

## **A Attitude Critique of the of Nigerian Churches To the Practice of Polygamy in Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Since the advent of the missionary churches to Nigeria, the practice of polygamy has been demonized. Nothing good is seen in this form of marriage. Monogamy is taught as the form of marriage acceptable to the church. For this reason, some churches deny their members who practice polygamy the right of participating in two of the most essential ordinances of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This paper seeks to examine this position of the churches in Nigeria against the materials available in the Bible as it concerns the practice of polygamy. Beginning with some of the texts in the Old Testament, the paper shows that polygamy was an accepted system of marriage in the Old Testament. It argues further that there are insufficient texts in the New Testament on marriage to warrant the wholesale condemnation of polygamy as a legitimate form of marriage. The paper therefore recommends that churches in Nigeria need to reappraise their attitude towards those who practice polygamy, treating them with love and respect, rather than condemning them outright.

## I. Introduction

One of the most vexing problems confronting the Nigerian Church today is on the position of polygamists in the church. This is because the Church teaches that monogamy is the ideal form of marriage, and thus all those who are engaged in polygamy are denied certain rights in the church by denying them full church membership; they are exempted particularly from participating in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. The question that arises at this point is: "What is the position of the Bible on this vexing question." This paper will seek to examine some biblical texts on marriage, determine whether the attitude of the Nigerian church towards polygamous marriage is proper, and give reasons why the Nigerian church should change their attitude towards those engaged in polygamy.

According to Wikipedia.com "polygamy (from *πολύς γάμος* *polys gamos*, translated literally in [late Greek](#) as "often married") is a form of marriage in which a person has more than one spouse at the same time, as opposed to [monogamy](#) in which a person has only one spouse at a time." Wikipedia goes further to say that "polygamy exists in three specific forms: polygyny - where a man has multiple simultaneous wives; polyandry - where a woman has multiple simultaneous husbands; or group marriage - where the family unit consists of multiple husbands and multiple wives." However, historically, all three practices have

been found, but polygyny is by far the most common, and confusion arises when the broad term "polygamy" is used when a specific form of polygamy is being referred to. In the Nigerian society, when the word polygamy is used, it is understood to refer to the first type described above, that is, where a man has multiple simultaneous wives. It is in this sense that the word will be used in this paper.

## **II. Understanding The Practice of Polygamy**

Wikipedia online gives a comprehensive list of several countries where polygamy is widely practiced, affirming the fact that polygamy is practiced all over the world. According to the BBC News of Sunday 16, June 2000, it was reported that “Muslims in Britain are to challenge the UK law which forbids husbands from having more than one wife.” This is because “under Islamic law a man is allowed to have up to four wives.” Zubeida Malik who posted the report observed that “there are no official figures on the number of people practising polygamy in Britain, but it's estimated that there may be hundreds.” ReligionNewsBlog is filled with references to the practice of polygamy by the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mammons). Jonathan Rauch in an article titled “One man, many wives, big problems” published in April 3, 2006 in reason.com

observed that “For generations, taboo kept polygamy out of sight and out of mind in America. But the taboo is crumbling.”

The practice of polygamy is found extensively within the Bible. According to Biblical Polygamy.com Abraham had at least three wives (Gen. 16:1, 3; 25:1); David had at least 18 wives (I Sam. 18:27; 25:39, 43; 2 Sam. 15:16); Jacob had 4 wives (Gen. 29:23, 28; 30:4, 9); Moses had 2 (Ex. 18:1-6; Num. 12:1); and 36 others including Saul, Solomon, Esau, Rehoboam. Interestingly, biblical families.org is a website “run by a group of Bible-focused, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled Christian believers desiring to support, defend, and encourage Biblical-based marriages, including those with more than one wife.” The website makes it abundantly clear that polygamy was the family unit that was most common in the Old Testament period.

However, it would appear that most western Biblical scholars in their interpretation of the New Testament come to the conclusion that monogamy is the ideal Christian system of the family. Monogamy, which is the marriage of one man to one woman, is considered to be the utopian state of family life as depicted by the phrase “*the two shall become one*”. They take their cue from Ephesians 5:31: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This verse is a quotation from Genesis 2:24, and contains the account of the institution of marriage. Albert

Barnes (in his commentary in the Power Bible CD) observed that the meaning of the phrase rendered "for this cause," is, "answerably to this;" or corresponding to this--that is, to what Paul had just said of the union of believers and the Redeemer. In other words, the phrase "for this cause" should not be interpreted within the context of marriage, but within the context of the unity that should exist between the Church and Christ. Thus Barnes observes: "There is no evidence that the marriage connexion was originally designed to symbolize or typify this union, but it may be used to illustrate that connexion, and to show the strength of the attachment between the Redeemer and his people. The comparison should be confined, however, strictly to the use made of it in the New Testament." This means that we must be careful in using this text to support a teaching which the Apostle Paul was not really talking about.

However, Adam Clarke (also in his commentary in the Power Bible CD) interprets the Greek word □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ as follows: "glued or cemented to." Thus "as a well-glued board will sooner break in the whole wood than in the glued joint, so death alone can part the husband and wife; and nothing but death should dissolve their affection." This seems to suggest that the oneness which God has formed between a man and his wife represents the union between Christ and believers, and is somewhat like the union between the soul

and body. The union for life of one man and one woman in marriage was thus designed by God to illustrate the union of Christ and his people. It is this conception that influenced the early missionaries to Nigeria in rejecting the polygamous system of marriage.

On the text of Genesis 2:24 (on which Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31 rely) C. A. Simpson (500) argues that this verse should be considered an editorial addition: “the verse seems to be an addition by a later writer who, reflecting upon the desire of man for his wife, found an explanation of it in the – supposed – fact that woman by her very origin was bone of man’s bone and flesh of his flesh.” He continues: “The verse was not originally an affirmation that marriage was from the beginning, by divine intention, monogamous. Such an affirmation would indeed have been impossible at that time.” He came to this conclusion, because according to him, “only when it had come to be recognized, however inarticulately, that woman was a person in her own right was it possible to discern the true meaning of the sexual desire of man which the verse seeks to explain.”

It is very important to understand the import of what Simpson is saying here. In the first place, the often repeated text on which Western interpreters base their theology on monogamous family unit was not even a part of the original biblical text. It is important for biblical scholars, particularly

textual critical scholars, to come out firmly to disabuse the minds of people concerning this verse. Genesis 2:24 has no contextual connection with both verses 23 and 25. It is clearly an interpolation, or as Simpson says, an editorial addition.

Secondly, Simpson is of the opinion that the developed concept of the personality of the woman as an individual came much later in the evolution of man. Thus to think that at the time this story was written, it crossed the mind of the writer that a woman shared equal position in the family unit with that of the man to warrant developing a theology of monogamy is absurd. The phrase *“and they shall be one flesh”* is a euphemism that must have developed much later in the evolution of human social psychology. It is thus safe to say that the phrase actually serves an etiological purpose in this text, Simpson concludes.

The argument of Simpson is that using Genesis 2:24 to support the practice of monogamy is an attempt to deny the fact that at the time the text was written monogamy was not even a system of marriage. Polygamy was the practice all over the world. It was much later that the editorial addition must have taken place. Thus using the text of Genesis 2:24 in conjunction with Ephesians 5:31 (and Matthew 19:5) to support the practice of monogamy over polygamy is doing injustice to principles of proper textual interpretation.

According to Mercy Ilevbare in an article titled “Practice of Polygamy in Nigeria” in Helium.com “polygamy has been a traditional practise in Nigeria long before the colonialist and the missionaries came in.” She observed that “in some Nigerian traditions the size of a man's family signified the size of his wealth, therefore marrying many wives equaled having more children, having more children equaled having more farm hands.” This position is supported by Ginger Kazay in the same website. Even though Nigeria is no more an agrarian society, the practice of polygamy has not diminished in momentum.

Even though the practice of polygamy has continued to increase in Nigeria, attitude of the Nigerian Church is to regard polygamous families as abnormal and sinful in line with the Western interpretation of Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31 and Matthew 19:5 as explained above. To the Western Church the ideal family unit is monogamy. Thus monogamy is approved by the Church, while all those living in polygamous family relationships are treated with disdain.

Adrian Hastings (74), writing in his well-documented book *Christian Marriage in Africa* quotes Karl Barth as saying that “We can hardly point with certainty to a single text (in the Bible) in which polygamy is expressly forbidden and monogamy universally decreed.” O. J. Baab (280) argues that the term polygamy “simply signifies more than one marriage alliance



existing concurrently in the same family or family group.” In other words a polygamous family consists of more than one marriage alliance subsisting under one roof. That in itself is an admission that it is possible for one man to have a “monogamous” relationship with one woman at a time, particularly at the time he is marrying her. In this sense, what polygamy does is to bring under one roof, the several women with which one man is having a “monogamous” relationship. In other words, polygamy is a family unit in which all the women with whom a man is having a “monogamous” relationship are all living under one roof.

This is of course in contrast to the type of monogamy practiced in the Western civilizations in which a man marries a woman and within four weeks seeks for a divorce. He then goes to marry another woman with the consent of the Church. In such a society, a man is allowed to have a monogamous relationship with as many women as he pleases, as long as two of the women with whom he is having such a relationship do not live under the same roof.

It must be admitted that in Nigeria under the Marriage Act operational in Nigeria, there is no room for polygamy. It is this marriage law that is upheld by the Nigerian churches. However, the question one should ask at this point is: “Who crafted the wordings of the Marriage Act?” there is no doubt that this is a

law imported from the Western world which is been enforced in the African society, without recourse to the traditions of the people. Attention was drawn above to the plan by the Muslims in the United Kingdom to challenge the law on monogamy.

For too long African Biblical scholars have allowed Western scholarship to dictate the rules of biblical interpretation as it relates to social practices. Though there are merits in the Marriage Act, it is not the only law by which family units are established in Africa. There are three laws governing marriage rites in Nigeria: the Marriage Act (which supports monogamy), the Customary Marriage Law (which supports polygamy), and the Islamic Marriage Law (which allows Muslims to marry not more than four wives). While it might like argued that the Customary Marriage Law and the Islamic Marriage Law are not Christian laws, it should be agreed that they are valid laws in Nigeria governing marriage rites. In order words, one must be willing to accept that a Muslim man who marries four wives and eventually becomes a Christian should not be considered to be living in a sinful relationship. He should not be seen as having a family that is not supported by law. The same is true of a man who marries under the Customary Law.

According to J. B. Webster (223) in his article “Attitudes and Policies of the Yoruba African Churches Towards Polygamy,” the early missionaries “proposed to make Africans

conform to the Victorian bourgeois society of England which appeared to them as the highest morality yet attained.” Going further he observed that this missionaries, “playing upon African’s desire for the material benefits of Europe, they never failed to point out in long, dreary recitals of world history that monogamist peoples were the conquerors, the civilized, the inventors, in short, the master race. Polygamous peoples were the conquered, the savage, the imitators, in short, the lesser breeds without the law.” Webster then concludes: “The proud Yoruba people did not suffer this argument to go unchallenged.”

J. B. Webster (227) observes that “For forty years Africans grudgingly accepted the missionary doctrine on polygamy. But with the growth of independent thought following in the wake of the African Church Movement, some began to challenge the hypothesis. Theological argument played a minor role in determining the missionaries’ attitude. Rather, it was their feeling of the superiority of European culture and their identification of those things good and moral as European and conversely those things evil and immoral as African.” In other words, when the Independent African Churches challenged the mentality of the missionaries on the question of polygamy, they were actually fighting the battle of contextualizing Christianity in the Nigerian society.

Rather than leave the fight to the Independent Churches alone, it is now time for African Christian theologians to come out boldly to affirm that polygamy is not an evil way of life, neither is it primitive. If after more than a thousand years of Western civilization, some communities in the United States of America are still practicing polygamy, then one has no other proof of the fact that polygamy is a legal and normal form of family life. With the passage of time, Africans will gradually replace polygamy with monogamy. Edward W. Fashole-Luke (1976:164), avers that “the quest for African Christian theologies is to translate the one faith of Jesus Christ to suit the tongue, style, genius, character and culture of African peoples.”

### **III. The Nigerian Church and Polygamists**

For more than thirty-five years, this writer was acutely aware of the tension which existed and still exists in the orthodox Churches in Nigeria concerning the issue of admission of polygamists into full church membership. For a long time he was of the opinion that the attitude of the African Churches in not allowing polygamists to be full members of the Church was both hypocritical and unbiblical. It is a case of religious apartheid, when one is rejected by the Church because of his marital status. Little wonder then that when the mission churches drove out polygamists from their fold, it became the

duty of the African Indigenous Churches to provide a spiritual home for these ‘pagans’ who were obviously disillusioned with their old gods but refused admission into the church by the missionaries. Webster (235) observes that even where the African Indigenous Churches failed in their duties, the disillusioned ‘pagans’ turned to Islam.

Webster (235), in his investigations, discovered that “prior to 1920 the Baptist Mission was considered an exception to the rule” of sending out polygamists from the Church. In fact, one of their missionaries, S. G. Pinnock, who was greatly respected and loved by the people who favored the admission of polygamists into the Church, was compulsorily relieved of his post as the missionary-in-charge in Abeokuta by the Baptist Mission. “He was replaced by B. L. Lockett, one of the leaders in the Baptist who campaigned to excommunicate polygamists.” Lockett had claimed that “the Baptist churches in Abeokuta were ‘thoroughly saturated with polygamist members’ (Mission Meeting Minutes, 12-16 January, 1921, *Robertson Collection*), and proceeded to use the ‘big stick’ of excommunication.” (Webster, 235)

Happily however, after 1920, the mission Churches, perceiving the success of the African Church Movement “began to accept or tolerate a kind of concealed polygamy among the laity. The weapon of mass excommunication was less frequently

used.” (Webster 235) Today there is every indication that some mission churches are tolerating polygamy as much as the African Churches. Webster is of the opinion that “had the mission churches insisted upon a strict observance of the monogamy rule they would have been smaller and the African churches proportionately larger today.” Sometime in 1992, the Nigerian Baptist Convention, soon after she had launched her program of mass evangelization of the un-reached groups in the country came to terms with the fact that polygamists had to be baptized.

Denying polygamists Church membership is more of a culturally minded stand than a biblically sound principle. There is absolutely no biblical basis to deny church membership to polygamists. Orthodox churches in Nigeria must review their stand on this issue. They cannot continue to close their eyes to the realities of the African family system. “By accepting polygamists into the Church through baptism, the African Churches took a significant and vital step towards indigenization. As long as the Church ignored polygamy, it was forced to ignore discussion of social morality, for the majority of social bonds existed through polygamous relationship. Since it ignored the society, making only hostile references to it, the Church was charged with possessing little social conscience.” (Webster, 235) This statement is as true today as it was at the time it was made. Today, while the orthodox churches are very willing to take the

tithes and offerings of the polygamist, they refuse to accord him full membership in the Church. And that translates to the fact that this hypocrisy of the Church has served as a hindrance to her in truly addressing fundamental issues that affect the morality of the society.

It should be recalled at this juncture that the greatest battle that the Apostle Paul had to fight in the early days of Christianity was that of the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church (John William MacGorman, 115). Paul disagreed with them. The Apostle had to deal extensively with this issue in Galatians 5. According to Burton (272), “the acceptance of circumcision is, under the circumstances then existing in the Galatian churches, the acceptance of the principle of legalism, the committal of the Galatians to a relation to God wholly determined by conformity to statutes and leaving no place for Christ or the development of spiritual life through faith in him and spiritual fellowship with him.” Paul argued that it was faith in Christ that mattered and not the circumcision of the flesh. “Faith is for Paul, in its distinctively Christian expression, a committal of one’s self to Christ, issuing in a vital fellowship with him, by which Christ becomes the controlling force in the moral life of the believer,” (Burton 280).

Though Paul had to pay dearly for his stand that Gentiles should be admitted into the fellowship of the Church

unconditionally, Christianity today is grateful to him. Then why can the Church in Nigeria not learn from history? Why must they deny Church membership to a person because of his marital status? If America of the 21<sup>st</sup> can go as far as to legalize same-sex marriages, and if the Anglican Church in America has gone as far as to ordain gay priests, then what is the moral ground for the Nigerian Church for refusing church membership to polygamists? Just as Paul affirmed that un-circumcision or circumcision does not save, it should be equally affirmed that monogamy or polygamy does not and cannot save. A polygamous, born again Christian, will get into heaven long before a Church member who is monogamous but is not a Christian!

From all that has been said above, it is becoming apparent that the stand of the Church in refusing baptism and the Lord's Supper to a polygamist is not only unbiblical and unchristian but abnormal to the common sense of natural justice. There was this church in which a woman, who is from a polygamous home, was the first wife of her husband; he had two other wives. Before the arrival of the Pastor to that Church, she was a very active member of the Church, playing her part effectively in most of the Church's organizations. In recognition of her Christian commitment and sincerity, the former leader of the Church (a layman) made her a member of the Executive Committee of the



Church. When the new Pastor assumed duty in the Church however, he discovered that this woman was the wife of a polygamist, and he called the attention of the Executive Committee to the fact that it is against the policy of the Church for ‘a known polygamist’ to hold office in the Church. He then carefully assigned the woman other duties that would not require her being a member of the Executive Committee. The question to ask at this point is: “what biblical right does the Pastor (an undershepherd of God) have to refuse the woman (a sheep in God’s fold) to enjoy the two essential ordinances of the church (the sheepfold of God)?”

It is true that on these matters the danger of syncretism is real. But if the Church seeks to avoid involvement by insulating herself from society, it will fail in one aspect of her mission. The Church will become self-centered, cut off from the community. Having ceased to save society, before long it will cease to save souls. This is precisely what is happening in Nigeria today. People know the form of religion, but do not know what it means in their lives and how it should change their lives. Fashole-Luke (175) comments: “suspicion about syncretism and powerful emotions have been aroused in the quest for African Christian theologies, but let us remember that theology, like good poetry, is the recollection of powerful emotion in tranquility.”

It has been the practice of some Nigerian Churches to tell their members who are polygamists that, in order for them to enjoy full membership of the Church, they should put away any other wives they have apart from the first one. Of course this position is based on the belief that the other wives are no wives in the first place. The situation in which such an action will place the children is not considered when such an advice is given. The primary aim is to satisfy the policy of the Church against polygamy. The social effect of what the Church is doing on the wives who would be put away is never considered. On this and other issues Adrian Hastings (77) comments:

A non-Christian has accepted life-long obligation by plural marriage from which he is not entitled to withdraw. To do so is frequently to cause very real injustice and misery both to wives and children. To impose this upon other defenseless people is a strange way of preparing for baptism. It is the woman and children, not the man, who mostly suffer in enforced separations of this kind. To end a polygamous marriage in the name of Christ, who said nothing explicitly to condemn it, at the expense of effecting a divorce, which Christ explicitly forbade, is to pay too high a price to achieve a theoretical conformity with one part of the Christian marriage pattern. Equally, to say that as a consequence it is impossible for a polygamist to be baptized, if he sincerely believes in Christ, wishes to be a full member of the Church and to do all that is right, is to say too

much when we have no explicit scriptural foundation for so doing. Hence in the view of this report a suitably disposed polygamist, can in some circumstances be baptized, together with his wives and children, while fully continuing in his polygamous marriage. If this is done, they should be admitted to communion.

Hastings published his report in 1974. Thirty-eight years later, Churches in Nigeria, and yea, in Africa, have not come to terms with the reality of the recommendations which he made in his report. Many of the orthodox Churches on the continent of Africa still insist that for a polygamist to be admitted into full membership of the church, and enjoy the ordinances, then he must put away his wives and along with them, the children which those wives bore him. This position is completely contrary to the spirit of Paul, who in I Corinthians 7:12 said specifically: “If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.” Usually it is argued that in this text, Paul was talking to a monogamous family unit. This position is simply an assumption. It is not stated in the text. When Paul wrote this Epistle, Corinth was one of the most morally corrupt communities in the then world. Prostitution was the order of the day. Polygamy was a way of life for the Greeks, most of whom had more than enough concubines to last a life time. How can any one then say that Paul was addressing only monogamous family units in this text? There were indeed

polygamists in the Church at Corinth and this text applies equally to them.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

According to a special report from the Eight Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Harare, Zimbabwe, December 3-14, 1998, the General Secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), Densen Mafinyani, urged the World Council of Churches (WCC) to stop quibbling over whether an African church which tolerates polygamy should be accepted as a WCC member. When we put the attitude of the Church in Nigeria today towards polygamy in proper perspective, we come up with a situation in which the people ask often and often again: “What type of God is this Christian God?” This is the primary reason why Christianity has not been able to make the type of impact expected after all these years of missionary activities. The Christian God is seen as one who is alien to the realities of the African culture.

Rather than decline, polygamy is actually on the increase, even among the elites. Lola Shoneyin, in an article in *The Guardian Newspaper* of March 20, 2010, gives a vivid detail of her discussion with her mother over the pros and cons of polygamy in Nigeria. The fact that most Nigerian men are civil

servants, businessmen, bankers, oil-workers, industrialists, has not stopped many of them from taking two or more wives.

There is no doubt therefore that for a long time the practice of polygamy in Nigeria will continue to be a subject of discussion. The Church in Nigeria has failed to squarely address this issue properly. In order to achieve the needed contextualization of the message of Christ to the culture of the African as it relates to polygamy, the following suggestions are presented for consideration:

1. African Christian theologians must come together more frequently to undertake a more thorough and Afro-centric interpretation of a lot of doctrines of the Christian Church in Africa.
2. African Christian theologians must understand that the morality of Western Christians should not be used as a yard stick to measure the morality of the Nigerian Christian, for in some cases the morality of the average Nigerian Christian is even higher than that of the Western Christian. This is clearly attested to in the debate in the Anglican Church on the issue of gay marriage when the Anglican Church of Nigerian stood up to be counted in opposing the stand of the Western and American Churches on gay marriages!
3. It should be noted that the practice of monogamy in the Western world allows for divorce more than does the practice of

polygamy in Nigeria and in Africa. Thus while divorce in the Western world is a normal way of life, the Nigerian culture does not tolerate it. It is more difficult to secure a divorce in a traditional marriage than it is in a marriage under the Marriage Act. What the Nigerian church should do is to continue to present monogamy as an ideal family unit while appreciating the existence of polygamy as a family unit in its own right.

4. The family unit is a universal phenomenon. Both monogamy and polygamy are accepted ways of family life. One should not be considered to be superior to the other. It is true that one is considered *desirable* than the other. However, the word *desirable* is a very relative term. Both monogamy and polygamy are honorable family institutions. Nigerian Christians should be allowed to replace one cultural pattern for another in their own way and at their own pace. Mayers (15-16) asserts that “the Gospel of Jesus Christ is tied to no culture and allows the individual to transcend his own culture. This does not in any way imply that we must attempt to establish a “Christian culture”. Rather, he points out, “it leads to a specific culture being regenerated by the work of grace within the hearts and lives of the Christians living within the culture. Christianity can permeate any part of the socio-cultural setting or make the whole over anew.” He then concludes by saying that “an American can become a Christian as an American, without being made over into

a Nigerian. A Nigerian can become a Christian as a Nigerian without becoming an American.”

4. To regulate wedding ceremonies, it is high time that we establish a *Marriage Counseling Council of Nigeria*. It will be the duty of this Council to regulate matters concerning marriages and marriage rites. Issues like pregnant brides, dressing codes for brides and their trains, wedding expenses, would be things to be tackled by this Council.

Jamal Badawi writing on “Polygamy in Islamic Law” in the Islam for today website writes: “the reason for not prohibiting polygamy categorically is perhaps due to the fact that there are certain conditions which face individuals and societies in different places and at different times, which make the limited practice of polygamy a better solution than either divorce or the hypocritical pretence of morality.” Reacting to the question “Is polygamy immoral per se?” he writes:

It is notable that most of the Old Testament Prophets are polygamous. According to the Old Testament, Abraham "the friend of God" had more than one wife, David had one hundred wives, and Solomon is even said to have had 700 wives and 300 concubines. If polygamy is immoral per se, then these and other leading figures in the Biblical traditions are immoral. In this case, there would be no sanctity attached to the Bible, its Prophets, or its teachings! No sincere

Jew, Christian or Muslim would regard God's chosen Messengers as immoral persons!

Chukwudi Nwokoye in Nigerianvillagesquare.com posted on article titled "How Relevant is the Law against Polygamy?" on June 3, 2008. Part of it reads:

This issue of polygamy and the attendant problems has been a topic that many writers refuse to take head-on. The topic is controversial and many people view polygamists with disdain. Some see them as heathens or traditionalists. To some, polygamists are pagans, or as they put it, idol worshippers. In this article, I wish to take this issue to the market square and ventilate the pros and cons in the public, so that people that do not understand African way of life and the complexities of our traditions will come to understand and maybe appreciate why it is so. Also, it is meant for even some Africans themselves that condemn the practice and refer to men that marry more than one wife as crude or living in the past. But I am here to tell readers that men that marry more than one wife are not crude.

Nigerian Christian scholars should not shy away from categorical statements as those credited to the writers quoted above. They should be bold enough to make it abundantly clear that polygamy is not a sinful act in itself and so should not be used to judge the moral or Christian character of a person.



Rather, polygamy should be accepted as a marriage system recognized the world over. The church in Nigeria must stop ostracizing polygamists, making them feel inferior.

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