business partners, carrying on as if they are in full-time jobs, which are shared on the basis of equality. The relationship is marked by constant negotiation and hackling about who does what and how much the other person is carried along, equally.

2.10.22 The Independents

People in this type of marriage want autonomy. They more or less live separate

lives alongside each other. They give each other room to be who they want to be, and may even spend their free time apart. Within the house, they tend to work separately and independently in their areas of interest, and on their terms, and timetable.

2.10.23 The Degree Seekers

Couples in this type of marriage are in it to learn something. Many times the couple are quite different, or even opposites. But they each possess some skills the other would like to develop, so they carry on as long as it takes, like a degree-seeking process.

2.10.24 The Traditional Roles

In this type of marriage the wife stays at home and takes care of the house. She and her husband have clearly defined roles, and they are clearly different.

2.10.25 The Companionship

When the partners want a life-long friendship and love, and someone to be by their sides through everything in life, what they have is companionship type of marriage. There is little or no independence in this type of marriage as partners stick together come rain, come shine, twenty-four-seven.

2.11 Dysfunctional Marriage

According to a dictionary definition, the word dysfunction means, “impaired, or abnormal functioning (as of an organ of the body), non-adaptive trait or condition.”⁵⁵ Dysfunctional is the adjective of dysfunction, describing the

condition of something that is suffering from impairment or abnormality in trait or condition. When something is dysfunctional, and is impaired, it needs to be repaired or discarded. To all intents and purposes, marriage is supposed to work properly to fulfill all, or at least most of its set goals to the benefit of the partners in it, for it to be useful. When marriage begins to get dysfunctional, there are some warning signs couples must watch out for, they include the following:

- 1) Spouses have characteristically negative communication and interactional behavior in the relationship.
- 2) They tend to blame their partners for their marital problems.
- 3) They often feel hostile and depressed after trying to bring a problem to a solution.
- 4) They feel contempt for their partners.
- 5) They feel controlled by their partners.
- 6) They remain in the marriage only to minimize negative impacts on their family.
- 7) Their body language shows disinterest in the marriage.
- 8) They make their partners feel bad about themselves.

When all efforts to remedy dysfunctional marriage or marital dysfunction fail, the logical final resort by most couples, is often divorce. An Ibibio proverb says: “Rather than allow a wrestling match turn into a fight, let the rain fall.”⁵⁶

In other words, it is better to run away and live to fight another day, than die in

a brutal battle. However, marriage cannot be seen as a battle; neither is anyone justified to run away from it once it is sanctified. God will ask questions about the act of running away from marriage. God justified neither Jonah nor Elijah for fleeing from their missions. Marriage is a mission.

2.12 Attenuating Marriage Conflicts:

In order to minimize the needs for marital dysfunction and resultant divorce, couples have to constantly watch out for signs of stress in their union, and take early action to forestall, or attenuate damage. According to Pace, psychologist, there are fifteen ways⁵⁷ to save marriage from breaking down and resulting in divorce. Some of the damage control measures may include the following:

2.12.1 Try to Relax

Being patient with oneself and one's spouse, keeping cool head, and relaxing, in a situation of marital volatility, are the best first steps towards saving one's union from collapse. It is presumptuous to rush to one's attorney, inform friends, family or pastor. Beware who you invite into your marital issue.

2.12.2 Discuss What is Wrong

When divorce is imminent, stopping it requires some efforts. Partners must consistently work on the relationship to get it back to where they can begin to improve on it. This is no place to trade hostility. Discussions in constructive and non-accusatory manner must not cease, and right attitude is important.

2.12.3 Change What Needs to be Changed

When divorce becomes an Achilles' heel and an option in marriage, it means at least one of the partners is unhappy with something. Then let either or both of them get up and do what he or she was not doing, or stop doing what he or she was doing that caused an offense. Show your spouse you can do what it takes to save the marriage. At that point, there is no need to sit on the fence, especially when the fence is weak.

2.12.4 Solve one Problem at a Time

When divorce knocks on the door of the marriage, let couples identify the problem quickly, and with co-operation, start solving it without delay, one problem at a time, before emotion rises to the rooftop.

2.12.5 Focus on the Positives in your Partner

Maybe your partner has done something wrong to jeopardize the marriage or, maybe it is just a general dissatisfaction with situations in the marriage, whatever it is, pointing accusing fingers cannot get things better. Nothing makes people become more defensive than focusing on the negative. Above all, there is something magical about prayer. Whenever a negative thought comes into your heart about your spouse, take a deep breath, close your eyes and pray against negativity. You would be amazed how quickly things change for the better.

2.12.6 Work Towards Forgiveness

One of the best ways to keep marriage from divorce is to allow ample space in your heart for forgiveness. In marriage, you can never forgive enough, because forgiveness is the ultimate form of love, and a vehicle for change. Sometimes, it is hard and looks impossible to forgive. But realizing that God forgives all, so why cannot humans try?

2.12.7 Get into Marriage Counseling Now

To avoid divorce crawling in through the back door of marriage, it is best to start marriage counseling today, even as courtship is being contemplated. That is the focus of the research project. No need procrastinating, the more the waiting time, the greater the chance for regret.

2.12.8 Start Connecting Again

Marriage is a relationship that is based on constant contact, connection, and communication, like electricity current. Once the current supply is turned off, power ceases. It is therefore, very important, and desirable for couples to keep marital relationship connection line always flowing, lest current supply ceases. If partners feel disconnected, it is necessary they recall the sparks that brought them together into the marriage at first, and plug back the current in order to save the marriage.

2.12.9 Question Yourself

If something goes wrong, couples should begin with sincere self-examination

about where they went wrong, what their contribution to the problem was, and where it all began. Questions like these are what therapists are interested in, but initial self-analysis is the best way to start in resolving problems.

2.12.10 Listen to Your Partner

Sometimes it is difficult to say in words what is needed, or not needed. In such a situation, body language tends to speak louder and more eloquently than voice. It is best to listen and study one's partner carefully to read what he or she wants or wishes to see done, or stopped.

2.12.11 Connect in the Bedroom

Couples on the brink of divorce are probably not spending enough time together in the bedroom. When husband and wife are not feeling close, or one has hurt the other, it can be hard to even want to have sex. It is important to know that sometimes physical bond can heal emotional bond, when couples cause it to happen.

2.12.12 Be Vulnerable, Speak From the Heart

When relationships cool off, we feel vulnerable because we feel like we no longer know or understand the other person, as each person raises his or her fences, and hides defenses. But, as it usually mostly turns out, the more vulnerable partners feel, the more they tend to back off from each other, and that tends to cool the relationship further. This is the time to stop attacking as a defensive maneuver, and start being real to one another, and begin speaking

from the heart, bringing down defenses, and re-opening the door.

2.13 Divorce

According to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, divorce is: “The act by which a valid marriage is dissolved, usually freeing the parties to remarry. In regions in which ancient religious authority still predominates, divorce may be difficult and rare, especially when, as among Roman Catholics and Hindus, the religious traditions view marriage as indissoluble. Custom, however, may make divorce a simple matter in some societies. The principle of individual determination and mutual consent are making divorce increasingly acceptable in the industrialized parts of the world.”⁵⁸ Divorce was originally not part of God’s design of marriage. Jesus Christ remarked that Moses permitted it as a punishment for the children of Israel because of their hard-heartedness, and headstrongness, and that it was not so at the beginning (Mathew 19:8). To marry with the expectation of divorce in the minds of the spouses, as it is the common practice in the western world today, is to sell out to the devil who will stop at nothing in ensuring that the marriage is wrecked, as a victory beat for the enemy of God that is at war with all the creations of God.

CHAPTER THREE

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES OF MARRIAGE

The biblical perspective of marriage as it was created by God in the Garden of Eden, is the Christian marriage – one man, one woman, based on the fear of God, wrapped up in mutual love, secured and protected in the presence of God, and prospered in God's blessings. That is the model of marriage every Christian should aim at recreating in his or her lifetime, in order to reap maximally the benefits that God in-built in the covenantal institution. Christian marriage is not only what couples call their marriage to be, it is also what they make their marriage to be. You cannot savor good marriage until you labor for it.

It is the daily activities that go on between husband and wife that shape the marriage in the best way, and shape, the couples expect of their marriage. It involves the physical dedication and commitment, and the spiritual devotion by the couples, to create a model marriage that is not only enviable to fellow human beings, but also acceptable by God. Marital bliss, joy, harmony, happiness, companionship, compassion, understanding, blessings, spice, and zest, are social and spiritual treasures that are never just stumbled upon, but are painstakingly dug out. And, it takes two, nay, three to make that happen – man, woman, and God the creator of marriage. Since the Garden of Eden, marriage has undergone tremendous changes, most of which have actually challenged the unassailable wisdom of God. The following are some of the biblical

perspectives of marriage that deserve being considered in the work:

3.1 Adam and Eve, and the Original Form of Marriage

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam” (Genesis 5:2). “And Adam called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20). As the first human beings, and the first married partners on planet earth, Adam and Eve laid down the original model of marriage as designed by God.

The original marriage was monogamous, which is what one-husband-one-wife marriage is called. Until the Serpent appeared to rock the boat, there was neither conflict nor feud between husband and wife in marriage.

However, no sooner did God establish the covenant of marriage than man dived headlong into sin that tarnished the holy wedlock. Ever since then, marriage has continued to suffer considerably, tottering from exchanges of bombardments of abusive relationships between partners, to unfortunate nuances of other forms of reckless human misbehaviors in the way couples comport themselves within the institution. From Adam’s infamous and invidious quibble of self-indictment: “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat,” (Genesis 3:12), with which he threw his wife under the bus before the Almighty God, to the present-day

reprehensible and sleazy divorce court testimonies rendered day-by-day by aggrieved couples around the world, who want to quickly terminate their acrimonious marriages without qualms, lots of couples are piling up mounds of wreckages of broken marriages, as proofs of their incapability of handling marriage beneficially.

3.2 Abraham and the Functionality of the Original Marriage Model

How can one discuss the original marriage and the family institutions without a mention of the marriage between Abraham and Sarah, and their family, the incubator of the Christian faith and the Christian marriage? Such a discussion would seem like a decapitated python in viability, and a lame-duck in appeal. Although, the marriage between Abraham and Sarah will feature prominently in the comparative analytical framework of this study, it is pertinent to broach it here from the out-set because the marriage stands out as the first fully functional example of the original model of marriage: monogamous, and one-man-one-woman, as well as the foundation of the Christian faith.

In spite of the frailty of the human nature that tried surreptitiously to introduce foreign elements into Abraham's marriage with the couple's decision to bring in Hagar and Ishmael her son, God quickly rescued the marriage covenant and returned it to its original format of monogamy, and one-man-one-woman structure. Jesus Christ would later uphold and fulfill that format. The fulfillment of Abraham's marriage is confirmed in the establishment of the nation of Israel through Abraham's progeny, Jacob also called Israel.

Although, Jacob married four wives and raised twelve sons out the marriages, and formed the nation of Israel with them, and were recognized by God, which seems to be reason why many Christians seem not to be effaced by their indulgence into polygamy, there is an error of interpretation of the gospel by those who engage in polygamy. They have to “rightly divide the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15). Many of the behaviors The Lord God accepted in the generations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as innocuous acts, though they were outside God’s plans, are no longer acceptable after Christ came and enthroned salvation, even with plenty of grace. Paul asked, “Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound?” Then he retorted, “God forbid.” (Romans 6:1-2).

The issue of adultery or polygamy with regard to Abraham mentioned in this section 3.2 of this chapter, has been thrashed out in more detail in chapter five of the study, 5.2(iii), and could be consulted for further information.

3.3 Biblical Deviations From the Original Model of Marriage

Deviation, according *Merriam Webster English Dictionary*, means, an act or instance of deviating. And deviate means, among other things, to stray especially from a standard, principle, or topic; to cause to turn out of a previous course.⁵⁹ A deviation from the original model of marriage is the act of turning away from the first model of the socio-cum-spiritual institution that God established in the Garden of Eden, using Adam and Eve as the first couple. And various examples abound in the holy book of different models of

marriage practiced by different people, that vary from the original model, ranging from Lamech's experiment with two wives, to Solomon's example with a whooping number of seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, and to other perversions in between. The following are some of the notable examples of marital deviations recorded in the Bible:

Lamech: In a first experiment with polygamy since the creation, breaking away from God's original model of marriage, Lamech married two wives, whose names were Adah, and Zillah (Genesis 4:19) -- a seeming challenge to the Lord God's supreme wisdom and authority.

Essau: The elder brother of Jacob, Essau, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, also dug into polygamous practice with three or more wives. The three known wives of Essau were: Judith, Bashemath, and Mehalath (Genesis 6:34,28:6-9).

Jacob: Jacob on his part, the carrier of the divine promise had four wives namely, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilkah (Genesis 29:15-28). His deviation from the divine marriage format appeared not to stand on the way of his destiny. It was with the four wives and twelve sons that God helped Jacob to establish the enviable nation of Israel. Is that why polygamists do not look back?

Elkanah: It is amazing how God works in miraculous ways that defy human understanding. Elkanah had two wives named Hannah and Peninnah. The former had no child, but the latter had children (1Samuel 1:1-8). The situation

gave rise to a family feud between both women, but in answer to Hannah's prayer, God favored her with a male child whose name was Samuel, and whom the Lord chose as a great prophet. He would be the one who would appoint the first King of Israel, Saul, and raised the second, David. It was out of the polygamous home that the Lord raised up the great Prophet Samuel.

David: The eighth and last son of Jesse, David grew up in favor with God and men. He was the second king of Israel, and succeeded Saul, the first king. Besides his many exploits on battle fields in defense of his nation, Israel, David had many wives. His wives included Abigail, Michal, Ahinoam, Maacah, Haggith, Abital, and many other wives and concubines (1Samuel 25:39-44; 2Samuel 3:2-5, 5:13-16). But it was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite that became an albatross round David's neck. Once upon a time, David was in his palace, and did not go to battle fields with his generals. He then walked outside to the roof of his palace, and saw a beautiful woman bathing in her house. He sent and invited her over to his palace, and slept with her. Shortly after, the woman sent to David a message saying that she was pregnant. David decided to marry her, but that was not possible because she was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's soldiers who was on the battle field fighting. David sent for Uriah, and tried to persuade him to go to his house, with the hope by David that he might sleep with Bathsheba his wife, so that it might appear that he was responsible for his wife's pregnancy. But Uriah refused to go home all night before returning to the battle field. Then

David commanded one of his commanders to send Uriah to a dangerous battle front so that he could be killed, and he was killed. Then David went ahead and married Bathsheba. But God was angry with David and punished him enormously for the sin. However, whether or not as a compensation to Bathsheba for the pains she suffered in the whole affair, it was her son Solomon who would succeed his father, David as the third king of Israel, and become the wisest and richest king ever, before and after him.

Solomon: Solomon, the wisest and richest king ever, can be described as the *Czar* of all polygamists. With his unprecedented and inimitable seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, no known man has ever beaten his record before and after him. Incidentally, Solomon's heart was turned by his bevy of women, away from the Lord God, to the gods of the idol worshipping nations. Consequently, God was angry with Solomon ((1Kings 11:1-9).

3.4 Case Study of Polygamy in Christianity

Polygamy is a marital deviation, a perversion, and a detraction from God's creation, and a distraction from the tenets of Christianity. Polygamy is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as a marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time.⁵⁹ The concept "polygamy" was originally borrowed from Late Latin *polygamia*, meaning "frequent marriage," and was borrowed from Greek *polygamia* from *poligamos*, which means "married several times."⁶⁰ Other forms of polygamy include: polyandry,

and polygyny. Polyandry is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as the state or practice of having more than one husband or male mate at one time. On the other hand, polygyny is defined as the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at a time.

The fact is that marriage was created by God as a monogamous institution, that is to say, one-man-one-woman. Abraham the foundation of the Christian faith, apparently through human weakness and ignorance, tried to adulterate marriage when he brought in Hagar his housemaid to be his second wife, but God overruled him to sustain the original form of marriage and maintain Sarah as his only wife.

Then Jesus Christ the founder of the Christian faith, came down from Heaven to reaffirm the monogamous nature of the socio-spiritual institution. Christians cannot in the 21st century Christianity, claim justification for their indulgence in polygamy, if ever they do so; out of lust, and licentiousness. It is therefore, a lame excuse for any Christian or anyone else for that matter, to argue that the nation of Israel was built out of Jacob's polygamous family, and that there is nothing wrong in polygamy. Such an argument is sequacious, and has been thrashed out at section 3.2 of this chapter, and chapter five, 5.2 (iii) of the study.

Today, the practice of polygamy is strictly prohibited in the Church, as it has been for over a century.⁶¹ Although, there may be some pockets of cases whereby backslidden individual Christians may be living in polygamy in clear

defiance of the gospel of Christianity, that is not the way to go. In the New Testament, a polygamist is ineligible for church leadership such as bishop, deacon, or elder (1Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6). In Nigeria, the influence of the Muslim religion has caused a lot of confusion for Christian elements, especially in the north-central regions of Nigeria where Christians and Muslims literally co-exist and intermingle. Sometimes, a Muslim husband may have several wives among whom are some Christian women who live in with others, while still appearing to be practicing Christianity that they had upheld prior to the marriage.

However,⁶² the reported cases of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (FLDS Church) seem to be an exception rather than the rule in Christianity. According to a report quoting from a statement from the church, “Today Church members honor and respect the sacrifices made by those who practiced polygamy in the early days of the Church. However, the practice is outlawed in the Church, and no person can practice plural marriage and remain a member.”⁶³ Founded by Joseph Smith in 1830, the Mormon movement from its beginnings offered a unique perspective on the religious role of men. One of the most influential events in the life of Joseph Smith was the death of his 25-year old brother Alvin in 1823. In 1836, Joseph Smith had a vision of Alvin Smith in heaven.

Based on this vision he developed the Mormon teaching that families could be together in heaven if they underwent religious rites – called “sealings” – in

Mormon temples. Any Mormon member approved by church leaders could perform these sealings.

Due in part to this powerful role he gave to men in helping to save the people they loved and brought to heaven, Mormonism attracted proportionally more men converts than any other American religious movement of the time. In the early 1830s, Smith extended this view of the role of men to include polygamy as it was practiced by Old Testament prophets like Abraham.

Smith taught that a righteous man could help numerous women and children go to heaven by being “sealed” in plural marriage. Large families multiplied a man’s glory in afterlife. This teaching was established as doctrine in 1843. Rumors that polygamy was practiced by a small cadre of FLDS Church leaders spurred mob violence against early Mormon settlements in Illinois and Missouri in the United States. In the face of opposition, Smith counseled Mormon men to be “crafty” – contemporary scholars have interpreted this to mean alert, wise and “resourceful” – in their practice of polygamy and use of “sealings.” After the murder of Joseph Smith in 1845, Mormons migrated to Utah territory in 1847, and there, under the leadership of Brigham Young – who succeeded Joseph Smith – brought the practice of polygamy out of the shadows. FLDS leaders announced plural marriage as an official Mormon Church practice in 1852.

Following Young, Mormon theologians heralded polygamy as a core doctrine and as evidence of patriarchal manliness. By the 1880s, an estimated 20-30

percent of Mormon families practiced polygamy.

3.5 Polygamy Laws, Fundamentalist Groups

However, after the U.S. Civil War, a growing controversy over polygamy united Americans – in both the North and South. Politicians, preachers, and novelists decried it as an evil equal to slavery. The United States Supreme Court ruled in Reynolds v the United States (1878) that polygamy was an “odious” practice. The court said, “Polygamy has always been odious among the northern and western nations of Europe, and, until the establishment of the Mormon Church, was almost exclusively a feature of the life of Asiatic and of African people. At common law, the second marriage was always void, and from the earliest history of England, polygamy has been treated as offence against society....”

Rulon Jeffs was born in 1909, became President of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (FLDS Church) in 1986 until his death in 2002. He had 19 or 20 wives and approximately 60 children. Members claim that Warren Steed Jeffs, born in 1955, and became leader of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints (FLDS) had 87 wives. He was convicted of several sex crimes and two assisted sex crimes involving children.⁶⁴

3.6 Christ's Reaffirmation of the Original Model of Marriage

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder,” (Matthew 19:4-6). This was one of the major policy statements of Christ's salvation ministry.

Christ's reaffirmation of God's original model of the marriage covenant, confirmed it as being:

- i. monogamous, involving only two persons – one husband and one wife;
- ii. one-man-one-woman, not involving two men, or two women, otherwise called same sex marriage;
- iii. a union based on oneness, whereby two persons in God-approved wedlock become one flesh -- a mystery indeed;
- iv. a union that admits of no external interference, not even from parents, who must be left behind by couples going into marriage;
- v. the parties must cleave together in a way that is beyond human understanding; and
- vi. the union is indissoluble, meaning divorce is unacceptable, except for only one reason: fornication, or adultery.

Pursuant to the important policy pronouncement, Christ modelled his Church that serves as a gateway to heaven for eternal salvation, and that he established by laying down his life for it, after the institution of marriage. But Paul the apostle would later expound on the divine resemblance between the marriage and the Church of the Lord.

3.7 Illustrating the Twin Institutions of Marriage and Church

Marriage and the Church are the most important institutions in the Christian faith that are located here on earth. They both are responsible for raising up human beings and preparing them for their last days on earth, when they are expected to return to their creator to give account of their work during their pilgrimage here on earth.

Christ paid very close attention to how these two institutions fared during his mission on earth. In addition to his teachings, sermons, and parables that underscored the importance of marriage amongst men and women, Christ also demonstrated physically, his respect and support for the marriage institution. He visited a wedding ceremony at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-12), where the ceremony ran out of wine supply for guests. Christ then turned water into wine for the guests, thereby kick-starting his church planting and miracle ministry, a metaphor for marriage.

But in his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul advised them to submit themselves to one another in the fear of God. He urged wives to submit themselves to their

own husbands, as unto the Lord; adding that the husband was the head of the wife; even as Christ was the head of the Church: and was the savior of the body. Moreover, he said that as the Church was subject unto Christ, so should the wives be to their husbands in everything. He also admonished husbands to love their wives, even as Christ loved the Church (Ephesians 5:21-26).

However, there have been some varying views by some theological scholars regarding Paul's teaching about the nature of the Church as being modelled after marriage, with husbands being to their wives, what Christ is to the Church; and wives being to their husbands what the Church is to Christ. The differences of opinions have been more in the interpretations of the meaning of Paul's doctrine, than in the truth and reality of God's creation and salvation plan for mankind.

According to Rosser 2013, a Bible scholar, there is a contradiction between Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians to make their marriage illustrate Christ and the Church on the one side, and the call by Jesus Christ himself to Christians to see marriage as a union of husband and wife who have left father and mother, and have cleaved together, and they two have become one flesh, who should never be put asunder because God had put them together, on the other side.

In Christ's teaching, Rosser 2013 sees husband and wife in a relationship of equal partners in marriage, and not a relationship between a Lord and a serf as Paul teaches. For further reinforcement of this matter that has already been analyzed in the first chapter of the study under Conceptual Clarification of the

concept of “Impact,” it may be necessary to return to the discussion there.

However, it must be understood that for salvation purposes, the church and the marriage institution have both been designed by God to function complementarily and not antagonistically. And they both have been doing that perfectly. So, let no human wisdom create any commotion between them.

3.8 Case for Marital Counseling

God designed marriage to deliver goodness to mankind right from creation. And, everyone going into wedlock expects nothing less than goodness and blessings of God. There are two types of marital counseling: premarital counseling, and post-marital counseling. Marital counseling is therefore, a consolidated preparation for reaping the showers of blessing endowed in marriage. Among the benefits, otherwise described as necessities for marital counseling, are the following:

3.9 Necessities for Marital Counseling:

- i. Marital counseling offers intended and extant couples an opportunity to learn more about one another.
- ii. It prepares intended and extant couples for marital life which is often an unfamiliar territory for new entrants.
- iii. Counseling affords partners a chance to build communication skills that would be useful to them both currently, or later in their union.
- iv. It familiarizes intended partners with each other's characters before they

commit to marriage. Preemptive knowledge of each other is very important for success of marriage.

- v. It enables couples-to-be learn on course, problem solving skills.
- vi. Marital counseling helps quell fears, anxiety; and create feelings of relaxation, and comfort in the minds of new entrants into wedlock.
- vii. It helps identify early and deal with it, any expectation that may become a stumbling block later in the togetherness. When a man or a woman knows in advance that his or her spouse's family members are a hostile and tumultuous lot, he or she would learn beforehand how to avoid hostile encounters with them.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPACT OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION ON MARRIAGE

4.1 Examining the Concept of Church Government

This study is focused on the Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria. The concepts of church and of government have been briefly introduced above, in this work, under the section dealing with conceptual clarification of the concepts used in the topic of this study, and may be referred to for an up-date. However, at this juncture, it is pertinent to examine first, the concept of government, before returning to the concept of church government, for the purpose of textual and contextual clarity.

Government is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as: “The body of persons that constitutes the governing authority of a political unit or organization: such as the officials comprising the governing body of a political unit and constituting the organization as an active agency.” There are many types of government, some of which are presented as follow:

4.1.1 Some Types of Government

The following are some types of government found around the world, which are appropriately defined and analyzed hereinunder.⁶⁵ Sometimes, some states may practice simultaneously more than one system. For example, prior to the

departure of Britain from Hong Kong – one of the last British colonial territories in the world – China had promised to introduce a one-government-two-systems policy in Hong Kong, in order to sustain Hong Kong's economic prosperity that ranked it as one of the strongest economic powers in the Asian sub-region. The idea was to allow the communist system to continue unabated in mainland China, while capitalism that had built and sustained Hong Kong would be allowed to subsist and thrive in the hitherto Asia's economic pearl of a city-state. However, no sooner had the British authorities left Hong Kong after the expiry of the disengagement agreement that Britain had signed with China than the latter gradually reintroduced communism that crawled slowly like an ominous snail, back into Hong Kong. Today, Hong Kong's economic prosperity and social vibrancy may apparently, and systematically, be becoming things of the past.

Anarchy: This means absence of government. It is a state of lawlessness or political disorder due to the absence of governmental authority. The English philosophers Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679), and John Locke (1632 - 1704), together with the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) espoused in their theory of the social contract, that absence of a government authority in a human society was like a state of nature, where there was no government to regulate human behaviors.⁶⁶ And so, the people set up a political system and had a social contract with it, giving it the power and authority to rule and regulate their lives. Hobbes argued that in a state of

nature, “there is war of every man against every man,” and life is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutal, and short.” It is a situation of “every man for himself, God for all,” which is tantamount to anarchism. It is a situation of survival of the fittest, complete chaos.

Aristocracy: This is government by the best individuals or by a small privileged class. It is a government in which power is vested in a minority consisting of those believed to be best qualified.

Authoritarianism: This is a political system characterized by the rejection of political plurality, the use of strong central power to preserve political *status quo*, and reductions in the rule of law, separation of power, and democratic voting.

Capitalism: A government based on an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decisions, and by prices, production and distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market.

Colonialism: This may be read together with the explanations under imperialism. Colonialism is a system of government based on the domination of a people or area by a foreign state or nation: the practice of extending and maintaining a nation’s political and economic control over other people or areas. It is to be noted that while the word colonialism is sometimes considered to encompass non-state forms of influence and domination, as by corporate or religious entities, in general use it is more typically understood as

an extension of state power. According to Manjari Miller, the United States was a product of colonialism by mass migrations, and it was the colonialists themselves who created the country: India and China were victims of an extractive colonialism that drained away national wealth. Rodney Muhumuza said that Africa's push for independence from colonialism, which mirrored Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s movement for racial equality in America, attracted his support. On the other hand, Michelle Cliff explained that: "While the primary colonial identification for Jamaicans was English, American colonialism was a strong force in my childhood – and of course continues today. We were sent American movies and American music. American aluminum companies had already discovered bauxite on the island and were shipping the ore to their mainland. United States bought our bananas." In a damning style, Allen Walker Read argued that: "Americans shed their colonialisms one by one, for political colonialism was merely the first to go. ... Many Americans still felt inferior to Englishmen in their language, and a strong jolt was necessary to dislodge that last colonialism." Elizabeth Williams reckoned that "American lexicographer Noah Webster, in his dictionaries of the early 1880s, wanted an American language, and that John Taylor had said that Webster had included such uniquely American words as *woodchuck* and *caucus*, which were seen by British reviewers as 'vulgar colonialisms.'"

Communism: This is a system of government in which goods are owned in

common and are available to all as needed. It is a theory advocating elimination of private property, a doctrine based on revolutionary Marxian socialism and Marxism-Leninism that was the official ideology of the Soviet Union. It is a totalitarian system of government in which single authoritarian party controls state-owned means of production; a final stage of society in Marxist theory in which the state has withered away and economic goods are distributed equitably.

Communism may be one of the most deceptive systems of government in the world. The researcher, in the early 1990s and the early 2010s was privileged as a diplomatic agent in Prague and Bratislava, capital cities of Czech Republic and Slovak Republic respectively; and in Beijing capital city of China; to personally see how corrupt and deceptive the system really is. The claim of “common ownership of goods, and their availability to all as are needed,” is a cruel, crude hoax. On arrival in Prague, Czech Republic in the early 1990s, as a diplomat, the researcher was systematically introduced into the city of Prague that was struggling with serious shortages of essential domestic goods and services.

There were some understocked government-controlled groceries, bakeries, and shopping outlets scantily dotted around the city, that held low quality, locally made goods available to ordinary citizens. Citizens and other consumers were strictly regulated to prevent them from buying more of every item -- such as detergents, toiletries, assortments of fruit, kitchen utensils,

clothing items, and so on -- at each shopping outing, than the quantity officially approved for each of them each week.

Everyone had a system-controlled shopping card to mark off at every shopping round, and one could not buy more fingers of banana for example, than he or she was entitled to each week. However, privileged by his diplomatic status, the researcher could purchase what he needed ordinarily, but he was also introduced to some exclusive, isolated shops ensconced away from easy public view in clandestine spots within the city. The privileged stores were policed by security agents and kept out of prying eyes. Stocked with imported goods from all over the capitalist world and beyond, the uncommon shops were secretly patronized by top communist party and government officials and families.

The shops were stuffed with such luxury items as assorted wines and liquors, marquee jewelry, gold trinkets, precious male and female accessories such as leather shoes and bags, male and female wears, household items and so on. The goods were sold at highly subsidized prices. Such high quality items were never found in the open, general, shopping outlets where the ordinary citizens patronized in the city.

There was, evidently, an indistinct glass-barricade in the society between the privileged rich and powerful on the one side of the barricade, and the desperately poor on the other side. It was like the infamous glass ceiling that is said to currently exist between men and women in the economic spheres in

contemporary world, which feminism is crying out against.

The animal farm scenario captured by George Orwell 1945, in his famous book *Animal Farm* was very much in operation, yet no one seemed to care.

Let it be quickly noted that Czech Republic and Slovak Republic transformed their social, political, and economic structures into capitalist formats after the collapse of communism internationally, and the consequent unification of East and West Germany in the early 1990s.

On being posted to Hong Kong as Consul-General, the same uncanny scenarios the researcher had witnessed in Prague almost a decade earlier, repeated themselves during his various officially guided familiarization trips to Beijing, and other cities in China.

At different parts of some Chinese regions, there were some secret luxury hotels hidden away from public view, stocked with imported luxury goods, and lifestyles that were available to only communist party leaders and high government officials. The experiences were also reminders of the content of George Orwell's thoughts in his 1945 book *Animal Farm*.

Corporatocracy: This is a government run like a corporate bureaucracy, or is influenced, or controlled by corporate business interests in policy decision making.

Democracy: Democracy, meaning "rule of the people" is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body, such as a

parliament. Democracy is sometimes referred to as “a rule of the majority.”

It is a system of processing conflicts in which outcomes depend on what participants do, but no single force controls what occurs and its outcomes.

This does not include citizens being able to vote different laws and leaders.

Electocracy: This is a political system where citizens are able to elect their government but cannot participate directly in governmental decision making as the government does not share its power. Electocracy is seen as a premature form of democracy due to the sharing of similarities of citizens casting ballots, however electocracy is not considered a democracy, though many democracies have electocratic involvement.

Ergatocracy: This is rule by the proletariat, the workers, or the working class. Examples of ergatocracy include communist revolutionaries and rebels which control most of society and create an alternative economy for people and workers.

Fascism: This is a government based on a political philosophy, movement, or regime that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.

Federalism: Federalism is a system of government operated in a federation. A federation (also known as a federal state) is a political entity characterized by a union of partially self-governing states, or regions under a central (federal) government. In a federation, the self-governing status of the

component states, as well as the division of power between them and the central government, is typically constitutionally entrenched and may not be altered by a unilateral decision of either party, the states or the federal political body.

Alternatively, federation is a form of government in which sovereign power is formally divided between a central authority and a number of constituent regions so that each region retains some degree of control over its internal affairs.

Feudalism: This is the system of political organization prevailing in Europe from the 9th century to about the 15th century having as its basis the relation of lord to vassal with all land held in fee and as chief characteristics homage. The service of tenants under arms and in court, warship and forfeiture. Any of various political or social systems that are similar to medieval feudalism.

Geniocracy: This is a type of government where very intelligent people, geniuses, control the country. Supporters of this type of government believe that if the smartest people rule, it will be good for the people. Scientists and sociologists would run the country using their good ideas.

Imperialism: In contexts dealing with the domination of a people or area by a foreign power, imperialism and colonialism are often used together with no real distinction in meaning. Used separately, however, each of these words can take a slightly different emphasis. Colonialism comes from colony, and tends to be applied in contexts addressing the effects that colonialism has on

the lives of those living in colonies. Imperialism is closely related to empire and therefore tends to place more emphasis on the ruling power and its intent to expand its dominion, as well as on the expanded empire itself, with its distinct parts subsumed under the banner of the dominating force.

Kakistocracy: This is rule by the worst; a system of government where the least-qualified citizens govern or dictate policies. Africa, Asia and Middle east may have “baskets of ‘deplorables’” full of kakistocracy.

Kleptocracy: This is rule by thieves; a system of government where its officials and the ruling class in general pursue personal wealth and political position at the expense of the wider population. In strict terms kleptocracy is not a form of government, but a characteristic of a government engaged in such a behavior. Developing societies, especially African countries have a forest of kleptocracies tended by military juntas and political perverts.

Meritocracy: This is rule by the meritorious; a system of governance where groups are selected on the basis of people’s ability, knowledge in a given area, and contributions to society.

Military Dictatorship: It is a dictatorship primarily enforced by the military. Military dictators are different from civilian dictators for a number of reasons; their motivations for seizing power, the institutions through which they organize their rule, and the ways in which they leave power. Often seeing itself as saving the nation from the corrupt myopic civilian politicians, a military dictatorship justifies its position as “neutral” arbiters on the basis of

their membership within the armed forces. For example, many juntas adopt titles, such as “National Redemption Council,” “Committee of National Restoration,” or “National Liberation Committee.”

Military leaders often rule as a junta, selecting one of them as the head. In the central African nation of Zaire, now Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), it was a one-party totalitarian military dictatorship which was led by the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, who ruled and ruined his country for 32 years, from 1965 to 1997. Until he was ousted from power during a civil war, he thoroughly abused his people, country and himself with the spoils of office. At the outset of the civil war, he immediately went into exile in Morocco, where he died three months after, at the age of 66.

The most interesting aspect of Mobutu’s departure into exile in 1997 was that at mere 66 years of age, he had so over-indulged himself in a perilous and unhealthy lifestyle that he was too sickly to climb up unassisted, the gangway into a small aircraft that would ferry him out of Zaire, until the then almost 80-year-old President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who was born in 1918, but had lost 27 years of his youthful life in incarceration, had to lift him up into the airplane.⁶⁷

Nigeria also has its own bloody sheds of ugly military dictatorships, that literally tore, frayed and shredded the country socially, politically and economically. Up till now, the weeping wounds inflicted on the country by one military junta after another, worsened by an opportunistic political class,

has not allowed the country to recuperate one bit.

Monarchy: A monarchy is a system of government in which a group, generally a family representing a dynasty, embodies the country's national identity and its head, the monarch, exercises the role of sovereignty. The actual power of the monarch may vary from purely symbolic (crowned republic), to partial and restricted (constitutional monarchy), to completely autocratic (absolute monarchy).

Traditionally the monarch's post is inherited and lasts until death or abdication. In contrast, elective monarchies require the monarch to be elected. Both types have further variations as there are widely divergent structures and tradition defining monarchy. For example, in elected monarchies only pedigrees are taken into consideration for eligibility of the next ruler, whereas many hereditary monarchies impose requirements regarding the religion, age, gender, mental capacity, and so on.

Occasionally there might be a situation of rival claimants whose legitimacy is subject to effective election. There have been cases where the term of monarch's reign is either fixed in years or continues until certain goals are achieved: an invasion being repulsed, for instance. Britain, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Solomon Islands, Sweden, Norway, Vatican City, Spain, Monaco, Japan and Netherlands, are some of the countries in the world today that still maintain varying sheds of monarchies.

Noocracy: This is a rule by the wise; a system of government in which

decision making is in the hands of philosophers, as advocated by Plato, a philosopher. His concept of philosopher king is notable.

Oligarchy: It is a government by the few, a government in which a small group of people exercises control especially for corrupt and selfish purposes.

Plutocracy: This is a system of government by the wealthy, who hold controlling power in government policy decision making process.

Socialism: This is a system in which workers, democratically and, or socially own the means of production. The economic framework may be decentralized and self-managed in autonomous economic units, as in libertarian system, or centrally planned, as in authoritarian system. Public services such as healthcare and education would be commonly, collectively, and, or state owned.

Statism: It is a government system with concentration of economic controls and planning in the hands of a highly centralized government often extending to government ownership of industry.

Technocracy: This is rule by the educated, or technical experts; a system of governance where people who are skilled or proficient govern in their respective areas of expertise in technology, and would be in control of all decision making. doctors, engineers, scientists, professionals, and technologists, who have knowledge, expertise, or skills would compose the governing body, instead of politicians, businessmen, and economists. In a technocracy, decision makers would be selected based upon how

knowledgeable and skillful they are in their field. Technocracies are today represented by algorithmic governance by Silicon Valley engineers. The recent form of technocracy has been called *digitocracy*.

Theocracy: This is rule by a religious elite; a system of governance composed of religious institutions in which the state and the church, or any other religious institutions are traditionally or constitutionally the same entity. For example, the Vatican's, Iran's, Afghanistan's, the Caliphates', and other Islamic states' governments are historically theocracies.

Totalitarianism: This is a system of government in which opposition is prohibited, civil rights are extremely suppressed and virtually all aspects of social life, including the economy, morals, and private lives of citizens, are controlled by a centralized authoritarian state that holds absolute political power, usually under a dictatorship, or single political party. Some examples include the following: the former Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and North Korea.

Unitary State: A unitary state is a state governed as a single power in which the central government is ultimately supreme and any administrative divisions (sub-national units) exercise only the powers that the central government chooses to delegate.

The majority of states in the world have a unitary system of government. Of the 193 UN member states, 165 are governed as unitary states. Is Nigeria a unitary state? Nigeria calls itself a federation, and has a federal constitution,

but in operation, the federal government carries on like a unitary state. It wields so much power that all national assets are controlled at the center, the incomes from the assets are pooled into the national account and shared to the 36 states and the federal capital city, every month. The federal government controls an unwieldy, humongous exclusive legislative list, shares with the states a concurrent legislative list, leaving a miserly residual legislative list of items to be legislated upon to the states.

Consequently, the heavy concentration of powers in the central government has injected acute instability into the governance process, frustrating national development in a rather infuriating manner. Some political scholars call the current Nigerian system an “Opportunism,” a system in which some poor and unproductive parts of the country seize the other parts on the balls, and subject them to the whims and caprices of dictates.

4.1.2 Functions of Government

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its training program offered to government officials and members of the public, the ten functions of government are as follow:⁶⁸

- i. General public service
- ii. National defense
- iii. Public order and safety
- iv. Economic affairs

- v. Environmental protection
- vi. Housing and community amenities
- vii. Health
- viii. Recreation, culture, and religion
- ix. Education
- x. Social protection

4.1.3 Church Government

Church government is the supreme authority in heaven that regulates the affairs of the church here on earth. Before the creation of the Garden of Eden, God already had the sovereign power of government authority and control over the angels in heaven, and other heavenly beings. Government as it is known here on earth began in the Garden of Eden, as God had rule over Adam, Eve, the serpent, and all of his creation on earth. God is the creator of Government, and the keeper of all Government's resources in heaven and earth.

Part of the message God sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in a dream, when he exceeded his bounds as a human king and began to boast of being god, was: "... to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." (Daniel 4:17). With regard to the question of who exercises the power of Church Government, the following passages in the

Holy Bible are very instructive and helpful in confirming Christ as the indisputable Church Government: (Luke 3:22) says: “And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him (Christ), and a voice came from heaven, which said, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” (Matthew 17:5) says: “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him.” These two passages confirm God’s introduction and presentation of Christ as the heir apparent to the throne of grace, the Kingdom, or Government. (Colossians 1:18) states thus: “He is also head of the body, the Church; and He is the beginning, the first born from the dead, so that He himself will come to have first place in everything.” (Colossians 2:10) states thus: “and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.” Similarly, (Ephesians 1:22) says as follows: “And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.” (Ephesians 5:23) says: “For the husband is the head of his wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.”

Furthermore, (1Corinthians 11:3) says: “But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.” Finally, but not exhaustively, (Isaiah 9:6) says: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the **government shall be upon his shoulder:**⁶⁹ and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,

The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Isaiah’s prophesy of the government being on the Messiah’s shoulder was fulfilled on the day when, after receiving the baptism by John the Baptist in River Jordan, the Holy Spirit descended on Christ’s shoulder, and God declared his pleasure for Christ as his Son, and Ambassador.

From the foregoing facts, it is clear that besides Jesus Christ there is no other authority in heaven or earth that can successfully claim the ultimate sovereignty over his church that he bought, built, died for, and is ruling over.

Although, Dr. Dale A. Robbins (1990 – 2015), in his book, *What People Ask About the Church*, has argued as follows: “However, the method of church government is sometimes an object of debate, and is one of the primary differences between some denominations.”⁷⁰

Let it be emphatically said that after examining all the aforementioned biblical references that confirm Christ as the undisputed head of Church Government, perhaps it is pertinent to say that the debate could move to some other subjects of discussion that may not have adequate authoritative support from the word of God. The *de facto*, and *de jure* church government cannot be any other authority than Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent to the world to establish a channel through which Christ the savior could reconcile man who had wandered out God’s grace since Adam and Eve, back to the loving hands of the Father.

The very idea by Dr. Robbins (1990 – 2015) of subjecting the discussion

about the power and authority over the church under denominationalism is not only immature and simplistic, it is also self-defeatist, to say the least. This is because denominationalism has no place in Christ's teachings. He even prayed against it before his ascension to heaven (John 17:23, 1 Corinthians 1:12-13).

The channel of reconciliation that Christ established is the church, his body, and he is its head. There is no other being in heaven and on earth to contest for authority over the church with Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior.

Moreover, as clearly stated in (Isaiah 9:6), the Government is upon his shoulder. He who has the government upon his shoulder, he it is that is endowed with the uncontestable responsibility to forcefully exercise government power, reign, authority, command, sovereignty, dominion, and more. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. He built the church as he promised Peter: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18). He purchased the church with his precious blood (Acts 20:28 - 35). He imbued it with the holy spirit (John 14:16). And he justified it (Romans 8:30 - 31).

Who can be more devoted to manage the church better? Christ therefore, is the church government. He has all it takes to run the type of government no one else can run; and he has more power than all the governments of the world joint together. How can human beings run a celestial, divinely endowed government when all the terrestrial or human governments ever established

and managed by man, here on earth, have all failed to meet the most basic of the physical needs of mankind, how much more spiritual needs?

Also, Jesus Christ did not leave any room for any doubt about the authority he had received from his father regarding his redemption mission here on earth, “All power is given to me in heaven and on earth,” he said. (Matthew 28:18 - 20).

Another point to confirm the power of government Christ wields over the church, is that one cannot give what one has not. In delegating the authority that he has, he said to his apostles, disciples, and followers: “Peace be unto you. As my father hath sent me, even so send I you.” (Matthew 26:49). Also, “Then said Jesus to them again, ‘Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.’” (John 20:21). This was a clear statement faithfully delegating to all church administrators here on earth, of whatever title and classification they may go by, the government instruction that his Father who, in the Holy Oneness of the triune Godhead, had given him towards efficient execution of God’s plans for mankind through the Christian church, the Christian marriage, and the Christian family. Therefore, the study on the *Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*, is in actuality an enquiry into how, through the results of the study, it would be possible for Church Administration in Nigeria, comprising the church members, leadership, and the clergy, would prepare the church administration adequately, like Moses did in the wilderness, to trap

blessings from the Church Government in Heaven, to turn things around for the marriage institution in Nigeria.

4.2 Examining the Concept of Church Administration

4.2.1 What is Church Administration?

Church Administration is the spiritual service to the Church of the Lord that involves the wise stewardship of God's resources for maximum utilization for the accomplishment of the work of ministry. It is also the application of administrative principles, skills, and strategies towards achieving maximum goals and results in the work of God, for the benefit of his flock. It also involves diligently applying God's rules and instructions, which Christ, through his father, has laid down to bless his church and flock of his pasture. And, for the benefit of achieving efficient and successful church administration, the following principles may be applied for the day-to-day running of ministry:⁷¹

4.2.2 Principles for Efficient Church Administration

The principles of efficient church administration are discussed as follow:

4.2.2.1 Create Strategic Plan for Accomplishing Your Goals

The overall success of your ministry heavily depends on the structure and goals that are put in place. Without a plan and corresponding list of goals for your church, your administrators will be unorganized and lack direction towards your mission. Creating a strategy and laying out plans based on that

strategy keeps everyone on the same page, or in the loops. And also makes sure that both the church administration and the church leaders are headed in the same direction.

4.2.2.2 Make Sure Board Governance is in Place

The typical role of the board, or the council is to hold the church and leaders accountable, assist the church budget as needed and assist the staff and volunteers with creating and achieving annual goals. The first generation church did not have standing board or council on ground, but when the conflict regarding the accusation of segregation between the Jewish and the Greek windows began to rock the stability of the church, seven elders amongst the apostles were elected to sort issues of “the tables” out of “the word of God.” (Acts 6:1-4).

4.2.2.3 Establish a Structured Budgeting Process

With this type of budget structure, the philosophy is to strategically prioritize spending to cover the initiatives that support the church’s mission, while setting aside funds for the church programs, unexpected repairs to the church building, and day-to-day expenditures.

4.2.2.4 Choose a Church Administrator to Manage Tasks, Goals, and Strategies

Select someone you trust to follow up with volunteers, staff and church leaders to make sure tasks related to the goals and mission of the church are

being completed on time. While this is often a thankless job, it holds everyone accountable and makes sure everything is going in the right direction.

4.2.2.5 Create a Scheduled Maintenance Program

While this may initially sound like an item that should be way down on the priority list, an organized and well-kept ministry goes a long way toward sending a message to church leaders, the congregation, and potential new members that your church is a healthy, well-oiled machine. Nothing conveys a toxic atmosphere more than an environment that is disheveled, dirty, and dated. Have administrators brainstorm with staff and volunteers to compile a checklist of weekly and monthly tasks that should be checked regularly in order to keep stores stocked, areas clean, and structures maintained. Once the list is compiled, distribute these tasks amongst church administrators, staff and volunteers based on their availability.

4.2.2.6 Build and Foster a Universal Culture of Support

Talk with members at all levels (church administrators, pastors, employees, volunteers, and so on), to find out their goals and what they need to succeed. Provide whatever resources they require, and be willing to offer additional assistance as needed. Offer small tokens of appreciation for those who routinely go above and beyond their responsibilities. Do not muzzle the ox that treads the grains.

4.2.2.7 **Make Church Finance a Priority**

Whether you are a professional accountant or just a church administrator who is decent at math, keeping church finances in order can be challenging, especially when it comes to larger churches. Don't be afraid to incorporate an accounting-by-committee approach when managing your church's financial resources and budget. Packing your ego at the door and bringing in some experienced sets of eyes puts your ministry's finances first, ensures that the data will be accurate, and takes some of the pressure and stress off of the individual initially responsible for the financial affairs. There are also affordable church management solutions on the market that can save your administrators a lot of time and headaches. The researcher once attended a church that was well-supplied with members who were professional accountants and auditors, and who were ever willing to offer their services free- of-charge to the church, and that helped the congregation tremendously.

4.2.2.8 **Be Transparent with your Congregation**

Many pastors think the hide-and-seek game with some of the church's sensitive matters including finances is a game worthy of trying a hand on. But both existing and new members of the church want to feel like their opinion and participation are acknowledged and appreciated, and one of the best ways to convey your gratitude is to keep members in the loop on

anything of significance that is related to the church. Many churches are taking advantage of resources like social media, text messaging, email, newsletters, blogs, vlogs, and print media to communicate with church members. You need to have your church administration use all the tools at your disposal to update members, general attendees, and volunteers about church programs, upcoming events, your involvement in community, and positive messages that convey God's Word and the mission of the church. There is absolute need to resist the temptations of turning your church into a social hub, or an events promoter for regular celebrations of birthday bashes, funeral parties, house warming celebrations, job promotion thanksgiving special services, and a lot more. Cross-check the euphoric celebrations from the Bible examples, if any, and abide peremptorily.

4.3 Functional Effects of the Combination of both Church Government and Church Administration

When Church administration has achieved its ultimate goal and has enabled a church to hit the beautiful milestone of turning out as a spiritually “well-oiled machine” as aforementioned, ready for the harvest, the church would then be able to perform its assigned functions that include the following:

4.3.1 Spreading the Good News

The good news is all about the birth, crucifixion, resurrection and the coming back of the Messiah Jesus Christ. And the dissemination of the good news is

laid squarely at the foot of the church. No other institution here on earth is as qualified as the Body of Christ, which the Lord purchased with his precious blood, and charged to spread the news to all the nooks and crannies of the entire world. Christ said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ...” (Mark 16:15-20). To abandon the death and resurrection of Christ and dwell on money-making, and wealth creation sermonizing is tantamount to putting the cart before the horse, because the Word of God says, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and every other thing will be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33).

4.3.2 Guiding its Flock unto All Good Works

When the church is administered in the right way, it would be able to thoroughly furnish the people of the world -- both the sheep of his pasture, and the wolfs in sheep skin -- with the inspired word of life, unto all righteousness, (2Timothy 3:16-17).

4.3.3 The Church is Meant to Function as the Main Route to Heaven

There is no other way to Heaven other than through the church, the body of Christ the Lord of the reconciliation that he achieved at the cross of sacrifice. The whole essence of human beings coming to the world is about serving God in holiness, and presenting to him the mirror image of himself in the beauty and glory of his being. After the fall of Adam, God painstakingly sought out a conciliator that would bring back the lost glory of God on earth.

Christ then came as a sacrificial lamb, to cleanse man and set him back on course to the recovery of the lost glory. He then set up the church as the only institution through which man can pass back into the glory. Such an important institution cannot continue to be administered, or mismanaged the way many church leaders are going about the business of running the church. When church administration is handled right, the church will recover its role as the gateway back the Creator of Heaven and earth. “I am the way,” (John 14:6), said Christ the redeemer. He is the way and his body, the Church, is the entrance route to heaven.

4.3.4 The Church is Where the Unsearchable Wisdom of God is Revealed

Before the coming, death and resurrection of Christ the Lord, the wisdom and judgement of God were not available to all. (Romans 11:33-36). Christ said, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the household of Israel, (Matthew 15:24). This means that he had come only for the Jews, whom God valued through the good work of Abraham, whose righteousness had taken away God’s heart, and God would not allow them to perish. However, Christ’s lamentation on the cross of Calvary about the completion of his redemptive, sacrificial mission on earth, tore-open the curtain of differentiation, whereby the hitherto excluded children of the bond woman, were allowed access to the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, in the excellency and the beauty of his Holy of Holies. And Apostle Paul, his able ambassador plenipotentiary and

extraordinary, brought to the rejected lots, the wisdom and the unsearchable judgement of God, (Acts 22:21). And, the church became the repository of the wisdom and the unsearchable judgement of God (John 3:35). Therefore, let the lady be groomed and managed with grace and righteousness to enable her fulfil this function.

4.3.5 A Place for The Actualization of Christ's Reconciliation Between

God and Man: Christ's mission of reconciliation began with the stumble of the first man in the Garden of Eden. The Lord must bring the alienated man back to God his Father. Millenniums went past, but the fugitive was still marooned on the wilderness of disobedience, and there was none to intercede. Then Christ came and offered his blood as propitiation for the wandering vermin. After Christ's death, he did not return to his glorious abode until he left a place for the vagrant, condemned souls to find the solace and reconciliation he had accomplished on the cross of crucifixion. That place is the church. Could someone please set the place right for the God-valued vagabonds to wade through the initiation, mediation, proclamation, and actualization, which make up the process of reconciliation (2Corinthians 5:18-21), in order to access the outstretched hand of the savior that is so free and so precious?

4.3.6 A Training Ground for the Laborers on the Lord's Vineyard

The church is the training ground for the laborers on the Vineyard of the Lord. Without the church can there be no place where perishing souls can be retrieved, trained, and released back into the world to pursue the Great Commission that Jesus entrusted into its hands. When the church is properly administered, the laborers will multiply in leaps and bounds, and the work of God will prosper.

4.3.7 Provides Spiritual Support for Members

The church is the only place where spiritual growth is achieved for its members. If a church does not refill spiritually, an individual member to become stronger, then that church may not qualify to be called church because it is possible that God may not be there in that assembly. The word of God says, "... in thy presence is fullness of joy ..." (Psalm 16:11). If the presence of God deserts a church, it is like when God deserted the Ark of the Covenant on the battlefield at Aphek (1Samuel 4:1); leaving prophet Eli, and the children of Israel stranded in the middle of a major battle. The church is spiritually like a refueling gas station for Christians to renew their strength.

4.3.8 A Fostering Mother Nurturing Perishing Souls

Like a good mother, the church nurtures, fosters, dandles, feeds, and prepares its members for the journey ahead. When there are arguments in a church over matters that have nothing to do with its core mission, which is the

promotion of the Kingdom work, there is a misplacement of focus.

4.4 The Nature of Weak Church Administration

A weak church is not a church whose house of worship has fragile frames and foundation that can be easily blown down by the wind. Nor, is it a church whose members are cowards and weaklings that cannot fight back if the church is under an attack or assault from the outside. Nor, indeed, is it a church whose leaders are unable to stand their ground on behalf of the church. As a matter of fact, even if all those people could flex their muscles and lift up the church building in the air in one heft of an effort, but have not an iota of godliness in them, their church would still be as weak as a piece of jelly. Instead, a weak church is one that has wandered away, like a proverbial slug, out of the grace, presence, and guiding hands of the Holy Spirit because of the choices the church has made about its focuses, priorities, pursuits, and orientations.

In the United States of America, a group of enthusiastic Christians carried out a survey on 557 churches to determine why a country club mindset appeared to pervade many churches, whereby most church members seemed to carry about them, self-centered, self-serving, and inward-looking attitudes, that disoriented many churches. They found ten dominant behavior patterns of members of the surveyed churches which spelled the following characteristics common to the churches that can be classified as signs of weakness:⁷²

4.4.1 Worship Wars

One or more factions in the church want the music just the way they like it. Any deviation is met with anger and demands for change. The order of service must remain constant. Certain instrumentation is required while others are prohibited for no other reason than personal preferences. Selection of members for contribution of labor of love to the church's work is a tug-of-war, even when the selected members are ever ready, willing, able, and fit to make such contributions. It's incredible how un-Christ-like Christians can be when they disagree with one another. These "worship wars" do nothing to further the Kingdom but everything to tear it down.

4.4.2 Prolonged Minutia Meetings

The church spends an inordinate amount of time in different meetings. Most of the meetings deal with the most inconsequential item, while the Great Commission and Great Commandment are rarely the topics of discussion. Meetings to plan birthday celebrations, buildings construction, trips to funerals, chartering of churches, compete for time with real work of conversion of souls. The solution here is simple; stop arguing about placing a comma in your mission statement, and go do the Lord's work. What has heated arguments at a meeting over the statistics and types of private aircraft owned by pastors got to do with the salvation of souls?

4.4.3 Facility Focused

The church facilities develop iconic status. One of the highest priorities in the church is the protection and preservation of rooms, furniture, and other visible parts of the church buildings and grounds. Being a good steward of your church building is not bad thing. But if the building takes priority over the people inside it, there is a problem. Indeed, when strenuous efforts are expended about isolation of seats in the pew for status-minded people in the church, there is a problem and a big question.

4.4.4 Program Driven

Every church has program event if they don't admit it. The problem is not with programs. The problem develops when the program becomes an end instead of a means to greater ministry. Remember to look at the picture. How can God use this program to do something even greater in your community to benefit more lost souls?

4.4.5 Inwardly-Focused Budget

A disproportionate share of the budget is to meet the needs and comforts of members, usually leaders, instead of reaching beyond the walls of the church. Yes, you need to pay the electric bills to keep the lights on. But your church's money does not really belong to the church. It belongs to God. How would he have you use it? And, when a pastor asks a member to meet him for prayers, and unbeknownst to the member, in the prayer room, a waiting pastoral

council jumps on the member and drills him or her on how he or she spends his or her personal money, should that be?

4.4.6 Inordinate Demands for Pastoral Care

All church members deserve care and concern, especially in times of need and crisis. Problems develop, however, when church members have unreasonable expectations for even minor matters. The pastor is a servant of the Lord, not a slave of his congregation. His needs for physical, spiritual, and mental health matter, too. Otherwise, he cannot shepherd his flock to his best ability.

4.4.7 Attitudes of Entitlements

This issue could be a catch-all for many of the points named here. The overarching attitude is one of demanding and having a sense of deserving special treatment. As Christ followers, we are called to live as Christ lived. This means not elevating ourselves above others, or believing that we deserve more than others.

4.4.8 Greater Concern About Change than the Gospel

Almost any noticeable changes in the church evoke the ire of many; but those same passions are not evident about participating in the work of the gospel to change lives. Where is the focus of your church? If it is not on following Jesus' teaching, it is time to re-evaluate what church is really about.

4.4.9 Anger and Hostility

Members are consistently angry. They regularly express hostility toward the church staff and other members. This is a bad sign. If this is the reality of your church, it is time to go into problem-solving mode. What issue is causing such hostility? The church should be a place to experience the peace of God, not the anger of sinners.

4.4.10 Evangelistic Apathy

Very few members share their faith on a regular basis. More are concerned about their own needs rather than the greatest eternal needs of the world and community in which they live. In almost every behavior above, church members were looking out for their own needs and preferences. You get the picture. I. Me. Myself. Church membership from a biblical perspective, however, is about servanthood. It is about giving. It is about putting others first. Christ said if you want to be a leader, serve! (Matthew 20:26-28). The word of God says by their fruit ye shall know them. A weak church will manifest its weakness by showing the following signs among others:

4.5 The Fruit of a Weak Church:

- i. A weak church is not a praying church;
- ii. There is absence of signs and wonders in a weak church. “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils: they shall speak with new tongues: They shall take

up serpents; and if they touch any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17-18).

- iii. In a weak church inordinate emphases are placed on monetary matters over salvation of souls. Sometimes, it is so bad that even wretchedly poor members who can barely find food for themselves are stoutly ignored;
- iv. There are constant robust crises and conflicts amongst leadership and members in a weak church, and often it is about personalities and interests clashes;
- v. Deviations into carnality are palpable occurrences in weak churches;
- vi. There is acute absence of holiness in weak churches, so that constant vulgar corridor gossips flow from the pew to the pulpit and back with no one seeming to have heard anything;
- vii. In a weak church, there is too much divergence into gossiping and old wives’ tales, most times, at the expense of sincere worship, teaching of the holy word; and sharing of love and unity of purpose.
- viii. When there is less time for Bible studies, and genuine evangelism, those are clear evidence of a church’s weakness.

4.6 God's Ordained Methods of Church Administration

God's ordained methods of church administration can be distilled from the ministries of great leaders in the work of God such as Jesus Christ, Moses, Joshua, John the Baptist, Apostle Paul, Apostle Peter, and other untainted men of God who led congregations of God's people, and drew their inspirations from either direct words from the mouth of God, or from the Bible. Any church administrator who fails to consult the Bible as a major source of resources for church administration will be doing a great disservice to the Lord and himself. The word of God says, Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God's administrative structures, based on his Word remain from eternity to eternity. Therefore, a little peek into history may reveal some helpful tit-bits.

In the history of God's relationship with mankind, the first time God would deal directly with people in such a massive population as one single group that can be considered as a church, was when the children of Israel massed up on their way out of the land of Egypt. They were on their journey out of slavery into freedom and God descended into their midst to guide them home to the promise land with a pillar of cloud in the daytime, and a pillar of fire in the night. The assembly was both metaphorically and realistically a church, when it is recalled that a church is where two or three assemble together in the name of God, and the Lord is in their midst.

Now, let us consider the main activities the early apostles performed when

they gathered on every first day of the week, as a church in worship of God, to see whether the massing Israelites in flight of Egypt, did fulfil the conditions necessary to qualify that assembly as a church. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. (Acts 2:42). The Israelites were continuously in the assembly of fellowship with God in their midst, especially when God would descend into the tabernacle in their midst. By way of a doctrine, Moses did not cease in reminding them of the law of God that he received at mount Sinai. By way of breaking of bread, their daily ration of mana the original bread from heaven, was the bread they broke daily. And prayer sessions were held when God came down into the tabernacle. So, the gathering of the children of Israel in the wilderness was no less a church than the church established on the day of Pentecost, or of today.

Now let us examine God’s ordained methods of Church administration as follows:

- i. The regulatory system of authority in the church is divine and theocratic, as it was in the wilderness, or even in the Garden of Eden where two (Adam and Eve) gathered, and God visited them. In the situation, there was a clear evidence of the meeting between Church Government and Church Administration. While the presence of God represented Church Government, in the gathering

of the children of Israel in the wilderness, the presence of Moses and the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel represented Church Administration. Similarly, in today's church, in every church assembly, there is always a meeting between the Church Government and the Church Administration for the assembly to qualify as a church. In other words, the headquarters of heaven, and headquarters of the earth must meet together in every church assembly. Therefore, a church assembly is analogous to human government's ministerial council, where the head of state and head of government sits in council with his ministers. Similarly, Christ sits in every church assembly as head of his kingdom (the church) with his heavenly angels as his ministers, and the leaders of the various ministries; together with the various church leaders here on earth, who constitute the leadership of the Church Administration. When God sits in a church with his angels, that is Church government, while the pastors, the clergies, the elders, the deacons, and more, represent the Church Administration.

- ii. The law to guide the order of service unto God is his Word or Command, that must pass as government's laws. And, there is no substitution of human legal wisdom. In the Garden of Eden, the fundamental law was: "You may eat all the fruit in the Garden, but not the fruit on the center of it." (Genesis 2:16-17).

- iii. God wants absolute obedience to his laws as it was in the Garden of Eden, or in the wilderness. God is the absolute sovereign government that is why he demands absolute obedience to his laws.
- iv. No church member can be more loved, or more favored than others except such preferential treatment is based on disobedience or sinfulness of anyone who is discriminated against. A government cannot discriminate against some citizens and love others. Christ says, come to me just as you are, even if heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28-29). God does not discriminate.
- v. No compromise of God's instructions on obedience, holiness, transparency, rectitude, righteousness, bribery, corruption, and more.
- vi. No dilution of the Word of God which must be delivered without fear or favor, like Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, Paul, Peter and many others did.
- vii. The mainstream work of the church takes precedence over all, and whatever is done, is done in fear of God and in the love of fellow humans.
- viii. The Holy Spirit is given premium attention with great sensitivity.

- ix. Exhortation of any church member is not to be based on hate, jealousy, drive for self-aggrandizement, or self-pride, but on the fear of God.

Church administration is the process of managing the Lord's Body by the leadership of the church for maximum results and productivity. It can be very exerting, and exacting, but also exciting, and comprehensively rewarding when it is handled right. Just imagine someone walking, and working in the very presence of a head who is considerate and kind! It may also be disconcerting, if it is not given the optimum attention it deserves. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." (Proverbs 22:29).

4.7 Functional Effects of the Combined Forces of Church Government and Church Administration in Impacting Marriage

So far in this study, the concept of Church Government as enunciated in the word of God has been unfurled, likewise the concept of Church Administration, also based on biblical analysis. These are the two institutional scaffoldings that prop up, and sustain the Christian marriage: the one is spiritual, and the other human. They constitute a very rare consolidation of divine-cum-human strength and support any institution, organization or individual can ever wish to enjoy for its, his, or her continued existence. No wonder that ever since its inception, the marriage institution has

absorbed so much shock, witnessed so many abuses, borne so many stresses, and withstood so much blackmail. Yet, it still has stood up as solid and unshaken as ever. For example, Adam's whoop-de-doo was the first ever assault on the beautiful marriage institution, when he whined in an escapist's alibi for his inordinate disobedience as follows: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." (Genesis 3:12). That was a very early and ridiculous indictment on an institution that had just been formed and launched by God to help solve the man's problem of loneliness: after God had realized that it was not good for the man to be alone. (Genesis 2:18). Ever since then, marriage has moved from one attack into another, worldwide. The purpose of this study therefore, as has already been stressed, is to identify the ways in which Church Government and Church Administration can work together to impact selected Christian marriages in Nigeria, to kick-start a new beginning towards a glorious dawn for marriage in the country. The discussion here, will focus on the results of the combined efforts of the two institutions in practical situations.

Instructively, the working of the holy relationship and collaboration between the twin regulatory institutions namely, the Church Government and the Church Administration, does have some salubrious effects on the Christian church, and the Christian marriage. The effects are examined hereunder as follow:

- i. There is an interesting division of labor between the two realms in

which the Church Government makes the laws in the form of the word of God in commandments, rules, regulations, directives, instructions, demands, laws, edicts, orders, advisories, and what have you, authoritatively and extensively enunciated in the Holy Bible. The Bible is the manual of the Christian faith. The Church Administration obligatorily obeys, applies, implements, executes, and enforces the laws of God, although penalties for infringements of, and sins against the Word of God, are ultimately punished by the Church Government in heaven, in spite of the Church Administration's residual power to deal with minor infractions here on earth. There is supposed to be a seamless relationship between the Church Government and the Church Administration in the daily working of Christianity here on earth. However, sometimes hitches do occur principally due to avoidable shortcomings from the Church Administration's side of the relationship, caused by factors, usually identified as sins. A sin is defined by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary* as; "Transgression of the law of God, a vitiated state of human nature in which the self is estranged from God." The Church Administration must not estrange itself from the Church Government, no matter what.

- ii. For administrative convenience, the Church Government concedes some governmental power of attorney to the Church Administration

to take some policy decisions which are honored by the Church Government in heaven. Pursuant to this, Christ said to Peter, “And I will give unto thee the key of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19). Although, this powerful instruction given by Christ to Peter on behalf of the church leadership here on earth is a groundbreaking show of co-operation between divinity and humanity, it does in no way amount to Christ surrendering his well-earned leadership, authority, and position as Church Government, to Peter or any other human leader on earth, to rule over the church in that capacity. What it does mean is an evidence of delegation of power of attorney to the leaders of Church Administration to represent the Lord here on earth as administrators, not as government. Many clergies, scholars, pastors, philosophers, and analysts would like to argue that the Christian heavyweights from various denominations all over the world such as the Roman Catholic Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the heavily anointed General Overseers (GOs) of the various Pentecostal and denominational Churches worldwide, the various heads of the reverential Orthodox Churches around the world, and other church leaders bearing tongue twisting, hifalutin pastoral titles, constitute

the Church Government. But the biblical endorsements are contrary to that assertion. The Holy Bible appears not to suggest such a situation, and it will be presumptuous for one to even insinuate it.

- iii. Furthermore, the Church Government, who is Jesus Christ, has granted concession on the quorum needed to summon the high council meeting of the Kingdom, which is the church assembly held every Sunday morning all over the world, or any other assembly by the faithful for that matter where God is called upon. The Lord declared: “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18:20). The implication here is that when hundreds of millions of Christian church assemblies convene every Sunday morning, or some other days of the week, and times, throughout the whole wide world, Jesus Christ, being the government over the Christian faith, is in their midst. He is sitting on the invisible throne of grace as the invincible government, watching closely how all the different classes of the administrative staff in the church are carrying out their work and responsibilities.
- iv. Also, for the sake of establishing unity-of-purpose between the Church Government in heaven and the Church Administration on earth, to avoid confusion -- since God is not the author of confusion, according to (1Corinthians 14:33) that says: “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the

saints.” Jesus said: “Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they ask, it shall be done for them of my father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19-20). These assurances given to the church by Christ, settle any attempts at overzealousness, unilateralism, and usurpation of power by the Church Administration.

- v. The impact of Church Government and Church Administration on Christian marriage in Nigeria, depends upon the results engendered from the relationship and interplay between the two institutions. A well administered and spirit-filled Christian church will receive overflowing blessings from God, the Government, which will impact marriages that are under the grooming hands of the church. On the other hand, a poorly administered church, suffering from spiritual famine, will receive zero, or negative impact from the Church Government in heaven, and that will rub off on the marriages under the nurture of the affected church. This, therefore, is the focus of this study. The study is out to survey ways whereby Christian churches in Nigeria will wake up and tidy up their acts in order to receive good impact from heaven, to enable them usher in overflowing marital blessings for marriages in Nigeria. The current practices of the Christian marriages in Nigeria are leaving much to be desired, with regrettable consequences, and something has to be

done to stem the tide, and reverse the flow of the current.

- vi. When the Church Administration is able to buoy up like a huge cork, and carry the Church Government along on every expedition in the salvation ministry, the sky will not be the limit, but the beginning of the heaven-bound pilgrimage for the Christian marriages in Nigeria.

4.8 Impact of Church Government and Church Administration on Marriages

As noted above, in the first chapter of the study, under the section on “Conceptual Clarification,” when one object impacts another, there is an identifiable mark, indent, or depression left on the impacted spot on either the one, the other, or both of the objects involved in the impactful coming together. This causes changes on the nature of the objects involved. Be that as it may, one way or another, it is all about the result of an impactful encounter. For the researcher, and for this study, it is positive impact that matters much more than negative impact. Consequently, when Church Government and Church Administration impact Christian marriages in Nigeria, it is positive result that is expected. There is bound to be discernible changes in the nature of the Christian marriages in Nigeria, or anywhere else for that matter. On the other hand, however, in a two-way-traffic impact, there may also be some registered changes inflicted on the nature of the Christian churches in Nigeria

in their impact on marriages that may be under satanic attacks. In such a situation, the churches must consolidate themselves in Jesus Christ the Church Government, with righteousness and holiness. In a research study entitled: *Challenges in Christian Marriages and Its Effect on the Church*,⁶⁹ the researcher of the project observed that in recent times after church weddings, 40% of marriages collapse within three to four months after their sanctification, while the remaining 60% struggle with conflicts, adding that marriages have become “hell on earth, resulting from serious marital abuses, with the partners being like prisoners living inside big cages without gates, and Christian couples even suing each other through church disciplinary committees, in traditional courts, and in appeal courts of law.” The question is, can the courts of unbelievers really fix marriages? (Corinthians 6:1-8). That researcher further explained that his study was intended to look into the challenges in Christian marriages and their effects on the church. Correct! There is a symbiotic relationship between church and marriage.

Marriages have also impacted churches in no small measures. Church members, leaders and pastors, who are being battered under grilling marital conditions cannot build and lead a spiritually strong church that can impact marriages positively. That researcher could not have pursued a better and more relevant research study. It is very clear that as the church tries to help married couples within the church to practice their marriages as correctly as God had designed marriage to be practiced, the problem-prone, crises-riddled,

stress-infested, Satan-attacked, and turbulent marriages would try to fight back against the survival of the church. And except the church is spiritually strong, and holy, it may have some wounds to lick in return. The fact is that many church members whose marriages may not qualify as Christian marriages – because of the way they are being plied – may also be ministering in different departments of the Church Administration; and may constitute a bane rather than a boon to the church and Christianity.

May the church of the Lord boom continually, and be not doomed. The word of God says, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness in this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 6:11-13). The Church Administration truly needs to stand up firmly in spiritual strength, shying away from all appearances of evil.

What can one say about some churches that place out sign posts that announce their Sunday morning worship assembly hours, but in practice, they fail to keep to the announced time-frame, exceeding the assembly hours by two hours, or more. Being aware that Jesus Christ is in every assembly that gathers in his name to worship him and his Father, what does the Church Administration hope to achieve by ignoring the presence of God who is not an author of confusion, and breaking its own rules and covenants? Does God

glory covenant breakers? Would the church, after alienating God, still hope to impact marriages in Nigeria under the circumstance? Would the church still expect Christ -- the senior partner in church management, and the Church Government -- to be in a clearly mismanaged church service that may be falsely aiming to impact married families in that congregation?

Crucially, Church Government and Church Administration are the two institutional frameworks created by God to regulate the working of both the Christian church and the Christian marriages. Their functions and interrelationships are very important because the survival and wellbeing of mankind depend heavily on them. Therefore, they are expected to work seamlessly together – though the physical initiatives are preponderantly on the Church Administration which is the one of the partners that is driven by human passion, and instinctual limitations -- to impact marriage in such a way that will generate positive ripples that will ensure increase in marital uprightness and family values. The following are some of the circumstances in which the two institutions can work together to impact marriages:

- i. To impact a Christian marriage, the Church Government has already laid down marital rules that must be obeyed by married couples before their marriages can prosper. For example, one of the ten commandments of God received by Moses on Mount Sinai says: “Thou shall not commit adultery.” If a married man or married woman commits adultery, he or she will suffer the consequences

imposed by the Church Government on the infraction. The onus is therefore, on the Church Administration to guide their members away from living adulterous life, by organizing stringent pre-marital and post-marital counseling to teach them how to refrain themselves from adultery, in order to achieve marital fulfilment, fruitfulness, harmony, peace, and enhanced family values. That should be besides the normal exhortations from regular church services and assemblies, and routine pastoral advocacies, advisories, guidance, and encouragements.

- ii. The Church Administration has a duty to sensitize couples on the need for regularly praying together in their homes as husbands and wives to ward off evil, and attract God's favorable interventions in their marriages and family affairs, and this must be done through pliant, constant supplications to God. Let it be underscored that a marriage without constant diligent, prayers by the couple, in addition to pastoral covering benedictory prayers, may be neither a Christian marriage nor a marriage impacted by the Church Government and the Church Administration. This is because God created marriage, and couples need to consult him persistently with prayerful petitions on how they wish their marriages to fare. God will supply all that one needs in his or her marriage. According the word of God, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in

glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19). And God can do it beyond all expectations. The word of God also says: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” (Ephesians 3:20).

iii. When the Church Administration works hard enough to be in good state and good relationship with the Church Government, the church will enjoy strong presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. In that circumstance, it is the marriages represented by the families and individual members of the Church that will benefit from the overflowing joy that the Church will reap. According to the word of God: “Thou will show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalms 16:11).

iv. The main purpose of church assembly or gathering is to worship God. If the Church Administration turns the assembly into something else, the Church Government will be dissed, and the consequences will not be savory as God will forsake and desert the assembly. A church forsaken by God is one that cannot impact any Christian marriage, because spiritual impact is what counts. When the Holy Spirit is absent from a Church gathering, it is only the carcass of the church building that is left for the people to gape at. A similar situation happened in a battlefield at Aphek, when Prophet Eli dissed

the Church Government by desecrating the altar to please his children, and arrogantly ordering the Ark of God's Covenant to be taken to the battlefield in a major battle between the Israelites and the Philistines. Eli was treating the holy Ark as a talisman that he expected to turn around the fortunes of the battle in favor of Israel that was already in disfavor with God. God abandoned the Ark of the Covenant and the Philistines captured it and brutalized the Israelites in the battle, and Eli died as a result. (1Samuel 4). Many pastors and church leaders have the propensity of treating the Invincible God as their talisman, like magicians, who conjure their genies at will to do their biddings. This is absolutely wrong!

- v. A very strong command from the Church Government says thus: "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they both shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:5-6). If the Church Administration ignores this injunction that both the Old and the New Testaments have emphasized, sandwiches the command with some mundane rules, and declines to ordain a young couple for reason of some traditional and cultural excuses that have nothing to do with the word of God, such a decision may be difficult to justify before God. Furthermore, if the Church Administration locks up the national building of the church headquarters, shuts it down, prevents it from being used for the

worship of God on Sunday mornings, thereby alienating the Church Government, just because the church did not support some corrupt election efforts of a political party that later formed the incumbent government, does the Church hope it can still impact Christian marriages in the country? Very doubtful!

- vi. Obedience to the Church Government by the Church Administration is very important for the sustenance of the type of unity required in their relationship towards their impact upon the Christian marriages. There is a lesson here: when King Saul disobeyed God and kept some of the booties of a war that God had won for Israel, contrary to God's instructions to him to not keep any part of the loots, and he also lied to Prophet Samuel that he had taken the loots in order to use them for sacrifices to God, Samuel angrily upbraided him as follows: "Obedience is better than sacrifice." (1Samuel 15:22-23). From then on, Saul's relationship with God was never the same again, until he eventually died in dishonorable circumstances. The lesson here is that gratuitous disobedience to God's laws does not promote good relationship between the Church Administration and the Church Government, which is God. When their relationship is not good, their impact is non-existent.
- vii. However, when the relationship between the Church Government and the Church Administration is good, there will be spiritual rebirth

as much in the Christian church as in the Christian families, and Christian marriages. This will give rise to an overflowing presence of the spirit of revivalism in the church, that will impact in no small measure, not only the marriages within the church, but also all church members, and beyond.

- viii. In (Matthew 6:10), it is stated, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Part of the massive will of God for mankind is for the Christian church and the Christian marriage to function flawlessly together in their mutually impactful relationships, under the supervision of the Church Government and Church Administration. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a God-impacted church can stop at nothing in bringing the will of God down to the earth – executing with fervor and flavor the Great Commission of preaching the untainted and unadulterated salvation gospel of Jesus Christ; bringing holiness and righteousness back into the church, and in Christian homes; bringing back the Pentecost Day outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and signs and wonders. It happened at Azusa Street in the United States of America in 1906; reestablishing the Christian families as the true incubators for raising up Christ’s Calvary soldiers, just like the family of Mary and Joseph was reestablished to raise up Jesus Christ the Great Commander himself; and rebuilding the church to tower above all powers and principalities to recapture

its momentum as the true exit-gate into heaven that the gates of hell cannot prevail against.

- ix. Abraham is a tremendous spiritual inspiration to many, has been a great model in virtually all aspects of his life, and his family is a great example of how divinity and humanity can impact marriage. Abraham and Sarah his wife had been without a child throughout most of their life time together. But, in spite of the pressure on her, Sarah respected her husband, and was submissive and obedient to him, addressing him as: “My Lord.” (1Peter 3:6). Because of her vulnerability in barrenness, Sarah advised her husband to have a baby with her housemaid Hagar. Abraham did. But, after having the baby boy called Ismael, Hagar became unruly, nasty, headstrong, and insubordinate, trying to usurp Sarah her mistress’s position in the home, and causing domestic fracas. Sarah then advised Abraham to evict Hagar and her son because they could not be part of the family. But, when Abraham developed cold feet, God ordered him to obey his wife, and Abraham conceded even as he ached, pointing Hagar and Ismael her son to the door. God’s timely and impactful intervention saved the situation. That was a great impact from God upon Abraham’s family. So it is not a wishful talk to speak of the impact of Church Government and Church Administration upon marriage. It is realistic and practicable. God’s interest in every

Christian marriage is very palpable, and cannot, and should not be frittered away, even in Nigeria today.

4.9 Areas of Impact of Church Government and Church Administration on Marriage

Due to the recklessness with which most married couples in Nigeria ply their marriage, the otherwise respectable institution is being derided, disdained, disregarded, and trivialized. With an unflattering high divorce rate of 4,000 cases⁷³ in two months, in Abuja, Nigeria's capital city alone, and fast diminishing family values, the red light has been lit. According to *Blueprint*, a weekly online magazine: "From what we gathered, lies, poverty, and communication gaps among couples are major factors responsible for this act ... from our findings communication and poverty are the real monsters that are destroying marriages"⁷⁴ in Nigeria. However, with good and well-coordinated efforts on the part of Church Administration, in attracting the awesome power and favor of the Church Government to shower the desired blessings upon Christian marriages in Nigeria, the marriage institution will surely receive divine impact from above that will turn around the fortunes of the matrimonial union in the country. Some of the areas identified by Walcott⁷⁵ in which impact from Church Government and Church Administration will benefit marriage are as follow:

4.9.1 Impact on Love and Affection

Love can be said to be the anchor of marriage. Without love can no marriage survive for long. This is because God built marriage on love, the Lord himself being love personified. According to dictionary definition, “love is a feeling of strong or constant affection for a person that includes sexual desires: the strong affection felt by people who have a romantic relationship or, a person in love in a romantic way. It is also strong affection for another arising from kinship or personal ties, such as a mother’s maternal love for her child.”⁷⁶ On the other hand, affection is a feeling of liking and caring for someone or something. It is the expression of love from one person to another. Armed with love and affection, marriage partners are most likely to overcome temptations, implant their commitments into the marriage and make the marriage flourish. The impact of Church Government and Church Administration in this area of marriage is by helping to prepare couples with the word of God, to embrace their marital partners with sincere love and affection, and dedication that come out of a heart of contrition, that only the fear of God can engender.

In Nigeria, the rush for materialism seems to have stolen the hearts of many citizens away from respect for the lofty ideals and morals of wedlock. Many Nigerians tend to care less about sincere love and affection, transferring their devotion to tainted wealth and money instead. However, if the Church Administration re-orders its spiritual priorities, and focuses its attention fully on God, the Lord will shower his inspiration upon the church to do exploits in the

marital realm and beyond, and reset the glorious institution to function like the marriage of Abraham and Sarah.

4.9.2 Impact on Admiration and Respect

Marriage happens when a man and a woman meet, admire, and nurse some respect for each other. It is someone you admire and respect that you want to be and spend time with. In a society, and especially a city, where population explosion tends to reduce people to mere faceless numbers, and statistics, admiration and respect are bound to dwindle substantially in human relationships. People become more and more detached from human values as populations grow. In those circumstances, the impact the Church Government and Church Administration would have on potential marital partners, would be to employ the convicting words of God to drag people's hearts back, into inculcating human and humane values, and care, thereby rekindling genuine, and enduring inter-personal admiration and respect, not influenced by lust for money and wealth. When marriage is founded on sterling admiration and respect, the union is able to weather storms and trials in all seasons of life, and that is when marriage triumphs.

4.9.3 Impact on Companionship

One of the major reasons, if not the main reason God instituted marriage was to give Adam a companion in the Garden of Eden, when the Lord saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Nowadays, married partners are too much in

haste for self-aggrandizement, to cherish the beauty of companionship. When they awake in the morning, husbands and wives are only busy preparing for the day's work. They return home late in the evening already fatigued, and get involved in preparing food for the family, before slumping into bed. No time to warm up their companionship. How did Adam open the space for Serpent the tempter to steal in, and steal the heart of Eve away, and channel it into sin? The Church Government and the Church Administration must be engineered into preparing intended couples to understand the importance of managing their time wisely in order to save time and energy for their conjugal or companionship responsibilities. Marriage is like some precious seed planted in a garden, if it is not tended and pruned, it may never yield the much desired passion fruit.

4.9.4 Impact on Spirituality and Values

Another apt description of marriage is that it is a socio-spiritual institution, because it combines catering for man and woman in society, with caring for their spiritual wellbeing. It is difficult for a person without spiritual fortitude to have a sense of values; and without values, hardly can anybody achieve much in life, including in marriage. Maintenance of spirituality in marriage means turning to God the Creator of the institution for help right from the start, even before one finds someone to marry. Turning to God for help in a search for a husband or wife is a good beginning. Spirituality in marriage also means constantly praying together by husband and wife, living together in the fear and

presence of God, insisting on righteousness, shying away from evil and sinful living, and appreciating God in everything day-by-day. Moreover, maintaining values in marital life is good investment for now and posterity. It involves keeping away contemptible lifestyle, and choosing honorable living.

The Church Government and Church Administration have their responsibilities well cut out here as promotion of spirituality and godly values in marriage cannot be obtained elsewhere, outside their jurisdiction. The church must step in and draw its strength from the Church Government in heaven above to empower the marriage institution with spiritual outpouring, and godly values that are able to sanctify and strengthen every marriage in Nigeria.

4.9.5 Impact on Commitment

Commitment is another pillar that keeps marriage standing strong, come rain, come shine, like the Rock of Gibraltar. Commitment is an agreement or a pledge to do something in the future.⁷⁷ It is mutual commitment in marriage that extracts mutual support from parties, and makes the wedlock a lifelong, for better, for worse affair. It also encourages partners to invest their lives in the union, without any reservation for any option “B” in their lives. The idea of a man leaving father and mother, and cleaving to a wife to become one flesh, calls for absolute, unreserved, total, and final commitment that is able to convince partners in marriage to stake out their inputs into the marriage. This is especially so, because no one stakes his or her life in a doomed voyage

knowingly, on board a cranky ship, except on a suicide mission.

The responsibilities of the Church Government and Church Administration in this aspect of impacting marriage, include preparing potential couples to both show and honor their commitments in their matrimonial undertakings, no matter what it takes to do so. If the commitment invested in a marriage is not comparable to the commitment Christ implanted in his salvation ministry, whereby he laid his life to make salvation irreversible, then someone is paying lip-services to marriage, and that marriage is not Christian marriage. One needs to read Apostle Paul's lips about the requirement of laying down one's life for the sake of marriage, even as Christ laid down his life for the sake of the church. (Ephesians 5:25).

4.9.6 Impact on Ability to Deal with Crises and Stress

Marriages are potentially crises prone and stress prone, because they involve at least two people in each union, who go into matrimony with their various stakes and differences. Every entrant into marriage has his or her specific social, cultural, racial, educational, spiritual, religious, and professional differences. And for the marriage to work, spouses must learn to not only be aware of their differences, but to also be willing, able, and ready to reconcile those differences. The closer the gaps of the differences that exist between marriage partners are, the abler the partners would be together in dealing with crises and stresses. Conversely, the wider the gaps of the differences that exist between couples are, the more unable they would together be in dealing with crises and

stresses.

The church can use the resources of the infallible words of God to counsel young couples in areas of crises and stress management, advising them on how to be less panicky, and less emotional, but more resilient about things in life, in order to avoid being easily overwhelmed. Expert marriage therapists are trained to be able to prepare potential partners on appropriate self-comportment measures that will suit the needs of their new families. When the Church Government and Church Administration impact marriage, they impart values that would make crises and stress less tenable.

Ability to manage crises and stress is a skill every husband and or wife must develop, irrespective of social or educational background. The fact that there is a misunderstanding in a home does not justify a man beating up his wife, or a woman railing invectives at her husband. Misunderstanding a normal process of establishing understanding between married couples must be avoided, and must not be blown out of control.

When spouses make pointed efforts to reduce crises in their marriages, stress will reduce. Such simple, courteous words as “please,” “thank you,” “sorry,” and the like, can cool anger, and vanish crises and stress, like the word “hocus-pocus” vanishes magical items in the hands of a magician. Many people think that uttering those niceties is infra-dignity, and they would rather die than speak them out of their mouths. How mistaken, or misguided! How wrong they are!

4.9.7 Impact on Responsibility

If there are serious undertakings in which one is liable to being called upon to show responsibility, or account, marriage is one of them. Quite interestingly, marriage is as much of a leadership engagement, as it is a subordinate one. According to the Bible, the husband is placed at the position of headship over his wife (Ephesians 5:23), but at the same time, he must be so accountable to her that it is contestable as to who, really is the head in the wedlock. The good thing is that responsibility in marriage falls upon both parties, without which marriage could tank. Responsibility is a virtue that one does not need to be reminded to demonstrate in his or her matrimony, as it stares him or her in the face steadily like the stream of water in the river: and peremptory cessation of performance, could result in immediate crises, or stress. The mechanism of Church Government and Church Administration can impact marriage in the area of the exercise of responsibilities, when pastoral marriage counselors or therapists ensure conjugal couples are advised to uphold their covenantal responsibilities.

4.9.8 Impact on Compassion

Compassion is defined as sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.⁷⁸ Without compassion between couples, life in the family will be like one between cat and mouse, and that cannot be a good augury for a lifelong relationship. It will only amount to slow, and steady dying,

for the couple involved. Pastoral counselors should not fail in their responsibilities by omitting to warn subtly, but sternly, expected brides and grooms, of the inherent dangers in failing to show compassion at all times, as a human value.

4.9.9 Impact on Empathy and Sensitivity

The impact of Church Government and Church Administration is felt on marriage when empathy and sensitivity are held out as a flashlight in the home. Empathy is the action of showing understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another, of either the past or present without having the feeling, thought, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner.⁷⁹ In a modernizing society, such as most Nigerian cities and towns are, life appears to be bizarrely on the fast track, strenuous, and fairly competitive; and people are on a kind of rat race, struggling for survival, or so it seems. Empathy and sensitivity appear to be relegated to the background. Young people who grow up in that kind of a milieu tend to build survivalist instincts – foul or fair, it is game. And when they arrive in their marital homes, they have their guards well hoisted up like a sail on a marshal's boat. Selfishness takes the front row in most of their dealings, and empathy and sensitivity are far-fetched. That kind of marital set-up is doomed to fail except corrective measures are quickly taken. That is when the church can come to the rescue, whereby people are groomed

to gently recoil back into the shell of humanity, to show love, care and concern for others, and best of all, their spouses.

4.9.10 Impact on Honesty, Trust and Fidelity

Few vices kill marriages faster than paucity of honesty, trust, and fidelity between couples in a union. Honesty means adherence to the fact, fairness, and straightforwardness in conduct.⁸⁰ When a husband, or a wife is stingy with honesty in his or her wedded home, he or she must begin to pave an exit route out of the union with concrete, because his or her departure lounge is set. No one else will be blamed for the failure of the marriage, it was a premeditated action by him or her, and an anticipated end.

Also, trust must not be found lacking in the relationship between spouses, such a situation is like some sleeping volcanic magma, and may erupt at the slightest provocation. When two people live together without trust for one another, there is enormous suspicion between them. Trust is defined as, “assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something: one in which confidence is placed; dependence on something future or contingent: hope.”⁸¹

There is a saying that when you live in a glass house you must not throw stone. The sensitivity of marital relationship, for couples, can equate to living in a glass house. And lacking trust therein, to throwing stones. One day, the glass walls may crack or shatter.

No sane person sets his roof on fire, and goes in to sleep under it. A marriage

that is riddled with problems is, for the partners in it, worse than a worst nightmare. It is like a cancer in the bowel. It was better they had not ventured into the marriage, than having gone into it, they turned around to keep biting their fingers in nagging sorrows, and deep regrets for the rest of their lives. The useful impact of the Church Government and Church Administration on marriage is also in the ability to enlighten intended couples on the dignity, honor, and pride of being trustworthy in all circumstances.

A marriage that lacks fidelity is set for public mockery, and censure. Fidelity is defined as, “the quality of or state of being faithful, and (having) accuracy in details.”⁸² When a married man or married woman lacks fidelity in his or her spousal life, he or she earns opprobrium wherever he or she turns. A few people may sing praises of him or her physically in their personal contacts, but behind him or her, it is a story of shame. A person that is devoid of fidelity is like a house with faulty foundation. It can easily be pulled down by the mildest of winds, so also is a marriage that lacks fidelity.

When pastoral counseling succeeds in building a whole bunch of virtues, including honesty, trust, and fidelity, in new entrants in marriage, to produce more virtuous women like the biblical Ruth (Ruth 3:10-11), who was the only woman to receive the rare encomium, of being addressed as a virtuous woman, throughout the Old Testament days, and beyond, then the Church Government and Church Administration could not have impacted marriage more gallantly. Ruth was honesty, trust, and fidelity personified, thereby challenging modern

women in marriage to emulate her brand of godliness.

Honesty, trust, and fidelity, are some of the virtues that should not be found in short supplies in marriage, lest the marriage loses taste like sauce without salt.

4.9.11 Impact on Adaptability, Flexibility, and Tolerance

In talking about adaptability, flexibility, and tolerance in marriage, the story of Ruth must readily come to mind (Ruth 3:10-11). Ruth was a young Moabitess, married to one of the two sons of Elimelech and Naomi his wife, from Beth-lehem-judah. The couple and their two sons had sojourned in the land of Moab to escape famine in their own country. Then the father and his two sons died, and Naomi decided to return to her homeland. But her two daughters-in-law, Orpah, and Ruth tried to join her on the journey. Naomi urged them to stay back. However, Ruth pressed on, and won Naomi's heart when she insisted on going with her, saying that Naomi should not dissuade her from joining her, and that wherever Naomi went, she would go with her.

She also vowed that Naomi's people would be her own people, and Naomi's God, her God. On arrival at Beth-lehem-judah, the two women had no food to eat, so Naomi sent Ruth to a farmland owned by Boaz, Naomi's rich kinsman, where she garnered some left-over crops for Naomi. But, while on the farmland, with Boaz's workmen, Ruth comported herself with such great respect, mesmerizing dignity, faithfulness, and sense of purpose, that earned Boaz's admiration and intent to marry her, and actually did marry her (Ruth

3:11). He described Ruth as a virtuous woman. It was into Boaz and Ruth's lineage that Jesus Christ the Savior of the world was born.

The word adapt is defined as, "to make fit for use (as for a new use) often by modification."⁸³ Adaptability, therefore, means being able to be made fit for use. It is a quality of being flexible, and ready to assume a new life, a new role, a new environment, a new responsibility, and more. Adaptability as a form of character, is a great asset in wedlock, as it portrays one's willingness and readiness to slug it out, for better, for worse, in a marriage. If an individual is too cunning, too rigid, or too aloof to fit into a new life, which conjugality invariably is, and unable to adapt to his, or her marital life like Ruth was adaptable, then it could just be a mere pretense trying to get married.

Also, flexibility is essential to couples' ability to blend together. When God spoke about a man leaving father and mother to cleave to his wife, and both of them becoming one flesh, he was referring to marital flexibility, and accommodation. Flexibility means, "capable of being flexed: pliant; yielding to influence; tractable; characterized by a ready capability to adapt to new, different, or changing environment."⁸⁴ Flexibility therefore, means the quality or capability of being flexible, easy to bend, or ability to yield to pressure, or impetus. What is an individual with an inflexible attitude looking for in marriage? Such an individual is a misfit, and has no business in marriage, he or she will only add to stories of marital woes, and failures.

However, there is no reason for complete despair, as the Church Government

and Church Administration are able to put things right, if the church leadership in Nigeria could work relentlessly to put things right by applying tirelessly, and righteously, the holy words of God to put away the hearts of stone that inundate the entire landscape of marital homes in the country, and replace them with hearts of flesh. With God, nothing is impossible.

Furthermore, tolerance is indispensable in the marriage covenant. On its part, tolerance is understood to mean, “capacity to endure pain or hardship: endurance, fortitude, stamina, sympathy, or indulgence for beliefs or practices different from, or conflicting with one’s own; the act of allowing something: toleration.”⁸⁵ As an institution that combines social, and spiritual characteristics, marriage needs a lot of tolerance to survive and grow. Without tolerance a union will resemble a steamy bedrock of volcano, always popping, exploding, erupting with, and spewing the magma of human anger, conflicts, and antagonism. When husband and wife resort to name-calling and trading of abuses at each other, rather than exchange of kisses of love, and sharing of pleasantries, it is because there is a dearth of tolerance between them. Tolerance breeds peace, trust, acceptance, understanding, empathy, and respect in the family, and even within the larger community, society and the world at large.

The Church Government and Church Administration have a divine responsibility to always call in a gentle manner feuding couples to order, whenever there is reason to believe that all is not well between partners who are members of the local congregation, especially when church leadership has wind

of festering imbroglio in any family. When couples cannot tolerate one another at home, they may not be able to tolerate fellow church members within the congregation, and that could spell bad omens for the church.

4.9.12 Impact on Family and Children

The greatest impact Church Government and Church Administration can have on marriage, is debatably, on family values and children's up-bringing. In the area of family, during pre-marital, and post-marital counseling, which every church should insist on offering intended and younger couples, as a matter of principle that conforms to the event at the Garden of Eden during the creation, when God brought Adam and Eve together, the church should insist that couples show tolerance continuously to each other without being frugal with it. Couples should aim at maintaining happy and harmonious family at all times. Couples should be enlightened on the essence of family love, and respect; inducted on home keeping; encouraged on Christian family planning techniques; shown the goodness of family health and first aid procedures, family prayer altar, family cuisine, family education planning, family financial management; and many other family-related subjects that are capable of equipping new arrivals into matrimonial affairs with necessary know-how. This aspect is even more important given the fact that within the secular realm of human existence, little or no facilities are available for Christians to learn the morals of family management and marriage practices, the way God wants it to

be done.

Regarding children, young couples should be sensitized in areas of pre-natal and post-natal clinical procedures, pediatric care for infants, early education for babies, basic home hygiene for babies, dietary standards for babies, and a whole lot of therapy on caring for children to avoid the type of disaster the researcher once witnessed. A young woman in very advanced stage of her pregnancy contracted tetanus infection within the confines of her home, due to stark unhygienic practices, and unhealthy conditions within the home. The disease threatened to not only up-end the pregnancy, but also her own life.

The importance of good child care cannot be exhaustively examined, but suffice it to say that since children constitute the future of mankind on earth, great care should be given in the way they are brought up so that they can continue to sustain godliness, a just world, good human values, healthy environmental practices, inter-human love, world peace, international co-operation, and the list is inexhaustible. The word of God says, train a child in the way he or she should go, and when he or she is old, he or she will not depart from it (Proverbs 23:6).

4.9.13 Impact on Nigeria as a Nation

A culmination of all the impact points on all the various parts of marriage by Church Government and Church Administration, as analyzed above, and in the rest of the dissertation, will leave marriage better off, more rewarding, healthier, stronger, more productive, more respectable, and more sought-after.

The impact of the instrumentalities of the church on marriage is a game changer. In the short run, once an individual is exposed to the best practice options in practical marital life, he or she will show the tendency not to remain the same again; but will try to shy away from old, perilous, ways of life; and will embrace new, correct and rewarding ways. The responses during the interviews conducted for the study have shown encouraging willingness and readiness of the citizens interviewed, to turn a new page in marriage, and prospective fans of the covenantal institution have shown inclinations towards the positive sides of marriage. If the church follows up the early tendencies and keys into the ripples towards the right directions of the flows of faith in marriage, there will be new impulses in the ways marriages are practiced in Nigeria, especially amongst Christian elements.

That is the main aim of this study. When this happens, Nigeria will be better off in marital practices. The ugly scenes of men and women shadowing each other in immoral sexual deals in dark street corners at night, will begin to ease out, the number of children abused and left stranded from broken marriages will reduce, cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) will decline, cases of failed marriages will drop, and the tabloids will find for their daily reports, other sources for more honorable information than divorce courts where they have been scooping lecherous and salacious titbits. In the long run, the country will begin to experience unprecedented impact of the positive effects of the injection through pastoral marital counseling, and teaching by the church, of

Christian values into society, and marriage in particular, like never before experienced.

The surge and impact of positive social and behavioral values will percolate into governmental arenas as people become more ready and willing to obey the law, be more patriotic, become more industrious and productive, show greater willingness to undertake high sense of responsibility, become less materialistic in daily economic pursuits, choose goodness over evil in all circumstances, and more.

Over time, as people alter social attitudes, there will be considerable improvement in the health sector, as cases of contagious diseases, STDs, and other health hazards record improvements. At the end, it is the Church Government and Church Administration that will triumph over the force of darkness in the marriage sector in Nigeria.

4.10 Harmonization of Text and Data of the Study of Impact of Church Government and Administration on Marriage in Nigeria

The text of the dissertation is interesting, revealing and inspiring, and the research data are equally revealing and futuristic. First, the text reveals the deplorable and helpless situation of marriage in Nigeria, which is still on-going. The dissertation is aimed at ameliorating the situation by presenting a brand new, and effective beginning towards recreating correct attitudes and practices in marriage in Nigeria. Nigerians, and Nigerian Christians in particular, must learn to be fearful of God who created marriage in the first place, in the ways

they practice the conjugal institution. They must begin to obey laws, show self-contentment, and self-restraint in life, show dignity in their attitudes, and start doing things right, and treating their partners right, in manners that please God.

Secondly, greed and insatiability had led people into easy lifestyle whereby many exchanged their dignity and conscience for pittance and indignities. The study has shown new thinking among most of the people interviewed. With appropriate therapy, the new thinking should become more rewarding pursuit in marriage and homes. The leadership whether in religious, political, or traditional spheres, must step in, and step up their interventions to show the people the proper and respectable ways of living their lives to please God. Both the text and the data point to the same direction in efforts aimed at enlightening Nigerian citizens on the enormous benefits of successful marriages.

Thirdly, the study has revealed that the attitudes that have painted the Nigerian society in crimson with regard to marital failures, were perpetrated by some Christians and non-Christians, religious and irreligious elements, believers and unbelievers, and traditionalists, across the board. However, a preponderance of the respondents to the study questionnaire agree that the old, bastardized choices in marriage and other social behaviors that affect the home, are much less helpful than God's ways, hence the need for changes.

Fourthly, the study data showed that many people indulged in the reprehensible lifestyle out of ignorance. With awareness or enlightening programs put in place such as this dissertation is proposing, most people are willing to change

for the better, like a snake sheds its slough.

Fifthly, God is the Lord of repentance. As the church in Nigeria steps up its acts to redeem the marriage institution in the country from collapse, and lead people to embrace new ways in regrets and repentance, God is always available to receive back the “prodigal son,” and hope is not lost for the marriage institution in Nigeria.

Both the text and the data of the study are mutually inclusive, mutually conciliatory, mutually supportive, and mutually re-enforcing; thereby confirming the thesis that postulates that the impact of the Church Government and Church Administration on marriage in Nigeria is necessary for, and important to the development, growth, and prosperity of the socio-divine institution, marriage.

CHAPTER FIVE
IMPACT OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT AND
ADMINISTRATION ON SELECTED CHRISTIAN
MARRIAGES IN NIGERIA

The central focal point of this study is to examine the *Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*, the main aim being to uncover the fault-lines in the way Christian marriages are being practiced in the country,⁸⁶ which has caused lots of problems for the socio-spiritual institution, and the society; and to recommend solutions to them, mapping out a better way forward for the institution to flourish, along with the society.

Seven Christian marriages are selected across the country for the study, based on Osagie's idea of Marriage Pillars discussed in chapter one of the study, under Statement of Research Problems. The locations of the marriages under scrutiny, are selected widely to capture as much as possible, throughout the length and breadth of the country, data that will generate results that will reflect regional and denominational peculiarities, cultural differences and similarities, and experiential affinities.

The results will enable the researcher to reach conclusions that are tenable in both the validity and reliability of the study. As already indicated in the first chapter of the study, under the section on Research Methodology, the

methodology employed in the study is historical, and consists of primary and secondary data sources discussed under methodology. The selected marriages will be examined to determine their nearness to what a Christian marriage should be like, based on the twelve, though not exhaustive, pillars of marriage listed out and discussed herein above, and herein after. The closer the adaptability level of a marriage is to each item of the twelve pillars of marriage, the closer the marriage is to what a Christian marriage should be, and the closer the marriage is to being a model of Christian marriage that other marriages may look up to for inspiration.

Conversely, the farther away the adaptability level of a marriage is from each item of the twelve pillars of marriage, the farther away the marriage is from being a Christian marriage, and therefore the farther away the marriage is from being emulated as a model Christian marriage. The pillars of marriage serve as attitudinal markers in marriage relationships that determine the health of the relationship in a marriage.

Let it be noted outright that the marriage of Abraham and Sarah passed the litmus test, and was approved by God as he intervened regularly in the marriage, to guide it from derailing, as will be seen later. So, every other marriage that claims to be a Christian marriage cannot do otherwise, but take a cue from Abraham's model. Therefore, the stronger a marriage fares in regard to the marriage pillars, the stronger the marriage is as a Christian marriage, and the more evident it is that Church Government and

Administration has impacted it.

Otherwise, the weaker a marriage fares in regard to the pillars of marriage, the less evident it is that Church Government and Church Administration have impacted it, and the more the need for it to be impacted for positive changes. The pillars of marriage as outlined by Osagie constituted the basis for the selection of the seven sample marriages for analysis in the research work, as done in this chapter, and are discussed as follow:⁸⁷

5.1 The Pillars of Marriage

- i. **Empathy:** This is an attitudinal frame of mind in which an individual puts himself or herself in the place of his or her spouse, in the daily exchanges that occur between them. Empathy translates into sympathy and *vice versa* in marriage. A marriage that stands the test of time, is built on effort, mindset, knowledge, habit, and many other psychological frames of mind, channeled at placing oneself in the place of one's spouse as the recipient in everything one does. There is a lot to learn from Abraham's nomadic lifestyle, about the mutual empathy that burned like unquenchable candle between Abraham and Sarah his wife. They deeply trusted and mutually relied on each other, come rain come shine. They passed through a lot of life's challenges together: from the depressive life of childlessness to weathering the storms of famine; to fighting jealousy from enemies and detractors; to withstanding king

Abimelech's, and Egyptian Pharaoh's lustful attempts at abducting or commandeering at different times and in different places, Sarah from Abraham; to their hospitable lifestyle that won them God's friendship; to gently lying about their true family relationship to save Abraham's life from barbaric, powerful strangers; to safeguarding their family values from an opportunistic housemaid; to protecting their godly values, and whatnots. At the end of the trials, they stood firmly together before God, like Mount Kilimanjaro. Empathy is an important marital trait that Christian couples in Nigeria must cultivate to ensure the blossoming of their wedlock, like Abraham and Sarah did. Couples that substitute selfishness for empathy should think twice because selfishness wins nothing in the long run. It is selflessness that Christ brought with him into his salvation mission on earth. He selflessly offered himself as a sacrificial lamb for the salvation of others.

- ii. **Mindfulness:** The question is: what type of words, or action does an individual speak or perform to his or her partner from time to time? The words a person expresses, or an action a person performs to his or her spouse has a great deal of influence on his or her spouse. Therefore, being mindful of the words or deeds that one puts forward to one's partner goes a long way to setting up the feelings of marital partners as to whether they are loved or not. One has to ponder

carefully, every word or deed one issues to his or her partner in order to demonstrate openly that there is unfeigned mutual love, support, care, connection, respect, and more stakes, within a marriage that one can cherish and live for. Sarah's mindfulness in her marriage towards Abraham her husband could not be second-guessed, after she addressed him as "My lord," (I Peter 3:6) and Abraham responded in kind when he commended her beauty as follows, "I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon." (Genesis 12:11). Nigerian couples who boast of their marriages as being Christian marriages cannot overlook this golden example of mindfulness in marriage, bequeathed by the father and mother of "many nations," and of the faith.

- iii. **Humility:** Sometimes people think expressing humility means giving away one's power, or showing cowardice. Not at all! True humility does not mean becoming a door mat, it actually means putting aside arrogance and the belief that one's ways are always the best ways. It means being civil enough to recognize that other people also have equal entitlement as one has, to be alive, respected, and to share the existential space here on earth, as one does. In a marital home, it means that one's spouse has equal right as one does, to be loved, cherished, respected, valued, regarded, helped, and so on. Sarah's obedience to Abraham was a clear evidence of her humility when she called him, "My lord" (1Peter 3:6); while Abraham's unparalleled

humility is expressed in his obedience to God, when he left his father's homeland and travelled to Canaan, a new country that God had instructed him to go to. No one is humble until he or she can obey commands and instructions from other people. Without doubt, Abraham and Sarah were humble toward each other. The man did not feel humiliated when God asked him to listen to what Sarah his wife was telling him about a rebellious housemaid, Hagar and her son, Ishmael (Genesis 21:12). Humility is very important in marriage, if that marriage is meant for greatness. It is a common scene in Christian families today in Nigeria, where couples often angrily haggle over who should obey whom. Yet obedience forms part of the marriage oath couples undertake at the altar on the wedding day. Even here in Nigeria!

- iv. **Gratitude:** Is it virtuous to feel grateful for whatever one already has in life, or is it necessary to only focus on what one is lacking? Does one even feel grateful to God for leading one's spouse his or her way? Is it a Godly attitude to express gratitude, or a mere latitude to run platitudes about what one's partner offers; before one whines about what one's spouse is unable yet to provide? Attitude of gratitude in marriage is very endearing to God, and extracts more blessings from him. Abraham said: "And being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." (Romans 4:12). Couples

should put their gratitude above their platitudes in their relationship with one another. It is wise to be nice to one's spouse. Christ asked a Samaritan man whom he had healed: "Were there not ten of you I healed, where are the nine others?" (Luke 17:17). They all walked away in their ingratitude, and refused to return to show gratitude, and give thanks and glory to the Lord for their healing. Those beautiful words of gratitude expressed in a heart of humility, grounded in faith about God's unshakable faithfulness and undoubtable ability, will go a long way to introduce spell-bound wonders into a marriage. And, the words of adulation Sarah cooed to her husband was calming, and endearing enough to make Abraham love her even more. A person who cannot be grateful to God, will not be grateful to his or her spouse, and *vice-versa*. Christian couples in Nigeria must first learn to be fully persuaded in their marriages that God created marriage for goodness and not evil, and that any challenge they encounter in marriage is subject to God's overcoming power. Then, would they not overbear each other with behaviors of ingratitude, and idle words that are profanity-laden, vanity-filled, and only tear down their marriages. The simple, two-word expression: "Thank you" can open up hearts of stone, cut down bars of steel doors, and couples in Christian homes should not lack it in their mutual communication, if they expect miracles in their marriages.

- v. **Honesty:** Is an individual contributing honesty to his or her marriage relationship, or is he or she adding deception into the mix? Is a person showing his or her partner an authentic self, or is he or she closing off a true self, and presenting *façades* to his or her spouse? Many years ago, a friend of the researcher once told him, “Do you know that as I am talking to you right now, I cannot give account of where exactly my wife is? She left home since morning and did not inform me where she was going. It’s 4 p.m. now, and she’s not home.” The researcher tried to find out whether that was a regular incident in the family, and the man confirmed that it was. Sadly, several years later, the man died of HIV/AIDS, and the woman also passed away of undisclosed cause, leaving a lonely little daughter to struggle alone for survival. A marriage without honesty is like a house located on the path of a raging bush-fire. Sooner than later, it will not be there anymore. The marriage of our model couple, Abraham and Sarah, was not so. The two notable, and possibly the most outstanding incidents that occurred between Abraham and Sarah that could today be counted as misbehaviors, or wrongdoings, were the decisions they both took together in very challenging circumstances in their life as a couple. The two incidents -- though the first consisted of two instances -- were when Abraham in two different instances introduced Sarah as his sister instead of his wife, to save his life from

barbaric kings, Abimelech and Pharaoh; leading to the abduction or commandeering of Sarah by the kings because of her dashing beauty. In both instances, Abraham had already fore-warned his wife about his intended actions, and she was agreeable to them. The second incident was when Sarah, under the depressive burden of her barrenness, introduced her Egyptian housemaid to her husband to sleep with, and raise a child for the family. In both incidents they both were involved *ab initio*, so there was no back-dealing, or deception of the one by the other. And there was no other case of dishonesty involving either of them against God, or against each other. The marriage was based on honesty, no more, no less. Honesty builds marriage like nothing else can do. When a marriage is built on dishonesty, the couple live like cat and mouse in a home bereft of love, trust, and the spirit of God, and such a marriage cannot be called a Christian marriage. Living in cunning deception is self-destruction in slow motion.

- vi. **Integrity:** This pillar of marriage, integrity, is very crucial in the building of a successful marriage and does much more to ensure strong structures within a family set-up: including family values, godliness, trustworthiness, incorruptibility, transparency, and more. Integrity is also identified as commitment or honor. Integrity is defined by dictionary as: “Firm adherence to a code of especially

moral or artistic values; an unimpaired condition; the quality or state of being complete or undivided.” Did Abraham have integrity? Of course! He was called the friend of God. (James 2:23). When a man qualifies as friend of God, who can impugn the integrity of such a man? In the Nigerian society there is often a tendency to equate integrity to riches, some of which could be corrupt, or popularity that could be cheap. Integrity is a sterling virtue that speaks better, and louder than voice -- about an individual that has it -- behind his back. Integrity has no monetary worth, and if it exists in a marriage, like it did in Abraham’s marriage, the marriage of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, the marriage of Jochebed Moses’ mother, the marriage of Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, and the list goes on -- the marriage is made-in-heaven.

- vii. **Respect:** Respect and trust co-exist in marriage like a pair of shoes. It is not possible to have one without the other. When matrimonial partners trust each other in whatever they do behind each other’s back, because they share the same beliefs, values, and goals, they respect each other for who they are, and what they stand for. That is why shared faith in Christian marriage is important and encouraged in order to consolidate mutual trust and respect, as it was with Abraham and Sarah. Abraham and Sarah shared their beliefs, values, and goals, and that was why the woman appeared to be unperturbed, in all the

circumstances of their trials and vicissitudes of life. They both trusted God, and each other, knowing that they would overcome every challenge that came their way. That was why Abraham remarked that he was “being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform,” (Romans 4:12). And their respect for each other grew in leaps and bounds as they sailed through together, all their challenges one-by-one. The Church Administration should try as much as possible to encourage Christian partners in Nigeria to learn from Abraham and Sarah, hold strongly on to their respect for each other, and for God, as every challenge will give way to celebrations, with God on their side.

viii. **Christ-centered:** This is the most outstanding marriage pillar.

Christ-centered marriage is a perfect marriage. One of the anchors of a Christian marriage is the following Bible passage: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” (Ephesians 5:22-24). Also as a woman, it is wrong to respect your pastor more than you do your husband. It is sheer hypocrisy and chicanery to do so, because the word of God has enjoined that if a wife does submit herself to the Lord, she should do similarly to her

own husband. In the same note the scripture says, "Husband, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." (Ephesians 5:25-28). It is self-deception for a woman or man, to pretend before a pastor, that there is love in their marriage, when there is none; only to return to barbarism and brutality, the ugly standard of their marriage; as soon as the pastor departs. Such a scene is not what a Christian marriage should ever portray. No person should deceive himself or herself that the founder of both the Christian Church and the Christian Marriage does not care about how people treat one another in the two socio-spiritual institutions; where pretenses and hypocrisies cannot survive for long. When hypocrisy is introduced into a Christian marriage, even though the marriage is identified as being Christian in name, it is no more Christian than another marriage that is contrived by an idol-worshipping couple. It is not the name-tag that makes a marriage a Christian marriage, as the cloak does not make a monk. It is the hearts, attitudes, practices, faith, and beliefs that are within a marriage that make the marriage what it is called.

The righteous commitments, orientations, and godliness will speak louder about the Christian character of a marriage than a name-tag crafted in gold and diamond. How did the marriage of Abraham and Sarah reflect Christ, when Christ had not even been in the world during Abrahamic days? Jesus said, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” (John 8:58). Moreover, the scripture says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten son of the Father), full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14). The godliness of our model couple in this study, set out for emulation, is beyond guessing. The word of truth says, “And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness (Genesis 15:6) Also, “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (James 2:23). A Christ-centered marriage admits of no filthiness whatsoever, physically or spiritually, if the marriage must succeed.

- ix. **Communication:** The definition of communication by *Merriam Webster Dictionary* is that it is the act or process of using words, symbols, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information between people. It is a system of expressing one’s ideas, thoughts, feelings, and so on, to someone else. It is a message that is given from

someone to another, using different media such as the voice, letters, telephone calls, telex messages, WhatsApp and other electronic media, signs, or a system of symbols, and the like. Communication is an interactive process that facilitates social, physical, psychological, and spiritual relations, and exchanges between individuals. This study is concerned with communications between a man and a woman in marriage. There are several types of communication among which are: verbal communication, written communication, non-verbal body language, spiritual communication, communication with signs and symbols, sexual communication, and communication with body language. For communication to be successful it must involve at least two persons: one that sends a message, and another that receives it, and there must also be a feedback from the receiver. It is the feedback loop that completes a communication cycle, and confirms the success of the communication. Communication is very important in everyday-life situations of human beings, inclusive of marriage. Without efficient communication system, no human group, or social group can survive for long. Communication in marriage is the process of interaction and exchanges between husband and wife. Sometimes, it also extends to include interactions between parents and children within a family and in a home. The importance of communication in marriage cannot be overemphasized. It is as important for husband

and wife to be mindful of the need for constant communication between them, as it is for them to be about the contents of their communication. Bad, or nasty communication is as dangerous as, if not even more dangerous than no communication at all.⁸⁸ How did Abraham and Sarah utilize communication in their relationship to their benefits? In the sixteenth and twenty-first chapters of the book of Genesis, a serious marital crisis brews up in Abraham's household. It then snowballs and blows out into the open, threatening to rip apart the marriage between Abraham and Sarah, over the former's sexual relation with their housemaid Hagar. Although, the matter is a tripartite consensual arrangement as a means of raising an heir for Abraham and Sarah by Hagar, due to Sarah's barrenness, it became a snare, threatening to tear apart the marriage. As Diana Princess of Wales, now deceased, once described a similar tripartite scheme in her own marriage, "There were three of us in this marriage, so it became a bit crowded."⁸⁹ Sarah's marriage has become too crowded, but she refuses to panic, and lose her focus on God, the creator of marriage, as the marriage begins to fall apart, when Hagar becomes contemptuous of, and insubordinate to Sarah her mistress. Hagar's spite for her mistress stems from pride as she begins to assume airs, feeling that it is herself the mother of Abraham's first and only seed then, Ismael, and not Sarah her hitherto unfruitful mistress, who

should earn a pride of place in the family. Sarah is greatly outraged, and distressed by the unexpected development. But it is her cute communication skill that saves the situation. Sarah's initiatives prepare the way for an effective, speedy settlement of the problem. Sarah first accosts Abraham, demanding him to intervene in the potentially destructive family feud that has developed between her and her housemaid as a result of the birth of Ismael, Abraham's first son that fuels Hagar's haughty behavior in the home. In reply Abraham deftly empowers, and encourages his wife to deal as forthrightly with Hagar as Sarah pleases. But Sarah finally urges her husband to send away Hagar the bond woman with her son. Abraham tries to hesitate first, smarting with pains of losing a son. But God overrules him, upholds Sarah's position, and reveals that Ismael is not the seed of inheritance that God has promised Abraham. Therefore, both Hagar and Ismael are sent away for good, thereby making room not only for Abraham and Sarah's marriage to be saved, but also for God's covenant promise to Abraham to be finally realized in the birth of Isaac the seed of God's promise to Abraham. In analyzing the level-headedness with which Abraham and Sarah handled their major marital challenges, the following lessons may be drawn: (a) Whenever volatile and distressing marital issues pop up in a family like blazing volcanoes, they call for calm and not callous

reactions; use of mature and godly communication skills and not fights and riotous approaches, to quell them. In moments of extreme provocation in the home, partners need prayerful dispositions to hear when God issues his ultimate verdicts, and directs the best way forward. That was what Abraham and Sarah did and triumphed. (b) The deftness with which Abraham and Sarah handled communication in their marriage is a model for emulation. (c) There was clear readiness and willingness between Abraham and Sarah to communicate freely by talking, or listening to each other. This type of attitude is important and useful in marital communication. Reluctance and avoidance, especially out of pride, can easily jeopardize marriage, by alienating God. (d) Evidently, both Abraham and Sarah had taken in error, a decision they had thought was right for their family, but it turned around to haunt both of them. It is credit to them that they realized their mistake and quickly retraced their steps. Generally, couples will make mistakes being humans, but they need to quickly team up together and correct errors without resorting to blame games, commotion, and names calling, that can only worsen things for them. Both husband and wife demonstrated appreciable amounts of restraint, and respect for each other's views, positions, and interests; though God's counsel had to prevail. (e) Both Abraham and Sarah refused to allow a stranger and an intruder to capitalize

upon their desperation, come in-between them in their marriage, wreck their relationship with God, and destroy them. Any go-between in a marriage is nothing but an unwanted wedge, a piece of excess luggage, who must be given no space for sandwich. (f) The couple showed complete respect for the decisive role of God in their family's affairs. Every marriage is a covenant arrangement, and the only way to protect the covenant is to allow God into it. (g) Abraham and Sarah left no doubt about their love for each other, when, at the critical moment of the family palaver, they quickly closed ranks and took decisions that saved their family. They truly acquitted themselves as a loving couple, laying good examples for posterity to follow. (h) The keen interest of the Church Government and Church Administration in all types of communication that transpire between husbands and wives on daily basis, should not be made light. It is the recognition by marriage partners, of God's interest in their marriage, that gives strength to the marriage, and confirms it as a Christian marriage. Couples should always carry on in their marriages bearing in mind that there is always a third party, whose presence in the home can only be ignored to the peril of the union. This is the only third party that is admissible in the marriage, though he is never seen or touched physically. He is both invisible and invincible.

- x. **Praying together:** Christian couples do not need a big fanfare, or a groundbreaking grandstanding, or any sort of ritualistic displays and show-offs announcing their prayer life as Christians, as it is the manner of many; to develop a sound prayer life. Praying together by a couple is something that is expected to evolve almost effortlessly, and the more discretely it evolves the more effective the results of their prayers will be. In November 2000, this researcher and his wife were living in a very swampy area in Lagos, Nigeria. They always had a very rough deal leaving or returning to their home through muddy streets. One day they began to appeal to God in prayers concerning their ordeals, asking God to have constructed, the sludgy road that linked their house to the nearest motorway. They kept praying like twice per day. But there was a big obstacle to the answer to their prayers. Just by the exit into the motorway from the slushy street, there was a dirty palace of a local monarch. The king and his deputy did not want the road to be asphalted, even though it was marked as tarred on the Lagos city map. They were said to have been sabotaging the road construction both physically and spiritually with obstacles from the spirit world, to prevent fast moving cars plying the road at night, from flashing their headlights, and disturbing some creepy meetings of some dark, evil spiritual agents that were said to be taking place at night in the area. However, in less than two weeks

after the couple had started their prayers, the king, his deputy, and his driver, died in a car accident on their way to receive medical care in another city near Lagos. And less than a month after their death, the swampy road was asphalted, and a new lease of life was released into the area. Couples should learn to wake up in the middle of the night, and at early dawn of day to spiritually take control of their affairs of the day in prayer. Let it be known that a Christian marriage without family prayer altar, is a marriage without Christ in it. Yes! As earlier pointed out here in the study, there was once, on a battlefield at Aphek, an Ark of the Covenant of God, without God dwelling in it, and it was captured by idol-worshipping Philistines. God dissented the Ark. Again, let no mistake be made here, a non-praying marriage could be compared to an Ark abandoned by God. A family prayer altar is nothing in the form of a physical representation like a place, an object, or a building. It is the hearts of a couple that meet together in constant, passionate prayers to God in worship, glory, praises, petitions, thanksgivings, adulations, adoration, and what have you. When Abraham received the three angels of God that stopped by his tent in the soothing warmth of a beautiful afternoon, on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah, Sarah was by his side, obediently taking instructions from her husband, and together with him, they prayerfully served the living God. When the angels asked Abraham

where his wife was, he told them she was in his tent, and they issued a blessing upon her. (Genesis 18:9). How beautiful! This researcher has a Nigerian Christian friend whose wife, for whatever reason, for over forty years, has hardly been seen side-by-side with her husband, even in church assemblies. A helper suitable for a man is a woman who must be by the man's side, helping him in everything, including travelling in prayers, particularly. Most married Nigerian Christian career-women think their higher educational certificates, big positions, and fat salaries constitute a license to achieving their fundamental rights to liberation from obedience to their husbands, freedom from domestic chores, and relief from engaging in kitchen routines. On the other hand, most Nigerian Christian men think that every promotion they attain, title they acquire, and degree they bag, is a vantage height from which they can oppress someone, their wives being the ultimate victims of their highhandedness and ruthless tyranny. Yet, they claim their marriages are Christian marriages. But the scripture says thus: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart: And lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil." (Proverbs 3:5-7).

- xi. **Forgiving:** Forgiveness is one of the greatest traits in Christianity and godliness. Anyone who has an unforgiving heart, has no business

being in marriage, because the marriage will not last long. As humans, everyone is prone to mistakes, and therefore, very likely to offend others, most times unintentionally. So, what would the individual who has difficulties forgiving others do, if he or she is in marriage and gets routinely offended by his or her spouse every day? When asked by someone about how many times he needed to forgive another person who kept offending him before he could say enough is enough, seven times? Jesus replied “I say not seven times unto thee, Until seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18:22). The answer was not surprising because Christ is forgiveness personified. Christ’s salvation ministry is founded on forgiveness. The scripture says, while we were yet sinners, Christ forgave us, and died for us. (Romans 5:8). So, why would a person not forgive the spouse of his or her bosom, if Jesus forgave him or her even as a rotten sinner and stranger to the Lord? If one does not learn to let go offences, and forgive, his or her heart is already too loaded to have extra space for love and happiness. Marriage is made for forgivers. But, were Abraham and Sarah forgiving? Absolutely! He would not be called the friend of God if his heart was stony and unforgiving. After Abraham and Lot his nephew separated as a result of a conflict between their shepherds, Abraham’s heart of forgiveness was still going with Lot wherever he went. When God destroyed Sodom and

Gomorrah, God saved Lot for the sake of Abraham, whose heart was right with God. (Genesis 19:24-38). And when Lot together with his household was captured and taken away by invading armies, Abraham organized his home-trained warriors to attack the five-nation armies to set free Lot and his household. (Genesis 14:14-16). No other deeds can better reveal a forgiving heart. Similarly, Sarah his wife was also imbued with a forgiving heart because she had no guile against, and did not blackmail her husband. She loved, respected him, and called him, “My lord.” How many wives in Christian marriages in Nigeria are calling their husbands “My lord,” especially among the “educated class?” And, of course, how many Nigerian husbands give their wives the love that equates to Christ’s love, by surrendering their lives to them? There is no way a marriage can qualify as Christian marriage, until the pillars that prop it up are strong enough to emulate Abraham and Sarah’s.

- xii. **Love:** Love is as much the foundation of God’s forgiveness and salvation for mankind, as it is of marriage. Without love can no marriage endure for long. In a popular folk song, *Love and Marriage*,⁹⁰ the remarkable old-time crooner Frank Sinatra, described love and marriage as follows: “Love and marriage, love and marriage, go together like a horse and carriage. You can’t have one without the other.” A celebrity in his own generation, handsome Sinatra was

popular for crooning ballads that conjured up the enchanting tenderness of love.

5.2 The impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria

It has been observed earlier in this study that the performance of the marriage institution in Nigeria has left much to be desired. The purpose here, in this chapter of the study, therefore, is to survey the impact of Church Government and Administration on selected Christian marriages in Nigeria, with the aim of prescribing useful solutions to the problems that have bedeviled the Christian marriages in the country, forced them to falter, and be in jeopardy: recording high rates of divorce, destroying family values, and causing other types of social disorder, and domestic abuses.

Also, the study will map out the way forward for Christian marriages to fare better and bloom along with the society. Pursuant to this goal, seven Nigerian Christians, representing seven marriages, were encountered for oral interviews to find out their opinions with a number of questions aimed at extracting their contributions towards achieving holistic solutions to the problems.

The following are some of their contributions *vis-à-vis* the Christian marriages selected for analysis to determine the extent of their being impacted by the Church Government and the Church Administration, and to also

evaluate a better way forward, that will serve as a model method through which other Christian marriages in Nigeria can be impacted in rapid domino effects, for the betterment of the Nigerian society.

However, for reasons of legal conundrums, and discretionary measures, couples whose marital affairs or opinions are under consideration in the study will not be identified with their real names, except with their permission, although the narratives in each case study, are actual situations of the marriages under considerations, and are factual and real.

The following are the persons, representing the seven marriages, selected, interviewed, and analyzed for the study:

- i. Denis Nwaobasi is a 70-year-old former Nigerian diplomat, and former workplace colleague of the researcher, who is currently based in Dakar, Senegal. A Catholic by faith, married for over forty years to one wife, he had these to say⁹¹ in reply to a set of questions posed to him to extract some ideas on what he considered to be the reasons for the poor performance of the Christian marriages, as well as the high rates of divorce in Nigeria. He replied thus: “A number of things are responsible for marital instability and high divorce rates in Nigeria. First, is the problem of ‘cultural terrorism.’ Cultural terrorism arises from Nigerian youths who studied abroad and returned home with

strange cultural practices they had observed among white people in the west or in the east. On return home to Nigeria, they insist on imposing the strange moral and social values on the Nigerian society, sometimes forcefully and violently. Lacking respect, genuine love, empathy, and forgiving heart for their partners, many Nigerian girls coming home from abroad, had experienced materialism, high tastes, lavish lifestyles, and bold display of passion. When they get married, they insist on getting a life of luxury they had seen abroad, notwithstanding the fact that they may not get such a lifestyle in their parental homes. And when they cannot get it in their marriage, it is a big problem that most times end up in divorce. The young men return home to begin experimenting with immoral sexual escapades that cannot sustain marriage, much less Christian marriage; such as homosexuality, lesbianism, and pornography, to mention only a few.” Moreover, Mr. Nwaobasi added that, “A certain witchcraft conference did take place in South Africa in 1998 entitled: ‘The National Conference on Witchcraft Violence,’ and had a major agenda for its ‘Commission on Gender Equality, 1999’⁹² which was designed to weaken the marriage institution, and destroy family values. So, the problems in marriages and families worldwide, and in Nigeria, are results of spiritual manipulation.” Also, Mr.

Nwaobasi said that, “In some churches, some pastors, bishops, and elders, no longer preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, but are focusing on wealth and money as their ultimate messages, thereby shifting their attention away from impacting marriages in a meaningful way.” He further explained that in the southeastern region of Nigeria, marriage had become a gold-digging industry as shylock parents fixed bride price so outrageously high that average young suitors could no longer afford. He said that when a young man was even able to cough out the extraordinarily high bride price, the girl became like a slave sold into wedlock, and her spouse began to treat her with contempt instead of love, and derision instead of respect; thereby injecting instability rather than intimacy into marriage. In Nigeria, even pastors are not spared the trauma, and rigors of marital and divorce problems. A certain pastor has a history of having been married to two women consecutively, while still leading the Church that he had founded. An enigmatic and stylish cleric, the pastor went into full time ministry over four decades ago. He got married to his first wife, before he began his ministry. The union lasted for more than a decade before it ended. Soon after the end of the first marriage, he married again to another woman, and that union also ended in divorce shortly, with a lot of distraction for both the pastor and

members of his church. For Mr. Nwaobasi, the solution to all the problems marriage is going through in Nigeria, is for the church to reform itself, return from the compromised position it is currently occupying, and return to the route of righteousness, that God had marked out for it. He explained that the church could achieve reformation by summoning up all the clergies, and church leaders in Nigeria to a national church rebirth convention and prayers, in which correct *modus operandi* would be laid out for all churches in the country to adopt and operate by. The lessons for both married and unmarried Christians in Nigeria, from the perspectives of the marital experience in this narrative is that whatever one does in marriage, seeking God's direction and protection in one's life is very important, as a major aspect of Christianity. Allowing the Church Government and the Church Administration to play a role in one's marital life is a wise and indispensable decision. Asked about the importance of the marriage pillars as outlined by Osagie, consisting of gratitude, empathy, mindfulness, humility, honesty, integrity, respect, love, communication, prayers, forgiveness, Christ-centeredness in marriage; Nwaobasi confirmed his faith in them in his marriage.

- ii. Ambassador Akin Oyateru is a retired career diplomat. In his about seventy years of age, and marriage for almost forty years to

one wife, he is a Baptist Church member. He has this to say in reply to the questions put to him:⁹³ “To talk about the problems of marriage and divorce in Nigeria, one must first examine what marriage is, and what its roles are. One would then ask whether marriage is fulfilling its roles? If the answer is no, it then means that it has failed, and must immediately return to fulfilling the roles that God assigned to it.” He went on: “The sociologists identify marriage as the smallest social group with set functions it is out to perform within society, including the following: (a) Providing care for its members, a husband and a wife, in the areas of companionship, comfort, help, love, and more; (b) Serving as the incubator for the rearing of the children which are the seeds of the union, and the heritage of God (Psalm 27:3); (c) Serving as an agent of socialization for the child in the world; (d) Serving as an educational platform for formal and informal training of the child to make him or her useful to themselves and society; (e) The parents must serve as role models for the child to grow up into a morally rounded, and God-fearing individual; (f) Instilling into the child a sense of duty and responsibility to the benefit of the society; (g) Equipping the child with moral and ethical awareness, in line with the word of God, by teaching the child where to go so he or she would not depart from it when he or she

grows up.” (Proverbs 22:6). Going further, Ambassador Oyateru explained that one could not give what one had not, adding that a marriage that had nothing good to offer the world, could not give anything good. He also explained that to worsen the lots of the marriage institution, the on-going activities of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) communities around the world, had become the single most challenging force against marriage and family values in recent times, destroying the ethical and moral values for which the conjugal institution had ever been known. With regard to the role the church must play in rebuilding the marriage institution, the Ambassador expressed sadness that the church had been so compromised that its teachings and preaching had become less impactful as a moral force. “How can a pastor justify stealing, corruption, and embezzlement on the doctrinal basis of ‘Wealth Transfer,’ for example?” He queried. He further added that satanic attacks on marriages, and particularly Christian marriages in Nigeria, were reaching a crescendo. In practical terms, there is another pastor who got married in 1991 in Lagos, Nigeria and appeared to have the perfect marriage. At the beginning he and his wife served as role models to both the members of his church that he had founded, and the Nigerian Christian communities nation-wide. But the

marriage soon hit the rock to the disappointment of many. Personable, enigmatic, hedonistic and well-spoken, the man of God, whose internationalized outreach ministry boasts more than a dozen million in membership, deserves genuine sympathy. The wreckage of the pastor's marriage has taken enormous tolls on the functioning and growth of the work of God in his hands. A pastor's ministry that is used to being handled by husband and wife, when divorce comes in-between both of them, it is very likely that the ministry will stall. Although, in Abraham's era, human society was simple, modest, undeveloped, and sedentary, Abraham yet led a nomadic lifestyle. But, he never left Sarah his wife behind during any of his expeditions across the wide, wild expanse of the land he was used to touring; until angels of God asked him, on their way to Sodom and Gomorrah, "Where is your wife Sarah?" (Genesis 18:10). After he replied them: "There, in the tent," the angels seemed impressed enough by what they heard, that they issued a great blessing upon Sarah, that cleared away her life-long shame and burden of barrenness. It is evident that God was pleased with both Abraham and Sarah for being together at that crucial time of their life, hence he gave them the blessing. Let it be recalled that it was when Adam was away from Eve that the Serpent stole in to beguile the first woman on earth.

There is blessing from the Church Government upon a family when the wife is always beside her husband. The Church Administration has a duty to advise Christian couples on this fact; even though, sometimes the pressure of modern civilization does force some couples to stay apart. In that case, unceasing prayers are needed to guide and guard them both. Furthermore, the issue of accountability to God is very important, even more so in relationships. When God asked Cain: “Where is Abel your brother?” (Genesis 4:9-12). He failed to account for his responsibility, and instead resorted to sophistry by asking God whether he was his brother’s keeper. When God asked Adam: “Where are you, Adam?” (Genesis 3:9). He failed to make God proud of him by standing up with his wife to display God’s handiwork in their beings. Instead, Adam crouched into hiding fearfully, for his sin. But, not Abraham, he accounted for himself and his wife when it mattered most (Genesis 18:10). Members of the Church Administration in Nigeria are expected to be accountable not only for themselves, but also for their spouses, members of their families, and the flock under their watch. They are expected to confidently, prayerfully, and positively impact the Christian marriage and the family institutions in Nigeria, to the glory of God. Oyateru’s response about the applicability of the

marriage pillars illustrated in the study, to his marriage, was upbeat.

- iii. Sunmonu S. Olawale is a 35-year-old young man, a member of the Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM), in Abuja. He is an electricity technician, and married to one wife. In answer to some of the study questions, he has these to say:⁹⁴ “There is a lot of lack of understanding in Nigeria about what marriage involves. Many men and women see marriage as a chance to make quick money. Some women see marriage as an opportunity to escape poverty, while some men see it as a chance to build a fortune from wealthy parents-in-law, and when their false dreams fail to materialize, divorce is the next move.” He said that young men who aimed at getting prized brides, resorted to boasting about their riches in order to entice their targets, and when the brides came in and found no wealth that their suitors had boasted about, they quickly looked for exit doors out of the marriage, aiming at catching another opportunity where their dreams could be met. Mr. Olawale then advised that everyone should “cut his or her coat according to his or her size when going into wedlock.” He warned that to live in a conjugal union and still have an eye on opposite genders other than one’s spouse, in adulterous lust, was like playing a cheat-death-stunt, where one

would stand on a high, rickety, shaky stool with a hangman's noose strapped round one's neck. "It's a very dangerous game," Olawale concluded. Incidentally, a hitherto powerful pastor divorced his wife in a two-way infidelity citation as the reason for the action. A report quoted the man of God as having confessed to his own cheating on his wife, in which according to the report, the pastor acted on the ground that his wife had started it all. From the word of Jesus Christ, there is a relief for a person from a marital vow through an adulterous act by his or her spouse, but there appears to be no alibi for a tit-for-tat by an offended partner. In current times in Nigeria, the fear of failed marriages has become "the beginning of wisdom," for many a potential husband or potential wife who is being scared away from matrimonial ventures. Sometimes, people have asked why God did not cite Abraham for a sin of adultery, as he had committed fornication with Hagar his housemaid, and even had a son, Ismael, with her (Genesis 16:15). The entry in (II Timothy 2:15) about "... rightly dividing the word truth" is good enough to help out here. In (Romans 8:1) Paul stated that when there is no law, there is no condemnation. In Abrahamic era, there was no commandment of God that forbade adultery. It was in Mosaic era that the law of adultery came into existence. And the law could

not have been enforced retroactively to catch Abraham red-handed. So, there might have been no alibi from Abraham's "mistake" if it were done today. Christians should look up to Jesus Christ in whose dispensation they currently are, on this matter, and not to Abraham. This discussion has also been broached in chapter three, section 3.2 of the study. Asked about the relevance of the marriage pillars, discussed in the study, to his wedlock, he opined that though he could not claim perfection, he believed the pillars were indispensable to marital success.

- iv. Michael Mzughul is 37 years of age, a member of the Living Faith Worldwide Church, a member of security personnel, married to one wife. Responding to questions⁹⁵ posed to him about what he thought were the reasons why Christian marriages are suffering terrible set-backs, while divorce seems to have taken the front seat among Christian marriages in Nigeria, he waxed lyrical in his replies as follows: "If the foundation is destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3-5). Should not the righteous pray? One ponders. Then he explained that sadly, the Christian marriage foundation had been destroyed in Nigeria for some reasons: First, he asserted that there were too many cultural additives to the Christian marriage practices, bordering on idolatry, that had spiritually weakened Christian marriages in

Nigeria. He added that instead of bonding together in love, oneness, unity, empathy, respect, and obedience as God created marriage to be practiced, husbands and wives were currently at loggerheads, pointing accusing fingers at each other and buck-passing, in quest of who was responsible for the problems in the Christian families in the country. Furthermore, he explained that Nigerian Christians were taught only the theoretical aspects of marriage, and not the practical part of it, and so people did not know the right things to do at the right time. He lamented that the foundations of the problems of marriage in Nigeria were enshrined in the ignorance of Nigerians in regard to how correctly the Christian marriage should be practiced. He probably was referring to the early Christian missionaries, who had brought Christianity to Nigerians together with the Christian marriage system, which had already been adulterated with European culture before being handed over to the Nigerian Christian converts, without inducting them into the nitty-gritty of the Judo-Christian marriage system. Mr. Mzughul further explained that lack of contentment among Nigerian Christians had added some weighty straw upon the heavy loads on the horse's back, as lack of contentment was forcing many people into selfishness, impatience, greed, corrupt practices, crimes,

unhealthy and immoral practices even in marital homes; thereby jeopardizing marital honor and stability in the country. He felt applying marital pillars as behavioral guide in wedlock was apt.

- v. Almost predictably, in respect of what ignorance and lack of material contentment could wreak in marriage, the Christian marriage between Henderson and Iyabo fell victim to these vices and more. The marriage was solemnized in 1982 in Lagos, Nigeria. Barely two years after the wedding, the marriage was already stressed. The union hardly had a moment of bliss because the girl came out in her full character as soon as she and Henderson tied the matrimonial knots, and they moved out on official assignment abroad. She barely stopped short of wrecking her husband's career up-front, even before their return back to Nigeria. But, her ignorant, greedy, and unreasonable behaviors pushed him into harm's way, when he went around and contracted HIV/AIDS, and eventually died in 1997. Iyabo too did not fare any better, as she ended up equally badly. Although, the union claimed to be Christian, what were clearly lacking in the couple were the wisdom of God, and the necessary impact from both the Church Government and the Church Administration. First, both husband and wife did not appear to tuck the word of God under their bosoms. Secondly, there was

neither pre-marital counseling for the young couple, nor post-marital counseling to guide or guard their ways in their youthful, inexperienced marriage. Also, the ridiculous, negative role played by the girl's mother was very satanic and unhelpful for the young couple, as the mother literally pushed her daughter into the streets to solicit for the good things of life, instead of tending her young marriage. With a hindsight, one can say that the marriage under consideration here did not only lack the presence of the marriage pillars, it clearly was not a Christian marriage.

- vi. Mrs. Patricia O. Joseph is a member of The Redeemed Evangelical Mission (TREM), retired school principal, 82 years of age, and has been married for sixty years. She had a lot to offer.⁹⁶ A resident of Lagos, her husband is a retired surgeon. Her replies to the research questions were down-to-earth, thought-provoking, and inspiring. She stressed on the roles sex, love and fondness played in stabilizing and prolonging marriage, urging young Christian women to avoid trying to re-invent the wheels of godly practices in marriage, if they wanted their marriages to serve them lifelong. She said that it was morally wrong and even sinful for couples to deny each other sex, (1Corinthians 7:5), adding that a wife should not go to bed strapped up in undies, or allow pesky underwear stand on the way, anytime and anywhere,

between her and her husband. “Why should there be struggles between husband and wife over things that God meant to be “freely offered and freely received?” She asked rhetorically. She further advised that sex should never be used by partners as a weapon, a lure, or a trap against each other; emphasizing that any couple that indulged in weaponizing sex was doing so to the detriment of their marriage. In practical terms, Ike and Chioma were members of the Church of Christ. Ike was older by far. Therefore, he was within the leadership level in the church as his voice was often given some consideration in decision making. In 1992, they had already been married long enough to have seven children, and the first child, a son, was in his late teens, while the last, a girl, was just a bit stronger than a toddler. At that time the marriage was already in serious problems and the couple were either in separation or estrangement. But, Ike had a strange elderly woman he appeared to squander his attention upon -- instead of his wedded wife -- and was attending the church on Sunday mornings with her. She was not his family member and the pastor or elders appeared to overlook calling him to order, even when they had known of the situation in Ike’s family. In an obvious distraction, the church was persistently hammering on wine drinking and drunkenness, either in sermons

or off-pulpit talks, as major sins. One day, Ike stood up in the congregation to make an announcement as follows: “Good morning brethren, I want to formally inform the church that the mother of my children has passed away.” It was a shocking, blood-curdling announcement. A couple of days later, this researcher and his wife paid a condolence visit to Ike in his house, only to discover that the atmosphere in the home did not reflect an emotion suggestive of the death of the mother of the family, who had just left her very little children without motherly care. Instead, the widescreen television in the house was blasting away pop music, while the children were milling around the house unguided, and unguarded. Ike looked unruffled, and the strange woman who had replaced the dead, even when she was still alive, was comfortably lounging on a mildewed sofa at a corner of the house that was as terribly unkempt as the children were. Could not the church have done more to save a sister, a Christian marriage and a home under its supervision? Her take on the marriage pillars was that when couples were devoted to each other, they would have no time to be ticking off item-by-item, which pillar was upheld, and which was not; as she leaned back on her own marital experience.

vii. Sylvester Ozumba is 38 years of age, an Anglican Church

member, a medical doctor, who has been married for 5 years. In an oral telephone interview at Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria; July 30, 2023; he had this to say:⁹⁷ “Many Nigerians take marriage as a ‘quick-entry-quick-exit’ affair, putting their selfish quest for money in it, into the fray. If people can de-emphasize their mad-rush for money in marriage, and care more for the people they are entering into marriage with, the institution will fare better in the country for all to enjoy.” Did he believe observing the marital pillars were essential to marital success? He replied that he had never heard of pillars of marriage, but he knew that the fear of God was “one-pillar-wins-all.”

5.3 The Impact: *Vox Populi, vox Dei*

The study has analyzed eight churches in Nigeria to determine the extent to which the church can impact marriage to make the latter function properly to fulfil its roles. The impact of Church Government and Administration on Christian marriages in Nigeria is represented by what the Christian in Nigeria is doing with the marriage institution. The impact is also registered by what some well-meaning and important members of the Nigerian Christian clergy, and other members of the church leadership have to do and say about the Christian marriage institution in the country that has recorded high rates of divorce carnage, in their efforts to move the Christian marriage institution

forward. Most partners in divorce cases involving Christian couples usually list the reasons for divorce option to include infidelity, greed, external interferences especially from parents, who sometimes dictate specific types of partners for their children, as well as covetousness and lust as against love founded on piety, and lack of conjugal or sexual fulfilment. Failed marriages usually inflicted on both parties mental and emotional stress, and caused improper child upbringing, mutual distrust, domestic violence and child abuse, and problems of abandoned children. So, there is no doubt that the divine institution of marriage has been under pressure in the body of Christ, as a lot of Christian marriages have broken down irretrievably, while others are on the verge of collapsing. And, among the critical questions people tend to ask include: how the trend can be stemmed in order to achieve better family and social life? To provide answers to some of the questions that can offer useful impact on Christian marriages in Nigeria, the following are some comments from highly placed leaders of the eight churches selected for the study, whose positive postures on the matter are very useful. *Vox populi, vox Dei*, that is to say, “The voice of the people, is the voice of God.” Theirs may be voices in the wilderness, but, they constitute the voice of God, capable of serving to ignite the much needed reforms, holy revival, and impact of change on the Christian marriages in Nigeria. They include the following:⁹⁸

- i. Bishop Peter Ogunmuyiwa, Bishop of African Church, Abuja, had this to

say about the current dicey state of the marriage institution in Nigeria: “The church has a procedure which every intending couple must follow, which will help them to understand themselves as well as what marriage is all about, and this should motivate them to always do the right things when they get married. However, because of the establishment of all kinds of churches, most of the marriage procedures like marriage counseling, and knowing what the church says about marriage, are not properly followed, resulting in the collapse of many marriages. At a church wedding, a pastor of one of the Pentecostal churches advised the couple that marriage was ‘for better for best, and not for better for worse.’ Many ‘mushrooming’ churches teach only prosperity, and not how a couple can live a life of sacrifice. So, many of the things that break up marriages in Nigeria are social and economic pressures from the society, peer groups and family. The foundations of successful marriages are usually not properly laid, because men and women now marry for selfish reasons. You hear things like, ‘The girl is beautiful,’ ‘The man has money,’ and so on. And, when those worldly things that determined the marriage choices are no longer available, people resort to cheating and unfaithfulness as shortcuts to easy life, leading to divorce. The high rate of divorce among Christian couples is a serious problem, which needs to be properly looked into by the Church so that the marriage institution in Nigeria will not be totally destroyed.”

- ii. Right Reverend Dr. Humphrey Bamisebi Olumakaiye, Anglican Bishop of Lagos Diocese offered his contribution to the way forward: “Couples no longer follow the marriage manual. The Bible is the Guide Manual for every marriage but when couples refuse to follow it, then there will be problems in that marriage. The Bible states how a marriage should be practiced. Couples are given a copy of the Bible during wedding in the church. They should read it together and practice the guidelines and follow them religiously. That is the only secret to a successful marriage. On the reason for the high divorce rate in Nigeria, first is cultural problem. It is about couples trying to import bad cultural influences from abroad which in most cases, may not be acceptable to the other partner. This will cause bad blood and indifference, and if not properly managed, may cause tension in the marriage. Intending couples should learn to marry a person they are compatible with to avoid this kind of situation. Secondly, couples of these days are not submissive to one another due to modern civilization. The Bible advised couples to be submissive because this is the only way true love can grow between them. The jet-age mentality of equality and freedom has really affected our women, who are no longer submissive to their husbands thereby causing quarrels, fighting, and unfaithfulness. The third, is forgiveness, and without forgiveness no marriage can last. Forgiveness is the key to the success of every marriage. When this key ingredient is lacking in any marriage, such marriage will surely hit the

rock. The fourth is material greed. The Bible says when two people get married they become one body and soul. They have to be open to each other and share what they earn together, but if one is selfish, greedy, and materialistic, then such marriage will only survive through the special grace of God. We see cases now of women building houses and hiding them from their husbands, when the husbands find out, it becomes a serious problem. Couples should be open with each other. Let your spouse have access to your phones so that you can build that trust that will help the marriage to grow.”

- iii. Venerable Paul Whiskel, Vicar, Cathedral Church of St. Andrew (Anglican Communion), Warri Diocese; through a spokesman, Mr. Christian Chibuzor Chukwu; offered his advice: “Every marriage is an institution ordained by God. Lack of communication is a major factor that collapses marriages these days. Communication is a key factor when it comes to marriage. It is one of the pillars that hold marriages. Once communication is lacking in a marriage, problems will creep in. Sex is also a very important factor in a marriage. A lady was once asked why she was seeking to divorce her husband, she replied that most of the time her husband was not meeting up to expectations, adding that her husband would lead her to the point of her attaining orgasm, but the man would not be able to continue, leaving her unsatisfied.” The Church has a role to induct couples, during marriage counseling sessions on how to handle

each other in their marital matters.

- iv. Bishop Seun Adeoye, Founder, Sufficient Grace and Truth Ministry and Director of Publicity, World Bishops' Council (WBC) Africa counseled as follows: "Patience is a virtue that is critical to peace and tranquility in marital life. For a marriage to last very long, couples would need to endure. As a counselor, I also know that intolerance kills home very quickly. If anyone thinks there would not be storm in marriage, such a person is living in a fool's paradise. So, anyone who desires a perfect partner should seek that in the kingdom of angels. I have never at any time strongly believed in, or recommended church engaging in match-making. I rather encouraged individuals to seek God fervently when looking for husbands or wives. The danger of match-making is that if such marriages fail, the blame is shifted to church leaders. Those who desire good and harmonious matrimonial homes must be patient. The real solution to collapsed marriages is that couples must first realize that the institution of marriage is ordained by God. So, if they truly believe in God as Christians, they must do everything within their power to obey his instruction that 'whatsoever God has join together, no man should put asunder.'"
- v. Pastor Kayode Oladunjoye, of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Youth Province 4, Winner's Embassy, Oshogbo did not hold back his words of wisdom: "Overestimation and underestimation of wife and husband about each other's personality, character, upbringing, beliefs,

and motives before and after wedding also fuel incidents of collapsed marital homes. Marriages also break down today because of the overbearing influence of parents, families, and peers. Marriages that are contracted based on the lifestyles of the spouses in this generation are equally contributing factors of marriage collapse. The most potent panacea for the premature breakup of marriages is to ensure that the foundation of every marriage is solidly laid on Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone of every dominating family that had ever lived in the present time.”

vi. Reverend Fr. Emmanuel Obinna, (aka) Ebubemonso, Spiritual Director, Holy Ghost Adoration Ministry, Uke, Anambra State; blamed marriage collapse on women liberation advocacy, as increasing calls for, and approval of equality between women and men have spilled over into marital lives. According to him, women now equate themselves with their husbands against the biblical doctrine that advises women to be submissive to their husbands, and men to love their wives as well. He said the rising cases of collapsed marriages in Christian families were a common trend in the western world because people in such places had thrown the dictates of God to the wind and imbibed self-made laws that confer on them near-absolute freedom. This, he said, was partly the reason behind the laws approving homosexuality in such countries. He advised Nigerian church leaders to return to the basics of God’s laws on marriage.

vii. Pastor Akeem Idoniboye, Senior Pastor, Glorious Destiny Family Church,

Port Harcourt, added his voice: “People are no longer patient with their spouses. I don’t know of churches where matchmaking takes place because such practice is not scriptural. People should be allowed to make their own choices; it is not a decision anyone can make for another because there are responsibilities involved and spouses should be made to understand that. Marriage is not just about age; people should not just rush into marriage simply because they think they are of age. Couples preparing for marriage should also grow spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even financially. Just like Adam, in the first ever marriage, he was walking with God and with that consistency he grew into marriage. Conflicts come naturally in marriage but how you handle it is what matters. If there are issues, you have to handle it, and move ahead, that is where the maturity is displayed. People should not just run away at the slightest sign of a conflict.”

- viii. Professor Pat Utomi, renowned economist (married as a Christian for 35 Years) did not hesitate to share his experience: “There is no perfection in marriage because two strange fellows from different backgrounds come together to live; they must be ready to play the fool’s game if they want their marriage to last. Every person has a defect; couples must be ready to adapt to each other’s lifestyle and be ready to forgive at all times so that peace can reign in the marriage. Many marriages break up these days because couples harbor so much in their hearts and are not willing to let

go. This is dangerous because without forgiveness, no marriage can stand. On some major causes of divorce, first cultural differences; young couples in Nigeria want to practice the culture of the white race. One of the couple, either the man or the woman, wants the partner to do what the white or a different culture does, when he or she refuses, there will be tension in the marriage. The second one is the materialistic tendencies of some women; some women now marry for the material comfort, and not for true love. When the material comfort is not available, the women tend to want to move up to someone else, who can provide the needed comfort they so desire. The masculine egoism also comes in here. When the woman earns more money than the man, he feels threatened; he feels that his wife is richer than him. Such inferiority complex can gradually cause problem in a marriage if it is not properly handled. The third one is technology. Modern technology has led to social connect among people thereby distracting couples as they easily find love online, resulting in unfaithfulness and lack of trust. It is a serious issue that is fast-destroying marriages. Many marriages have broken up because a husband or wife finds his or her lover cheating on him or her through the social media. Cases of unfaithfulness are regularly discovered on their spouses' phones. For marriages to last the test of time, couples must be ready to forgive, no matter what the case may be. That is the only secret to a happy marriage life."

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONCEPT OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN NIGERIA

There is no doubt that there is a lot of confusion about the Christian marriage as it is understood and practiced in Nigeria. In practical terms, the confusion began, *ab initio*, from the point where Christianity was introduced to Africa, and Nigeria in particular, by some European explorers, traders, and missionaries. To start with, the Europeans themselves were not sure of the true identity and nature of the brand of marriage they themselves were practicing, neither were they certain about the brand they were transferring to Africans, who patronized them as new Christian converts. Consequently, some questions arise: Was the type of marriage the Europeans introduced to Africa, a European marriage system or Christian marriage system? Secondly, what did the Africans do with the “pig in a poke” that the invading Europeans introduced to the Africans in the name of Christian marriage? Did the Africans further mangle it up by adding their own traditional and cultural marital practices and values into the alien one? Is what emerged out of the cultural admixtures, that is neither Christian nor European nor African, what is being presented today as “Christian marriage” in Nigeria? Childs 1946 explains that the marriage system his European counterparts brought to Africa was a confused mixture of Jewish and European marital systems. Moreover, as if to further bastardize what the

Europeans brought, the Africans or Nigerians to be exact, further diluted it into a composite marriage system that is based on a combination of the Christian faith and some other faiths such as some strands of Islamic marriage practices, owing to the influence of Islam in Nigeria; and some traditional practices, arising from local worship and belief systems that fuse into a mosaic of cultural pallets upon which the Nigerian society sits, and within which Christianity is being practiced. A true Christian marriage, based on sincere love, holiness and selflessness, will bear the imprimatur of the Hebrew marriage practices that are found in both the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible, such as was created in the Garden of Eden, practiced by Abraham when he took Rebecca as wife for his son Isaac (Genesis 24:7- 59), or what is discerned from the marriage of Mary the mother of Jesus Christ, or the marriage of Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, or what was done in the marriage ceremony at Cana in Galilee where Christ was a guest (John 2:1-11), to mention a few. Those marriages were thoroughly monogamous, and heterosexual, to start with.

6.1 What is Christian Marriage?

As aforementioned in the introductory chapter of this research study, and also above, the brand of “Christian marriage” currently being practiced in Nigeria is not exactly the system that was brought into Nigeria by the European colonialists and traders, even though that itself was not Christian marriage, as can be surmised from Childs 1946. What they handed down to the

newly converted Nigerian Christians was a hybrid of Jewish and European marital systems configured together. For example, white bridal wedding dress is not Jewish -- as it is not mentioned in the Bible -- but a piece of European culture introduced and added into Christian marriage by European royalty.

Though Mary, Queen of Scots, wore a white wedding gown in 1559 when she married her first husband, Francis Dauphin of France, the tradition of a white wedding dress is commonly credited to Queen Victoria's choice to wear a white court dress at her wedding to Prince Albert in 1840.⁹⁹

Since then, white wedding gown has unwittingly become part and parcel of Christian marriage today in Europe, Africa and possibly all over the world, wherever Christianity reigns, and has been adopted even by many other religions.

Similarly, the introduction of the wedding rings into marriage ceremonies is said to be another European cultural infusion into Christian marriage as attested to by the following statement: "However, while the use of rings for marriages has no mention in the Bible, historians have said that it came from the ancient Egypt, Rome and Greece."¹⁰⁰ Again, "Some suggest that the Christian wedding ceremonies started to exchange wedding rings around the 9th century AD/CE. The tradition of exchanging wedding rings can be traced back to ancient Rome."¹⁰¹

It can be argued that what is not original, is fake, therefore, any marital system that does not conform to the Jewish marriage, and does not bear the

characteristics of what originated from the Garden of Eden, or from what existed in the Abrahamic era, or from the patriarchal era, or from the era of Christ through the Apostolic era, cannot attest to its originality as Christian marriage.

Today, in Nigeria, if a young bride wears a wedding dress of any color other than white to her wedding ceremony, and does not tuck away in her clenched fist, a golden wedding ring for her marriage ceremony, her church members are very likely to think that it is weird, satanic, or that she may be evil spirit-possessed. And, there is a great chance that the officiating priests may walk out of the church and decline ministering the conjugal vows. The wedding ring seems to have been elevated to a level of idolatry, or wealth worship.

What then can one say about wedding cakes? Neither did Abraham send a cake along with his servant as potential marriage gift when the old man sent his servant out on head-hunting for a wife for his son Isaac, nor is a marriage cake mentioned in the Bible. Today, in Nigeria's Christian wedding, if the couple cannot produce a wedding cake that competes in height with the tallest skyscraper in Hong Kong or Dubai, some of their invited guests may grumble about a "disgraceful wedding arrangement" that might have just failed to receive approval from "above in the Garden of Eden."

In his book, *Christian Marriage in Nigeria*, Childs 1946 was hard put to understand the rationale of his fellow European Christians when, on arriving on the African soil, they began to embark upon the holier- than-thou, hide-

and-seek, games that many a Christian leader of today is too quick to assume when dealing with new Christian converts. Childs 1946 lamented thus: “The first question therefore that must be approached is: What do we mean by Christian marriage? We must clearly distinguish between Christian marriage and European marriage, but too often they are confused. The revolutionizing of the whole conception of marriage was one of the first tasks which the Christian Church had to undertake, and that task is by no means finished yet in Europe. Our problems in Europe arise largely because we find those ideals so difficult to accomplish, so that we try to find easy ways of solving our difficulties. Much of what is commonly regarded as European in our marriage conceptions is not strictly European but largely derived from Christianity. In trying to produce the Christian home in Africa, we must not forget or ignore what we in Europe have learnt through our experience. We must not forget the history of the Church, our task is to transform the social conditions, and not least the home life of the people. To do this we dare not ask them to go back to the partial stages through which we ourselves went, any more than, in trying to secure the right social conditions, we ask them to travel the slow way by which slavery was gradually...”¹⁰²

Childs further remarks that most Christians in the southern part of Nigeria respect more, and uphold better, customary marriage than church marriage. Christians who seek church marriage would usually conduct customary marriage first before the church marriage. The church marriage is often

considered as the blessing of the marriage.¹⁰³

It is intriguing, however, to think of a marriage being blessed by God when the marriage is plied in such a way that borders on estrangement of God. Like divorce has been incorporated into European and western marriage which is still classified as Christian marriage, many reprehensible practices are being carried out in Nigeria, in the name of Christian marriage from which God's blessing is still expected.

A marriage that is festooned with jealousy, materialism, spiritual bankruptcy, competitiveness, unnecessary display of affluence, greed, carnality, ungodly pride, murderous instincts, and reckless show off of wanton obstinacy, cannot be called a Christian marriage. To do so is to obfuscate the very essence of Christian marriage, and to that extent, Christianity.

Right now in Nigeria, there is an obscene, and evil under-current development among potential young brides who vow to stop at nothing in ensuring their intended mothers-in-law are quickly eliminated to guaranty that their wedding cannot be derailed, stalled, or disrupted. Is that a part of Christian marriage still?

6.2 Effect of Christian Marriage on the Development of Christianity in Nigeria

The Christian marriage in Nigeria also has an impactful relationship with the church.¹⁰⁴ There is a symbiotic relationship between the Christian church and the Christian marriage in Nigeria. It is somewhat ironic that marriage that

was the first to begin in the Garden of Eden, at God's creation, and therefore, predated the establishment of the church that was physically established on earth at the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, did not enjoy that order of precedence in its arrival on the Nigerian soil. The Christian marriage arrived in Nigeria after the introduction of the Christian church into the country.

Once the Christian church was established by some European elements who came with ulterior motives, namely trading, colonialism, imperialism, and eventual slave trade, the Christian marriage system followed, though it was not very Christian in outlook, and practice. Danfulani Kore quotes Howard Hendricks, and is adopted by Longji Ayuba Dachal, as saying: "Marriage is not the product of human pervert. It is the product of a divine plan. God has specifications for the marriage relationship. To attempt to build a marriage without following that plan is to invite failure."¹⁰⁵

However, today, many people are interfering with God's intention and purpose of marriage in so many ways. He goes on further: "Until marriage is understood, especially by believers from the biblical perspectives, many marriages will not fulfill God's purpose and intention and will eventually experience breakdown. But, if the factors responsible for the rapid, and high rates of breakdown of marriages and their effects on the society are understood by couples, many marriages will be saved. It seems that most people in Nigeria see marriage as an emergency measure for curtailing

loneliness, satisfying sexual feelings, or reducing societal, cultural, economic and political pressures, and more. Marriages contracted on these faulty grounds, mostly result in series of breakdowns at the slightest glimpse of challenges.”¹⁰⁶ According to a Nigerian proverb, “The eyes and the nose are so close together as neighbors, so that when the one ‘sneezes’ the other ‘catches cold.’” In Nigeria, the Christian church and the Christian marriage institution are so closely related that they both impact each other in such a rare situation that cannot be seen between any other twin institutions. But, the discussion here is on the effect the marriage institution has on the Christian church in Nigeria.

The following are some of the areas in which the Christian marriage has effect on the church:

- i. The Christian marriage and the family are the main sources of the personnel that the church needs as members, staff, and leaders, to keep the church functional. If marriage and the family are too sickly and too weak to produce suitable hands for the church, there is a problem. When the Israelites, on their way out of Egypt, in the wilderness, failed to impress God in their unrighteousness, God caused that generation of unrighteous people to perish in the wilderness before the remnants could enter the promised land of Canaan. This underscores the uselessness of unrighteous people in the work of God.

- ii. The monogamous nature of one-man-one-woman in marriage is the will and purpose of God to maintain purity and holiness in the process of procreation amongst his people, the heritage of God, who would become citizens of the Kingdom, the Church, because God maintains that he is not the author of confusion (Corinthians 14:33), the type of confusion that reared its ugly head in the family of Abraham, when Hagar and Ishmael popped in on the scene. Like God removed Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's family for the family to forge ahead in righteousness, bad products of ungodly marriages and ungodly families will impact the church negatively.
- iii. When a Christian marriage is truly Christian in faith, practice, and character, the church is inspired by the products, or seeds of the marriage, to please God and extract greater impact on marriage, to the greater glory of God, and the benefits of the society.
- iv. Currently, there is a vicious cycle of relationship between the Christian marriage system, the family system, and the church institution in Nigeria. The church is supposed to receive divine inspiration, energy, spiritual strength, and force from the Church Government as impact from God, which should bring about spiritual revival in the church. The church should then impact the Christian marriage institution to make the latter fully equipped,

and fully functional to impact the family system, that should in turn produce suitable seeds to further energize the church to function properly and positively enough to realign its acts and relationship with the Church Government, the Lord Jesus Christ. However, in the present time, this cycle seems to be stalling as the Church Administration within the country appears to be compromised. It is therefore, the church that needs to wake up, and step up its acts to achieve rapid revival in order to stem the vicious elements in the whole cycle of relationships between God, church, marriage and family within the Christian faith in Nigeria.

6.3 The Model of Jewish-cum-Christian Marriage Approved by Jesus Christ

Jewish marriage¹⁰⁷ is not merely a secular legal partnership, but a union sanctified by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In biblical times, people were married in early youth, and marriages were usually contracted within the narrow circle of the clan and the family. It was undesirable to marry a woman from a foreign clan, lest she introduce foreign beliefs and practices. When King Solomon disobeyed God and married foreign women who served strange gods, they influenced him and stole his heart away from serving the living God. Consequently, Israel lost favor with God and suffered tremendously. Christ approved Abraham's marriage model (Mark 10:6-9, Matthew 19:4).

6.4 Negotiating a Match:

Marriage in ancient Jewish times was a negotiated match involving an agreement on conditions and payment of a bridal price. As a rule, the fathers arranged the match. The girl was consulted, but the “calling of the damsel and enquiring at her mouth” after the conclusion of all negotiations was merely a formality. In those days a father was more concerned about the marriage of his son than about the marriage of his daughter. No expense was involved in marrying off a daughter. The father received dowry for daughter whereas he had to give a dowry to the prospective father-in-law of his son when marrying him off.

The price paid by the father of the groom to the father of the bride was called *mohar*. (The term continues to be included in the text of the traditional *ketubah*, or Jewish wedding contract). In Genesis (Parashat, Vayishlah), Shechem [Dinah’s suitor] said to Dinah’s father and brothers: “Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much *mohar* and *mattam*, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.” (Genesis 34). *Mattam* was the Hebrew word for the gifts given by the groom to the bride in addition to the *mohar*. The *mohar* was not always paid in cash. Sometimes it was paid in kind, or in service.

The book of Genesis relates the story of the servant of Abraham, who, after his request for Rebecca [to marry Isaac] was granted, “brought forth jewels of

silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebecca, he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. “They thus gave *mattam* to the brother and mother. The Bible does not specify what was to be done with the *mohar* in case the marriage agreement was broken by either of the two parties. It can, however, be assumed that the Bible is silent on the issue of the *mohar* because God did not create the marriage agreement to be broken. It was meant to last a whole lifetime. Neither is covenant breaking in the nature of God, nor is divorce in the nature of marriage.

***Mohar* as Purchase and Gift**

The *mohar* was originally the purchase price of the bride, and it is therefore understandable why it was paid by the father of the groom to the father of the bride. In ancient days, marriage was not an agreement between two individuals, but between two families. The newly married man usually did not found a new home for himself, but occupied a nook in his father’s house. The family of the groom gained, and the family of the bride lost, a valuable member who helped with the household tasks. It was reasonable, therefore, that the father of the groom should pay the father of the bride the equivalent of her value as a useful member of the family.

Yet in the course of time the *mohar* lost its original meaning as a purchase price paid to the father for his daughter, and assumed the significance of a gift to the relatives of the bride. As far back as in early biblical times, it was customary for a good father to give the whole of the *mohar* or at least a large

part of it to his daughter. A father who appropriated the whole *mohar* for himself was considered unkind and harsh. The portion of the *mohar* which the bride received from her father, and the *mattan*, which the groom presented to her, were not the only possessions she brought to the matrimony. A rich father sometimes gave his daughter a field or other landed property, as well as female slaves. In the book of (Genesis 24:59-61) Rebecca was given some female servants by members of her family, on her departure from her family to Isaac her new husband, in her marital home in Abraham's house. Similarly, on entering his new possession at Kirjath-sepher in the land of Canaan, Caleb gave Achsah his daughter into wedlock, and a prized piece of land with springs of water (Joshua 15:16-19).

Betrothal and the Wedding

Until late in the middle ages, marriages consisted of two ceremonies that were marked by celebrations at two separate times, with an interval. First came the betrothal [*erusin*]; and later, the wedding [*nissuin*]. At the betrothal the woman was legally married, although, she still remained in her father's house. She could not belong to another man unless she was divorced from betrothed. The wedding meant only that the betrothed woman, accompanied by a colorful procession, was brought from her father's house to the house of her groom, and the legal tie with him was consummated. This division of the marriage into two separate events originated in very ancient times when marriage was purchased, both in its outward form and in its inner meaning.

Woman was not recognized as a person but was bought in marriage, like chattel. (Sadly though!) Marriage, as with any other purchase, consisted of two acts. First the price was paid and an agreement reached on the conditions of sale. Sometime later the purchaser took possession of the object. In marriage, the *mohar* was paid and a detailed agreement reached between the families of the bride and groom, who took actual possession of her. In those days the betrothal was the more important of these two events and maintained its importance as long as marriage was actually based upon a purchase. But as women assumed more importance as individuals, and marriage ceased to be a purchase, attaining moral significance, the actual wedding became more important than the betrothal.

A New Attitude Toward Women

During biblical times, even before the Babylonian exile, Jewish life evolved and changed in many ways, including attitude towards women. Over time, women came to be regarded as endowed with personalities just as were men. Even as far back as early biblical times, we find traces of a new moral attitude towards women. For instance, man was legally allowed to marry more than one wife, barring kings and princes, very few used this right. As a rule, the ordinary Jew lived in monogamous marriage.

However, as history progressed, monogamy has been observed predominantly by Askenazic Jews, following the ban on polygamy in about the tenth century by Rabbenu Gershom, Meor Ha-Golar (the Light of the Diaspora). In

Sephardic community polygamy has never been outlawed, and several sources relate that Christians in Muslim Spain were scandalized by the not infrequent cases of Jewish polygamy.

An Ancient Marriage Record

At the beginning of the 20th century, an actual Jewish marriage record during the period of the return from the Babylonian exile was discovered – the oldest marriage contract in Jewish history. The marriage did not take place in Palestine or among the Babylonian exiles in Babylon, but among the Jews in Elephantine and Aswan, at the southern border of Egypt.

The marriage contract of *Mibtachiah* [the bride] and *As-Hor* [the groom] began with a declaration of marriage by *As-Hor* to *Mibtachiah's* father. “I came to thy house for thee to give me thy daughter, *Mibtachiah*, to wife; she is my wife and I am her husband from this day and forever.” Following this declaration of betrothal, all terms of the marriage contract were written in detail. *As-Hor* paid *Mibtachiah*, the father, five shekels, Persian standards, as a *mohar* for his daughter.

Besides, *Mibtachiah* received a gift of 65 ½ shekels from *As-Hor*. From this we gather that the *mohar* that the father received for their daughter was then merely a nominal payment, the formality of an older custom. According to the marriage contract *Mibtachiah* had equal right with her husband. She had her own property which she could bequeath as she pleased, and she had the right to pronounce a sentence of divorce against *As-Hor*, even as he had the right

to pronounce it against her.

All she had to do was to appear before the court of the community and declare that she had developed an aversion to *As-Hor*. We do not know to what degree the equality of rights enjoyed by Jewish women of Elephantine was due to Jewish or to Persian-Babylonian law.

The *Ketubah*, or Marriage Contract

In many points of content and form, *Mibtachiah's* marriage contract resembles the version of the *ketubah* (wedding contract) still in vogue in modern Jewish life. In reference to marriage throughout the Bible, the *mohar* was paid and gifts presented, but a written contract was never mentioned. However, the book of Deuteronomy specifically states that if a man dislikes his wife, “he writes her a bill of divorcement and gives it in her hand” (Deuteronomy 24:3). But Jesus disowned that bill of divorcement when he said that Moses had approved it as punishment for the headstrongness of Israelites. Modern critics of the Bible have agreed that on the whole, the Deuteronomic law is a product of the century preceding the Babylonian exile. If written document was employed at that period in dissolving marriage, we have to assume that it was also employed in contracting marriage.

Original Model of Jewish-cum-Christian Marriages

Some Judo-Christian marriages have already been discussed in this study, including Abraham and Sarah's, Isaac and Rebecca's, Joseph and Mary Christ's mother's, Zacharias and Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist's,

Achsah Caleb's daughter's, Jochebed Moses' mother's, and Moses and Zipporah's marriages. Others include Esther's marriage to King Ahasuerus of Persia, Ruth's marriage to Boaz, Deborah the Prophetess and Lapidoth's marriage, Peter the apostle's marriage, and a host of other marriages. The marriages had the following attributes in common that conformed with the model of marriage established by God in the Garden of Eden, hence they were accepted:

The marriages were monogamous and heterosexual, based on a one-man-one-woman structure, and bore the following characteristics that conformed to God's design of marriage:

- i. They were in compliance with God's command, the husbands loved their wives and the wives respected and submitted to their husbands;
- ii. The marriages were contracted in obedience to the word of God;
- iii. The couples had God in their midst and relied on him;
- iv. At least one of the couple was a Jew through whom godliness had reins within the family;
- v. The couples worked, and walked together with God in their midst;
- vi. The marriage format and the spiritual content of it were what Jesus Christ would later approve, and fulfil at the cross, when he said among other things: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19:4-9).

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Summary

The title of the study is: *The Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigerian*. The study is motivated by the unconscionable amounts, and seriousness of problems that the marriage institution has been subjected to in Nigeria, forcing it to both underperform, and fail to live up to expectation. God created marriage to deliver goodness to humankind in the world.

However, in Nigeria, the contrary appears to be the case, as marriage has virtually become a sore toe to the Nigerian society, delivering various types of excruciating pains into the lives of numerous people who are into marriage.

Rather than bring harmonious companionship between husbands and wives, joy of living, social stability, peace in human existence, social prosperity, and what have you, marriage and even the Christian marriage, has generated so many pains in various marital homes, and the society at large that there have arisen urgent needs to try and stem the problems in marriage.

In Nigeria, marriage has brought with it not only the high rates of divorce, together with the pains of family disruptions associated with them; but also domestic violence and abuses, and spousal bashing; the evil of girl child marriage; problems of abandoned children, child abuse, and street kids; problems of the loss of family values; problems of same-sex marriage and

challenges of the LGBT; problems of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), such as bacterial vaginosis (BV), gonorrhea, herpes, hepatitis, genital ticks, HIV/AIDS; and thingamabobs.

Consequently, the need for the study became so greatly emphasized that it was embarked upon with the aim of finding solutions to the problems, in order to deliver the Christian population in Nigeria, and the Nigerian society, free from the stranglehold of marriage failures that could choke life out of the Christian faith in Nigeria. God forbid.

Part of the principal causes of matrimonial failures in Nigeria has been identified as the fundamental error that came *ab initio* with the introduction of the Christian marital institution into the Nigerian society by European explorers. It turned out that the marriage system the Europeans had handed over to the early Nigerian Christian converts along with the Christian faith, was not in reality, the Jewish marriage system created by God in the Garden of Eden, and adopted by Abraham in both his marriage to Sarah, and the marriage of his son Isaac to Rebecca.

Instead, the Europeans had delivered a pig in a poke, having already sandwiched into the purported Jewish matrimonial structure, some nuggets of European cultural influences by the time they introduced it into Nigeria. For example, divorce was not part of the original marriage plan in the Garden of Eden. But nowadays, divorce has plagued humanity worldwide, and become so in-your-face that even as the researcher was working on this part of the study

today, August 2, 2023, a news item suddenly popped up on his computer screen. The news was announcing one of the most celebrated divorce cases in the world right then: Mr. Justin Trudeau the Prime Minister of Canada, had just announced almost with gusto on his *Instagram* account, the divorce between him and his wife Sophie Gregoire Trudeau. According to his statement on CNN, “After many meaningful and difficult conversations, we have made the decision to separate.”¹⁰⁸ What a coincidence! An eerie sort of coincidence, to pop in just at the nick of time as one was tinkering with the subject of divorce!

On receipt of the new marriage system, Nigerians also introduced multiplicities of Nigerian cultural trappings into what is currently called the Christian marriage in Nigeria. The bastardization of the Christian marriage, coupled with the display of massive ignorance by many Nigerian couples about the working of the Christian matrimonial system, have conspired in no small measure to render the conjugal covenant almost unworkable in Nigeria.

Additionally, the Nigerian society is multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic, thereby causing a conglomeration of traditional infusion, cultural confusion and religious diffusion, too volatile for the Christian marriage to have a solid cultural pallet to snugly settle on, and prosper.

Hence the study is stepping in, to point to the right way forward. In the first chapter of the study, the Background of the study, Statement of Problem, Purpose of the Study, Significance of the Study, Scope of the Study, Methodology and Sources of Data, Conceptual Clarification, and the

Theoretical Framework are extensively analyzed to give credibility to the study. The second chapter examines literature review, origin of marriage, and discusses the various deviations and detractions from the original model of marriage, including its nemesis, divorce, that had never been in the Garden of Eden, but has come from behind to exert so much distraction, one would even think God had created it first, to be an anchor in marital arrangements. The third chapter discusses the biblical perspective of marriage in its pristine, innocent, spicy and zesty format. The fourth chapter examines the impact of Church Government and Church Administration on marriage, an impact that is absolutely inevitable if marriage must maintain its chastity. The fifth chapter is the crux of the study, and focuses on the impact of Church Government and Church Administration on selected Christian marriages in Nigeria. The chapter highlights how Nigerians and the Nigerian churches are grappling with such an important, and yet so misunderstood a socio-spiritual institution as marriage. The sixth chapter is fixated on the question: "What is a Christian marriage?" It unveils the fact that the Christian marriage as practiced in Nigeria is not the original Christian marriage, but a pseudo-Christian marriage diluted with slivers of European cultural impositions, and handed down to Nigerians, who also fiddled rather awkwardly with the contraption they had received from the Europeans. The presentation of the basic history, nature, practices, functions, and characteristics of the ancient Jewish marriage system in the sixth chapter of the study, is to enable many Nigerian Christians peer into the marriage

institution that has become such a mysterious nightmare that appears to be keeping them on their toes through their pilgrimage here on earth.

The seventh chapter of the study provides a summary of the Dissertation, draws up a useful conclusion on the outcome of the study, and itemizes some recommendations that will bring forth radical changes, leading to astounding awareness and progress in the ways and manners the Christian marriage will be practiced henceforth in Nigeria, when the recommendations are implemented.

7.2 Conclusion

The research study: *Impact of Church Government and Administration on Selected Christian Marriages in Nigeria*, is aimed at ameliorating the multifarious problems that are confronting the Christian marriage in Nigeria, and pointing the way forward for better understanding and better practice in Nigeria, of the marvelous institution that God created for the good and benefit of mankind. A lot went wrong with the Christian marriage handed down to Nigerian Christian converts at the point of introduction of the Christian faith by Europeans.

The Nigerians received a marriage system that had already been alienated from the faith itself through Europeanization. Ever since then, Nigerians have been grappling with how to practice the Christian marriage institution correctly, but have so far, failed to do so. This study is therefore out to point out some of the loopholes in the practice of the Christian marriage in Nigeria, and set the correct way forward.

Based on the results of the research case studies, the interviews conducted in the course of the study, and the close observation of some of the marriages selected for the study, it is very clear that there are dire needs for Christians to start practicing the Christian marriage correctly, in order to achieve better results than has hitherto been the case. Since doing the same thing in the same way over and over, has failed to bring different and better results in the Christian marriage in the country, it is time to apply different approaches both in Christian worships and practices, and in the Christian marriage system for better results, and greater beneficial impact.

The situation offers no alternative routes to pleasing God, the all-intelligent and awesome creator of the marriage covenant, other than rigidly observing the rules and divine precepts, and prescriptions as contained in the Holy Handbook, the Bible, which God has set out for observance. In this case, the church leadership, the Church Administration, will have to do something never done before in the country. They need to unite in an unselfish, prayerful and god-fearing manner; and in togetherness, guided by the untainted word of God, carefully set out some holy, righteous, correct, and invariable practices for all churches in Nigeria to adopt as common systems of worship of God. The church, and the Christian marriage practices in Nigeria, need to be reviewed and reset to align with the word of God. Any alternative way forward, will not only exacerbate the situation, but will be a way to perdition.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on the study results, the lamentable situations of the Christian marriage in Nigeria may seem desperate, but they are not entirely overwhelming if Christians can rise up to the challenges. The situations can still be redeemed because the Almighty God is a merciful and forgiving Lord. Consequently, some recommendations are set out herein-under as necessary steps and measures that need to be taken to recover the lost territories of godliness in the practice of Christianity, and the Christian marriage in Nigeria:

- i. Christianity in Nigerian is badly in need of reformation and revival. When the Church is spiritually strengthened, the Christian marriage in the country will be positively impacted for proper functionality;
- ii. The Church in Nigeria must rise up from slumber and step up its acts to revamp its relationship with God, to enable its positive impact to be felt in every Christian home, and within the country as a whole;
- iii. Given the evidentiary ignorance of spouses in practical marriage that often underlays most divorce cases, it is time the Church in Nigeria starts to enforce holistically, compulsory pre-marital counseling for every intended couple prior to their wedding, and post-marital counseling for partners in marriages that appear to show signs of distress, as soon as pastors observe such a development in their congregations;
- iv. Mishandled marriages constitute important areas of interest for God the

creator of the marriage institution. Because of the importance God places upon marriage as the incubator for the rearing of God's heritage, and the training of the citizenry of God's Kingdom, the Lord paid so close an attention, and so much care in the way he handled the matrimonial institution when he created Eve, and dutifully delivered her to Adam by himself (Genesis 2:22). Therefore, every pastor, after officiating a wedding ceremony, must hold himself bound to ensure, as much as possible, that the marriage turns out successful, by grooming the couple until they are fully grounded in their wedlock.

v. Every pastor has a binding duty, besides being fully trained in pastoral duties and responsibilities, to prayerfully study the Holy Bible cover-to-cover with full understanding before becoming a practicing pastor; by so doing he would be sufficiently grounded in the word of God to become a pillar of spiritual strength for his church members, especially in conjugal matters;

vi. Many aspects of cultural dilution and additives in Christian marriage may not be encouraged, especially when such cultural additives are contradictory to the Christian values such as bringing in accursed idol things. For example, when excessive and monstrous sums of money, and long and unaffordable lists of valuable items are given out to be procured for the purpose of a marriage, there should be questions about the needs for a boundary between modesty and excessive materialism, between moral human values and values for animals, and inanimate objects, beyond which God may not accept a marriage as Christian marriage; especially as Christian marriage is not so much

what it is called, as what God makes of it. There is also, a good reason why excessive bride-price or dowry could pass into the areas of idolatry, or monstrous greed which does not attract favorable response from God.

vii. To reap the full benefits of the Christian marriage, couples must familiarize themselves with the nitty-gritties of the blessed marriage institution, and willingly submit themselves to its dictates in practical terms, without leaving an iota of requirement in it unobserved.

viii. Every Christian, man or woman, is duty-bound to diligently study the Bible for personal development, and enlightenment; it is impossible to please God in marriage without knowing his word. (Hebrews 11:6). “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the word of God.” (Romans 10:17).

ix. Every Christian must understand that any marriage that has not been ordained at the altar by an anointed Christian priest is not a Christian marriage. Sometimes, new-convert-couples are welcomed into church without being asked whether their marriages had been sanctified by a Christian priest. That should not be, they should be asked. If their answer is in the negative, then the pastor should have them sanctified in prayers of forgiveness as husband and wife to invoke the spirit and power of God into the union. That little ceremony or ritual represents a reenactment of that moment when God created Eve and delivered her to Adam. The ceremony should be simple and done in the name of Christ. It should not be turned into a grandstanding display of idol-worshipping type of ceremony, or snowball into a money-making spin.

- x. All traditional and cultural rituals, totemic items, and symbols suggestive of any invocation of deities, or appeasement of ancient beings, should be exorcized from Christian wedding ceremonies in Nigeria. To admit such rituals is to alienate the marriage from God, and create into it permanent clashes between God and the gods, and that can never sit well within the marriage.
- xi. The church leadership in Nigeria should join together to make the success of Christian marriage in the country, an article of faith, based on biblical injunction, which every Christian must accede to.

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