

Gay and Gay practices: Nigerian Christian Views

By

Ifeoma Grace Otubah, PhD

Department of Religion and Human Relations,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

Gay is more of a relationship. It is a relationship between two persons of same sex whereby they live like husband and wife. Such relationship seems to negate the reason for institution of marriage and in support of termination of the world. Even though, society is said to be changing, the question therefore is, should change in marriage be geared towards world termination by human being themselves by not procreating any longer and that is the problem this paper is poised to solve. A married man can be a gay so also a married woman. Gay relationships include masturbation, homosexuality, sodomy and lesbianism. Gay is a term used to describe a homosexual lifestyle by those who feel the term homosexual has too many negative connotations. Gay as homosexual, relating to, frequented by or intended for, homosexual. Gay men are those who want to be and/ or at least look and dress like women. It was understood that homosexuals with femininity and lesbians with masculinity are consequently, men and women who deviate from traditional expectations about gender roles and become gays. This type of people see what they do as right and see themselves as being cheated and discriminated against by the society.

Introduction

Gay male and lesbian sexual orientations have existed throughout history. Attitudes toward these orientations have varied widely. They have been tolerated in some societies,

openly encouraged in others, but condemned in most. Homosexuality and its acceptance pose a serious problem to a society predominantly made up of heterosexuals. In most places gay people were dealt with great hostility and oppression and can be found in all classifications of wealth, race, age, religion, talent, intelligence, occupation and background. This research will find out those problems posed by homosexuality as well as gay marriage.

Lesbians and gay men frequently suffer the slings and arrows of an outraged society. Because of societal prejudices, it is difficult for many young people to come to terms with an emerging lesbian or gay male sexual orientation. You might assume that people who have been subjected to prejudice and discrimination – members of ethnic minority groups in the Nigerian states would be more tolerant of a lesbian or gay male sexual orientation. Nigerian cultures are influenced by Christianity, Islam and Traditional religion which are not in support of gay marriage. However, a lesbian or gay male sexual orientation is rejected by ethnic groups in Nigerian. Lesbians and gay males are pressured to keep their sexual orientations secret or to move to communities where they can live openly without sanction.

Gay: Origin and Development

Muchmore and Handson (1991) however have seen homosexuality from the angle of genetic or environmental origin. They maintain:

Homosexuality or gayness is not a disease. It may be caused by genes or environment, some combination of these or something else entirely nobody knows. It is clearly that homosexuality has been in existence throughout history and that it is practiced by some lower animals as well. Curing a man of his desire for

other men may be as impossible as task of curing blue eyes of their colour (p. 23).

Negative attitudes toward gay people have pervaded our society. At worst, male – male and female – female sexual behaviour has been viewed as a crime against God and nature. Bailey (2003), in describing gay states that, on average, gay males tend to be somewhat feminine and lesbians to be somewhat masculine, but there is a good deal of variation within each group (p. 79).

In concord with with Bailey's idea, Isay (1990) confirms that: "Gay males are more likely to recall feeling more sensitive than their heterosexual peers in their childhood, they cried more easily. Their feelings were more readily hurt. They had more artistic interests. They had fewer male buddies but more female playmates" (p. 283).

Dawood (2000) in addition to this statement states that:

Gay males were more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to have preferred 'girl's toys'. They preferred playing with girls to playing with trucks or guns or engaging in rough and tumble play. Gay male preferred the company of older women to that of older men and engaged in childhood sex play with other boys rather than with girls (p. 15).

There is also evidence of masculine – type behaviour among lesbians as children. Bailey and Zucker (1995) affirm that:

Lesbians as a group were more likely than heterosexual women to perceive themselves as having been "tomboys". They were more likely to have preferred rough and tumble games than to play dolls and enjoyed

wearing boy's clothing rather than cutesy dresses (p. 55).

However, according to Rathus (2003) "... origins of a gay male or lesbian sexual orientation remain mysterious and complex just as mysterious as the origins of heterosexuality". (p. 316).

Stickland (1995) indicates that "... sexual orientation appears to spring from multiple origins including biological and psychosocial factors" (p. 135). Genetic and biochemical factors (such as hormone levels), he continues may affect the prenatal organization on the brain. These factors may predispose people to a certain orientation. (p. 140).

But Rathus (2003) maintains that "... early socialization experiences are also necessary to give rise to a gay male lesbian heterosexual or bisexual orientation. The precise influences and interactions of these factors have so far eluded researchers" (p. 316).

However, gay life is almost invisible while it exists under conditions of discretion and secrecy. It is to some extent intertwined with the dominant culture hidden in plain sight. Many people leave their community and settle in some usually distant city that has a large gay population. Such towns include Abuja, Lagos and Kano. Gay bars are to be found in every sizable Nigerian city as mentioned above.

Christian View

By 21st century, the nature of marriage in western countries had begun to change. Some countries since the beginning of the 21st century approved same sex marriages. In 2000, the Netherlands became the 1st country to legalize same sex marriages, the law went into force in April, 2001. Numerous countries such as: Canada, France, United States, Germany, Sweden, Scottish,

Denmark, Belgium, Norway, Berlin, Norway, Netherland, Newzealand, Brazil. etc followed suit.

Some Christian churches in these countries allows religious marriages of same sex couples, though others forbid it together with other same sex relationships and practices. Some churches that support same sex marriages according to en.m.wikipedia.org (Retrieved 27th November, 2019) are:

The Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Christian church and other Anglican denominations such as the Episcopal church in United States, the Anglican church in Canada, the Anglican church in Aotearoa, Newzealand and Polynesia. The Anglican Episcopal church of Brazil, The Scottish Episcopal church and Mainline Protestant denominations such as the United church of Christ, the United church of Canada, the Metropolitan community church, the Presbyterian church (USA), the Quakers, the United Reformed church, the church of Iceland, the Denmark, the United Protestant church in Belgium, the church of Norway, the Evangelical church in Berlin, Brandenburg and Silesian, Upper Lusatia, the Evangelical church in Hesse and Nassau, the Evangelical church of Hesse, Electorate Waldeck, the evangelical church Lutheran church in Oldenburg, the Evangelical Lutheran church of America, the Evangelical Lutheran church in Canada, Some Lutheran and United churches in Evangelical church in Germany, some reformed churches in Federation of Swiss Protestant churches, the Protestant church in the Netherlands does not administer sacramental marriage to same sex couples, but blesses same sex unions through the use of a specific liturgy.

More conservative Protestant denominations do not perform or recognize same sex marriage because they do not consider it as marriage at all. The Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) consisting of the church of Nigeria, Kenya,

Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda, churches of South Cone, Australia, parts of England, Canada, USA and church of India through the Jerusalem Conference condemned same sexual preferences and marriages as not biblical and sin against God.

Over the decades, news in electronic and print media has continued to paint different colours of gay marriages. The reality of gay life and activities is not in doubt. As stated earlier, “Gay” is, according to Sarason and Sarason (2009), a term used to describe a homosexual life style by those who feel the term “homosexual” has too many negative connotations (p. 592). Could the ascribed too many negative images be based on its origin, nature and effects on society? It may be true; according to Mairi (1998) that gay could refer to attractive, sexually appealing and charming. “Gay” has been used synonymously with “homosexual”. In contemporary usages, homosexuals are gay men while their female counterparts are lesbians.

Male homosexuality refers to many people associated with femininity and lesbianism with masculinity. The feature of homosexuality is that men and female are involved in same sex activities such as oral sex, anal intercourse, masturbation and other forms of fondling which have been on the increase and culminating into gay marriages. Gays live a monogamous relationship. Their orientations do not make them publicly acknowledge their homosexuality. There is no procreation here which is against the natural order in traditional African and Christian marriages. Continuity with their lineage seems compromised. Child adoption seems the best option but the question being raised is whose children would be adopted?

In the traditional African society, various cases of sexual deviations were unheard of. This is because Africans value family and their culture which is against gay marriages and gay practices, so they could not allow that. One’s problem is

another person's concern and they will not like anyone to be in such a problem which will connect everybody.

This also indicates that a woman or a man should not have any reason to have any sexual affairs with his or her fellow man or woman. Similarly, marriage dowry was cheap and affordable to enable one marry. Moreover, marriage could be arranged by parents. All these indicate or show one has no reason to be involved in same-sex practices and marriages.

Parents, especially mothers should guard jealously their children's moral behaviour especially as it relates to sexual relationships. Consequently, issues of sex behaviour were viewed as sacred for it promoted moral sanctity in African society. Asuni, Schoenberg and Surift (1994) maintain that "sexual deviations are almost unheard of in most traditional communities, perhaps because sexuality is clearly directed by custom. Strong social taboos against sexual deviations may also reduce the reported number of cases" (p. 150)

Man is created in the image and likeness of God. The Holy Bible made it clear in Genesis 1:27-28: "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created them, male and female, He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it".

From the above scriptural quotations, one can see that it is the will of God for marriage to be between man and woman. In other words, God is in support of heterosexual relationship and not same-sex relationship. God also blessed man and mandated him to be fruitful, increase and multiply. But with gay marriage, man cannot multiply, not to talk more of filling the earth.

The position that man is created in the image and likeness of God means that man is a spiritual, moral, social and religious being. He is indeed capable of receiving from God the norms and the values that could guide his human conduct. He is expected by virtue of this honour not to live a life of contradiction, recklessness and irresponsibility. Man is, on the other hand, expected to display a high sense of devotion to duty in the service of God and his neighbours. Man is a moral agent who is expected to direct and lead fellow men to God. More so man is to direct fellowship, worship and service to God. Man as a rational being, he is exalted among other creatures and is capable of receiving from God the reality of nature and human existence.

However, in spite of the above moral fiber that God bestowed or endowed on man, man seems to be disobedient and rebellious to the commandments of God as they relate to marital relationships. The divine plan of God for man is for him to leave his mother and father and cleave to a woman and they become one. This holy ordinance has been turned upside down. In the name of civilization, human rights, freedom of choice and development, man has become proud, arrogant and finds it difficult to respect the will of God for his life. Man seems to decide to be wise in wickedness, negative thoughts and actions. This desire to be wise has remained the starting point of same-sex relationship and marriages. Gay relationship such as homosexuality, lesbianism and so on, enhanced more into gay marriage.

In the book of Leviticus 20:13, it is written "if a man lies with a man as with a woman both of them have committed an abomination, they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them". Sexual activity with members of one's own sex was not the only sexual act considered sinful by the early Christians. Any no procreative sexual act was considered sinful, even within marriage (Rathus, 2005). Christian beliefs were

eventually encoded into secular law. Our legal system grounded in this religious tradition, maintains criminal penalties for sexual practices commonly associated with male – male and female- female sex, such as anal and oral sex.

Homosexuality is said to be unnatural and acceptance of homosexuality and sexual rights would have a negative moral effect on society. A set of stereotypes revolves around gays as a pervasive sinister conspiratorial threat. The core stereotypes here are that the gays are seen as persons, as child-molesters and more generally as sex-crazed maniacs, whose actions inspire fears of the very destruction of family and civilization.

Within the Judeo-Christian perspective, God's will for man is to cleave to his (female) wife and multiply. But with gay marriage, this cannot be accomplished as man and man, or woman and woman marriage i.e. same-sex marriage cannot multiply and fill the earth. This is a problem being created.

The Christian church does not seem to be challenged by the problems associated with same-sex marriage, yet it poses a socio-religious threat in Nigeria. The spiritual problem created by same-sex marriage and practices has become a problem and concern to committed members of the church authority. However, the problem of gay marriage and gay practices is not only negation to natural order, but it is a threat to humanity in general which in Igbo language '*ometuta imi ometuta onu*'.

Homosexual men and women are often referred to as gay males and lesbians. Gay males and lesbians may also be collectively referred to as "gays" or "gay people".

In this write up, the researcher used "homosexuality" or "homosexual" to denote or represent gay. The term "gay" or "homosexuality" denotes sexual interest in members of one's own anatomic sex and applies to both men and women.

Rathus (2005) states that:

Some gay people object to the term homosexuality because they feel that it draws attention to sexual behaviour. Moreover, the term carries a social stigma. As noted by the American Psychological Associations (1991) Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns, the word homosexual has also been historically associated with concepts of deviance and mental illness. It perpetuates negative stereotypes of gay people. Also, the term is often used to refer to men only. It thus renders lesbians invisible (p. 292).

Gay is a word that primarily refers to a homosexual person. The term was originally used to refer to feelings of being “carefree”, “happy” or bright and showy.

From abcdefg.. online Etymology Dictionary, “gay had also come to acquire some connotations of “immorality” as early as 1637. The term gay used as a reference to homosexuality may date as early as the later 19th century, but its use gradually increased in the 20th century.

In modern English, gay has come to be used as an adjective and as a noun referring to the people especially men, their practices and cultures associated with homosexuality. In his own explanations, Rathus (2005) states that:

Lesbian is the common name for female homosexuals, while no special name exists for male homosexuals. The broadest and most inclusive word used by the homosexual community to refer to them is gay. Whatever the assorted meanings given to them, all refer to people who prefer sexual relations with members of the same sex. (p. 37).

For our purposes, homosexuality or gay will be defined as a symptom of neurosis expressed by an erotic impulse toward members of the same sex. Gay male and lesbian sexual orientations have existed throughout history. Attitudes toward these orientations have varied widely. They have been tolerated in some societies, openly encouraged in others, but condemned in most. Gay practices in our Nigerian society are a negation of natural order; it is seen as an abomination and abnormal in our society.

Rathus (2005) affirms that: "... sexual activity with members of one's own sex was not only sexual act considered sinful by the early Christians; any non procreative sexual act was considered sinful even within marriage" (p. 300) where as Stengers (2001) collaborates the above by saying that "Non procreative sexual activity was deemed most sinful. Masturbation, male-male behaviour, oral-genital contact, anal intercourse – all were viewed as abominations in the eyes of God". (p. 17).

Conclusion

This work will bring out the implications of gay marriage to Religion, society and human race entirely by creating awareness of it through Radio, Television, village gatherings, Newspaper etc. this is because a time will come when few or none will remain on this earth planet as a result of non-procreation. It will create awareness to the entire society on its effect on the marriage and family even in our economy. It will affect our marriage system, because God's ordained marriage will crumble and to the family, because there will be retardation in procreation, and in our economy, because those things produced for babies will no longer yield money for it will no longer be marketable.

This work serves as an eye opener to parents on the evil of gay practices and gay marriage as a negation to natural order, to be able to correct their children and wards when they see them practicing it. This study is of immense good to homosexuals in that they will have the idea of diseases one can get through gay practices such as AIDS and Syphilis.

The work benefits the Nigerian Christian Church in that it will be a guide to them as they handle gay relationship in the church and society. This will be done by impacting on the people the evil of gay marriage and gay practices by using the word of God, and why they should not engage on that for it is against the word of God. The church will even help those of them that engage in the gay practices as a result of lack of money and material wealth. This work benefits the entire human race in that they will evade the danger of contracting same-sex marriage, and why they should not continue in same- sex marriage, such reasons as spread of AIDS, psychological problems and stigmatization of their names.

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