

Sexual Indulgence and Christian SPIRITUALITY

GEORGE CHIZOBA OKPARA

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About the Book

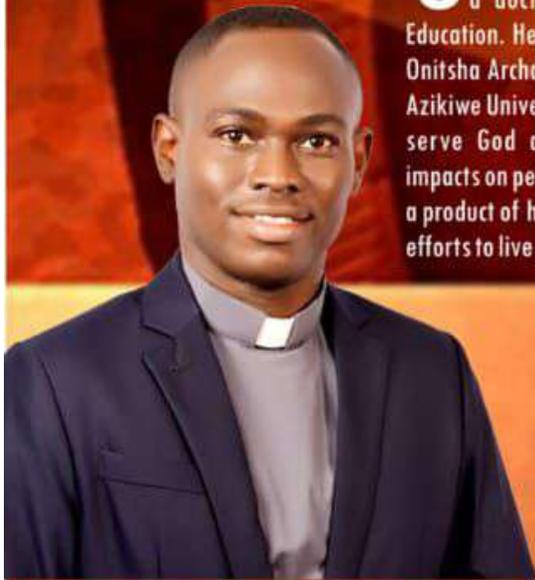
Sexual indulgence and Christian Spirituality is concerned with a vast array of issues such as premarital and extramarital relationships, conscience formation, biblical stance on sex and sexuality. It touches other issues affecting young people such as abortion, contraception, peer pressure etc. The implication of the above is that the management of sexuality and Christian spirituality to a great extent depends on obedience to the commandments of God. This is even more apt in the present-day challenges of sexuality which have been revolutionized with the aids of technological advancement. This book comes as a guide to the aspiration towards a fulfilled Christian Life. It is intended to widen the reader's knowledge in practical issues of sexuality and its relatedness to Christian spirituality.

About the Author

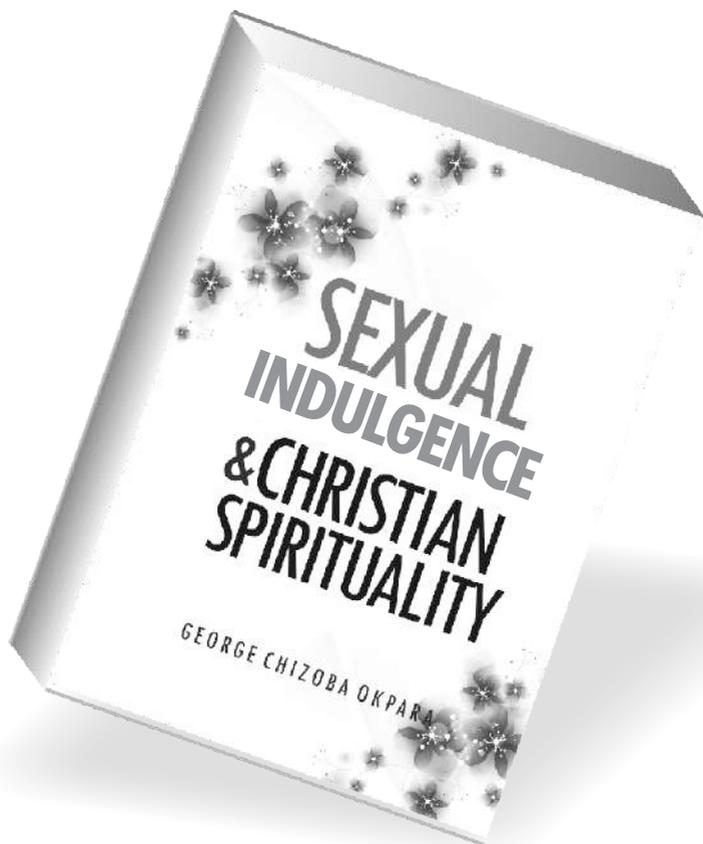
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Sexual Indulgence & Christian Spirituality



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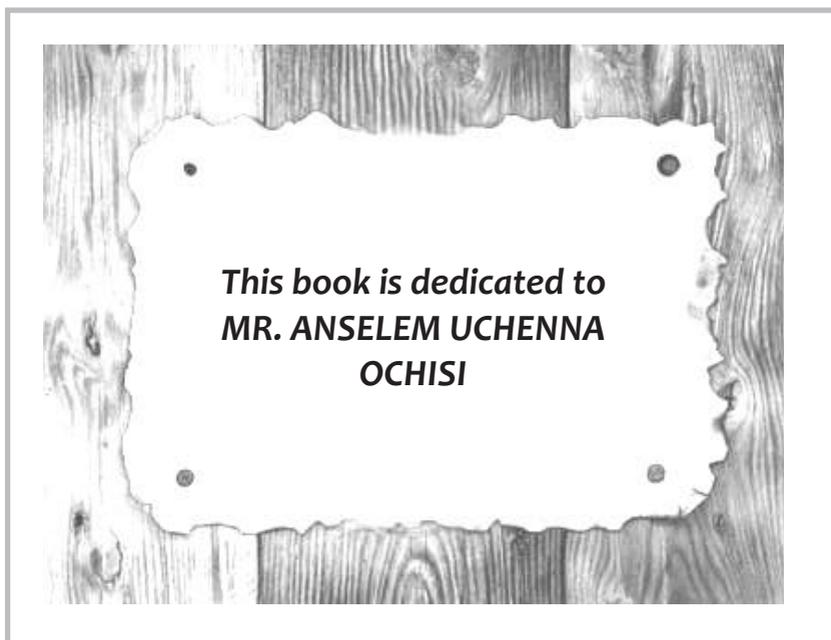
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George Chizoba Okpara

FOREWORD

This book *Sexual Indulgence and Christian Spirituality* is one of a kind and quite rich in content. It is a 9-chapter work, well researched by the author and relevant to the practical issues of sexuality and its attendant consequences in this modern time.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the world of today is facing a very serious sexual explosion which has overarched the human ambience, such that human beings have been reduced to becoming objects of sexual satisfaction and gratification. This fact is greatly reflected in the seemingly normal practice that “on the cover of some books are usually women without cover” all in the name of advertisement. Gay practice, which is not even tangential but contrary to nature's ordered sexual expression, has gained global acceptance. People now give unbridled and irrationalized expression to their sexual promptings and drives. Sex has become the window through which greater percentage of human beings now view relationships and assess human physiognomy. Sexual gratification is always within the field of a man's expectation in almost all the human endeavours either as a sign of gratitude, show of appreciation, show of love, source of income, relaxation, satisfaction for sexual urge etc. Thus, fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, prostitution, rape and other forms of sexual expression and indulgence are on the increase.

Man's proclivity and disposition towards sexual indulgence has greatly affected/militated against man's Christian spirituality. In

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fact, it has an antithetical effect on the spirituality of man, such that once a man is up on the ladder of sexual indulgence, his spirituality becomes downward bound. Man is created in the image and likeness of God, and his body, according to the scripture is the temple of God, and should therefore not be desecrated by indulging in immoral sexual acts, which are sins against our body. Such immoral sexual acts also lead to other sins and in some cases to more abominable sins like abortion, which all tend to widen the gap between us and God. Sins of the flesh cut off our spiritual moorings and subject man to the aesthetic level of existence where man slavishly follows his desires and feelings.

Fr. George, in this well researched work made it clear that man is a sexual being and is therefore not alien to sexual drives and feelings. Every normal human being must have sexual desires, drives and feelings because they are part of him, but the question here remains what does one do when such sexual desires, drives and feelings come upon him? Must one give expression to them? This is where the differentiating line lies. According to Fr. George, Man cannot be a slave to his passion, but can give rational expression to his sexual desires within the ambits allowed by our Christian faith such as the institution of marriage. Sexual drives and desires are not beyond the control of man. They are forces within man and are fully subject to the control of a disciplined soul. Thus, a rational man and spiritually active soul does not allow the flesh to control him, but decides when to allow the body give expression to sexual drives/desires in accordance to the dictates of our Christian spirituality.

Finally, I commend Rev Fr George Okpara for his great work and painstaking efforts in seeing to the production of this wonderful

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book. I recommend same not just to the young and unmarried, but also and more importantly to the married couple who are determined to lead a healthy marriage, because the social consequences of extramarital affairs destroy not just the family unit, but society at large.

Rev. Fr. Prof. Ofojebe, W.N.

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PREFACE

Sexual Indulgence and Christian Spirituality is concerned with a vast array of issues such as premarital and extramarital sexual relationships, conscience formation, youth and abortion, contraception, peer pressure, sexual immorality in relation to Christian spirituality among others. The implication of the above is that the management of our sexuality and living authentic Christian life to a great extent depend on obedience to the commandments of God regarding sexual relationships. This is even more apt in the face of challenges of sex and sexual behaviours which have been revolutionized with the aids of technological advancement. In the background, an attempt was made to cover the key aspects of human sexuality and its relatedness to the spiritual life of Christians.

This book which is a restructured version of the author's thesis in theological studies is written for several target audience including young and old, married and unmarried. It is equally valuable for Christians and non-Christians. The book is made up of nine chapters focusing on various aspects of sex and sexual relationship as regards human existence. It draws its principles from the biblical injunctions and the teachings of the church. It is envisaged that this book widens the reader's knowledge in human sexuality and aids in living a happy and fulfilled life based on principles of Christian spirituality.

George Chizoba Okpara

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*...the society is flooded
with sex and sexual
talks at the detriment
of morality and
godliness.*

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the craving for sex has taken unprecedented dimensions in the world. Diverse premarital and extramarital sexual adventures and exploitations have apparently become parts of daily life for some people in the society. It is indeed an anomaly which has impacted negatively on the people and has become the bane of modern society. It seems that to be human implies engaging in sexual exploits and voyages before marriage which tend to provide means for libidinous pulls.

Sex and sexual behaviours have been revolutionized with the aid of technological advancement. They are exhibited in several forms ranging from sexual advertisements and shows to nudity, erotic movies and pornographies including erotic literatures which are capable of inciting unhealthy sexual impulses. These have exposed the porosity and adaptability of human culture towards accepting, even undesirable elements in the society.

In recent times, sexual practices (including premarital and extramarital) in all their forms have become the order of the day and have assumed the way of life of the people. The streets and

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highways are littered with communication and information bordering on sex without resistance or objections. In fact, the society is flooded with sex and sexual talks at the detriment of morality and godliness. Sexual innuendoes and exuberances are effortlessly emphasized and displayed on screens. In various ways, the media including the social platforms and the internet have played essential parts in reflecting the sexual revolution occasioned by cultural transformation.

Sexual discourses and information constitute themes of the dailies and have got the attraction of showbiz and magazines. Sex has become marketable in various ways and has assumed a strong marketing tool for many businesses-movies, art works etc. It is saddening that many business owners believe that their goods and services may not attract the much needed attention or get a great part of the market share unless they incorporate the strategy of sexual appeal in order to gain popularity or become household brands. Most often than not, many advertising agencies tend to sexualize their services in an effort to maintain their leading positions in the world of advertisement. All of the above have enormous influence on the psyche of the people thereby inhibiting or interfering with the cultural, moral values as well as spirituality of the people in society.

Often, uninformed persons argue that it is impossible for young people to remain free from sex till marriage, even for married people to maintain chastity in their marriages. One therefore wonders the possibility of an individual living and maintaining good spiritual life in this sexually perverse society. Indeed, the sexual insanity and insatiability in the present society have motivated the writing of this book *Sexual Indulgence and Christian Spirituality* which is an expository work with focus on sex and

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sexuality as they affect the spirituality of people based on Christian principles. The book equally relates the formation of conscience which is central to human life, the biblical stance on sex and sexuality, as well as provides answers to many vital questions on the subject matter.

CHAPTER ONE

HUMAN
SEXUALITY

“

Sexuality plays a crucial role in the ability to answer our call to love, for it is sexuality which reveals both our incompleteness and our relatedness, and in our sexuality we find the biological, emotional and psychological grounding of our capacity to love

”

CHAPTER ONE



HUMAN SEXUALITY

Naturally, man is a sexual being. What this means is that man has the ability to, not only engage in sexual practices but also in reproduction, i.e. in producing young ones as instituted by God. In addition, man possesses the reproductive organs which are embedded in his body for specific purpose. Sexuality is simply the state of being sexual. It is one of the characteristics of man. It is encompassing in the sense that it connotes a host of human realities which are closely related. It could be used to refer to sexual orientation, gender roles in society, genital sexual activity and affective dimension of human life that either makes or mars loving relationships with oneself and others. It is a part of biological process as well as physical makeup of the human person. It spreads through every act of the human body. It fosters the externalization of love. Thus, Komonchak (2003) opines that,

Sexuality plays a crucial role in the ability to answer our call to love, for it is sexuality which reveals both our incompleteness and our relatedness, and in our sexuality we find the biological, emotional and psychological grounding of our capacity to love.

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This implies that sexuality is essential both to human existence and becoming human in fullness. It affects all aspects of human person in the unity of his body and soul. Sexuality cuts across physical, biological, social, spiritual, emotional and psychological dimensions of human person. It is not practical sex as perceived. However, sex is an integral component of sexuality.

Fundamentally, sexuality is an essential aspect of human existence and a component of personality. It helps in cementing bonds of communion, emotion and love. Moreover, it improves the human affectivity and capacity to love and procreate. Human sexuality which is the way people experience and express themselves sexually involves biological, erotic, physical, emotional, social or spiritual feelings and behaviours (Rathus et al., 1993). It does not only presuppose the biological sexual functions but it encompasses attitudes, values, customs and beliefs among other things which are constructed by people and society.

In respect to gender, individuals are structured differently according to the sexes. For instance, the sexuality of a woman is her whole being in entirety. In other words, the development of her body affects her personality profoundly. Variations in her biological processes affect her moods but when her physical sexuality harmonizes with it, it stirs the process of maturity into womanhood. Likewise in a man, sexuality has its unique features and manifestations. By and large, sexuality to an extent informs what we are, determines our actions and shapes our lives.

THE NECESSITIES OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

Essentially, human sexuality is useful to human existence but its importance cannot be overemphasized. The necessities are as

follows:

Emotional Necessity

Sexuality plays important roles in the ability of the human person to respond to the yearnings of love and communion. This is because it reveals the incompleteness and relatedness of the human persons- male and female. This entails that in every male, there is a deposit of progesterone (a female hormone) and in every female there is a deposit of testosterone which is the male hormone. Thus, psychologically, a female is attracted to a male because of the above biological explanation, and so is the male. Hence, a part of the male is in the female and a part of the female is in the male. This is why homosexual practice is considered totally unnatural. Besides, sexuality is God's unique means of uniting us with others through our need for love and embrace, as well as our social, intellectual, physical and emotional desires.

Engaging in sexual relationship is not only a typical part of being human but an expression of the natural desire of every human person to have desire to relate with the opposite sex. It was the initial desire of Adam and in fulfilling that need, God provided Eve. Adam experienced total completeness when he saw Eve; hence, he expressed it literary by saying,

*“At last, a bone of my bone and a flesh of my flesh”
(Gen. 2:23).*

This expression could not have been made in any illegal union of a man and a woman, or a man to a man or a woman to a woman.

Humanity is a creation of love. God made us with love and for love. Our sexuality endows us with the power to love not only

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ourselves but others also. Oftentimes, sexual expressions involve the externalization of love or outward expression of feeling. For instance, married people have the explicit rights to express their sexual desires towards their spouses. Again, marital relationship is an embodiment of love as intended by God. The desire for love is imbedded in the sexuality of human. However, the reverse is the case with single people- those who are not married. The unmarried people are not to engage or make sexual expressions because it is improper to do so and also for their inability, not just to cope with but also not being ready to handle or take up the responsibility that goes with such expression. Rather, their expression should centre on communication and discussions on personal development.

Digressing a little, the human body has five specialized cells that perform different functions. They include neuron cells, muscle cells, Sperm cells, red blood cells and leukocyte or white blood cells (Nnadozie, 2018). Specifically, focus is always on the third one which is sperm cells. Sperm cells are essential for human reproduction. Without it, human conception will not take place. It is a cell that ought not to be taken for granted or put into inappropriate use in whatsoever guise. At every point in time in our lives, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that we that are called as Christians have to express special kind of love. Even in marital life, it is expected that love between and among the married Christians should be an embodiment and reflection of God's kind of love as exemplified by Christ.

Unfortunately, the concept of sex has been misconstrued and indiscriminately practised as seen especially among single people who now engage in unwholesome sexual practices in negation of biblical and moral injunctions. Even married people are not

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exempted. Though, sex is an exclusive reserve of married people according to the Bible, some of them still indulges in extramarital sexual affairs which are abominable and condemnable before God and man. For this reason, both single and married people should exercise self-control in expressing their sexuality.

Speaking in a more liberal term, an intense desire to express oneself sexually as a single person is an indication of sexual activeness and should not, in the strongest sense, be activated because it is capable of consuming the young person spiritually, physically and otherwise .Again, such desires have great responsibilities as well as consequences in the life of the young person which could spell doom as it may result to unexpected pregnancy, contraction of deadly diseases and other associated consequences. It is advisable therefore for young people to get busy and channel the energy into productive and profitable ventures because sexual maturity and chastity till marriage is ideal and core to Christian spirituality.

Sexual relationship requires maturity and has spiritual connotation; maturity in all aspects of it- body, mind and soul. On the spiritual aspect, when two individuals engage in sexual relationship no doubt, there is spiritual exchange between the two. In other words, sexual relationship goes beyond the physical. Above all, getting married before engaging in sexual act is the best maturity one could ever have. Same goes for married people. Married people need maturity to live within the purviews of their marriages, maintain healthy sexual relationships with their spouses and have healthy family lives with spiritual stability.

Biological and Ontological Necessities

The biological and ontological necessities are the bases of procreation. They necessitate reproduction. They sustain the existence of human person. The two factors are the natural tendency imbedded in all creatures. They are indomitable forces in human beings that propel the desire to procreate. They are purposed to propagate mankind through reproduction. Therefore, sexuality manifested through sexual love derives its purpose of propagation of mankind through the reproduction of children. This is in tandem with the assertion of Peschke (1999) who posited that propagation of children is the innate and ultimate purpose of man's sexual faculty which aims at ensuring continuous existence of mankind.

This could only be possible through sexuality. In fact, the whole of mankind's sexual structure and inclinations are geared towards the realization of human existentiality. That is to say, every sexual act should be able to sustain, promote and protect life, not death and destruction. This is why only married couples have the divine approval to engage in it. Hence, it involves a lot of responsibilities-physical and spiritual. As young and single people, it is imperative to cultivate the virtue of self-control. As Peschke rightly pointed out, God's ultimate intention in providing humanity with the sexual faculties is the propagation of children, the urge for sexual union and the sexual organs will not have existed without the necessity of procreation. Therefore, we are able to preserve our being and our identity through procreation, which is made possible solely by the gift of human sexuality basically as Christians.

GENDER DIFFERENTIATION

Every individual is by nature a sexual being and from birth belongs to a particular gender- either male or female. Gender differentiates one individual from another. It determines the characteristics of human person on the basis of biological, psychological and spiritual properties which make the person either a man or a woman.

As individuals become members of either of the two sexes, the existence of individuals is determined by different orientations which are manifested in internal as well as external developments. Due to differences in sexuality, differences exist between a male and a female. The two are distinguished not only by their sexual organs and systems of glands, but also by their whole anatomic structures. Differences in gender are not only physiological but psychological and spiritual as well. Indeed, the sexual properties of the human person are not limited to the genital organs and their related parts. It encompasses the differences in their identity, strength and limitation. Each of the sexes also has and manifests its peculiar strengths and weaknesses differently. What makes up each of the sexes is what determines its roles and status in society. These differences are orchestrated by divine creativity such that each gender complements the other; but this purpose can only be realized in marital relationship.

The human sexuality is structured in such a way that a man and a woman are complementary partners for the expression of love and transmission of human life through the union of marital bond as willed by the Creator. Man and woman give themselves to each other in their masculinity and femininity. In their biological, social, spiritual, psychological and emotional differences, they manifest

their equality by fulfilling each other's desires through their natural differences. To put it in a more clear term, sex is biological, social, psychological, emotional and especially spiritual. One must be prepared in these areas before engaging in it.

MANAGING SEXUAL IMPULSES

Although the body including the genitals are designed to become aroused, but what we do with that arousal becomes our responsibility. For instance, appreciating the beauty of a woman is one thing and striving round to get a better look is another thing. We can learn to admire the eyes, the hairs, the smile, the strength of shoulders and arms, the curve of hips and legs, without lusting. That is what is called self –control. One of the ways to maintain self-control is mastering the five senses. Just as the male folk are aroused more by what they see, the female folk are aroused more by what they hear. It becomes necessary for one to mindfully control one's senses of sight, touch and hearing. Once this is achieved, managing the sexual impulses becomes a lot easier.

In addition, one must review and possibly limit one's frequent presence on certain websites, literatures and social media platforms that are suggestive of sexual provocation. The kind of music we listen and dance to should also be reviewed. The people we consider as friends must be people who would add value and contribute positively to our lives. Again, the places we visit especially during the weekends and free times may be contributing factors in sexual misconduct. Therefore, we need to mindfully review them. If we can honestly examine these factors, we will discover that most of them maybe the reasons for our lack of self-control and inability to practice abstinence. People do not change until they see the reason to change. Thus, we should not

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feed our weaknesses because they are capable of marring our spiritual progress as well as our lives as Christians.

Though sexuality is part of being human, it is important that as the beauty, sexual impulses, drives and their stimulations are enjoyed even as married people, they must apply caution to ensure that they do not lose self-control. Thus, while addressing the youth in an enlightenment programme, Campbell (1963) stressed that the biological intensification of sexual impulses at the time of puberty presents a new challenge to the youth and warned that the youth therefore must adapt themselves to and somehow come to accept his sexuality. There is no doubt that beauty abounds in everything especially in human nature. But while we appreciate the figurative nature of feminine beauty, we should not fall headlong into uncontrolled passion which may possibly lead to arousal and wetness of sexual appetites.

Controlling every part of one's sexual life and sexuality must be an utmost responsibility of every individual. This can be achieved through the power of the human mind. This is where we are uniquely different from animals. But once the mind or the intellect loses the stronghold of power of control, the implication is degeneration to animal tendencies. As man degenerates to animals, his actions become determined by instinct. The result is that his nature and gifts become subject or prone to all forms of abuse. The example of the amorous man is evident among us. The sexual act is a human good. But this human good could be made to look bad or ugly if not properly managed. The onus lies on us to ask this question: Where do we locate the good, and where do we locate the bad especially among the unmarried people?

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUALITY

Scripturally, there are several stories on sexuality. First, the book of Genesis Chapters 1 and 2 explain the biological importance of sex and the reasons for the two genders. God recognized that it was not good that the man should be alone (Gen. 2:18). Then, He set out and found Adam a companion. Though the Bible writes extensively about sex, but it refers it to only the married people. It discusses it within the context of the union of husband and wife. Referring to the injunction given to Eve, "... your desire shall be for your husband" (Gen. 3:16). This means that whatever you desire sexually must be for your spouse. There must be no room for extramarital relationship with anyone else. This is because God approves sexual relationship only within the institution of marriage for the pleasure of the spouses and for procreation which is the end product.

The Bible (Genesis 26:8 and Genesis 18:12) highlights the kind of relationship that often occurs between spouses. But if it is done outside the marital sphere, it becomes disastrous and has both physical and spiritual implications. For instance, when Sarah requested her husband Abraham to have sexual intercourse with Hagar her maid, the end of it was an unforgettable ugly experience for Sarah and Hagar (Gen 39:7). Same was the case with Rachel who urged Jacob to be with her maid Bilhah so that she could have children through her and build a family (Gen. 30:3). These are the experiences of many married women. In trying to overcome a particular problem, they end up creating more problems for themselves. As a married person, your sexual decisions should not include third party no matter the situation or challenge. It should be only and only between the spouses unless it becomes necessary to include third party on health or spiritual grounds. In the case of Potiphar's wife, she channeled her sexual

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urges wrongly (Gen. 39:7). Fortunately, Joseph was a godly young man and he fled from the appearance of evil.

In today's world, many young men would have embraced the idea as an opportunity to climb the social ladder and enjoy a seemingly better life but have regrettable ends. The scripture enlisted numerous warnings about the potential destructive uses of sexuality. There are references to rape (Gen.34:1-4), gang rape (Gen.19:4-8), incest ((Gen. 19:31-39), and prostitution (Gen. 38:15-17). The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Onan who spilt his semen in order not to impregnate his brother's wife are equally some of the examples of the destructive uses of sexuality. Leviticus says that “you shall not lie with a male as one with a woman, it is an abomination” (Lev.18:22). This is an admonition against homosexuality or gay practice. Unfortunately, it has even gained global recognition and legalization. According to the scripture, the following are punishable by death:

- *Sex with the wife of a neighbour (Lev. 20:10),*
- *Sex with the wife of one's father (Lev.20:11),*
- *Sex with one's daughter-in-law (Lev. 20:12), or*
- *Sex with an animal (Lev. 20:15-16).*

In the New Testament, 1Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1Timothy 1:10, the Bible equates fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites with other sinners such as the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers (1 Cor.6:9-10). The most overtly romantic/sexually inclined book of the Bible are the Canticles or Songs of Solomon. It is important to note that the scripture does not condemn the good aspects of sexuality. Rather, it urges that it should be exercised within the ambience of true Christianity and spirituality that is deeply rooted in Christ. Thus, Paul recognized that adults experience sexual desires. He felt that

people had the ability to make good decisions about their sexual feelings, and that sexual feelings are not uncontrollable, and that they should be acknowledged and acted upon only in the right direction (1 Cor.7:36-8).

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Sexual immorality is seen as sexual relations that are contrary to or that which violates accepted moral principles. It could occur in many forms- premarital or extramarital. Premarital sex which is prevalent among growing people is closely knitted with sexual immorality. Though, there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible that precisely refers to sex before marriage. Scripture in general offers numerous specific condemnations of deviations from the norm of loving and life-giving marital expressions of sexuality.

The Bible undeniably condemns adultery and sexual immorality, but is sex before marriage considered sexually immoral? According to 1 Corinthians 7:2, “yes” is the clear answer: “But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.” In this verse, Paul appears to suggest that marriage is the “cure” for sexual immorality.

The above scripture is essentially insinuating that if people cannot control themselves such that they are having sexual relationship outside of marriage, they should get married so that they can fulfill their passions in a moral way. Since 1 Corinthians 7:2 clearly classifies sex before marriage as sexual immorality, all other Bible verses that condemn sexual immorality as being sinful also condemn sex before marriage. There are numerous Scriptures that declare sex before marriage sinful (Acts 15:20; 1

Corinthians 5:1; 6:13, 18; 10:8; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Jude 7). The Bible promotes complete abstinence before marriage. This should be the lifestyle of a true Christian. Sexual relationship between a husband and his wife is the only form of sexual relations which God approves according to the Bible (Hebrews13:4).

ABSTAINING FROM SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS UNTIL MARRIAGE

Is it possible for one to totally abstain from sex before marriage? The answer is yes. The story of Joseph is a typical example. The Bible records that he fled from Potiphar's wife. This is a practical demonstration of abstinence. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26). If you resolve in your mind to abstain from premarital sex, you are most likely going to keep to it. Every battle is first lost or won in the mind. If you win the battle inwardly, you will also win outwardly. Hence, we are products of our decisions. And this is why the Bible says: "If you want to, you can keep the Lord's commands" (Sirach 15:15). It is your decision to either be obedient to the Lord's command or not. You have a choice between life and death; you will get whichever you choose. The Lord's wisdom and power are great and He sees everything. He is aware of everything that everyone does, and He takes care of those who fear Him. He has not commanded anyone to be wicked or given permission to anyone to sin (Sirach15:15-20).

In summary, it is possible to abstain from sexual immoral practices as accentuated in the Bible. Choose abstinence and you will enjoy your future to the fullest. Pay the price now!

DEVELOPEMENT OF GENITALS

If God does not permit sexual relationship before marriage, why did He not wait for man to get married before developing genitals? This is one of the questions young and single people often ask to justify their sexual escapades. To answer the question, consider how it will be, if God had waited until you are grown up before He could enable you to walk. How would you feel? If it is not wrong for God to allow you have all your senses before you get married, and you have not put food in your nose in lieu of your mouth, then you should not blame God in any way for enabling your genitals before you are due for marriage. He knows that it takes good relationship with Him, godliness and self-control to manage sexual arousal.

If God had allowed man's genitals to only appear or develop when he is mature, it would be contrary to nature and biological properties of man. Thus, man wouldn't have developed any need or tendency for sexual activity and it would have ultimately threatened human existence and continuity. He is God. He is Omniscient. He knew the beginning from the end and the end from the beginning; and He still does. God is not an author of mistakes or confusions. He couldn't have made mistakes with human originality. As a young and single person, it is within your jurisdiction to decide what to do and what not to do. It is more about you, not about God but it is essentially necessary to place God first in whatever decision you take in order to maintain a good Christian spirituality.

WHY SEXUAL IMMORALITY?

There is a saying that man is polygamous in nature. Some people anchor on this view for their sexual escapades. This unfounded view partly is why sexual immorality is on the rise in the

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contemporary society. Could this assertion be true? The answer is in negation. God created man in His image and likeness. If we claim that man is polygamous in nature, we are directly affirming that God is polygamous too because man is a spiritual representation of God. In creating man, God did not ignore the characteristics of man as regards to his sexuality. That is why God provided a helpmate. The Bible says, "It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him" (Gen.2:19).

From the above scriptural passage, God instituted a union of a man and a woman, which is monogamy- a marriage of one man to one woman. He provided the sufficiency and completeness that the union required. So, marriage of one man to many wives is borne out of greediness, cultural belief system and insatiable sexual desires of some men. Therefore, polygamy is a creation of man. It was never the intention of God towards man. So, polygamy in whatever form – polygyny, polyandry among others, is not intended by God.

If as a married person one is practicing any of the forms, such a person is invariably deviating from the true nature of marriage as God purposed it. Again, if as a single person, one is engrossed in sexual act as against the principle of abstinence and self-control, then such a person is abusing the nature of God in him or her. Moreover, if one is lacking in self-control and abstinence as a single and young person, he or she is most likely to be committing adultery even after being married. This is because he or she will be comparing the performance of his or her spouse with those he or she has had sexual relationship and it will cause a great desire in him or her, especially when he\she thinks his\her sexual needs are not met by his or her partner. This will create rancour in the

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person's marriage. This is why abstinence is advocated among young and single people; and sexual maturity advocated for married people. Hence, it closes all doors of comparison within marriage. This will definitely make one to have a solid and happy home. Hence, such a person will be satisfied with what he\she has.

CONSCIENCE FORMATION

“ Knowledge in this context refers to the awareness of right and wrong- morality. It is a judgment about right and wrong, good and bad, perfect and imperfect. ”

CHAPTER TWO

CONSCIENCE FORMATION

Catholic theology stresses the important role that conscience plays in determining right from wrong. In one ecclesiastical document, the Episcopal Conference of Ireland (1980) defined conscience in general terms as a sense of right and wrong and of the fundamental principle that we are to do what is good and avoid what is evil. In a more particular sense, conscience can be defined as the attempt to discern the moral values at stake in particular situations. Conscience is concerned with the ethical guiding of self in concrete human actions. When one answers one's conscience, one acts freely and responsibly in a manner that professes one's values in the concrete existential situation of one's life.

Nowadays, great changes have affected sexual behaviours. Society is characterized by increasing pervasiveness amongst people. The availability and the use of improved contraceptive techniques have combined to reinforce the sexual ethics, which defines chastity as unnatural and regards full sexual experience outside marriage as a norm. Many young people clearly accept such a norm and openly practise what in an earlier generation would have been condemned as promiscuity. The acceptance and practice of such norm has been attributed to the way an individual forms his or her conscience. Moreover, conscience could be said to be the judgment that a person gives of himself with regard to his actions. It is to act with knowledge. Knowledge in this context refers to the awareness of right and wrong-

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morality. It is a judgment about right and wrong, good and bad, perfect and imperfect. Connell (1964) defined conscience as an act of the intellect, judging that an action must be performed as obligatory or must be omitted as sinful, or may be performed as lawful or is advisable as the better course of action. That means it is a man's judgment on how he should act if he wishes to please God. Conscience is not a faculty distinct from the intellect and reason. It is nothing else than reason applied to moral conduct in order to regulate life. In a nutshell, conscience is a practical moral judgment; hence in the Second Vatican Council, Paul VI (1965) speaks of judgments of conscience when it submits thus:

... everybody has the duty and consequently the right to seek the truth in religious matters so that, through the use of appropriate means, he may prudently form judgments of conscience which are sincere and true.

Everyone has a common sense or consciousness of right and wrong. This common sense or consciousness of right and wrong is called synderesis. It is the innate habit of practical reason (not a faculty itself) by which man comes to know immediately the first principles of moral order. Because of this, elementary moral principles of practical reason such as:

'good is to be done, evil is to be avoided', 'preserve moderation', 'render to each his own', 'do not do to others what you do not wish them do to you', 'act so that social coexistence is possible', 'parents must be respected', 'lawful authority must be obeyed', 'contract must be honoured', 'due honour is to be accorded to God', etc., are known easily by all.

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These principles enable us to practice right conducts. These principles are parallel to the principles of speculative reason, which enable us to practice right thinking. For example, the principle of contradiction which declares that two mutually contradictory propositions cannot at the same time be true is immediately evident to anyone as soon as the underlying notions are grasped. Pius XII (1939) in his encyclical, *Summi Pontificatus* writes that:

The voice of man teaches even the uneducated and what is more, those who do not enjoy the cultural values of mankind, what is just and unjust, permitted and forbidden.

The discernment of these principles is not through logical deduction. It is often through the application of moral insight or intuition which is achieved in the depths of one's conscience.

KINDS OF CONSCIENCE

Considering the action, conscience may be antecedent, concomitant or consequent (Peschke, 1999).

Antecedent Conscience: Conscience is antecedent when the intellect judges the morality of the act before it is done. Antecedent conscience commands, exhorts, permits or forbids.

Concomitant Conscience: It is concomitant when the intellect judges the morality of the act while it is being done. The concomitant conscience animates the good action and disturbs the one who does the evil.

Consequent Conscience: Conscience is consequent when the intellect judges the morality of the act after it has been done. This

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judgment, of course, will not change the morality of the act already done. The act is good or bad if at the moment it was done the intellect judged it to be good or bad; the judgment after the act has been done will not make a good act bad or a bad act good. The consequent conscience approves excuses, reproves or accuses.

In view of its conformity with the objective moral order, conscience can be true or false. It is true or right when one judges licit what is really licit, or illicit what really is illicit. It is false or erroneous when one judges as licit what really is illicit, or illicit as what really is licit. This false conscience can be invincibly erroneous. According to the degree of subjective certitude of the person who judges and acts, conscience can be certain or doubtful. It is certain when the judgment of the practical intellect is sure and without fear of the opposite. What is required is moral certainty. It is doubtful when the judgment of the practical intellect is not sure. There is some fear of the opposite. A certain conscience can be false and a false conscience can be certain.

Perplexed Conscience

Confronted with moral problems one may take different attitudes. But when one is in doubt of what he or she should do and is not able to solve the doubt, his conscience is said to be perplexed. An example is the mother of a sick child who fears that if she does not attend mass on Sunday, she commits a sin; at the same time, she fears that if she does not look after the sick child, she commits a sin.

What should one do in this or similar case? If time allows, he should seek counsel, or consult books etc. If time does not allow it, he should choose or make the best decision. The natural law

requires that a mother should look after her sick child. The positive law requires that she goes for Mass on Sunday. It is a lesser evil to omit what is required by the law of the Church than to omit what is required by the law of God. Hence, the mother of the sick child should decide that she is not obliged in her circumstances to go to church. If one is not able to decide which the lesser evil is, one could choose any of the alternatives.

Scrupulous Conscience

A scrupulous conscience is that conscience which, for slight motives or without any motives at all, often fears to do an action thinking that it is a sin. A scrupulous person is often tortured by doubts that he may be living in mortal sin, or he may be constantly beset with an unfounded fear of having committed sin. Scrupulosity is a religious-moral-psychological state of anxiety, fear and indecision. It consists of a more or less constant, unreasonable, and morbid fear of sin, error and guilt. Thus, Thils(1963) writes:

The scrupulous person in the matter of chastity is obsessed with the idea that he has sinned against purity. First of all this whole area frightens him. Mortal sin is everywhere. His instructors have described this vice in such a terrible way that he will never be able to forget its horror. Or there may be a sort of repulsion and physical fear of this entire and mysterious and dangerous domain. In short, whether by education or by nature, he is apprehensive and afraid.

A scrupulous conscience is no conscience at all. It is rather mere anxiety and fear. It is a disease of the soul doing harm not only to

the soul but also to the body. Often times, it brings one to despair. Mental ailments can be far more torturing than physical suffering. Perhaps, no keener mental suffering can be harder than that involving conscience. Simply, scrupulous people are suffering souls, really and truly sick. They deserve the love, tenderness and patience which every sick person deserves. For instance, a scrupulous housekeeper will come back five or ten times to her kitchen to be sure that she turned off the gas. A chemist will go through anguish verifying time and time again the prescription he has just made. He certainly has reason to be prudent. Yet, it must not be made a sickness (Delhayé, 1961).

A scrupulous person at times can be a very good moralist and a very clear thinker when it is a question of others. Often, he can even reason at length about his own case. But even when he sees clearly, he has not the force of will to impose a solution upon himself. He acts as if the solution were neither good nor exact. He remains anxious, not always speculatively, but practically in his concrete decision. It is often associated with sufferings, anxieties, hesitation, fatigue that is sometimes slight, but often extremely painful and unbearable (Thils, 1963). A scruple is above all indecision of will. A scrupulous conscience is different from a delicate conscience.

Delicate conscience is a God-fearing conscience, which avoids even the smallest sin. It judges correctly the goodness or badness of an action, without any anxiety or fear. There is however, the danger of egocentrism, timidity among others.

Lax Conscience

A lax conscience is one that is characterized by motives which favour one's cupidity, and does not judge grave or illicit that

which is really grave or illicit. People with lax consciences are said to have smeared their conscience in such ways that their consciences become blunt by the habits of sin. At times, they attach too much importance to trivial matters especially external practices while at the same time despise the great commandments of the Lord, as the Pharisees did in the scripture, which prompted Jesus to say, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence (Matt.23:25).

Bad education, company, vehement and uncontrolled passions, sloth, neglect of prayers, lust, excessive quest for temporal affairs etc., are the causes of the formation of a lax conscience. Prayer, spiritual retreat, frequent examination of conscience, reading of good books, choice of good spiritual director etc., are ways to overcome or remedy for lax conscience.

FORMATION OF AN UPRIGHT CONSCIENCE

There are two ways to form conscience, either wrongly or rightly. Conscience is formed rightly when one tries as far as possible to arrive at a definite judgment with seriousness and after careful study of a particular issue, bearing in mind the objective truth. Conversely, it is wrongly formed when one does not care sufficiently to arrive at an objective truth. It is absolutely important for one to have true and upright conscience. In order to form an upright conscience, one must value the truth at all times and appropriately absorbs the laws as guiding principles, and not as burden. One must thoughtfully reflect on one's words before letting them out, speaking or acting. Moreover, seeking for counsel is another way to overcome wrong formation of conscience. Above all, one must always pray for the

gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to realize that we must all have reverence for the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice. Every man has the duty and the right to seek the truth in both religious and secular matters, in order to prudently form the right and true judgments of conscience while employing suitable means. People of all ages must be given the liberty to weigh moral values with upright consciences, and embrace them personally; know and love God more intimately. In recent times, the numbing of consciences, their indifferences to good and evil, and deviation are great threats to man in particular and society at large. This is because the level of morality in society depends largely on the human conscience. Therefore, our conscience should be reformed and well formed, not unformed, uninformed, misinformed or deformed.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCTS AND CONSCIENCE FORMATION

Sexual misconducts are unacceptable or improper behaviours with regard to sexual expressions. They include but not limited to the following: fornication, adultery, rape, prostitution, incest, masturbation, bestiality, paraphilia, paedophilia, necrophilia, narcissism, sadism, voyeurism, masochism etc. It has been argued that sexual misconduct is as a result of poor upbringing. Though, it has not been proven, it can be stated categorically that nurture (i.e. environmental influence) plays essential roles in conscience formation with regard to sexual misconducts. Sexual misconducts among people may be attributed to the way one's conscience was formed especially at tender age. When a child is growing up without the guidance of moral values and Christian principles on sexual matters, the child will probably be reckless with and on sexual matters. He or she is likely to misbehave

sexually.

Therefore, parents particularly must communicate moral values to young ones and at the same time encourage them to wisely make personal decisions that will impact positively on their spiritual and moral life. This will enable them to form their consciences rightly and discover moral truth by themselves such that their decisions can be truly responsible. Moreover, parents and educators should be careful not to jeopardize the moral upbringing of young ones by taking lightly what ought to be taken seriously because it could result to the formation of lax conscience. Lax conscience can make young ones behave immorally without qualms of conscience or remorse.



CHAPTER THREE



**QUEST FOR
CLARITY**

“ ...the ability to maintain sexual chastity or practice abstinence requires clarity of mind in order to absorb or perceive the implications associated with them.

”

CHAPTER THREE

QUEST FOR CLARITY



As children, we excessively craved for sugary things, although, as growing children, our bodies needed them. We couldn't do without sugar. That is an indication that we lacked knowledge and clarity about the realities of life. But as we advance in age, we begin to realize that excessive sugar and sugary things could be harmful to our health. Thus, we begin to reduce our sugar intake and most often tend to avoid something we dearly cherished. Advancement in age and knowledge as well, help us to appreciate the realities of life and see beyond the obvious. Clarity means clearness or lucidity in perception or understanding; freedom from indistinctness or ambiguity, the state or quality of being clear (Dictionary.com/clarity).

The ability to maintain sexual chastity or practise abstinence requires clarity of mind in order to absorb or perceive the implications associated with them. Those who indulge in premarital and extramarital sex can be likened to children who prefer sugary things to bitter things without considering their health implications. It is important to note that sexual practices as mentioned above are not fun as many people consider them; rather they spell doom for whoever indulges in them. "You are doomed! You call evil good and call good evil; you turn darkness into light and light into darkness. You make what is bitter sweet and what is sweet you make bitter. You are doomed! You think you are wise, so very clever" (Isaiah 5:20-21). This Bible passage

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explains the fact that no matter the name the sexual practices assume- premarital, extramarital, fornication, adultery etc., it is still what it is. And those who are involved in them are attracting indescribable consequences to themselves. Our lives will be well directed, when we gain clarity. An anonymous quote says that fools rush in where the wise fear to enter.

DIRECTION

When clarity is gained, we can easily follow the direction that leads to a great future. Direction is more important than speed. Essentially, direction is given to people who want to get to a particular destination. Reality is this, we must all get to a particular destination, but the difference is that while some will arrive with the plans they have based on the clarity they have got, others will arrive and become more confused because they have no plan of where they are. However, there is an important question that needs to be answered. Are you aware of what you are doing now? Is this actually the way you have planned to live your life or are you being influenced by external factors such as friends, tutors, etc?

An honest heart looks for truth. This agrees with an anonymous quote which says “the side with the truth is not the side with the right words, but the side with the right reason”. If we are honest with ourselves, God can influence us through our conscience and we begin to do things in the ways many do not do.. We need to stay in touch with the words of God for direction else we fall off and follow bad instructors who do not have right words. If you have future for your life, then you need direction. But you don't need it if you have no future for your life. “...if our conscience does not condemn us, we have courage in God's presence” (1 John 3:21). This means that if our conscience does condemn us,

we have no courage to be in the presence of God. This is why people who indulge in premarital and extramarital sexual relationships feel uncomfortable to receive Holy Communion; their prayer life degenerates and gradually their hearts become hardened for evil and so they get used to it. This is why we should allow God's words to direct us to achieve authentic Christian spirituality.

THE GAINS OF HAVING DIRECTION IN LIFE

The gains of having good direction in life are enormous. When our lives are guided by principles, we will have the following gains:

- **Overcoming peer pressure:** when you have the clarity of mind, you will be able to handle the pressures that may emanate from it. Again, having good knowledge liberates and saves from unnecessary pressures thereby enabling you to focus on the plans for your life.
- **Increased confidence:** having a clear and free conscience can help in gaining confidence. Hence guilty conscience takes away the confidence to pursue a bright future.
- **Being happy:** having direction in life makes one happy because one will be clear with what one's doing and where it is taking one.
- **Avoiding the law of Karma:** being directed in life will enable one abstain from behaviour or action that will attract nemesis to one's life. So that you'll not be fingered for the downfall of anyone or someone's marriage.

Achieving personal growth: You will experience personal growth when one's life is properly directed. It will enable one know that everything done in life comes with a consequence.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSEQUENCES
of **SEXUAL**
INDULGENCE

“ _____
*...premarital sexual experience
has devastating impacts on the
persons involved and does not
guarantee sexual satisfaction
even in marriage.*
_____ ”

CHAPTER FOUR

CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL INDULGENCE

As earlier stated, human person is created in the image of God. In creating male and female, God categorized their sexuality and perfected their nature. Sexuality is a sacred gift. Physical sexual act as a manifestation of our sexual nature is also good and sacred. It is good and sacred because when God had created all things, God saw that all He had made were indeed very good. The goodness extended not only to man but also to the acts associated with being man and its constitutive functions. Man is endowed with the gift of sexuality and the Church values this gift. In this regard, Charles & Shelton (1984) opines that:

A discussion of the Church's perspective on sexuality does not in any way mitigate the valuable place church's teaching gives to human sexuality. The Catholic perspective of human sexuality has always honoured the exclusivity and permanence of the sacramental commitment wherein sexuality finds its most authentic expression (p.244).

Although, sexuality is not just sex but sex is an integral component of sexuality. Sexuality does not mean the genital organs or the pleasure derivable from them, but the genitals are the important symbols of our sexuality. There are acts associated with the genital organs which are the physical sexual

expressions. The physical sexual expressions are sacred gifts and the popular view is that they should be done within the context of marriage. But could there be benefits accruing from sexual expressions if they are done before marriage? This chapter explores some of the purported benefits advocated by proponents of premarital sex and some of the detriments that are associated with sexual indulgence especially premarital and extramarital affairs.

THE PURPORTED BENEFITS

Interestingly, some people hold the view that one needs to have a prior knowledge and even the experience of the sexual act before one gets into marriage. Such people according to Peschke (1999) have some arguments against premarital continence. For them, there are some gains associated with premarital sex.

It Promotes Physical and Psychological Well-Being

Premarital sex experience, according to its proponents, is beneficial both physically and psychologically. Some psychological studies reveal that when the sexual organs in the body become mature as a result of development and secretion of hormone, the body begins to undergo certain changes including development of sexual urges which are said to be normal and if the urges are not expressed or satisfied, they will affect the physical disposition of an individual. The proponents of the arguments for premarital sex assert that:

The sexual drive needs its satisfaction as any other drive. Continence imposes an unnatural strain. And since in our present civilization the interval between sexual maturation and marriage is rather long, the natural and normal way to gratify the drive in this

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meantime is premarital intercourse. Evidence from psychology and psychotherapy is supposed to confirm that repression of sexual impulses is psychologically harmful (p.442).

Contrary to the above opinion, I strongly maintain that abstinence does no harm. It has not been recorded that abstaining from premarital sex is associated with any medical ailments. Rather, it has enhanced spirituality, self-worth and deep sense of responsibility towards life in general. In fact, in my own view, premarital sex can impact negatively on the psychological, physical and financial capacity and wellbeing of an individual. For instance, in order to attract the females for sexual gratification, the individual will have to expend his financial resources to woo them. Also, there is tendency that the individual may have varying tastes which makes him/her to be involved with different persons at different times thereby depleting his/her physical wellbeing or even contracting some deadly sexually transmitted diseases.

Moreover, self-control is a virtue and it is embedded in human nature. Every human person has the ability to exercise self-control. Therefore, saying continence is unnatural to man is like saying self-control is unnatural to man. Even so for the married people who have the outright permission to sex also exercise self-control in their marriages. Despite the abuses, wrong placements and immature approaches to sexual acts, prior knowledge and experience of sex before marriage ought not to be encouraged so as to retain the roles and values of sexual intercourse in the human economy.

It Aids in Consummation of Love and Marriage

Through the initial sexual union between couples, marriages and marital love are consummated. It bonds marriage and brings it into full existence and stamps it with indissolubility. Sex realizes its value within the garden of love that divinizes and humanizes man through marriage. Sex in marriage should be sacrificial, self-giving, genuine, responsible and open. It is neither selfish nor born out of concupiscence, but it respects and strengthens the individuals such that each sees the other as a person, not as a sex object. The proponents of premarital sex argue that one cannot fully realize this if he or she has not had prior experience of sexual act before marriage. They opined that, "this experience is to be gathered before the final marriage pledge, and not afterwards, when a withdrawal from the bond is no longer possible" (Peschke, 1999:442).

Regardless of supposed importance of premarital sex as advocated by this view, it is important not to lose sight of the Church's teaching on sexuality. As Christians who are called by God, we are expected to live in accordance with the scripture, the magisterium and the tradition of the Church. These should be our guide in order to maintain authentic Christian spirituality. In other words, God has set the standards for us to follow. Anything short of that will be a contradiction. Therefore, prior experience of sex before marriage is not a guarantee that one will have a healthy sexual life with his/her spouse after marriage. In fact, those who engaged in premarital sex before marriage tend to draw comparison of sexual performances of their spouses with their previous experiences of their sexual escapades. This will affect their relationship with their spouses in marriage. The reverse is the case with those who practiced abstinence till marriage. There is no room for comparison as every act of sex will be highly appreciated.

It Promotes Marital Intimacy

In marriage, one person becomes part of another. This oneness is manifested and communicated through sexual intercourse which represents and symbolizes the mutual giving of selves. Couples communicate better sexually. God has given couples the joy of expressing marital commitment by becoming one flesh. Sexual intercourse before marriage plays an important role in achieving this marital intimacy since it is through it that the partners will know whether they will truly match sexually (Peschke, 1999: 442).

However, there is more to intimacy than sexual intercourse. While the genitals and their activities are important symbols of our sexuality, it is obvious that they are not the only focus. Komonchak et al (2003) notes, "There is a whole other dimension to human sexuality: the social or affective dimension which manifests in relationship to others with warmth, compassion, tenderness and openness" (p.952). These human qualities are rooted in sexuality and are true expression of it, not necessarily focusing on genital. Sexual intercourse that will realize intimacy must also cut across these dimensions.

Indeed, every normal person has the physical desire for sexual activity as well as the desire to know and be known. These desires make up the real quest for intimacy in a relationship. Sexual intercourse represents only one ingredient that allows one to experience true intimacy. Hence, marital intimacy transcends just the physical act. It includes all other social and affective dimensions of human life. Although, sex is a source of marital intimacy, yet it does not achieve this in isolation from other human affective qualities. Intimacy (oneness) is what couples seek in marriage, but it does not just evolve from mere sex.

Instead, great sex evolves from an intimate relationship where sexual intercourse serves to deepen and cement intimacy. Thus, intimacy in marriage cannot be said to be a right cause for premarital sex.

It Contributes to Better Management of Sexual Life

It is not surprising to know that some believe that having sexual activity before their marriages will guarantee their satisfaction in their marriages when they eventually get married; that sex before marriage will help them to better manage their sexual life in marriage. That is a wrong notion. One may have all the experiences about sex and sexuality before marriage and still not get the desired satisfaction after marriage in sexual relationship. On the other hand, one can perfectly learn and enjoy sex satisfactorily after marriage by learning together with his/her spouse. This is more preferable because spouses will learn each other's sex preferences and strive to satisfy each other. Besides, there is far more to sex than just having intercourse. Sex in marriage is flavoured with friendliness, spiced with unique intimacy that sweetens and strengthens the marital relationship between the spouses which is absent in premarital sex.

No doubt, intending couples are encouraged to know themselves before coming together as husband and wife. Peschke (1999) stresses this when he says:

Partners must know whether they will truly match, also under the sexual aspect. This experience is to be gathered before the final marriage pledge, and not afterwards, when a withdrawal from the bond is no longer possible (p.442).

From the above statement, I agree to the assertion that partners must know their capacity to match physically and sexually. In the physical context, they must ascertain if they are attracted to each, and the sexual aspect, they must also ascertain their sexual compatibility in terms of genotype, rhesus factors among others. Importantly, ascertaining their sexual aspect does not necessarily insinuate indulging in sex. Thus, no matter how fashionable premarital sex may be, it is not a ticket to better management of sex in marriage.

THE DETRIMENTS

The sexual act that God intended for marriage as a blessing and source of joy for married couples has become one of the greatest social problems in our society. It has been misused and abused through premarital and extramarital sex. Certainly, the abuse, misuse and misplacement of the sexual act originated from the distorted view, misunderstanding of the roles and values of sex in the divine and human economy. Consequently, sexual intercourse has been defiled and reduced to mere pleasure-giving act within the context of fornication, adultery, prostitution etc. It has been turned to an exploitative and degrading act in rape. These wrong uses and misplacement destroy sex, cheapen it and make it worthless, valueless and empty. And when the good-intended act is destroyed by misuse, abuse or misplacement, it turns sour and becomes a bad act. Some of the detriments of sexual indulgence especially premarital and extramarital relationships are given below.

Unwanted Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Premarital and extramarital relationships create the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases as well as unexpected pregnancy that often ends in abortion. In reality, no pregnancy is unwanted.

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The term 'unwanted' simply means not justified, or authorized. However, by engaging in premarital sex or adultery, you have authorized pregnancy. Responsibility must be taken.

Have you wondered why weeds are referred to as unwanted plants? It is because they grow on their own in the midst of other plants cultivated by the farmer. Pregnancy is not a weed because it comes as a result of full knowledge of two people who are engaging in sexual relationship. When pregnancy is referred to as unwanted, it reduces the unborn child to the level of inanimate, thereby encouraging abortion easily without any remorse. Peschke (1999) stresses that:

Sexual intercourse is responsible only if it is performed by a couple who are able to secure the healthy education of a child. And the proper education of a child can be guaranteed only within the permanent state of marriage (p.439).

The above assertion stresses the need for pregnancy to occur within the confines of marriage in order to secure the legitimate wellbeing of the child. This is where many young people miss it. They often engage in a relationship involving sex without considering the consequences. They only see the surface. They think that as long as they fall in love, they do not care about any other thing else. These young people most often find it difficult to handle the responsibility that goes with a long term relationship. They do not know that failure to plan for pregnancy and parenthood always leads to disaster.

Premarital sex, in general, occurs amongst young people and those without a stable source of income. They often tend to

make extra effort to get money including engaging in financial theft in order to gain sexual gratification. Many of them engage in sexual acts out of curiosity, and the quest for experimentation. And any sexual relationship initiated based on these two factors often lead to dire consequences. In reality, there is no bastard. Every child born has a father. What we have is a father who has failed to take responsibility of his action. Do not make yourself one of such fathers.

When the sexual desire is gone, and something unexpected happens, some of them have the psychological fear and inferiority complex. Because premarital sex occurs among young people especially those who lack the knowledge of sexuality and experience, it may result to pregnancy which may pose great harm to the female in particular both physically and psychologically. They even run the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Some of the diseases have no cure. It cannot be overemphasized that premarital sex entails considerable hazards to health: venereal diseases, the health dangers of abortion etc. In addition, it encourages the use of contraceptives. We shall expatiate more on abortion and contraception in the next chapter.

Fornication and Adultery

Premarital sex is often considered as fornication while extramarital sex is seen as adultery. Fornication is the lustful anticipation of marital commitment. Pre-marital sexual relationship is common among the youth. Thomas Pazhayampallil (1995) remarked that “fornication is sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are free from a bond of marriage” (p.1326). It is the carnal union between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman. All these go to suggest

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why it is called premarital sex. All sexual relations outside of marriage militate against love and through them the gift of love is misused. Fornication and adultery are of course prompted by mere carnal gratification. With them, sexuality and even love are interpreted simply as genital expression.

Sexual act is a wonderful gift but if uncontrolled has a great capacity for evil and terrible consequences. An illicit sexual intercourse is one of the vilest and most harmful vices that human beings can indulge in. It debases both the man and the woman. One who fornicates as a single person is likely to indulge in adultery even after getting married. Pazhayampallil (1995) has this to say; “Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse or enjoyment of sexual pleasure by a man and a woman, at least one of whom is bound by the marriage bond with a third party” (p.1328). It is the betrayal of the institution of commitment. Adultery refers to marital infidelity. When a married person seeks sexual pleasure devoid of commitment, accountability and responsibility for personal action from someone other than his/her spouse, he/she is guilty of adultery. Adultery is an extramarital sexual relationship. It is a betrayal of the covenant of commitment and the promise of exclusivity. It signifies betrayal and injustice. Indeed, it expresses lack of true love but trespasses justice, charity, chastity and fidelity. It destroys conjugal love and harmony.

Marital infidelity has devastating consequences for the individual, the family and the society at large. It shatters trust, intimacy and self-esteem. It breaks up families, ruins careers and leaves behind pain and destruction. Even when affairs are not exposed, emotional, health, spiritual, social and psychological costs are involved. Marital infidelity may not be unconnected

with premarital sex. One who is deeply rooted in premarital sex is prone to marital infidelity

Rape, Prostitution and Incest

Rape is the forcible violation of the sexual intimacy of another. Pazhayampalli (1995) sees it as “an intercourse or enjoyment of sexual pleasure with somebody against his or her will” (p.1330). Although, cases abound of female rapists yet men are commonly associated with rape. Rape, if it comes from men, expresses nothing but a brutal assault on the dignity of women and vice versa when it comes from women. Rape expresses no love but a sheer physical lust combined with hatred and violence. Rape does not attempt to win the will and voluntary acceptance of the other but to overpower and dominate through force, violence and aggression.

Many people are victims of rape and many more are abused in the same way. Many house helps, sales ladies, nieces etc., are raped by their bosses, uncles, guardians etc. Rape is absolutely bad as it lacks love, denies freedom and voluntary consent of its victim. Those who are involved in premarital sex are likely to develop the tendency to rape another if there is no means of expressing their sexual desire especially if the sexual partner is not available. Similarly, prostitution has been described as indiscriminate sexual intercourse for monetary reward. It is the most scandalous and degrading form of sexual practices. It reduces the human person to merely an instrument or object of sexual pleasure. Prostitution is a social scourge that involves women but also men. Whoever engages in premarital or extramarital sex will not find it difficult to indulge in prostitution.

Incest designates “intimate (sexual) relations between relatives

or in-laws within a degree that prohibits marriage between them” (p.1332). Incest corrupts family relationships and marks a regression towards animality. Cases abound of brothers who abuse and exploit their sisters, half-sisters, cousins, aunts, mothers and step-mothers. There are cases of fathers who abuse their daughters, mothers-in-law, aunts etc. This level of animality extends to many other degrees of sexual relationship prohibited by consanguinity and affinity. There is no gainsaying the fact that sexual indulgence amounts to indiscriminate sexual relationships including incest which is abhorrent to both God and man.

Sexual Perversion

Perversion is a type of human behaviour that deviates from that which is considered normal or acceptable. Although the term can refer to a variety of forms of deviation, it is most often used to describe sexual behaviours that are considered particularly abnormal, repulsive or obsessive. Whatever exists under the sun can be perverted. Human sexuality is a gift that can be perverted. In fact, it has been perverted in many ways. Sexual perversions are conditions in which sexual excitement or orgasm is associated with acts or imageries that are considered unusual desires or practices within the natural order of action or within a given human culture.

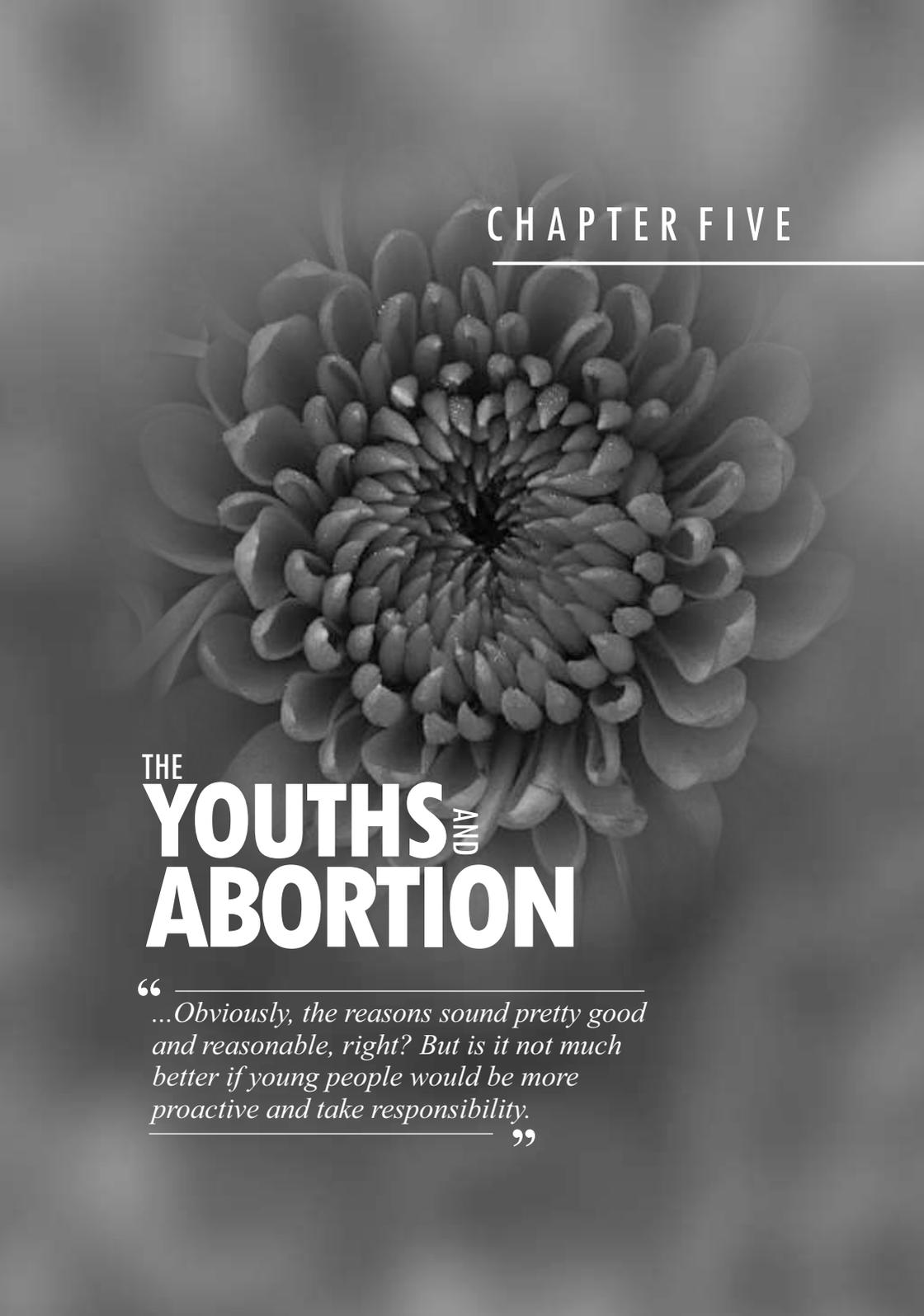
Sexual perversion can take the form of acts, fantasies or abnormal practices with the aim of receiving sexual pleasure or achieving orgasm outside the given and normal heterosexual relationship. This is witnessed in and among people who have developed abnormal orientations and desires with regard to sexual needs (Ughaerumba, 2007). The following are identified as perverted sexual activities or orientations: voyeurism, fetishism, sadism, transvestism, exhibitionism, homosexuality,

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masturbation, bestiality, paraphilia, necrophilia, pedophilia etc. A sexually active person who indulges in premarital or extramarital sex may tend to explore other means of sexual excitement. In a bid to explore or to achieve sexual satisfaction, the person can knowingly or unknowingly delve into sexual perversion. Sexual intercourse ought to be a natural sign of total gift of oneself, the culmination of a mutual relationship of love. Peschke (1999) buttressed thus:

Sexual intercourse which is not the sign and expression of this kind of preferential love, but mere tension reduction or even only exploitation of the other for the sake of bodily pleasure, falls short of its authentic meaning. It is a delusion and a deceit (p.440).

From the analysis and discussions thus far, it can be concluded that sexual indulgence has devastating impacts on the persons involved and does not guarantee sexual satisfaction even in marriage.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE YOUTHS AND ABORTION

“
*...Obviously, the reasons sound pretty good
and reasonable, right? But is it not much
better if young people would be more
proactive and take responsibility.*

”

CHAPTER FIVE

THE YOUTH AND ABORTION

The above topic demands special attention because of the havoc associated with it in the world today. It has been estimated that approximately 46 million abortions are performed worldwide every year (Ekwutosi, 2008). The high rate of abortion is not unconnected with sexual indulgence. The word abortion originated in the mid-16th century. It has its root in the Latin word *aboriri* which means to perish. Thus conventionally, abortion means the deliberate termination of pregnancy—most often performed during the first 28 weeks of pregnancy.

When pregnancy occurs after indulging in sex especially premarital sex, young people in most cases suddenly realize how unprepared they are. They will begin to feel the heavy weight of the result of their pleasure, thus they start denying the unborn is human, and so the need for abortion. This brings us to the question; “when does life begin?”

WHEN DOES LIFE BEGIN?

Life begins at conception or fertilization. That is to say, life starts immediately the sperm fertilizes the egg of a female. This has been acknowledged to a great extent by science and religion. According to one prominent embryology text *The Developing Human: Clinically Oriented Embryology* by Keith L. Moore and T.V. N Persuad (2003),

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Human development begins at fertilization when a male gamete or sperm (spermatozoon) unites with a female gamete or ovum to produce a single cell, a zygote. This highly specialized, totipotent cell marked the beginning of each of us as a unique individual (p.16).

Similarly, the scripture says...

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you....”
(Jeremiah 1:5).

This implies that at fertilization, life has already begun. The Church has been consistent in her teaching about the sacredness of the life in the womb. For this reason, the official Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception” (no 2270).

Interestingly, every human being is a product of the fertilization process and without it, there will be no human. Therefore, the process is as important as the product. This is why it has been stated repeatedly that sexual relationship as instituted by God is sacred. Its sacredness should be upheld by every individual both the single and married by abstaining from sexual indulgence for the single and maintaining sexual purity with the spouses for the married. It will not only enable one to be fulfilled, but also will ensure sound and Christian spirituality throughout one's life.

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THE UNBORN CHILD

A baby goes through several stages of development. Through the union of male sex cell and female sex cell i.e. sperm and egg, fertilization occurs resulting in the formation of a zygote. A zygote develops into a blastocyst after 5-8 days. A blastocyst

develops into an embryo when it has moved from the fallopian tube to the uterus through implantation. An embryo then develops into a fetus which is a more advanced stage of development and up until birth (Artal-Mittelmark, 2019). From the foregoing, it can be seen that each of these stages is interconnected, and necessary for the safety of the innocent unborn child. Every stage is as important as the other.

Biblical View of the Process

You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because you are to be feared, all you do is strange and wonderful...when my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there—you saw me before I was born: the day allotted to me had all been recorded in your book before any of them ever began (Psalm 139:13-16). From the foregoing, we see clearly that the Bible acknowledges these processes involved in the developmental stages of the unborn child.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT ABORTION

Abortion can be direct or indirect depending on whether it is just aimed at or only foreseen as a consequence of a lawful act. It is direct when the termination of pregnancy is deliberate. It has been described as a willful attack on unborn human being. It is indirect when the termination of pregnancy is not intended or directly willed, but the side effect of legitimate procedure. Our focus is on direct abortion which is a deliberate termination of life of a human being in the womb.

ABORTIONISTS, WHO ARE THEY?

They are those who carry out abortion either directly or indirectly.

In my own opinion, the pronoun 'they' includes the doctors, the nurse, the parents, the financier, the adviser and all those whose consents were sought. These people conspire against not a sitting president, not a law-breaker but against an innocent, defenseless and harmless unborn child, who is at their mercy for survival and manifestation. This is why as a young and single person; you should abstain from it and save yourself from becoming one of the abortionists. However, many young people claim they have cogent reasons for abortion but unless it has to do with the survival of the mother, no reason can be justified.

REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE COMMIT ABORTION

Below are some reasons young people give to justify abortion of pregnancies resulting from sexual indulgence:

- I am not ready to take responsibility.
- I want to further my education.
- I want to protect my family image and reputation.
- My partner will not forgive me, I don't want to lose him/her
- It is not yet a human being; it is just a thing, a cluster of blood that needs to be flushed out.
- I do not have money.
- I do not want to lose my rights in the religious group I belong to, among others.

Obviously, the reasons sound pretty good and reasonable, right? But is it not much better if young people would be more proactive, take responsibility and say things like:

- Because I am not ready to take responsibility, I will practise abstinence.
- Because I want to further my education, I will not indulge in sexual relationship.

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- Because I want to protect my family image and reputation, I will live a disciplined life.
- Because I don't want my family to be in crisis; I will control myself.
- Because I want to get all the rights my religious group has for me, therefore I will be in control of myself etc.

If young people could approach it this way, it will be easier for them to live a more disciplined life and save themselves from unforeseen consequences of abortion.

IS ABORTION LEGALIZED IN NIGERIA?

No! In Nigeria, abortion is illegal and carries a stiff jail sentence, up to 14 years, unless it is done to save the life of the pregnant mother (Okagbue, 1990). This is why no hospital will boldly write on their billboard that abortion is one of the services they render.

TYPES OF ABORTION

- Simple or Spontaneous Abortion.
- Medical Abortion
- Surgical Abortion.

Spontaneous Abortion

This is natural miscarriage. In this case, there is no human interference. For women, it is usually painful to experience a miscarriage. They cry in most cases because they have lost a potential child.

Medical Abortion

This involves taking some medication or pills in order to terminate a pregnancy. It is used mainly in the early stage of first trimester. It works by suppressing the growth of the zygote or fetus in the

womb and expelling it from the womb in the form of bleeding. Thus, what appears to be a miscarriage is not always the case. Only the woman can explain it. However, it should not be encouraged because conception/pregnancy is God's way of actualizing the purpose of creation and multiplicity. If the process is obstructed or halted, God's purpose apparently will be thwarted. In addition, aborting a pregnancy is the same as committing a murder which is a mortal sin.

Surgical Abortions

Dilation and Curettage (D&C): This is when the cervix is widened in order to scrap some parts of the lining of the womb for the purpose of treatment or in an abortion. It is one of the surgical procedures to remove a pregnancy. Some young people deploy this method to terminate their pregnancy but as stated earlier, it is morally wrong to extinguish the life of another who is at your mercy like in the case of pregnancy.

EFFECTS OF ABORTION

- Infection
- Death
- Difficulty in giving birth in future/infertility
- Psychological trauma
- Spiritual disconnection from God
- Perforation of the uterus
- Murder
- Guilty conscience etc.

THE POSITION OF THE CHURCH ON ABORTION

The Catholic Church opposes all forms of abortion procedures whose direct purpose is to destroy a zygote, blastocyst, embryo, or fetus, since it holds that human life must be respected and

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protected absolutely from the moment of conception. Thus, the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable...” (2271). The Church considers it simply as murder of the innocent. At the same time it has always admitted of the lawfulness of indirect abortion in cases of serious danger to the mother's life.



CHAPTER SIX

**CONTRACEPTION AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS**

“The best and safest way to deal with sexual impulse is abstinence. It is safe physically, emotionally, psychologically, medically, and otherwise.”

CHAPTER SIX

CONTRACEPTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The word contraception originated in the late 1850s and it is a combination of two words; contra and conception. The term contra means against while conception implies the fertilization of egg by sperms which results to pregnancy. 'Ception' is a short form of conception (www.vocabulary.com/contraception). From the above, it can be deduced that contraception, in a layman's understanding means 'against pregnancy', i.e. preventing pregnancy from taking place.

Literarily, contraception is simply a deliberate action to hamper pregnancy or prevent pregnancy from taking place. It is a deliberate use of artificial method or other techniques to prevent pregnancy as a consequence of sexual intercourse. Thus, any device or act whose purpose is to prevent a woman from getting pregnant can be considered as a contraceptive.

CONTRACEPTION: MAN VERSUS GOD

"I chose you before I gave you life and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). This scriptural passage is a clear indication of how special the human person is and continues to be before God. And every human being was conceived spiritually by God before the physical conception takes place. Thus, using contraception is against the natural law. It breaks the natural connection between the

procreative and the unitive purposes of sex. Therefore, by using contraception, man tries to thwart the procreative purpose of sex which God has established. This is why we should distance ourselves from sexual indulgence that often leads to contraception which is in opposition to the intention of God.

METHODS OF CONTRACEPTION

There are different methods of contraception (Britannica, 2017). Some of them are

- Oral Contraceptives
- Barrier Method
- Sterilization
- Withdrawal
- Intrauterine Devices (IUD)

Oral Contraceptives

These are oral medications or pills taken to prevent pregnancy. From the name, it means they are taken orally. In other words, contraceptives are used to bring about contraception. Usually, they are a combination of an estrogen and progestin hormones. Estrogen and progestin are artificial. Both of them combine to prevent pregnancy, by inhibiting the release of the Luteinizing Hormones (LH) and Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) from the pituitary gland in the brain.

LH and FSH play key roles in the development of the egg and preparation of the lining of the uterus for implantation of the embryo. But the pills make the egg not to form and, the uterine mucus that surrounds the egg is made more difficult for sperm to penetrate and so fertilization is denied. In summary, the artificial hormones disrupt the biological condition of the uterus and process of pregnancy (Mode of action of oral contraceptives,

1978).

Barrier Method

These are physical barriers created or manufactured to prevent pregnancy from taking place. Examples are male and female condoms. Unfortunately, it is distributed freely to virtually all the camps during National Youth Service Corp (NYSC) annually in Nigeria. This gesture is directly encouraging indiscriminate sexual relationships among the young people who are not married when abstinence should be preached at every corner. Even among those who are engaged, they find it an expressive option to indulge in sexual relationship with their partners, pretending to be upholding chastity during courtship. This method is often tagged safe sex while on the contrary, it is not safe. The best and safest way to deal with sexual impulse is abstinence. It is safe physically, emotionally, psychologically, medically, and otherwise.

Sterilization

This is the method or procedure of permanently preventing an organism from reproducing. It involves surgical removal of reproductive organs from the body to prevent reproduction from taking place. Examples are hysterectomy, vasectomy among others.

Hysterectomy: this is a medical procedure in which one's womb is removed so that conception will not occur. It is a major surgical procedure. Once one's womb is removed, it is impossible for one to become pregnant. Some people carry out this procedure to just satisfy their sexual quest. This depicts the height of sexual decadence in society. However, the procedure is not ought to be done except on medical grounds; i.e. when one's chance of

survival depends on its removal. Some other cases may lead to this procedure.

Vasectomy: this is a surgical procedure for sterilization or permanent contraception in male. During this procedure, the male Vas Deferens are cut and tied or sealed so as to prevent sperm from entering into the urethra and thereby prevent fertilization of a female through sexual intercourse.

Withdrawal Method

This is a practice of withdrawing the penis from the vagina and away from a woman's external genitals before ejaculation to prevent pregnancy. This method prevents the sperm from entering the vagina. Another name for this method is Coitus Interruptus. We see this in Genesis 38:8-10. Onan died as a result of it.

Intrauterine Devices (IUDS)

These are implantable devices that create an environment in the lining tissues of the womb that is unfavourable for implantation of a fertilized egg. The device is often T-shaped and it is inserted into the womb to prevent pregnancy. It prevents pregnancy by stopping sperm from reaching and fertilizing eggs. This method may worsen menstrual bleeding and cramps. Most women with certain conditions may be more at risk of developing serious complications while using IUD.

EFFECTS OF CONTRACEPTION

A lot of complications may arise from the use of contraceptives especially among women (Smith, 2020). They include; nausea, headache, breast tenderness, weight gain, irregular bleeding and mood changes, scanty menstrual periods, anal incontinence

etc. Christians are therefore advised to be mindful of both the physical and spiritual consequences of all these moves and so avoid them for the good.

Apart from health hazards associated with the use of contraceptives, there are also other bad consequences. The use of contraceptives would lead to widespread immorality. It would encourage conjugal infidelity and the general lowering of morality. It would equally lead to disrespect for women. This is because a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman; thus reducing her to being a mere instrument for sexual satisfaction. Moreover, artificial contraception could be used by governments to implement eugenic policies - i.e. as a weapon of social engineering to remove elements of society. One example is the way developed countries have sent contraceptives to the third world to limit their population.

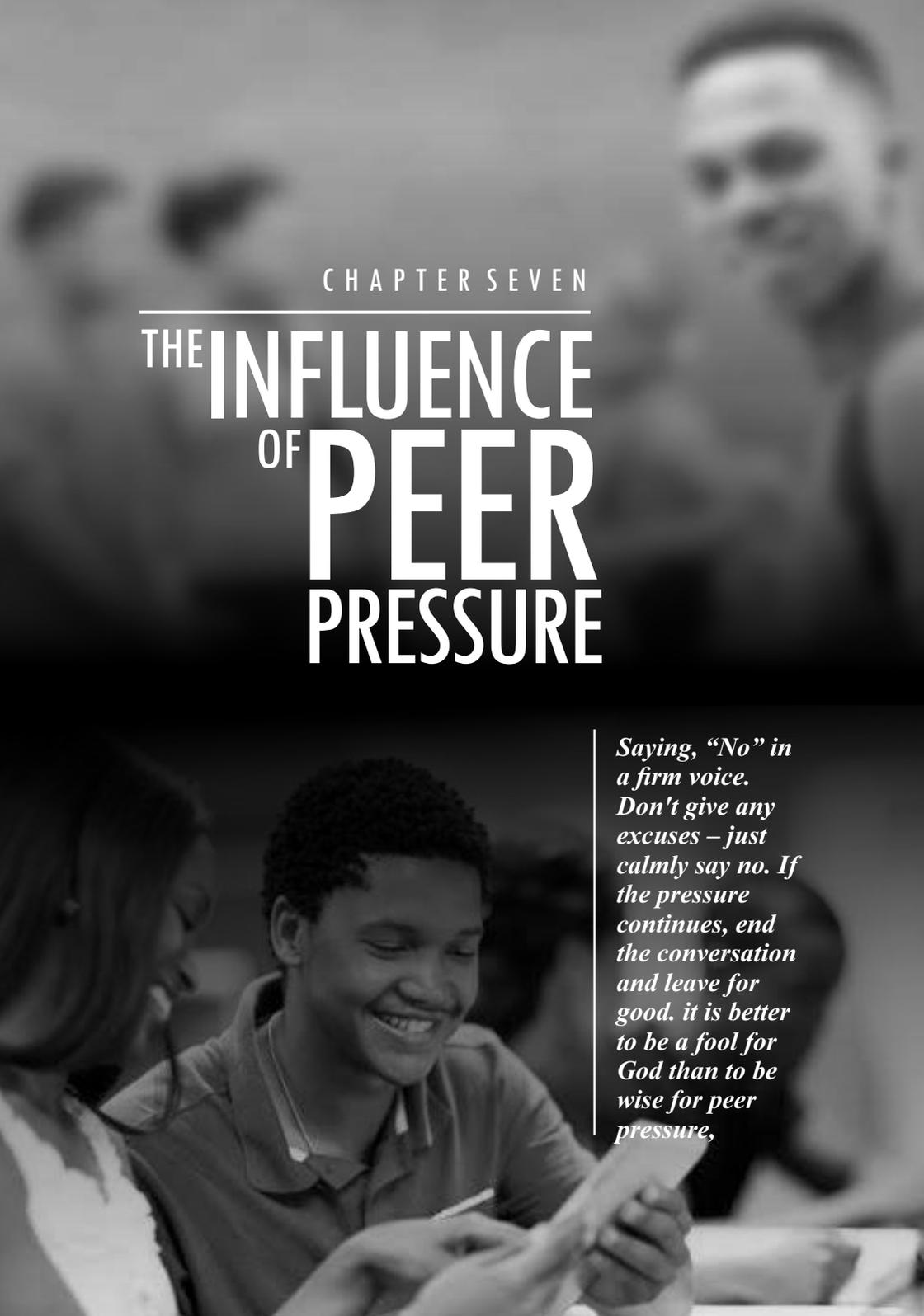
CATHOLICISM AND CONTRACEPTION

The Catholic Church believes that using contraception is intrinsically evil in itself, regardless of the consequences. Catholics are only permitted to use natural methods of birth control. The position of the Catholic Church on contraception was formally explained and expressed by Paul VI (1965) in his encyclical *Humane Vitae*. He states thus:

Artificial contraception is considered intrinsically evil, but methods of natural family planning are morally permissible as they do not usurp the natural way of conception.

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This means that since contraception involves the prevention of conception, then it is evil because it is morally wrong to impede or hamper the purpose of God for humanity which is procreation. Moreover, it is against the principle of morality and more importantly against the commandments of God. On the other hand, it may not be considered evil if it happens as a result of natural factors; that is if the conception or inability to conceive is not by any means induced.



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INFLUENCE
OF PEER
PRESSURE

Saying, “No” in a firm voice. Don’t give any excuses – just calmly say no. If the pressure continues, end the conversation and leave for good. It is better to be a fool for God than to be wise for peer pressure,

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE INFLUENCE OF PEER PRESSURE

It has been observed that most people especially young people indulge in sexual relationships because of the pressure from their peers. In his book, *Deadly Challenges Threatening Families Today*, Ozoudeokpoko (2015) writes “Peer pressure is the pressure you feel from your friends and associates to do things that please them. It causes you to do things you do not really want to do, but you do that in order to be accepted by your friends” (p.40). He further states that:

'Peer pressure is powerful because of the need and desire of young people to win the approval of others. However, deep down inside, most young people are unsure of themselves after doing what the peer group asked to be done. They do not feel good anymore about themselves. They want others to like them and accept them. That is why they do all that the group asked them to do. Indeed, any person under the influence of peer pressure is not living his/her own life, instead the life of others' (p.40).

Peer pressure exerts enormous pressure on the lives of people both single and married. It is a two-way process. It could manifest in either positive or negative way. The focus is on the negative aspect. It can lure them into doing what ordinarily they would not want to do. In the quest to be accepted and be identified with others, they will align with whatever that is presented before

them in order to feel belonged or fit in with others. Peer pressure can make people indulge in sexual practices that could affect their lives, change their lifestyle and even their behaviours. A morally inclined person could be influenced into becoming immoral. Even married people can be influenced by a bad company to engage in ills such as drunkenness, womanizing among others.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO PEER PRESSURE?

Peer pressure has led some people to change their attitudes, values or behaviours to conform to those of their peers, which is often inimical to their wellbeing. Ozoudeokpoko (2015) notes that the solution to peer pressure lies in the ability to stand up for one's right to choose what one will do and what one will not do. He further acknowledges that one has the right to do the following as a way to safeguarding oneself against peer pressure:

- One has the right to be oneself.
- As unique person, nobody has the right to pressure you to do something you don't want to do.
- You have the right to have your values respected. The values you establish in your life are important to you. If others have different values, that is their own business. Do not lower your standard because of others whose values are compromised.
- You have the right to go out with those who treat you as the very special person you are, those who do not tempt you to do things you know that are wrong.
- You have the right to care for and protect your body. Your body belongs to only you. It is your personal possession. In supporting this view, Zig ziglar posites thus; “Do not trade your body for wealth; you may think you can buy it back, but you cannot”.

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- You have the right to establish and protect your reputation. You have the right to act in a way that makes you proud of your actions, not ashamed of them.
- You have the right to be free from guilt and fear. You can be free from the fear of pregnancy, free from the fear of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. This is only possible if you say no to sexual relationship outside marriage.
- You have right to plan for a happy, and satisfying marriage. You have the right to keep yourself for the one you will meet someday for marriage and the one you have chosen to spend your life with.
- You have the right to say no. It is not easy to say no to your friends when they dare you to do something or threaten you if you don't do it. But saying no will help you gain confidence and feel good about yourself.

OVERCOMING SEXUAL INDULGENCE DUE TO PEER PRESSURE

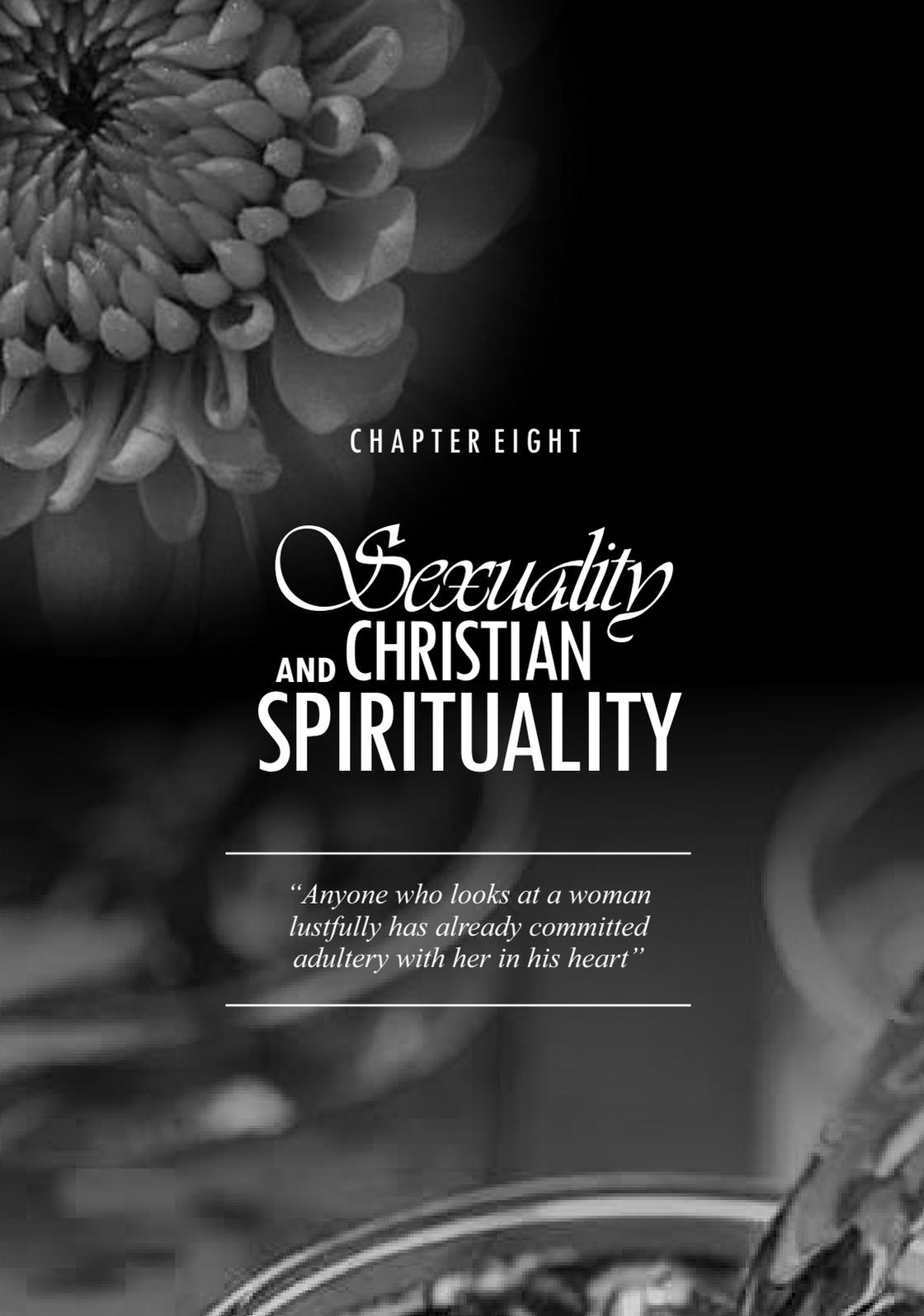
The following could be helpful in overcoming sexual indulgence resulting from peer pressure:

- Saying, “I don't want to do that”. Tell your friend that you value the friendship, but that you just don't want to do it.
- Saying, “My dad or mom or Spouse would not approve of my doing it”. Don't be afraid to use your parents or spouse as an excuse to turn down sexual advances or unwholesome requests.
- Saying, “I promise myself I wouldn't do it, and I believe in keeping my word”.
- Saying, “Sorry, but I have to go now” then get lost.
- Saying, “No” in a firm voice. Don't give any excuses – just calmly say no. If the pressure continues, end the conversation and leave for good.

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Finally, it is better to be a fool for God than to be wise for peer pressure.

Christian Parents are therefore advised to guide their children and wards with the word of God and monitor their association with peer groups, so as to avoid negative peer influences on their sexual life and overall lifestyles.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Sexuality
AND CHRISTIAN
SPIRITUALITY

*“Anyone who looks at a woman
lustfully has already committed
adultery with her in his heart”*

CHAPTER EIGHT

SEXUALITY AND CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Given the rising trend of misuse of sex and sexuality in this modern time, it becomes necessary to examine the place of spirituality in the life of Christians. Before dissecting the subject matter, it will be helpful to explore the meaning and significance of the term spirituality. Essentially, Christian spirituality is concerned with personal response to and growth in the Lord. This response to God's call takes place in the context of prayer and one's efforts to proclaim the kingdom of God through service to humanity. Spirituality is linked to prayer, worship and service to faith and community. In society, every Christian is uniquely called to live out and proclaim the saving power of life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through meaningful ministerial service.

To Christians, spirituality means one's entire life as understood, felt, imagined and decided upon in relationship to God, in Christ Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.. When a Christian is spiritual, he/she takes the things of God seriously and applies them to his or her life. When the application is made, the person makes a choice to allow God to control him or her. Christian spirituality is based upon the extent to which a Christian allows God to lead and control his life. Thus, a person's attitude to sexual relationship can either help to improve or mar his/her spiritual life.

DANGER OF SEXUAL INDULGENCE TO CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Here, I take recourse to the Bible which contains the eternal truth

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for all ages to show the danger of sexual indulgence to spiritual life. No doubt, the Bible condemns every form of sexual immorality. The Christian attitude towards sexual intercourse either as a married or single person should be based on the principles as contained in the Scriptures following the guidance of the Church. The Old Testament strongly detests sexual immorality. It even prescribes that a young woman shall be stoned to death if the man who marries her finds that she is not a virgin anymore;

“... because she has wrought folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house” (Deut. 22:21).

Similarly, the magisterium of the Church has repeatedly expressed its conviction that sexual indulgence is a grave sin, although not by any infallible definition. The Thirteenth Ecumenical Council at Lyons under Innocent IV (1245) in Peschke (1999) decreed:

But concerning fornication, which an unmarried person commits with another unmarried person, there is no doubt that it is a mortal sin, since the apostle asserts that fornicators as well as adulterers are excluded from the kingdom of God (p.64).

The New Testament explicitly condemns all forms of sexual immorality specifically and such will not be permissible in the kingdom of God. It explains thus, “The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body” (1 Cor. 6:13). Further in verse 18 of the same chapter the scriptures thus admonished; “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins

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against his own body.” Galatians 5:19 thus reechoes the same, “The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity...” Ephesians 5:3 says it more plainly, “But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people”.

From the above verses, it is obvious that the Bible promotes complete and total abstinence from sexual immorality. According to the biblical account of creation, God created man in His own image and likeness. And He created him for his own purpose to be His own. St Paul's letter to the Ephesians expresses this purpose clearly: “Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before Him (Eph.1:4)”. God Himself is Holy (Lev.19:2, 11:44-45, 1 Pet. 1:16). Our root is Holy. Our destiny is Holiness. Besides, the Church says that “all in the Church whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness” (Paul VI, 1965).

In Ephesians 4, our pathway to God is in union with Christ. To maintain this union, the scripture adjures, “The body is not to be used for sexual immoralities but to serve the Lord” (1Cor. 6:13); “You know that your bodies are parts of Christ (1Cor. 6:5)”; “You do not belong to yourselves but to God, He bought you for a price. So use your bodies for God's glory” (1Cor.6:19). To preserve our union with Christ and the corresponding holiness therein, the human body was made to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor.3:16 establishes this fact when it says, “Surely you know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you”. God's temple is holy and you yourselves are His temple” (1 Cor. 3:17). The spirit that God has given us to live in our body is powerful. 1Tim. 1:7

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says, “The spirit that God has given us does not make us timid; instead, this spirit fills us with power, love and self-control”. The spirit fills us with the power of self-control which enables us control our human impulses and inclinations towards sexual relationships. God created us and gave us His Holy Spirit to equip us with the ability to be holy and completely free from sexual immoralities. He did not call us to live in immorality but in holiness. Anchoring on the scripture which says; “Avoid immorality!”, “Any other sin a man commits does not affect his body; but the man who is guilty of sexual immorality sins against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18).

Sexual indulgence affects the body because it expels the Holy Spirit. That is why the scripture asks, “Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and who was given to you by God?” (1 Cor. 6:19). Therefore, to indulge in premarital or extramarital sexual relationship is to expel the Holy Spirit. It makes one filthy before God and impedes one's relationship with Him because it is the Holy Spirit that preserves our union with Christ. Sexual immorality destroys our union with Christ, as our bodies cannot be shared with any other person or thing other than Christ. We cannot be slaves of two masters because the Scripture asks; “Shall I take a part of Christ's body and make a part of the body of a prostitute? Or perhaps you don't know that the man who joins his body to a prostitute becomes physically one with her (1 Cor. 6:15-16)”? The fornicator/adulterer becomes one with his/her partner instead of with Christ. By becoming one with the prostitute, he/she has cut himself/herself off from Christ. Thus, his/her spirituality is endangered.

Indulging in sexual practices before marriage as in the case of single people or outside marriage as in the case of married people

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can destroy the spiritual foundation of a Christian. It destroys the spiritual life as well as health of a person. As Christians, the Holy Spirit is the source of our spiritual life and health. It is also the source of our spiritual power and divine connectedness. It is the link between our spiritual and physical relationship with God. Also, the Holy Spirit is the assurance of God's glory. The works of the Holy Spirit in our lives cannot be overemphasized. He is our Teacher, Revealer and Comforter. His presence in our lives fills us with the aura of God. But unfortunately, we forfeit these benefits when we indulge in sexual immorality.

The story of David is a typical example. He got involved with Bethsheba, the wife of another man. By his sin of adultery, David ruptured his relationship with God. He lost the joy of the presence of God's spirit in himself. The glory of God left him. It is the spirit of God living in us that gives us inner peace, joy and consolation. When David fell from glory, he also lost the sense of guilt; he went ahead and got Uriah killed. Thus, he complicated his problem both physically and spiritually. This is always the case when one commits a sin. When the sin is discovered, one commits another to cover the former and on and on till the chain becomes too long to handle. When it gets to that extent, the person will either get even consumed by the sin or return to God in repentance as with the case of David. However, David did not let his sins consume him. He returned to God in repentance. He knew he had lost God's eternal joy and retracted his feet with his prayer of repentance, "Give me again the joy of your spirit" (Ps. 51:20).

Sexual indulgence goes with a price. It takes away one's peace, joy and breaches one's relationship with God. It leaves one with guilt, defenseless and spiritual emptiness. Little wonder David realized his wretched condition of sinfulness and yearned for the

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peace of God that passes all understanding. “Let me hear again the sound of joy and gladness” (Ps. 51:8). This is to say that whenever one's internal peace, joy, happiness and consolation are destroyed, spiritual life and health are affected as well. As this condition lingers, so the physical, emotional, psychological, mental and social health is affected. This does not only cause spiritual, emotional and psychological crises but also emotional, physical and psychological sicknesses.

Furthermore, sexual indulgence in all its forms destroys the spiritual power, vision and sanity of an individual. The Holy Spirit living in human body is the source of its power and energy. Thus, the scripture says, “The spirit that God has given us is not that of timidity but that of power, love and self-control” (1 Tim. 1:7). So long as the spirit lives in the human body, the person will be filled with power, the power of God of course. But if the temple of the Holy Spirit is destroyed, the Holy Spirit will depart from it. The departure of the Holy Spirit leaves a person powerless. Sampson is a typical example as contained in the book of Judges. Sampson was filled with a divine power and self-control. But as soon as he became promiscuous and committed adultery as contained in Judges 16, he lost control of himself. He revealed the source of his power and his prostitute partner destroyed it.

From the above, it is very clear that immoral sexual relationship poses danger to spiritual life and health, spiritual power, vision and sanity of a Christian. It destroys the temple of the Holy Spirit which is the body. This is why it becomes important to stay away from any appearance of sexual immorality in order to avert the consequences therein.

THE GRAVITY OF IMMORAL SEXUAL INDULGENCE

Before God every sin is rated equally. None is weightier than the other. However, 1 Cor 6: 18-20 suggests that sexual immorality is graver for two reasons. First, it is against the body. When someone indulges in sexual immorality outside the context of marriage, it defiles the body of the parties because it does not add to the fulfillment of God's purpose as regards sexuality. Second, sexual immorality is an absurdity before the Holy Spirit. Since it leads to defilement of the body, it is very difficult for Holy Spirit to dwell or abide in such a person. Thus, the scripture says, 'All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?' (1 Cor. 6: 18-20). According to economists, human needs are insatiable. It is no doubting the assertion but in the aspect of sex and sexuality, I strongly believe that the reverse should be the case. This is because sex or sexual intercourse is not meant for everyone. For instance, a child is not supposed to indulge in it. It is exclusively reserved for married people and should be enjoyed within the confines of marriage with utmost consent of both parties which agrees with the cliché; 'it takes two to tangle'.

Unfortunately sex and sexual immoralities with their associated effects have grossly destroyed or negatively impacted relationship which might have taken many years of trust to nurture. Even, some marriages are at the verge of collapse as a result of sexual immoralities and sexual wantonness. Sexual immorality is like a wild fire which shatters trust, destroys respect, defaces ones image and demotes prestige. It diminishes one's personality drastically.

The Bible admonishes us to put on the armour in order to repel

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any form of sin. But in the matter of sexual sin the bible strongly affirms that we should flee. Ughachurumba (2000) notes that sexual desire or impulse is like a tidal wave, powerful enough to bear away all best intentions, capable of weakening the strong hold of any resolution or vow, powerful enough to kill and overcome the power of discipline and self-control and enthrone the spirit of compromises and the slight of values.

To support the above, the sin of impurity destroys man and detaches him from the Great Divine. The Bible echoes the importance of purity when it states thus; 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. (Mtt 5:8). Purity necessitates divine connectivity and connectedness; and enhances spiritual power and vision. This underscores the necessity to abstain from sexual immorality, either before or after marriage and adhere to God's instruction to flee from it. When we flee from sexual immorality, we become spiritually, emotionally, physically, psychologically, socially and mentally healthy. Therefore every individual particularly Christians should flee from indulging in sexual immorality both premarital and extramarital.

A CALL TO CHASTITY AND SAINTLINESS

Chastity is the moral force which keeps order in the sphere of human sexuality (Peschke, 1999). This order is deduced from the purpose and nature of sexual activity. Rueuss (1964) opines that man is duty bound either to use his sexual capacity in accordance with its character, or else to renounce it. If he acknowledges this duty without limitation, and if he seriously endeavours to reach the appropriate attitude in his thinking, speaking and actions, he lives in chastity.

The subject of chastity relates to all categories of individuals

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namely: betrothed, single, celibate, religious, young, old etc. Broadly, chastity embodies abstinence from sexual pleasure. Chastity is synonymous to purity. It means the constant attitude of the mind that distances an individual from any sexual inclination. As a virtue, chastity enables an individual to regulate and moderate one's sexual desires, thoughts and actions. In marriage chastity is also needed. It enables the spouses express their sexual desires as permissible in marriage while it enables the singles to restrain from sexual desires, thoughts and actions in totality. Sadly, the term chastity is becoming obsolete as it has been weathered away and bastardized in modern time. Besides, with the advent of sexual revolution, the word chastity is rarely mentioned or even made a matter or subject of discourse. In the assertion of Charles and Shelton (1983), chastity connotes completeness and wholeness of self that reflects whether the person is married or single as well as the proper use of the person's sexuality in the way he or she relates with others. Primarily, chastity is the virtue which relates greatly with charity and justice. Through it an individual consciously refrains from seeing the other as an object for sexual gratification.

From the biblical perspective, chastity is regarded as a spiritual value which is accentuated in love and justice. It is a virtue through which love and sex can be expressed selflessly and with a sense of responsibility. It enjoins married people to exercise their sexual relationship responsibly within the auspices of marriage while enabling Christian singles to remain chaste until the consummation of marriage or until they get married.

Aside its spiritual embodiment, chastity empowers the social aspect of individual's life by enabling him/her to channel his/her sexual energy into creativity by participating in trainings. These

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will keep them mentally, socially and educationally active and become functional members of society. Chastity is also beneficial to the married. It will enable them to remain faithful to their spouses.

In practical term, chastity can be achieved by deliberately staying away from any element capable of exposing one to sin. Such element could be unwholesome touches, indecent dressing, imaginative fantasies among others. In addition, it could be achieved by avoiding anything capable of arousing pleasure through images or suggestive approximation of sexual act or indulge in improper caressing, immodesty etc. This is because the above listed are often underestimated or taken lightly. They are sometimes considered as mere forms of entertainment in recent times; but they are capable of corrupting the sense of morality in people of all ages.

Jesus Christ strongly condemned the act of sexual immorality in Scriptures as stated in Matthew 5:28 thus, 'Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart!'. The above passage is not directed to the married only but also to the unmarried. Although, adultery is attributed to married persons, the Scripture emphasizes "anyone" which means that even when a single person admires a woman in a lustful manner, he/she has committed a sin. Therefore, everyone irrespective of status should exercise caution in matters of sexual relationships.

Furthermore, sexual immorality is capable of creating undue sexual attention, seductive tendencies which may precipitate sexual arousal in individuals. But deliberate practice of chastity helps the individual to be modest and avoid any form of sexual sensitivity. Also, it helps individual to exercise restraints over

sexual elements.

Importantly, chastity is founded on continence and temperance. Sexual continence is the ability of an individual to restrain or abstain from sexual impulses. The term is broadly applied to singles. According to Stravinskias (1998), chastity is the virtue that resists the strong impulse of lust. Continence and temperance are two virtues that must be properly coordinated to achieve chastity. They both encourage moderation of one's instincts, drives for pleasure and keep Christians/individuals both single and married within the boundaries of justifiable sexual morality. And once the correct and justifiable sexual morality is accepted, preserved and lived, it simply signifies sincere human response to the call to saintliness, a call that cuts across every aspect of human life. Christians are advised to cultivate the correct and justifiable sexual morality in order to avoid sexual indulgence and be saintly. To achieve this, Schneider and Girardey (1903) advise thus,

Excite in thyself feelings directly opposed to the temptation, for poison is rendered harmless by antidotes. For instance, thou art tempted by impure feelings; make thy body suffer, in order to stifle them in their origin (p.203).

They further advise thus; “Disclose all thy temptations to thy spiritual father or counselor; such sincerity often produces admirable and, even wonderful effects, on account of humility practiced therein” (p.206).



CONCLUSION

“ All the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their own state of life. ”

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION



Often, people tend to ask or ponder if it is possible to abstain from sexual immorality with the intent to enhance their spiritual life. The answer is in affirmative. It is possible to abstain from sexual immorality by remaining chaste. Obviously, achieving chastity is not so easy but it requires sincere efforts with commitment. Also, it requires being attentive to whatever that is capable of provoking sexual thoughts and desires and avoiding them as well as other forms of sexual provocations. The injunction to flee from sexual sin means that people of all ages and status should disassociate themselves from sexual entertainment including materials from the social media that are detrimental to their spiritual life. Any form of entertainment which is purported to exploit the sexual instinct simply to generate income and at the same time preoccupy the sub consciousness of the mind with a matter that threatens freedom and spirituality should be avoided and possibly eliminated.

Truly, human sexuality is not bad per se but its goodness or badness depends entirely on the individual. It can be integrated together in a good and healthy life. As part of nature, it shares in the essential goodness of its creation. For sexuality to fulfill its purposes and yield the profound joy that it promises, it must be lived and used according to its nature as destined by the Creator. Nevertheless, the most fundamental battle about sexuality is

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whether it is a meaningful element of human nature that needs to be governed by purpose and design and therefore used in a spirit of responsibility or just a form of fun, wherein a person has right to play as he or she pleases. Such an attitude has led to disorientation, trivialization, and disasters of human sexuality.

Repeatedly, it has been stated that sexual intercourse is an aspect of human sexuality. It needs to be integrated by love, companionship, responsibility, accountability, achievement, justice and all other values that make human life complete. The idea that sexual relationship, by itself, is the key to happiness is refuted by numerous problems associated with it and by many marriages that end in divorce. This is because whenever false expectations are unfulfilled, the resultant effect is disappointment. Persons (even married ones) with nothing but sexual relationship to bind them together often end up fighting each other. The human person is destined for something more than bodily pleasure and passionate love.

From the basis of morality, immoral sexual indulgence is wrong on different counts. It obstructs the perfection and holiness which the Church enjoins all her members to aspire towards when she says, 'All the faithful are invited and obliged to holiness and the perfection of their own state of life'(Lumen Gentium). The married and unmarried in their own state are not excluded from this clarion call made by God and His Church.

For the young people especially Christians to improve their spiritual life, they must consider sexual relationship as sacred gift from God to humanity and for them to fully appropriate sexual relationship they must be married. That is the only permissible condition for them to enjoy it. Any condition other than the one

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above is against the standard of God. To this end, the young and single must deliberately stay away from sexual immorality if they want to secure their future. Therefore, they should not listen to music or watch movies carelessly. They must selectively choose the kinds of music and movie that will edify both their body and spirit. More so, they need to purge their hearts of sexual thoughts and stimulations because when those thoughts fully metamorphosed, there is possibility they will find expression; and when it happens, they may get sexually frustrated or abused. Instead, they should uphold the tenets of chastity till marriage in order to enjoy it in fullest with their spouses. This is not to say that there will be no sexual temptations. No! In fact, sexual temptations abound which could cause a Christian to derail. But the teaching of Jesus Christ is clear on that. We must guard our hearts as well as our actions.

It is saddening that some single/young people tend to justify their sexual escapades and refer to them as having fun. It is not fun, rather a frustration that is waiting to explode. It is accompanied by high level of anxiety and in most cases, guilt. Fear is a component of sexual indulgence; fear of being found out, fear of unexpected pregnancy, fear of contraction of diseases, fear of commitment and a lot more. As a result, it breeds exploitative tendency on sexual relationship. At the end, it becomes a waste of time and resources especially one's youthful energy.

One thing must be made clear here, that sexual indulgence is not a panacea for lust. It is an illusion to think that premarital or extramarital sexual relationships will possibly extinguish their unguarded sexual desires or urges. That is why they keep seeking sexual gratification before and outside their marriages which renders them powerless and uncontrollable. And when this

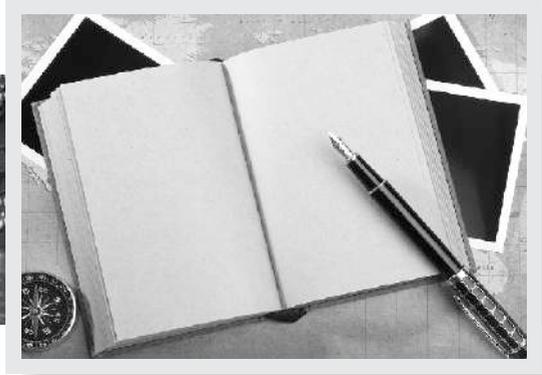
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happens; the individual will experience retardation in his/her spiritual life.

The consequences of immoral sexual indulgence on the spirituality of Christians are very devastating. It draws one away from God, it leads to spiritual dryness; it weakens the stronghold of discipline and self-control needed to make progress in spiritual life. Again, it drives away the Holy Spirit; cheapens and trivializes the most solemn and interpersonal relationship we have with God. It excludes the sacrament intended by Christ to protect, assist and satisfy marriage; it reduces the human person to object. Again, it distorts the human sexuality. Above all, it perverts the demand of chastity and holiness of life.

Furthermore, it violates the mutual love and fidelity of the spouses as promised during the institutionalization of marriage at the holy altar. In addition, torture which characterizes sexual promiscuity lasts longer than imagined. Emphatically, it can be asserted that sexual relationship with other persons other than the spouses is very dangerous to the spiritual and physical wellbeing of every Christian. However, the sure way to overcoming immoral sexual indulgence is by abiding tenaciously with the biblical principles, godliness, discipline, chastity, self-control and abstinence.

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