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YOUTH, CULTURE AND FAITH IN AFRICA
Navigating the LGBTQIA+ Debate



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Words of Introduction from the Rector

“Youth and LGBTQIA+ – Church’s Response in Africa”

Dear Reader,

In the heart of Africa’s vibrant and youthful landscape, the Church is called once again to be a mother and teacher, to walk closely with her children, especially the young, in all their complexity, hope, and vulnerability. It is within this pastoral and theological horizon that we present this edition of our e-journal, titled *“Youth and LGBTQIA+ – Church’s Response in Africa.”* The decision to dedicate a journal issue to this sensitive and often contested theme is neither casual nor ideological. It is a pastoral necessity, born from the Church’s commitment to proclaiming the truth in love and living her mission of accompaniment, dialogue, and formation in today’s world.

This journal emerges from the academic and spiritual milieu of Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College, a center of formation entrusted with preparing future ministers of the Gospel. It is directed especially to our students of theology, religious and lay alike, but also to a broader audience across Africa and beyond. The reflections contained herein seek not to exhaust the topic but to provide a thoughtful starting point for prayerful discernment, scholarly engagement, and pastoral action.

The African continent is experiencing a demographic youth explosion. A vast majority of our population is under the age of 25. These young people live in a world increasingly shaped by global discourses on human identity, sexuality, rights, and inclusion. Many of them are exposed to diverse interpretations of gender and sexual identity through education, media, and digital interaction. Some identify as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Others are struggling to understand what these terms mean, how they relate to their faith, and what the Church teaches on this subject. Still others may harbour deep wounds of exclusion, judgment, or silence.

For us, as educators of future pastoral agents, this reality poses profound questions. What is the Church’s response to these emerging realities? How do we remain faithful to the deposit of faith, rooted in Scripture and Tradition, while also listening deeply to the experiences of our young people? Can theology be both doctrinally sound and pastorally sensitive? Can our communities become places where truth and mercy meet, where difficult questions are not avoided but approached with reverence, and where all young people, regardless of their identity, can encounter Christ and grow in holiness?

Pope Francis of happy memory did not hesitate to repeatedly urge the Church to become a “field hospital,” especially in *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Amoris Laetitia*. He called us not to abandon doctrine but to apply it with the discernment of a pastor, the heart of a shepherd, and the eyes of mercy. His apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit* reminds us that young people are not merely the future; they are the present of the Church. It is in this spirit that our theological reflection must take place: not to abandon the truth, but to encounter the person; not to dilute doctrine, but to purify hearts of prejudice and fear; not to impose ideology, but to form consciences in the light of the Gospel.

In Africa, the conversation around LGBTQIA+ issues often takes on particular cultural, political, and social tones, with many of them tense and emotionally charged. As future ministers, it is imperative that we develop the ability to distinguish between what is authentically Christian and what may be cultural or ideological. Our response must be formed by an African theology that is truly Catholic, that is to say, universal yet rooted in our local context. This calls for theological maturity, pastoral prudence, and spiritual depth.

This edition of the journal includes contributions from lecturers, pastoral workers, theologians, and students who reflect on the challenges and opportunities of ministering to all people, especially those who experience same-sex attraction or identify within the broader LGBTQIA+ spectrum. These articles do not propose easy answers. Instead, they invite a deepening of understanding, a recommitment to respectful dialogue, and a renewal of pastoral love.

Let us recall the words of St. John Bosco: “It is not enough to love the young; they must know they are loved.” This love is not abstract; it is expressed in listening, in accompaniment, in truth spoken with gentleness, and in communities that reflect the merciful face of Christ. If our theology and our formation do not lead us to love more deeply, to listen more attentively, and to serve more faithfully, then we have missed the heart of the Gospel.

As you engage with the reflections in this journal, I encourage you to read with openness, to think with the Church, and to pray with the Spirit. May this journal be a tool for formation and education, a spark for dialogue, and a seed for a more compassionate and courageous Church in Africa.

May Mary's Help of Christians and St. John Bosco accompany us on this journey of truth and love.

Rev. Fr. Abel Njeru, SDB
Rector Don Bosco Utume Salesian Theological College
Nairobi, Kenya

Editorial Foreword

The Theological Journal of Don Bosco Utume – Salesian Theological College is glad to present to you articles on the “Youth and LGBTQIA+ The Church’s Response in Africa”. This journal contains articles that navigate matters of faith, culture, and youth, particularly in Africa.

We augur that the journal will trigger serious theological reflections on the theme, given that the LGBTQIA+ conversation is reshaping Africa’s cultural and religious landscape. As our youth grapple with questions of identity, faith, and belonging, this analysis offers rare perspectives from Scripture’s view on marriage to why our youth are joining the LGBTQIA+ movements. We should not shy away from hard truths: the Church teaches that marriage is a male and a female (Genesis 1:27), yet the Church and especially Pope Francis urge us to “walk with” those who feel excluded. African cultures see same-sex unions as destabilising lineage, but global media paints resistance as bigotry. Where does that leave us?

These articles explore the following: First, why the Church holds its line and how to explain it to the youth. Second, the African cultural lens: Is LGBTQIA+ truly “un-African”? Third, youth allure: Digital worlds versus family expectations and fourth, stories of grace: How to love without compromising truth?

These articles are not about “picking sides” but seeking wisdom. Whether one is a traditionalist, activist, or confused, the goal is clarity, not caricature. They call for a serious discernment. So, for the Conservative: How to engage LGBTQIA+ peers without hatred, for the Curious: What science says about sexuality and for the Compassionate: Practical ways to bridge/understand faith and LGBTQIA+ struggles. In this regard, the Gospel challenges us all: “Speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). Let us journey together.

The ten articles in this issue of the journal bring together diverse and deeply engaging theological reflections on Youth and LGBTQIA+ in the African Church context. *Cubaka Bisimwa Arsene* explores the generational tensions and urgent need for compassionate dialogue in Church responses to LGBTQIA+ youth in Africa. *Rev. Fr. Joyzy Pius Egunjobi, Ph.D.*, examines the theological and pastoral frameworks that guide a faithful yet empathetic Church’s stance on LGBTQIA+ persons. *Dr. Wahome Ngare* presents a biomedical perspective, raising questions about scientific narratives surrounding sexuality and gender amongst youth. *Bonares Evelio Castillon, FDP*, challenges African churches to shift from a “culture of hate” to a “culture of encounter,” grounded in Christian humanism. *Jasmine Obiri-Yeboah, SDB*, offers a youth-centred pastoral approach that emphasises accompaniment over alienation. *Makhanu Humphrey Wekesa, CSSR*, surveys the varied responses of African churches and critiques their engagement with cultural and theological tensions. *Moses*

Paul Uwora, SDB, provides a critical analysis of LGBTQIA+ understandings of marriage in light of Scripture and Church tradition. *Niwagaba Gerald* emphasises the Church's responsibility to provide a pastoral presence that is both truthful and welcoming in today's African context. *Okenye Nyakebako Jared* delves into the pastoral dilemmas faced by clergy and youth ministers as they seek to accompany LGBTQIA+ youth with fidelity and care. Finally, *Pascal Nkandu, SDB*, argues that LGBTQIA+ identities pose a challenge to both divine order and traditional African values, calling for a return to theological and cultural roots.

As we navigate through these ten articles, the following overview emerges. First, **Five Reasons the Church Opposes Same-Sex Unions:** Biblical Authority: Scripture (Genesis 1:27–28, Romans 1:26–27) defines marriage as male-female, with procreative intent; Natural Law: Homosexual acts are deemed «intrinsically disordered» (CCC 2357) for violating the unitive-procreative design of sexuality; Sacramental Theology: Marriage reflects Christ's union with the Church (Ephesians 5:31–32), requiring gender complementarity. In addition, there is Magisterial Consistency: Church tradition, from Augustine to *Fiducia Supplicans*, uniformly rejects same-sex unions and Anthropological Integrity: Gender dimorphism is tied to the *imago Dei*, with LGBTQIA+ identities seen as distorting divine order.

Second, Five Reasons African Cultures Resist Same-Sex Unions: Procreative Mandate: Lineage and ancestry are central; non-procreative unions threaten cultural continuity; Religious Syncretism: Indigenous beliefs often align with biblical gender binaries (e.g., “male as priest, woman as altar”); Colonial Legacy: Anti-LGBTQIA+ laws (e.g., Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act) stem from colonial-era moral codes; Communal Ethics: Individualistic LGBTQIA+ advocacy clashes with collectivist African values (family/clan centrality) and Stigma and Taboo: Same-sex attraction is historically framed as “un-African,” a Western import or occult practice.

Third, Five Reasons African Youth Are Drawn to LGBTQIA+: Digital Globalization: social media (67% of urban youth) exposes them to global LGBTQIA+ narratives; Educational Exposure: Universities and abroad studies normalize non-binary identities; Activist Allure: Youth-led movements frame LGBTQIA+ rights as “modern” and emancipatory; Rejection of Tradition: Younger generations associate conservatism with “backwardness,” and Safe Spaces: Online communities offer belonging amid familial/cultural ostracization.

Fourth, Five Reasons Some African Countries Legalised LGBTQIA+: International Pressure: Donor funding (e.g., U.S., EU) ties aid to LGBTQIA+ rights; Constitutional Rights: South Africa's post-apartheid constitution bans discrimination (Section 9); Judicial Activism: Courts (e.g., Botswana 2019) rule bans unconstitutional. Other reasons include: Tourism/Economy: Cape

Town's LGBTQIA+-friendly policies boost revenue, and Elite Advocacy: Urban elites leverage human rights discourse to shift laws.

Fifth, Five Strategies for the Church in Africa to Mitigate LGBTQIA+ Influence: Theological Clarity: Teach *Amoris Laetitia*'s "accompaniment without compromise" model; Youth Formation: Integrate natural law and digital literacy into catechism (e.g., "media discernment"); Family Ministry: Strengthen parental roles in gender/sexuality education; Cultural Apologetics: Highlight African traditions' harmony with biblical anthropology as well as Pastoral Care: Create safe forums for LGBTQIA+ youth to discuss struggles without affirmation.

Sixth, among the ten articles, five articles oppose LGBTQIA+ based on doctrinal and cultural perspectives. Three articles call for a serious discernment of a balanced approach between a pastoral nuance and doctrinal fidelity. The remaining two emphasise a person-centred approach, overemphasising only doctrine.

As you read these articles, one thing is clear: the theme of Youth and LGBTQIA+ and the Church's Response in Africa reveals the complexity and urgency of the Church in Africa in dealing with the pressing issue at hand. In working with and for the youth, the Church in Africa needs a serious theological reflection based on revealed truth, the Church's tradition and the Magisterium's teachings, with faith-based interpretation of the signs of the times. The Church's youth Pastoral care should be rooted in truth and love. As editor, I commend the contributors for fostering a dialogue where theology, compassion, and culture meet in service of a more faithful witness.

Fr. Dunstan Christantus Haule SDB
Editor in Chief of the Don Bosco Utume
Salesian Theological College Journal

YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+: THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE IN AFRICA

Cubaka Bisimwa Arsene

Abstract

This study examines the theological, cultural, and pastoral implications of LGBTQIA+ identities in Africa, with particular attention to the Church's response. Grounded in biblical anthropology, the research affirms that same-sex unions contradict the natural order established by God, who created man and woman as complementary beings entrusted with procreation (Gen. 1:28). The Church maintains that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered, as they oppose the unitive and procreative purposes of sexuality, thereby undermining marriage—the foundational institution of society.

The investigation begins by defining LGBTQIA+ terminology and analysing the root causes and societal consequences of homosexual behaviour, including health risks, moral deviation, and the erosion of traditional family structures. Scriptural and Qur'anic perspectives are examined, revealing consistent condemnation of same-sex relations as contrary to divine law (Lev. 18:22; Romans 1:26–27; Surah 7:81). African cultural perspectives further reinforce this stance, emphasising procreation as sacred and same-sex unions as incompatible with indigenous values.

The study evaluates the Church's position in Africa, which aligns with universal Magisterial teaching while addressing local sociocultural realities. Pastoral recommendations include reaffirming the natural purpose of sexuality, safeguarding marriage, and fostering compassionate engagement with individuals experiencing same-sex attraction. Additionally, the study highlights the need for responsible media usage and youth formation to counteract secular ideologies.

Ultimately, this research underscores the Church's dual mission: to uphold doctrinal truth while extending Christ-like mercy. It calls for further pastoral strategies to address contemporary challenges without compromising biblical and African moral frameworks. The findings contribute to ongoing discourse on sexuality, theology, and cultural identity in an increasingly globalised world.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+, African Church, same-sex unions, natural law, pastoral response, theology of the body.

INTRODUCTION

The question concerning same-sex or homosexual union must not be undermined, for in creating woman, God affirmed the necessity of complementarity between man and woman.¹ Furthermore, He entrusted them with the role of perpetuating His creative action, as evidenced by the divine command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28, NRSV).² From this, it follows that any act contrary to this injunction opposes the natural order established by God and contradicts His design in creating man and woman.³ Moreover, the Church’s response remains pertinent insofar as homosexual behaviour constitutes a direct challenge to marriage, an institution foundational to creation itself.⁴ Thus, whenever this sacred institution is undermined, the very fabric of the Church—rooted in the family—is threatened.⁵

The youth demand particular attention from the Church, as its strength hinges upon the morality and vitality of young people.⁶ This concern prompted Pope Francis to assert in *Christus Vivit* (2019) that «the youth are the now of the Church.»⁷ Consequently, their formation must be prioritised, for if the present is neglected, the future stands at risk of compromise.⁸

Given this urgency, the Church, through its teachings and pastoral engagements, continually calls parents to exercise responsible parenthood, safeguarding youth from external threats.⁹ It is within this context that this study examines the problem of “*The Youth and LGBTQIA+. The Church’s Response in Africa.*” To thoroughly explore this issue, four guiding questions are posed: First, what constitutes the acronym LGBTQIA+, and what are the root causes of homosexual behaviour, as well as its societal implications?¹⁰

¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), no. 7.

² Gen. 1:28 (NRSV).

³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana* (December 29, 1975), no. 8.

⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), para. 2357.

⁵ Pontifical Council for the Family, *Family, Marriage, and “De Facto” Unions* (November 21, 2000), no. 23.

⁶ Synod of Bishops, *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment: Final Document* (October 27, 2018), no. 64.

⁷ Pope Francis, *Christus Vivit* (March 25, 2019), no. 178, accessed Vatican.va.

⁸ Benedict XVI, *Address to the Pontifical Council for the Family* (May 31, 2012).

⁹ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (December 8, 1995), no. 22.

¹⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

Second, what do Scripture and the Qur'an teach regarding same-sex unions?¹¹ Third, what is the stance of the universal Church, and more specifically, the African Church, on this matter?¹² Finally, how does African culture interpret LGBTQIA+ identities?¹³

To address these questions, this work is structured into five chapters. The first chapter delineates the meaning of the acronym LGBTQIA+.¹⁴ The second examines scriptural and Qur'anic perspectives on same-sex unions.¹⁵ The third chapter analyses the African cultural understanding of LGBTQIA+.¹⁶ The fourth evaluates the Church's response in Africa to LGBTQIA+ issues.¹⁷ The fifth and final chapter offers pastoral and theological recommendations.¹⁸

1. THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ACRONYM LGBTQIA+

Lesbian and Gay: These words mean the same reality, and the difference is very minimal. The terms lesbian and gay are applied only to persons whose conscious sexual desire and experience are exclusively and primarily directed towards other persons of the same sex.¹⁹ The only demarcation is that one designates the female gender (lesbian) and the other refers to the male gender (gay). According to John Boswell, "Gay is used to designate a person who prefers erotic contact with his or her gender. Gay is a person who is conscious of erotic inclination toward their gender as a distinguishing characteristic or, loosely, to things associated with such people, as gay poetry".²⁰ From this point of view, it is understood that a gay person is a person who assumes and accepts homosexuality as part of him or her, primarily directed towards other persons of the same sex.²¹ The only demarcation is that one designates the female gender (lesbian) and the other refers to the male gender (gay).

¹¹ Robert A. J. Gagnon, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); Scott Siraj al-Haq Kugle, *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender Muslims* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2010).

¹² Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), *Communiqué on Gender Ideology* (July 29, 2019).

¹³ Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ American Psychological Association, *APA Style Guide to LGBTQIA+ Terminology* (Washington, DC: APA, 2021).

¹⁵ Lev. 18:22; Rom. 1:26–27; Qur'an 7:80–81.

¹⁶ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, *Morality and the Future of African Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020).

¹⁸ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (March 19, 2016), no. 250

¹⁹ Maake Masango, *Homosexuality: A Challenge to African churches*, 959.

²⁰ John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, (USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 41-45.

²¹ Maake Masango, *Homosexuality: A Challenge to African churches*, 959.

The term “bi” refers to dichotomy, double, two, or duo. The term bisexual is often used to mean people who, in one way or another, are attracted to both males and females. Moreover, Jay P. Paul defines bisexuality as a sexual, emotional, and social attraction to individuals of both biological sexes. It is often treated as a myth, as a developmental phase that has no meaning in and of itself, or a pathology, either neurotic inability to choose between a heterosexual or homosexual orientation.²²

Transgender: Etymologically, it comes from “trans”, meaning across; this is a transition. Gender refers to one’s personal, social, and legal status as male or female, or mixed, based on somatic and behavioural criteria more inclusive than the genital criterion and/or erotic criterion alone.²³ The term Transgender is generally used about transsexuals (men or women) who feel they are one sex trapped inside the body of another, often dressing and living in the role of the opposite sex, and at times undergoing sex-change surgery to resolve their conflict.²⁴

Queer: According to JOE Dallas and Nancy, Queer is a slang historically used to describe all homosexuals especially homosexual men. Though normally seen as an insult similar to Faggot (homosexual man) some homosexuals have reclaimed the word to describe themselves or their ideology (such as “queer theory or queer politics”.) when used in that way it normally describes homosexuals who are aggressively open about their sexuality.²⁵

Homosexuality: The CCC states that homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction towards persons of the same sex.²⁶ The word homosexuality has many definitions. This research cannot cover all of them. However, the researcher will give some meaning according to some authors. The Greek substantive “*homo*” does not refer to the Latin word “*homo*” which means man. The difference has been stated to avoid confusion in terminology. In this perspective John J. McNeill says that: the prefix homo- in the word homosexual is derived from the Greek root signifying “same” and not from the Latin word for “man”. Consequently, it designates anyone who is sexually attracted to someone of the same sex and refers to both male and female (homosexuals and

²² Jay. P. Paul, “the bisexual identity: An Idea without Social Recognition” *Journal of Homosexuality*, no 2/3:45-90.

²³ John Money, *Gay: Straight and In-Between* (N-Y: Oxford University Press, 201).

²⁴ Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche, eds., *The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality: A Biblical and Compassionate Response to Same-Sex Attraction* (USA: Harvest House Publishers, 2010, 101.

²⁵ Joe Dallas and Nancy Heche, eds., *The Complete Christian Guide to Understanding Homosexuality*, 102.

²⁶ CCC, 2357.

lesbians).²⁷ From this definition, we understand that the word homosexual or homosexuality is sufficient to mean both genders.

Furthermore, the German Catechism employs the term about people whose eroticism cannot be oriented to the other sex, but only to the same sex to which they belong.²⁸ Widely, Homosexuality cannot be limited to the sexual intercourse between people of the same sex, but also takes into consideration the psychological aspect. That is why John Cavanaugh brings a new way of looking at the term, stating that it is important to accept the concept that homosexuality is a way of thinking and feeling, not merely a way of acting. The performance of a homosexual act is therefore not in itself evidence of homosexuality.²⁹

1.1. Causes of LGBTQIA+

The state of being homosexual is based on many factors, and among these, few have interested our study. Furthermore, Murhima A Kau gives the following elements as causes of homosexual behaviour: Family factor, environmental factor, individual drive, and biological factor.³⁰ Family factor: Refers to the experience or trauma of childhood. For example, a child gets abusive treatment from their mother or father, so that the child thinks all men or women behave abusively or cruelly, which allows her/him to feel hate towards that group. Environmental factor: For example, one of the factors that may affect the behaviour of a homosexual is the environment. It is more related to interaction and circumstances surrounding families that overly curb their children, a father who shows less affection for his child, a close relationship with the mother while distant from the father, and a lack of receiving proper education about sex from childhood. Another opinion says that homosexuality is not born but is built through experiences, such as complex living conditions and the effect of circumstances during infancy, childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood. Individual drive: A series of learning processes during childhood, such as a reduced sense of trust in mother and sister (lesbians) and vice versa (gay), and a lack of confidence in the sexual potential that exists in oneself. Besides, the individual's attraction to homosexuality becomes a desire to feel that affirms dominant lust. Self-esteem should not be obtained from other relationships. Fear of the opposite group causes passive erotic retaliation.

Another major cause is Biological: In this factor, the individual, firstly, feels discomfort when doing their homosexuality, then the community

²⁷ John J. McNeill, *The Church and the Homosexual* (New-York: Beacon Press, 1925), 41.

²⁸ *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for adults* (New-York: Herder, 1967) 384-385.

²⁹ John Cavanaugh, *Counselling the Invert* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1960), 17

³⁰ Murhima A Kau, *An Analysis of Factors Causing Homosexual Behaviour Deviation Reviewed from Students' Perception at Faculty of Education, State University of Gorontalo*, 166.

of homosexuals will continue their homosexual activities. Over time, the individual finally becomes more comfortable with this situation. Same-sex attraction has existed since ancient times worldwide. Because it shows sexual activities outside the prevailing norms. Gay and lesbian individuals sometimes show expressive behaviour that seems to indicate their homosexual orientation. Homosexuality or Heterosexuality is an important aspect of personality, something that should be explained by personality theory.

1.2. Consequences of LGBTQIA+

The first consequence is the rejection of the doctrine of creation: all that God created is good. Homosexual union is a total refusal and denial of what God wanted the human being to be. It is a rebellion against God, who in his wisdom created man and woman for the drive of the sexes towards each other. Through this practice, human beings are trying to give God a lesson on what He should do. Yet, Job shows us that “God does not have any other teacher or counsellor” (Job 21:22). This is a clear rejection of God’s might, wisdom, and goodness reflected through what he created.

The second is the distortion of the sacrament of marriage and family: The debate concerning union between persons of the same sex is to be considered seriously by the church because it threatens the very first created sacrament of matrimony. This consequence goes to the extent of even destroying and undermining the goal of marriage, which is the openness to new life. Our understanding is that if marriage, which is critical in bringing new life, is compromised, then social stability can no longer be promised. In this perspective, Pope Francis states that the weakening of the family... Poses a threat to the mature growth of individuals, the cultivation of community values, and the moral progress of cities and countries. There is a failure to recognise that only an indissoluble union between a man and woman has a role to play in society as a stable commitment that bears fruit in new life. Any union that is inherently closed to procreation cannot safeguard societal continuity.³¹

The question of marriage between same sexes is not only against the family, but also demolishes the church since its strong foundations are based on a strong and well-formed family. Hence, any practice opposed to the development of the family is also indisputably opposed to the well-being of the Church. In this context, Pope Francis writes: the church is a family of families, constantly enriched by the lives of all those domestic churches... by the virtue of the sacrament of marriage, every family becomes, in effect, a good for the church.³²

³¹ Pope Francis, *Encyc. Let. Amoris Laetitias*, (Rome: Vatican Press, 2016), no. 52.

³² *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 87.

The third consequence is Health effects: The detrimental effects of homosexual intercourse are numerous and may be differentiated by the gender of the individuals involved. Men experience theirs as well, and women have negative consequences related to their state. On the side of male, Anne Rompalo says that for men, there is a risk of the following diseases: anal cancer, chlamydia trachomatis, cryptosporidium, Giardia Lamblia, Herpes simplex virus, human immunodeficiency virus, human papilloma virus, isospora belli, microsporidia, Gonorrhea, Viral hepatitis types B and C, Syphilis.³³ On the side of women who have homosexual behaviour, there is a risk of bacterial vaginosis, hepatitis B and C, as it is for men, heavy cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, intravenous drug use, and prostitution were present in much higher proportions among female homosexual practitioners.³⁴

2. SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF LGBTQIA+

The Holy Scriptures speak of sexuality as a gift from the creative hand of God. In the Old Testament, we see that sexuality was part of God's design from the beginning of creation. When God created Adam, He saw that Adam was in a situation that was "not good" —he experienced emptiness and incompleteness because he lacked a companion. To fulfil him, God gave man a woman as his helper and partner (Genesis 2:18). Furthermore, in the book of Genesis, God blesses Adam and Eve and commissions them to participate in "*creatio continua*". This is evident when He commands them: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). From this perspective, we learn that any act that opposes the natural order established by God contradicts His command to humanity. Such an act is *contra naturam*.

When it comes to speaking about homosexuality in scripture, it is advisable to be careful because the question of homosexuality is not explicitly stated. In this context, Boswell reads that it is quite clear...that word homosexual does not occur in the bible: no exact text or manuscript and language... contains such a word. Sodom is used as a symbol of evil in dozens of places, but not in a single instance is the sin of the Sodomites specified as homosexuality.³⁵

³³ Anne Rompalo, "Sexual Transmitted causes of Gastrointestinal Symptoms in Homosexual Men," *Medical Clinics of North America*, 74(6): 1633-1645(November 1990); Anal Health for Men and Women," *LGBTHealth Channel*, www.gayhealthchannel.com/analhealth/; "safer sex (MSM) for Men who have sex with Men," *LGBTHealthchannel*, www.gayhealth.com/stdmsm/.

³⁴ Katherine Fethers, et al., "Sexually Transmitted Infections and risk behaviour in women who have sex with women," *Sexually Transmitted Infections*, 76:345-349, p. 347(2000).

³⁵ John Boswell, *Christian Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, (USA: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), 94.

More clearly, it is in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 that the matter of homosexuality is mentioned. The act of sexual intercourse between people of the same sex is, according to Leviticus, an abomination and crime. Equally, many periscopes in the New Testament also deal with the depravity of morality. Saint Paul's literature speaks against moral deviation among believers.

In the letter to Romans 1:18-32, Paul qualifies some practices, especially sexual immorality, as a depravity. Performers of these deviations, according to Paul, will receive due penalty. He thus declares: for this reason, God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way, men, giving up the natural intercourse course with women... men committed shameless acts with men and received in their persons the due penalty for their error (Rom 1:26-27). In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11, Paul lists behaviours that can be an obstacle to inheriting God's favour, and among these sins, he also quotes the practice of Sodomy. In addition to the biblical consideration, the Islamic tradition, through its Qur'an, does not remain silent regarding the question of same-sex relationships. In some of its surahs, the Qur'an seems to touch on the question. Islam teaches that to approach men with desire instead of women is a moral depravity and a transgression (Surah 7:81; 26:165-166).

3. AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES OF LGBTQIA+

It would be unfair to claim that the practice of homosexuality is not a reality among African people. Partly, I agree with LAY Oladipupo that homosexuality existed in traditional Africa. However, he is wrong when he declares that it was socially accepted.³⁶ The practice is a reality, but it contradicts the traditional African values and especially the sacredness of life and procreation.

The African worldview considers the sacredness of life. This is to be perpetuated through the procreative act. Because Africans believe that the perpetuation of a dead person relies on bringing new life. Africans survive through their children. This view meets the declaration of Francois Rabelais that human beings die, but they survive in their children. Homosexual behaviour is a crime and a great offence against this value in Africa. As it is a taboo for a husband/ wife to have sexual relations with another woman or man, as stated by Ansh³⁷ So, homosexuality is also more than a taboo. It is a crime against African values. Procreation in Africa is sacred.

³⁶ Sunday Layi Oladipupo ed., *African Philosophy: Whose Past and Which Modernity?* (Nigeria: Obafemi Awolowo University Press, 2021), 289.

³⁷ Ansh, J.K. "The Ethics of African Religious Tradition" in S.C. Crawford(ed) *World Religion and global Ethics*, New York: Paragon House, 1989, 254.

4. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE IN AFRICA REGARDING LGBTQIA+

4.1 The Magisterial Teaching on LGBTQIA+ in General

The definition of marriage according to the Code of Canon Law of 1983 is in sharp contradiction with homosexual union. It shows that, marriage is a covenant, through which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptized, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament.³⁸ Moreover, Homosexual acts are contrary to the natural established order and contradict it.

God's design for human sexuality. The Catechism of the Catholic Church not only condemns homosexual acts, but also considers them as acts intrinsically disordered because they are contrary to the natural law, they close the sexual act to the gift of life, and they do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.³⁹ Furthermore, the *CDF* enriches the idea of the catechism by declaring that to choose someone of the same sex for one's sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals, of the Creator's sexual design. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union, able to transmit life, and so, it thwarts the call to a life of that form of self-giving which the Gospel says is the essence of Christian living.⁴⁰

Gaudium et Spes speaks of the duality of man without denying his wholeness. Man is body and spirit, and his body should lead him to praise God and should not be used in a disordered way. It thus says: man is not allowed to despise his bodily life, rather he is obliged to regard his body as good and honourable because it has its origin in God. But the very dignity of man postulates that man glorifies God in his body and forbids it to serve the evil inclination of his heart.⁴¹ The doctrine of faith states that those who would move from tolerance to legitimisation of the specific rights for cohabiting homosexual persons need to be reminded that the approval or legalisation of evil is something far different from tolerance of evil.⁴²

In addition to this, it argues that, in those situations where homosexual unions have been legally recognised or have been given the legal status and

³⁸ Canon, 1055.1

³⁹ CCC, 2357.

⁴⁰ *CDF, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, (Rome, 1986), no. 7.

⁴¹ *GS*, 14.

⁴² *CDF, Consideration Regarding Proposals to give Legal Recognition to Union Homosexual Persons*, no.5.

rights belonging to marriage, clearly and emphatic opposition is a duty. One must refrain from any cooperation in the enactment or application of the gravely unjust laws and material cooperation on the level of their application.⁴³ In a letter addressed to Bishops, the same congregation clarifies that it is only in the marital relationship that the use of the sexual faculty can be morally good. A person engaging in homosexual behaviour, therefore, acts immorally.⁴⁴

4.2 The African Conferences' Position on the Question of LGBTQIA+

The question regarding homosexuality is a challenging problem to the church family of God in Africa because, apart from being Christian, it is also stuck on traditional African values. These values, due to globalisation, seem to be mitigated and rejected. In this perspective, Maake Masango reads that: the issue of homosexuality is particularly problematic for the church in Africa and poses a significant challenge to African churches.⁴⁵ Capturing the teaching of the church, Nilson writes that homosexuality constitutes a deviation from the order of nature according to which humans are created male and female by God; moral norms based on the truth of human nature are unchangeable since human nature is complete and finished.⁴⁶ The church in Africa not only relies on the teachings of the church, but also considers the traditions and cultural context in Africa. Union between same sexes, as stated in his letter to the bishops of the SECAM, would be a confusing and sharp contradiction with the cultural ethos of African communities.⁴⁷

5. PASTORAL AND THEOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Homosexuality is not a problem of today; it has been there since the time of the Old Testament. Although it is a perennial problem, the church in Africa needs to think of ways to suppress it and save those who may be adhering to it due to ignorance. Here are some suggestions that can help us:

5.1. Reaffirmation of the Purpose for which each Organ was Created

The question concerning Homosexual behaviour is mostly a problem of moral decline and of the tendency to consider sex as an instrument that can perform any act, even for what it wasn't created. So, whenever something is disoriented in the fulfilment of what it is intended for, it becomes a deviation.

⁴³ CDF, *Consideration*, No. 5.

⁴⁴ CDF, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, no 7.

⁴⁵ Maake Masango, *Homosexuality: A Challenge to African Churches*, 956.

⁴⁶ Nilson, *The church and Homosexuality: A Lonerganian Approach*, Collegeville: MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001,

⁴⁷ Card. Fridolin Ambongo, Let. to the Bishop of SECAM On No Blessing for Homosexual Couples in the African Churches (Accra, January 2024), 4.

Besides this deviation being dangerous, it is also incompatible with the goal of procreation.

The mouth is for eating, speaking, and kissing for married people; it is not for sex. The anus is for not for sex but for releasing.... the only organs for sex penetration are penis and vagina. It is only when these two organs are in deep penetration that we can speak properly of sexual intercourse. Other practices are opposed to God's will.

5.2 The Church Must Support and Protect the Family and Marriage as willed by God

The church must support and protect what God Himself started. By assisting the family according to their circumstances and protecting it and marriage against theories that threaten the meaning and value attached to marriage and family. This is what the church is doing, but it has to be keen in fulfilling its prerogative because John Paul II states that:

Knowing that marriage and the family constitute one of the most precious of human values, the Church wishes to speak and offer her help to those who are already aware of the value of marriage and the family and seek to live it faithfully, to those who are uncertain and anxious and searching for the truth, and to those who are unjustly impeded from living freely their family lives. Supporting the first, illuminating the second, and assisting the others, the Church offers her services to every person who wonders about the destiny of marriage and the family.⁴⁸

5.3 Respect for People of Homosexual Behaviour Despite Their Sinful State

God created all human beings in His image and likeness. Based on this, human beings have an irrefutable dignity regardless of their situation. As stated by Saint Augustine, "Even though sin came into the world and disrupted the relationship between God and man, the image of God in man was not destroyed". So, the homosexual person, despite his state, is still a creature of God and needs to be treated accordingly.

5.4 A Careful and Responsible Use of Mass Media

The means of social media are not as bad as we can imagine. Their harm depends on the education of the person using them. They are a means of gaining perfect knowledge and of socialisation among people from different parts of the world. However, if these social media are not controlled and used according to their purpose, they can be a means of moral decline and

⁴⁸ FC 1.

deviation in society. Regarding to this, pope John Paul II advises that: families should take care to seek for their children others forms of entertainment that are more wholesome, useful and physically, morally and spiritually formative, to develop and use to advantage the free time of the young and direct their energies....parents must ensure the moderate, critical, watchful and prudent use of means of communication, by knowing what impact they have on the life of their children and by doing so they train the conscience of their children at the extent that they learn to reject all harmful programs available.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

Our work consisted of reflecting on the theme regarding "*The youth and LGBTQIA+ The response of the church in Africa.*" In the first chapter we read that LGBTQIA+ is an acronym made up of the words Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Asexual. All these refer to same-sex unions. The second chapter, which was about the scriptural understanding of same sex union, informs us that sexuality is a gift from the creative hand of God, same sex union is a deviation and depravation of morality, and is against the natural established order. The third chapter was about the African understanding of same sex unions. Through this chapter, we found that the African worldview considers the sacredness of life, which is to be perpetuated through the procreative act. Therefore, homosexual behaviour is taboo and a crime against African morality.

The fourth chapter focused on the teachings of the church in general and its position in Africa in particular. From this, we saw that the church of Africa holds on to the teaching of the scripture and tradition according to which homosexual unions can never be approved and are contrary to God's will. The chapter concerning suggestions invites to the Reaffirmation of the purpose for which each organ was created, to Respect people of homosexual behaviour despite their sinful state because they are still God's creatures, to a careful use of social media, etc.

This study has undertaken a systematic examination of the complex relationship between youth, LGBTQIA+ identities, and the Church's response in the African context. Through rigorous analysis across five chapters, several key findings have emerged that contribute to ongoing theological and sociocultural discourse.

The investigation first established the terminological framework, clarifying that LGBTQIA+ represents an umbrella designation encompassing diverse sexual and gender identities, including but not limited to Lesbian, Gay,

⁴⁹ FC76.

Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual persons.⁵⁰ Subsequent scriptural analysis confirmed the Church's longstanding position that while all persons possess inherent dignity, same-sex unions constitute a departure from the natural law as instituted by the Creator.⁵¹

African cultural perspectives, examined in chapter three, revealed a profound connection between traditional values, procreation, and the maintenance of social order.⁵² The study found near-unanimous consensus across African societies regarding the incompatibility of homosexual behaviour with indigenous moral frameworks. This cultural analysis provided crucial context for understanding the African Church's particular stance on these matters.

The examination of ecclesial responses demonstrated remarkable consistency between universal Church teaching and African episcopal positions.⁵³ The research confirmed that African ecclesial communities maintain an uncompromising adherence to biblical anthropology while facing unique pastoral challenges in contemporary society.

Finally, the study proposed several constructive recommendations, including (1) Theological reaffirmation of creation-based anthropology. (2) Pastoral approaches balancing truth and compassion. (3) Critical engagement with digital media influences and (4) Youth formation programs grounded in Christian anthropology.⁵⁴

This research contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations at the intersection of theology, cultural studies, and pastoral practice. While limited to the African context, its findings may inform broader discussions regarding the Church's engagement with sexual ethics in the modern world. Further study is recommended regarding the pastoral care of persons with same-sex attraction and the evolving challenges posed by globalised gender ideologies.

⁵⁰ American Psychological Association, *APA Style Guide to LGBTQIA+ Terminology* (Washington, DC: APA, 2021), 12-15.

⁵¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), para. 2357.

⁵² Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 45-48.

⁵³ Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar, *Communiqué on Gender Ideology* (July 29, 2019), 3-4.

⁵⁴ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), no. 250; Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (1995), no. 22.

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CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO LGBTQIA+

Rev. Fr. Joyzy Pius Egunjobi Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the Catholic Church's engagement with LGBTQIA+ issues through the theological, cultural, and pastoral lenses, particularly in the African context. Analysing historical and contemporary perspectives, it traces the Church's doctrinal consistency on homosexuality as intrinsically disordered (CCC 2357) while exploring evolving pastoral approaches under recent pontificates. The investigation begins with Fr. John Harvey's 1970 confessional dilemma, illustrating the tension between upholding moral doctrine and extending pastoral mercy to same-sex-attracted individuals.

In Africa, traditional values and religious teachings have fostered resistance to LGBTQIA+ acceptance, despite evidence of same-sex relationships across the continent (Sandfort & Reddy, 2013). The article critiques how African churches navigate the realities after the Fiducia Supplicans of 2023, highlighting the interplay between cultural norms, colonial legacies, and theological orthodoxy.

Scriptural and magisterial foundations are systematically examined, from Old Testament condemnations (Lev 18:22; Gen 19) to New Testament teachings (Rom 1:26-27) and patristic writings (Augustine, Aquinas). The study underscores the Church's dual mandate: to affirm the complementarity of heterosexual marriage (Can. 1055 §1) while ministering to LGBTQIA+ persons with "respect, compassion, and sensitivity" (CCC 2358).

Findings reveal that effective pastoral care requires neither doctrinal compromise nor exclusion but a via media of truth articulated with charity. The study concludes with recommendations for culturally attuned evangelisation, emphasising catechesis on anthropology, youth formation, and critical engagement with globalised gender ideologies.

Keywords: *Catholic Teaching on Homosexuality, African Christianity, Pastoral Theology, LGBTQIA+, Fiducia Supplicans, Synodality.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The contemporary discourse surrounding homosexuality presents a complex intersection of theological, cultural, and pastoral considerations.¹ This article examines the Catholic Church's response to LGBTQIA+ issues through three primary lenses: the lived experiences of pastoral ministers, the African sociocultural context, and the Church's doctrinal tradition.² The analysis begins with Father John Harvey's 1970 confessional dilemma, which encapsulates the tension between maintaining doctrinal integrity and extending pastoral compassion to individuals in same-sex relationships.³

The discussion then shifts to the African context, where traditional cultural values and religious teachings have created strong resistance to LGBTQIA+ acceptance.⁴ As Sandfort and Reddy (2013) demonstrate, same-sex relationships exist across Africa despite cultural and legal prohibitions.⁵ The article analyses how African churches have responded to these realities after the Vatican's *Fiducia Supplicans* declaration in 2023.⁶

Furthermore, this study examines the scriptural and theological underpinnings of the Church's doctrine on homosexuality, engaging sacred texts, patristic tradition, and contemporary magisterial pronouncements.⁷ The analysis demonstrates both the consistency of Church teaching and the evolution of pastoral approaches under recent pontificates.⁸ Throughout, the article maintains a scholarly tone while preserving the experiential narratives that illuminate these complex issues.⁹

2.0 THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PASTORAL MINISTERS

Father John Harvey, who was ordained on June 3, 1944, and who served as the President of De Sales Hall School of Theology, Washington, D.C, is the author of numerous publications about homosexuality.¹⁰ He lived during the transition

¹ John F. Harvey, *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 45.

² Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2019), 34.

³ Harvey, *The Homosexual Person*, 112.

⁴ Theo G. M. Sandfort and Vasu Reddy, "African Same-Sex Sexualities and Gender Diversity," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15, suppl. 1 (2013): 1-6.

⁵ Sandfort and Reddy, "African Same-Sex Sexualities," 3.

⁶ *Fiducia Supplicans* (Vatican: Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2023), sec. 5.

⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), paras. 2357-2359.

⁸ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), para. 297.

⁹ Bogdan S. Czyżewski, "Homosexual Acts in Early Christian Writings," *Verbum Vitae* 39, no. 1 (2021): 335-351.

¹⁰ Harvey, John F. *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1971, 3.

of homosexuality from a mental disorder to sexual orientation in 1971¹¹. He shared his experience as follows: “During the November 1970 workshop on homosexuality and religion held at the Catholic University, the question was presented to me whether I would give absolution in the confessional to a homosexual who had every intention of remaining a homosexual liaison, or what is sometimes called a homosexual “marriage”¹². The interrogator added that this homosexual did not feel that he was doing wrong in such an overt practice of homosexuality, because he knew of no other way to have a stable human friendship and did not want to lapse into the promiscuous kind of life so characteristic of many homosexuals.” Harvey continued to say that he replied that, in conscience, I could not give absolution to this individual, unless he agreed to give up this practice because I regarded such a way of living as a serious violation of the Christian norms of sexual conduct. To this reply, it was objected that I had overlooked the fact that the individual did not regard his behaviour as contrary to the law of God.

3.0 THE SITUATION - THE AFRICAN SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXT

One of the hottest topics of discussion with a great push from the Western world today concerns LGBTQIA+ matters, including same-sex marriage. The issue of homosexuality is biopsychosociotechno-spiritually factored. A condition once regarded as a mental disorder or a psychiatric illness by psychiatrists, physicians, scientists, and the public is now gaining recognition and being fought for. Until the nineteenth century, the discussions about homosexuality were prominent in the sphere of religion, which regarded it as “immoral.” Today, the Church as well as many people are either confused, in disbelief, or changing their worldview or position about homosexuality. The truth is that homosexuality is as old as human existence.¹³.

It can be said without mixing words that the African society does not encourage homosexual relationships, but it does not mean that there are no such behaviours among Africans. As Sandfort and Reddy (2013) noted, it is uncommon to find high-calibre social science and humanities studies on same-sex sexuality in Africa.¹⁴. This does not mean that same-sex relationships

¹¹ Harvey, John F. *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1971, 3.

¹² Harvey, John F. *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987

¹³ Egunjobi, J. P., Ayuma, S. A., Njuguna, E. M., & Maina, C. W. (2023, October 20). *Kenyans' attitudes towards the formation of an LGBTQIA+ association*. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 7(9), 1802–1812. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.71048>

¹⁴ Sandfort, T. G. M., & Reddy, V. (2013). *African same-sex sexualities and genderdiversity: An introduction*. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 15 (Suppl 1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2013.797218>

are not common in Africa. Yet, African nations appear to have been the least receptive to same-sex sexuality and sexual relationships in the recent past when compared to those on other continents.¹⁵ According to Itaborahy (2012), the continent of Africa has the greatest number of nations where homosexuality is prohibited.¹⁶ This is because, on one hand, homosexuality is not supported in African traditional culture.

Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2009 was seen as aiming at protecting the cherished culture of the people against emergent threats to the traditional heterosexual family.¹⁷ On the other hand, religions play a significant role in this (Sandfort & Reddy, 2013). According to Adriaan van Klinken (2018), the emergence of anti-homosexuality politics in Africa is often explained in terms of religion. Given the dominance of Christianity in many of the countries in which homophobia seems to be on the rise, churches in particular are seen as fueling the repression of African LGBTQIA+ people.

It is easy to find evidence in support of this idea: African Anglican bishops are at the forefront of the crisis over homosexuality in the Anglican Communion; Ugandan evangelical pastors actively campaigned for the Anti-Homosexuality Bill; Nigerian Catholic and Pentecostal leaders enthusiastically welcomed the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Bill. Moreover, political leaders in many countries often use explicitly religious arguments against homosexuality, denouncing it not only as "un-African" but also "un-biblical" and "un-Christian". In the media and among the general public, religious beliefs often frame debates about homosexuality, such as in Zambia, where United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was even seen as an agent of the devil after he called upon the country to recognise the human rights of sexual minorities.

Several newsrooms have reported the accusation against the Christian churches of promoting homophobia. The term homophobia was first used in the 1960s by psychologist George Weinberg. It combines two terms: (1) the word homosexual, which is composed of neo-classical morphemes; and (2) phobia, which comes from the Greek word φόβος, *phóbos*, which means "fear," "morbid fear," or "aversion." It is acknowledged that Weinberg was the first to use the phrase in a speech (Herek, 2004).

¹⁵ Inglehart, Ronald, and Christian Welzel. *Modernisation, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

¹⁶ Itaborahy, Lucas Paoli. 2012. *StateSponsored Homophobia: A World Survey of Laws Criminalising SameSex Sexual Acts Between Consenting Adults*. May. Brussels: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.

¹⁷ Nyanzi, Stella. 2013. "Dismantling Reified African Culture through Localised Homosexualities in Uganda." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15 (8): 952–967. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2013.798684>

According to Egunjobi et al. (2023), some of the reasons for the negative attitude towards LGBTQIA+ in Kenya were due to: Religious intolerance for homosexuality, especially in the Christian Religion. Religious perception of LGBTQIA+ as sinful. Cultural perception of LGBTQIA+ as moral decadence. LGBTQIA+ is unconstitutional.

4.0 CHURCH'S RESPONSE - THE CHURCH'S DOCTRINAL TRADITION

The Church should not be on the defensive. The Church should uphold her values in divine inspiration, as guided by the Scriptures and Traditions. I can only express the Church's view from a Catholic perspective. The African Catholic Church, for now, will say nothing different from what the Universal Church will say.

4.1 CHURCH'S RESPONSE FROM THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Scripture presents clear and consistent teachings on human sexuality, including homosexuality. Both the Old and New Testaments contain passages that address same-sex relations, often in the context of broader moral and ethical teachings. These texts have been the subject of theological interpretation and debate, particularly in light of contemporary discussions on human dignity, inclusion, and pastoral care.

4.1.1 Old Testament Foundations

The first occurrence of homosexuality was in Genesis 19:4-5, where young and old men in Sodom asked Lot to bring out his male visitors so that they could have sex with them. That led to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was mentioned as an abomination in Leviticus 18:22-30, and Leviticus 20:13 stated that it was punishable by death.

4.1.2 New Testament Foundations

Jesus did not directly address homosexuality. However, He affirmed marriage as a union exclusively between a man and a woman (Matthew 19). Furthermore, passages such as Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and Jude 7 provide clear evidence that Scripture regards homosexual behaviour as sinful, alongside other forms of moral transgression.

4.2 Church's Response from the Tradition

Throughout the Church's history, the Church and Church documents have not looked kindly on the practice of homosexuality. The Fathers of the Church, according to Czyżewski, gave their opinions on homosexual acts, not

necessarily in separate works, but in occasional voices, which does not mean that this problem did not exist or was ignored by the early Christians.¹⁸

Saint Justin Martyr, an important Greek Philosopher-Apologists in the early Christian church mentioned that “females and hermaphrodites, and those who commit unmentionable iniquities, are found in every nation.... and there are some who prostitute even their children and wives, and some are openly mutilated for sodomy; and they refer these mysteries to the mother of the gods” (First Apology 27 [A.D. 151]). For Basil the Great, “He who is guilty of unseemliness with males will be under discipline for the same time as adulterers” (Letters 217:62 [A.D. 367]). In the year AD 342, the Christian emperors such as Constantius II and Constans decreed that a man marrying a man was punishable by death.

According to the Theodosian Code (9.7.6), “All persons who have the shameful custom of condemning a man’s body, acting the part of a women to the sufferance of alien sex (for they appear not to be different from women), shall expiate a crime of this kind in avenging flames in the sight of the people”. St Augustine said “If all nations were to do such things, they would be held guilty of the same crime by the law of God, which has not made men so that they should use one another in this way” (Confessions 3:8:15 [A.D. 400]). For Thomas Aquinas, a 13th Century Great Theologian, not all things to which a person might be inclined are “natural” in the morally relevant sense; rather, only the inclination to the full and proper expression of the human nature, and inclinations which align with that inclination, are natural. Contrary inclinations are perversions of the natural in the sense that they do seek a good, but in a way that is destructive of good (Summa Theologia, Q. 94).

Pope Paul VI, in 1976, published a homily, *Persona Humana: Declaration on Certain Questions concerning Sexual Ethics*, that forbade premarital and extramarital sex, condemned homosexuality, and forbade masturbation (Hitchens, 2013). Pope John Paul II (1993), in his encyclical *Veritatis Splendour*, proclaims the intrinsic evil of the homosexual condition and rejects the view of some theologians who had begun to publicly question the basis upon which the Church had condemned homosexuality as morally unacceptable. In a letter to the bishops of the United States of America on October 5, 1979, he publicly praised the bishops of the United States for stating that “homosexual activity ... as distinguished from homosexual orientation, is morally wrong”. That, instead of “[holding] out false hope” to homosexuals facing hard moral problems, they had upheld “the true dignity, the true human dignity, of those

¹⁸ Bogdan S Czyżewski, (2021). *Akty homoseksualne w ocenie pisarzy wczesnochrześcijańskich* [Homosexual Acts in the Opinion of Early Christian Writers]. *Verbum Vitae*, 39 (1), 335–351. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.11157>

who look to Christ's Church for the guidance which comes from the light of God's word."¹⁹

On 9 March 2012, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the concerns about homosexuality and gay marriage by denouncing "the powerful political and cultural currents seeking to alter the legal definition of marriage".²⁰ Therefore, "the Church's conscientious effort to resist this pressure calls for a reasoned defence of marriage as a natural institution consisting of a specific communion of persons, essentially rooted in the complementarity of the sexes and oriented to procreation. Sexual differences cannot be dismissed as irrelevant to the definition of marriage".²¹

For Pope Francis, 'We must always consider the person. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy. When that happens, the Holy Spirit inspires the priest to say the right thing.' The key, he said, is for the church to welcome, not exclude, and show mercy, not condemnation. 'This church with which we should be thinking is the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people. We must not reduce the bosom of the universal church to a nest protecting our mediocrity.' In an 80-minute conversation with journalists while on a plane from Brazil in July of 2013, Pope Francis was quoted as saying, "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?" (The Irish Times, 2013).

4.3 Catechisms of the Catholic Church

From the time of the Second Vatican Council, various authoritative documents of the Church, such as the *Code of Canon Law* and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, have affirmed the Church's teachings on homosexuality. The *Catechism* distinguishes between homosexual acts and homosexual tendencies. *Homosexual Acts*, scripturally, are grave sins. The Church's Tradition has always seen these acts as intrinsically immoral and contrary to natural law. They should not be approved under any circumstances. *Deep-seated Homosexual Tendencies* in some men and women are also objectively disordered and often constitute a temptation for those who experience them. Persons with homosexual tendencies are to be accepted with respect and sensitivity, and not discriminated against.

¹⁹ John Paul II. *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*. Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1997. Originally delivered as catecheses (1979-1984).

²⁰ Philip Pullella, "Pope Denounces U.S. Political Push to Legalise Gay Marriage," *Reuters*, March 9, 2012, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-usa-marriage-idUSBRE8280TW20120309>.

²¹ Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger). "Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Bishops of the United States of America on the 'Contemporary Crisis of Marriage and the Family.'" Vatican, March 9, 2012

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: 2357, homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. This practice has taken a great variety of forms throughout the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

The CCC no. 2358 states that the number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This objectively disordered inclination constitutes, for most of them, a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfil God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

Furthermore, CCC no. 2359 insists that homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

According to the 1983 Code of Canon Law, same sex marriage is not permissible. Can. 1055 §1 stated that: The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.

Before Synod on Synodality, there seemed to be some clarity on the stand of the Church, namely that: Homosexual Act is a sin like any other sin, like idolatry, adultery, fornication, etc. Homosexual tendency is not a sin. Additionally, deep-seated homosexual tendencies in some men and women are also objectively disordered. Therefore, persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies should not be admitted into the Holy Order. Meanwhile, the Church emphasises that homosexual persons should be respected and treated with dignity.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments believes it necessary to state clearly that the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called "gay culture". Such persons find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women. One must in no way overlook the negative consequences

that can derive from the ordination of persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies.

The Congregation for Catholic Education on the Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations about Persons with Homosexual Tendencies, given their Admission to the Seminary and Holy Orders. Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem, for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate.

While some people believe that the Synod on Synodality is divided or polarised about LGBTQIA+ and same-sex marriage issues, the Prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Communications, Paolo Ruffini, says that "his experience is that the synod is not polarised." Allen (2023) reported him saying, "It is an experience of sharing...it is a sharing of what we each want to say, whether it is a question of gay people, or LGBTQIA+ persons". Further, Ruffini also stated that the engagement of the issue of sexual orientation during the synod demands "responsibility and understanding", as well as Church teaching, with some asking for "a greater reflection" on the Church's teaching on this issue. Although some say that this reflection "is not necessary". Ruffini believed that the focus was on pastoral outreach to gay couples.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Let me conclude this with the response of Fr. Harvey (1971) concerning a homosexual person who came to confess his homosexual behaviour but did not see the behaviour as a sin. Fr. Harvey responded to this objection with further observations. Arguing that if the person believed that his conduct was not sinful, he had no solid reason to present it in the confessional. The fact of presentation of his homosexual actions indicates that he expects the confessor to respond with approval or disapproval. Granting, however, for the sake of discussion, that a given individual had been, in good faith, unaware of the serious gravity of this matter until the time of his confession. However, he must accept the advice of the confessor on the immorality of his past conduct in this issue and take whatever steps are necessary to free himself from such a homosexual union. It is theoretically possible that this individual had not been aware of the immorality of his conduct before the confession. However, such ignorance does not free him from the... obligation of following what has been the common teaching of moralists on this subject. Nonetheless empathetic the confessor may be to the subjective difficulties of the homosexual penitent, he is not free to approve the continuation of the homosexual liaison. Since he exercises the power of forgiving or retaining sins in the name of the Church, he is bound to follow solid moral teaching both in instructing the penitent and in demanding that the penitent change his way of life.

In Summary, this examination of the Catholic Church's response to homosexuality reveals an enduring tension between doctrinal clarity and pastoral accompaniment.²² Father Harvey's 1970 experience demonstrates the challenge of applying unchanging moral principles to complex human situations.²³ The African context illustrates how cultural values can shape the reception of Church teaching, often amplifying resistance to LGBTQIA+ acceptance.²⁴

The Church's doctrinal position remains clear: homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered according to natural law and Scripture.²⁵ However, as Pope Francis has emphasised, this teaching must be accompanied by genuine pastoral care for individuals with same-sex attraction.²⁶ The African Church's experience suggests that effective ministry requires both fidelity to tradition and creative engagement with local contexts.²⁷

Moving forward, the Church must continue to uphold its teaching on marriage and sexuality while developing pastoral strategies that respect the dignity of all persons.²⁸ As Harvey's example shows, this requires both theological precision and compassionate accompaniment.²⁹ The path ahead lies not in compromising doctrine or abandoning pastoral care, but in finding new ways to articulate timeless truths with both clarity and charity.³⁰

²² Benedict XVI, *Address to U.S. Bishops*, March 9, 2012.

²³ Harvey, *The Homosexual Person*, 156.

²⁴ J. P. Egunjobi et al., "Kenyans' Attitudes Toward LGBTQIA+ Association," *IJRIS* 7, no. 9 (2023): 1802-1812.

²⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 2357.

²⁶ Philip Pullella, "Pope Francis: 'Who Am I to Judge?'" *Reuters*, July 29, 2013.

²⁷ Stella Nyanzi, "Dismantling Reified African Culture," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15, no. 8 (2013): 952-967.

²⁸ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Homosexual Candidates* (2005), art. 3.

²⁹ Harvey, *The Homosexual Person*, 201.

³⁰ Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), para. 33.

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BIOMEDICAL FINDINGS ON YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+

Dr. Wahome Ngare

ABSTRACT

This interdisciplinary study examines LGBTQIA+ identities through biomedical, psychological, and theological lenses, interrogating their alignment with empirical reality and divine truth. Analysing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), neurobiological development, and attachment theory, the research demonstrates that 83% of LGBTQIA+ individuals report significant childhood trauma (Vanderbilt University, 2021), suggesting many same-sex attractions originate from environmental factors rather than innate biology. The study critiques gender ideology's foundational claims, demonstrating through endocrinological and genetic evidence that biological sex (determined at conception by XX/XY chromosomes) remains immutable despite surgical or hormonal interventions.

Theological analysis anchors human sexuality in Genesis 1:27-28's complementarity paradigm, exposing LGBTQIA+ identities as deviations from the sacramental vision of male-female union. Psychological data reveal severe mental health consequences among LGBTQIA+ populations, including elevated rates of depression (Dutch Study, 2019), anxiety disorders, and suicidality, outcomes exacerbated by identity-affirming approaches. The paper proposes a trauma-informed therapeutic framework prioritising psychodynamic intervention over conversion therapy or affirmation models.

Findings indicate institutionalised LGBTQIA+ ideology as exploiting vulnerable individuals for political and economic gain, with Africa's resistance framed as both cultural preservation and theological fidelity. The study concludes with pastoral recommendations: (1) truth-based public policy resisting ideological colonisation, (2) ACEs-focused psychological care, and (3) ecclesial leadership in restoring Thomistic anthropology. This research contributes to ongoing debates about human dignity, demonstrating that authentic compassion requires alignment with biological reality and divine revelation (John 8:44).

Keywords: LGBTQIA+ Ideology, Adverse Childhood Experiences, Biological Sex, Trauma-Informed Care, Christian Anthropology

INTRODUCTION

The theme of youth and LGBTQIA+ identities necessitates a critical examination of the physiological, psychological, and neurological dimensions of gender and sexual diversity. This article looks at biometric perspectives to determine if scientific findings can explain the tendencies and behaviours associated with LGBTQIA+ identities. Guided by the biblical theme of deception or *lie*, which means an intentionally false statement as exemplified in the gospel of John 8:44,

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, refusing to uphold the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Which identifies falsehood as the native language of the devil—the discussion interrogates the origins of truth, questioning whether it is relative or divinely ordained.

The analysis adopts a multidisciplinary approach, integrating biomedical, psychological, and theological perspectives. Beginning with an overview of LGBTQIA+ terminology and historical context, the article examines the proposed biological and psychological etiologies of homosexuality, emphasising adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), attachment theory, and familial influences. It further explores mental health disparities among LGBTQIA+ individuals, the societal implications of gender ideology, and the theological and biological arguments concerning human sexuality. By evaluating empirical data, cultural narratives, and ethical considerations, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of LGBTQIA+ identities while affirming a Christian worldview on human dignity and divine creation.

Where did life begin? Creation solution! Let us explore if this is true: Is truth relative? My truth and your truth? Or Objective - God's word?

Biomedicine and Biomedical

Biomedicine refers to the branch of medical science that applies biological and physiological principles to clinical practice, emphasising evidence-based approaches to diagnosis, treatment, and disease prevention. Biomedical pertains to biomedicine, the integration of natural sciences such as biology and biochemistry into medical research and healthcare. Medicine cannot be practised in a moral vacuum! The Hippocratic oath of the Kenya Christian Doctors' Association (KCDA): "I SWEAR in the presence of the Almighty, and before my family, my teachers and peers that according to my ability and judgment, I will keep this Oath and stipulation."

OVERVIEW AND UNDERSTANDING OF LGBTQIA+

In Ancient Greece and Phrygia, and later in the Roman Republic, the Goddess Cybele was worshipped by a cult of people who castrated themselves. Thereafter, they took female dresses and referred to themselves as females. These were the early transgenders.

The term “homosexual” was coined in 1869 by a Hungarian doctor, Karoly Maria Benkert. The term was not in popular usage till the early twentieth century. Mid-twentieth-century homosexual activists preferred the term “homophile” over homosexual, seeing it as a more neutral and acceptable option because it removed the word “sexual” while positively affirming same-gender attraction. “Gay” emerged as an underground term in the early twentieth century and came into popular usage in the 1960s. Other terms then started emerging... The letter “Q” was added to the initialism of LGBT, alternatively referring to “queer,” or to include those who were “questioning” their sexual orientation or gender identity.

In Kenya, the LGBTQIA+ history has been characterised by religious and colonial influences. Interactions with traders along the Indian Oceanic coastline introduced Islamic religious doctrine against homosexuality. European explorers and British colonial rule incorporated the influence of Christianity. After gaining independence in 1963, the Kenyan government has remained hostile to the LGBTQIA+ community. However, the 21st century has seen the formation of LGBTQIA+ advocacy organisations.

Meaning of Terms as per LGBTQIA+ Ideology

Sexual orientation is about who you're attracted to and who you feel drawn to romantically, emotionally, and sexually. Lesbian - Women who are primarily or exclusively attracted to women. Gay - Men who are essentially or exclusively attracted to men. Gay can also be used to describe homosexual men and women. Bisexual - A person who is attracted to both sexes. Transgender - A person who has/is transitioned to the opposite sex, as they were born as the wrong sex/in the wrong body. (Female to male. Male to female). Queer - A person that does not want to label themselves as, e.g., Lesbian, so they call themselves queer instead. Questioning - Someone who is questioning their sexual orientation, unsure which gender or gender/s they are attracted to. Asexual - A person who is not sexually attracted to either gender. Allies - A straight person who supports the LGBTQIA+ (QQIAAP) community.

Aetiology of Homosexuality

Scientists do not yet know the exact cause of sexual orientation. They theorise that it is caused by a complex interplay of genetic, hormonal, and environmental influences and do not view it as a choice. The factors contributing to an individual's same-sex sexual orientation or sexual preference remain poorly understood. Two major categories of scientific explanations have been

proposed to explain the origins of homosexuality, namely, biological and psychological.

Aetiology of Homosexuality: Biological

Biological theories focus on anatomical, hormonal, and/or genetic factors. No single, specific gene has been implicated in an association with homosexuality to date. Researchers have been unable to identify linkages to any genetic region in lesbians. Research has shown that those who believe sexual orientation is inborn are more likely to have tolerant attitudes toward gay men and lesbians, whereas those who maintain that it is a choice have less tolerant attitudes.

Aetiology of Homosexuality: Psycho-cultural Perspective

Overwhelming evidence points to psychology. A person's psychological life history includes their childhood, adolescent experiences, family, and peer relationships. The psycho-cultural aetiology of homosexuality focuses on how psychological development, adverse childhood experiences, family, peer relationships, and cultural context shape sexual orientation. This approach emphasises the influence of early life experiences, family dynamics, social structures, and cultural values in the development of same-sex attraction. Others attribute it to the mental status and traumatic experience in one's life.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Adverse Childhood Experiences included physical, emotional, and sexual abuse; household mental illness, household substance misuse, household domestic violence, having an incarcerated household member, and parental divorce or separation. A new study led by researchers at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and Vanderbilt University found that 83% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBTQIA+) individuals reported going through adverse childhood experiences such as sexual and emotional abuse, and worse mental health as adults when compared to their heterosexual peers.

Epidemiological studies find a positive association between childhood maltreatment and same-sex sexuality in adulthood, with lesbians and gay men reporting 1.6 to 4 times greater prevalence of sexual and physical abuse than heterosexuals. Causal relationships driving the association between sexual orientation and childhood abuse may be bidirectional, may differ by type of abuse, and may differ by sex.

Attachment Style

Attachment Theory, developed by psychologist John Bowlby and expanded by Mary Ainsworth, posits that "we need to form strong emotional bonds to keep us safe and protected as infants, and give us an evolutionary advantage. Based on how parents loved and cared for us, we create a picture of ourselves and other people, which we use to negotiate the world around us – Am I

lovable? Am I safe? This “internal working model” continues into adult life. However, those who are insecurely attached may avoid the stress of exploring and developing their identity. With an insecure attachment, one is seen as *‘unreliable, anxious,’* so it is hard to count on them for support. Those who are insecurely attached are deprived of the resources for dealing with negativity. If such persons find comfort and understanding from other persons of the same sex, then they may find themselves drawn to each other. An imbalance in parent-child interaction, notably forms of overinfluence of the opposite-sex parent, in combination with a deficient relationship with the same-sex parent. However, other studies also indicate that securely attached persons are more likely to come out and confidently identify as gay due to their high self-esteem.

Early research identified three main attachment styles in babies: First, “Secure”: “A secure attachment style emerges as caregivers respond predictably and warmly to the child, leaving the child in a position to trust in the availability of their caregiver. With this trust, children are more inclined to explore the world around them.” Second, “Avoidant”: “If a child learns to perceive their caregivers as emotionally distant and physically unavailable, then they may develop an avoidant attachment style. Avoidant children are less likely to rely on, and distance themselves from, their caregiver in times of need.” Third, Anxious-Ambivalent: “If children see their caregiver as unpredictable or unaware of their needs, they are inclined to develop an anxious-ambivalent attachment style. Anxious-ambivalent children tend to cling to their caregiver, make greater demands on them, and are less likely to explore the world around them.”

Family and peer relationships

Parenting styles: Teens are especially responsive to peer influence. That’s because their brains undergo changes that make them highly attuned to social situations. At the same time, the reward system in the teen brain becomes extra sensitive. The reward system is a brain circuit that causes feelings of pleasure. Negative peer pressure is often related to influencing bullying behaviours, drinking alcohol, drug use, and negative body image, all of which are harmful to a child or young person’s wellbeing. The effects of such behaviours can decrease self-confidence and self-worth, leading to rebellion and distancing from family members and friends.

Mental status

Psychiatric disorders: In a 2019 Dutch study, gay men reported significantly higher rates of mood and anxiety disorders than straight men. Lesbians were more significantly likely to experience depression (but not other mood or anxiety disorders) than straight women. LGBTQIA+ individuals experience adverse mental health outcomes, including mood disorders, substance use,

and suicide, more frequently than heterosexuals. They also face additional barriers to accessing mental health treatment. More adverse outcomes are linked to family rejection, systemic discrimination, and internalised homophobia. Barriers to treatment include prior negative experiences with clinicians regarding sexual identity, socioeconomic status, and marginalised status.

The following are mental health issues that LGBTQIA+ individuals experience: Anxiety, panic attacks, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders (PTSD). Other causes of mental status include: substance abuse, self-harming behaviours, suicidal tendencies, and suicide.

Notably, large numbers of LGBTQIA+ people have said they have self-harmed or had suicidal thoughts and feelings, or have felt anxious or depressed about their bodies. “Research has shown that sexual minority men feel under pressure to hold an appearance that is centred on looking slim and athletic. Many suffer from issues of body self-image.

Same sex attraction/relationships and rejection of one’s biological sex

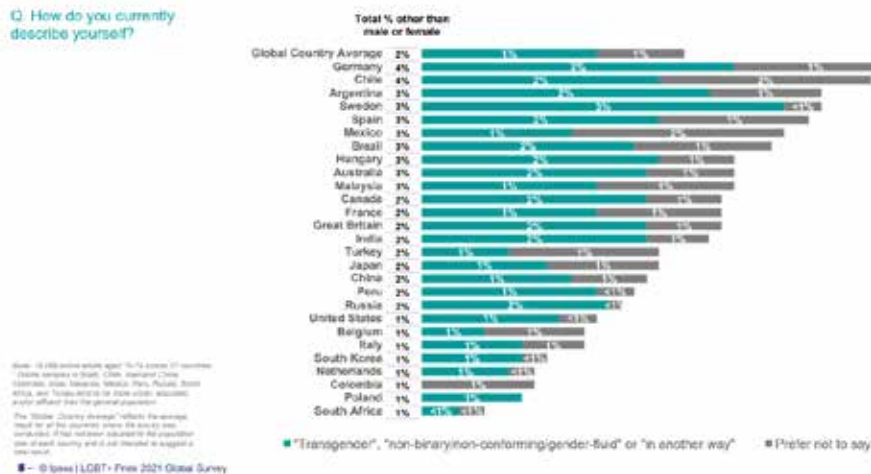
Do we have such people in our homes and society? The research indicates that people who identify as LGBTQIA+ exist in societies. Since they do exist, are these attractions and behaviours normal? The Church teaches that same-sex attraction is not sinful in itself, but acting on it is contrary to God’s plan and moral teaching. On this, the Church distinguishes between mere attraction or inclination and behaviour. Biologically, sex is determined at conception by XY chromosomes for males and XX chromosomes for females. These influence anatomical and hormonal development. Being male or female has a biological value as it is divinely ordained as an expression of the human person created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). In this case, being male or female entails the complementarity of the male and female sexes. It makes natural reproduction possible. It also has social, psychological, and cultural dimensions. So, it is the biological value of attraction to the opposite sex that enables procreation and the continuation of the human kind. It also fosters relational bonds, emotional intimacy, and overall human flourishing.

The prevalent question is whether LGBTQIA+ is normal or not, and why does it happen? What is the long-term effect of same sex relationships and rejection of one’s biological sex? Who is the greatest beneficiary if such behaviour took root? Who is the greatest loser if such behaviour took root? These questions are complex since there is no clear or single cause for how and why it happens. However, some claim that it is caused by genetic, prenatal hormonal, or early life circumstances. The long-term consequences of the LGBTQIA+ and the rejection of one’s biological sex include identity crisis, regret, mental health, social and religious stigma. The normalisation of such behaviours and way of life is contrary to the divine plan of creation

and procreation. There is no doubt that whenever humanity drifts from God's original plan, humanity is endangered and the future is at stake of living a life of meaninglessness.

GENDER IDENTITY BY COUNTRY

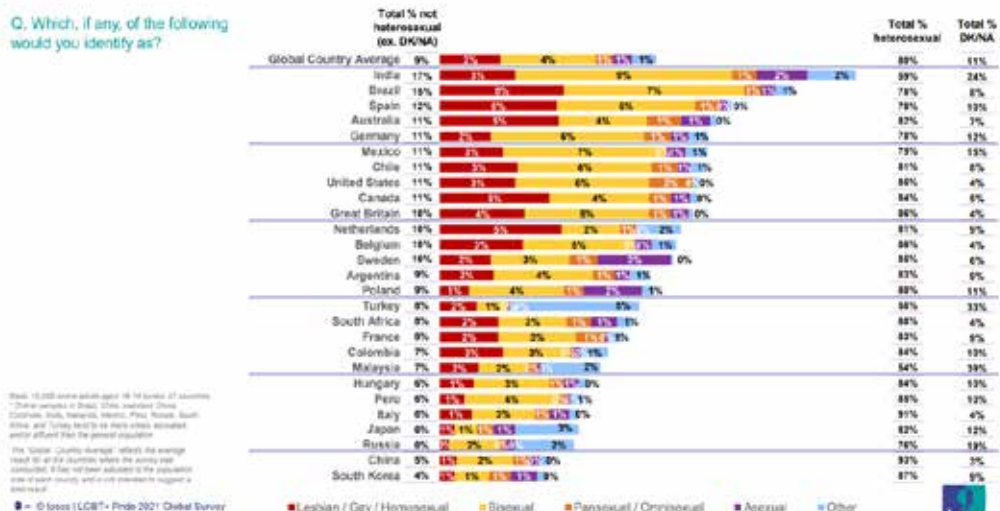
Q How do you currently describe yourself?



Source: Ipsos. LGBTQIA+ Pride 2021 Global Survey – A 27-country Ipsos survey (2021)

SEXUAL ORIENTATION BY COUNTRY

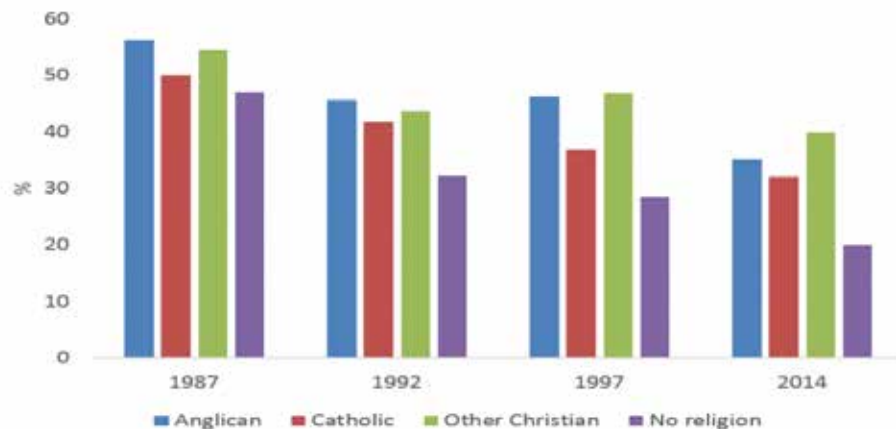
Q. Which, if any, of the following would you identify as?



The graphic labelled “Sexual Orientation by Country” breaks down the percentage of respondents identifying as heterosexual, lesbian/gay, bisexual,

pansexual/omnisexual, asexual, other, or who prefer not to say, as presented for each surveyed country.

Figure 4a: Percent saying that equal opportunities for have gone too far, by religious affiliation

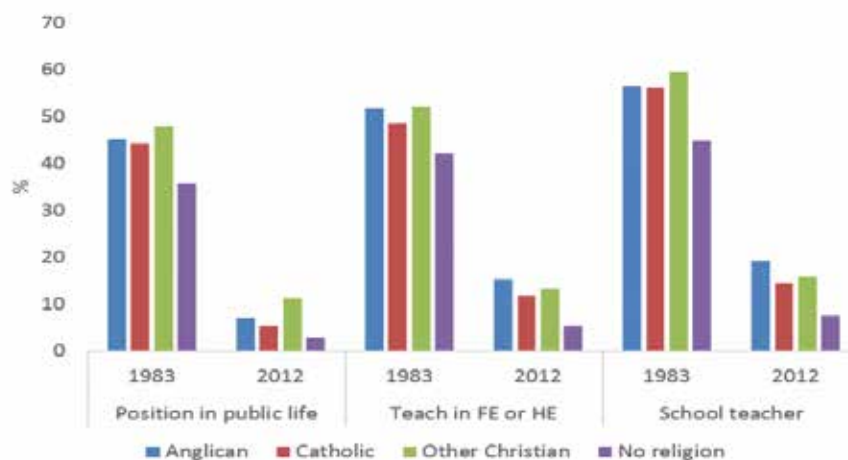


Source: Author's analysis of BES surveys.

Note: Combines responses 'gone much too far' and 'gone too far'.

The above figure is from British Election Study Surveys, 1987-2014

Figure 5: Percent saying no towards homosexuals occupying roles and occupations, by affiliation



Source: Author's analysis of BSA surveys.

Why are attitudes changing?

Well-funded campaign to normalise LGBTQIA+ activity through the UN, movies, music, advertisement, enactment of laws, judicial activism, especially in the supreme courts, United Nations (Sustainable Development

Goals), Ministry of Education (Corporate Social Responsibility = CSR), Ministry of Health (SRHR), etc. Over time, people (parents and youth), especially in the West, have been convinced that LGBTQIA+ is a variant of normal. There are LGBTQIA+ people and an LGBTQIA+ community.

Consequences of a fake life cycle on human sexuality and mental health

Fake life cycle on human sexuality separates humanity from God/truth; encourages disregard of our spiritual existence (soul). Separates men from women and children and leads to fatherlessness. Grave blow on masculinity by radical feminists – man is presented as a stumbling block to female empowerment and less than the woman. What a man can do, a woman can do better! Not being guided by or being disconnected from the truth is spiritual illness and can lead to mental illness.

Mental health and sexuality:

A person who sees or views another of the same sex as a mate (one with whom to bear children) is suffering from a delusion, which is a mental illness. Sex is not assigned at birth; it is only scientifically observed and recorded. A person who rejects their biological sex is suffering from a delusion, which is a mental illness.

Role of a mental health professional – psychologist/psychiatrist

A psychological assessment involves active listening (the therapist pays full attention to the client), taking a comprehensive history (they gather details about the person's life from childhood to adulthood), psychological testing (standardized tests help identify mental health conditions) developing a treatment plan (based on the findings, the therapist creates a tailored plan) and referral if needed (if necessary, they guide the client to other specialists). This process ensures accurate diagnosis and effective care.

How to promote positive mental health for LGBTQIA+ individuals:

Convene **self-reflection sessions**, practice active listening and empathy, and foster family and peer support networks. Furthermore, it requires community-based and workplace support, understanding, appropriate and positive feedback provided during the coming out process, defining, assessing, and handling the social factors influencing LGBTQIA+ individuals' health outcomes and self-care

Gender identity and sexual orientation: The LGBTQIA+ ideology

John Money – gender ideology, sexual orientation, gender identity. Gender is different from biological sex; it is self-identified, fluid, and can be changed through nurturing. Failed John/Joan case and David Reimer. It is therefore of

no legal or medical value to know or record someone's gender, but it is critical to know and record someone's sex.

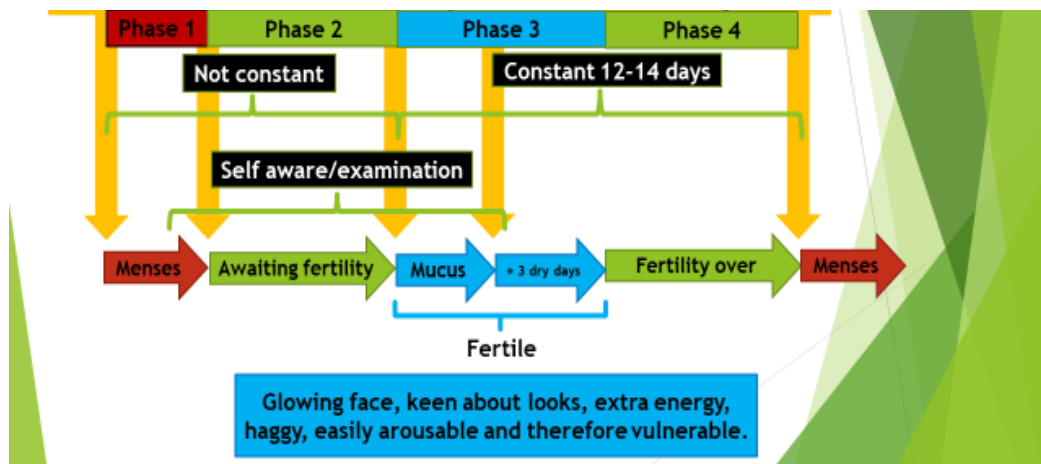
Authentic sexuality:

Basic moral code of sexual relationships in civilised societies: Chastity. This means that if you are not married (committed to be a spouse and parent), you have a moral responsibility to avoid sexual intercourse.

Spiritual sacrifice of procreation: The role of a man

Man is the high priest; he calls on God to make him a father. His life-giving seed is the sacrifice. The alter is the woman he nominates as his mate. Man and woman become co-creators of a new soul with God. Parenting is the responsibility of ensuring that the new soul will eventually be reunited with the creator. Men bear far more responsibility in the procreation and spiritual formation of the child.

Custodian of fertility: The role of women. Important events of the cycle that need charting.



A woman's fertility hinges on precise hormonal regulation, with key events requiring monitoring:

- Menarche: The onset of menstruation marks the beginning of reproductive capability.
- Ovulation: The release of a mature egg, critical for conception.
- Luteal phase: Progesterone secretion prepares the endometrium for implantation.

Disruptions in these processes (e.g., polycystic ovary syndrome) can impair fertility, exacerbating identity conflicts in cultures that equate womanhood with motherhood. Such pressures may drive some toward LGBTQIA+ identities as alternatives to traditional roles.

Procreation/Mating: Sexual Intercourse, Masturbation and Porn

Male and female, including their sexual organs, are designed for compatibility. Male genitals: Deliver his life-giving seed into the woman. The male is the giver. Female genitals: Receive the male seed, facilitate fertilisation, implantation, growth, birth, and nursing of the child. The woman is the receiver. The mouth and anus are part of the digestive system. Non-procreative sexual acts—such as anal or oral intercourse—deviate from this design, functioning as masturbatory practices (closed to life)! Rather than life-giving unions. Pornography exacerbates this distortion by reducing sex to visual consumption, divorcing intimacy from its procreative purpose. Sexual act was designed for performing, not watching!

Marriage: First ever male-female relationship

The following is the best explanation of marriage: In the book of Genesis we read, “This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Gen 2:24). The significance of some words from the quotation from the Genesis above: “A man” signifies maturity, “leaves” means transition, “father and mother” signify a model of a complete family. The word “attached” means entering into a new family. His “wife” means a complement. “They become” signifies a process of learning, friendship, and trust. “One flesh” implies deep intimacy between two people.

The scripture is explicit about God as the origin of the human person’s existence. Referring to Jeremiah, and by extension to all humanity, God says, “I knew you before I formed you in your mother’s womb. Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations” (Jer 1:5).

Our sex is determined at the point of fertilisation!

Genetically, the male is XY and the female XX. By nine weeks from the mother’s last period, the unborn child has both primitive male and female internal/external genitals. The Y chromosome turns the primitive gonads into testes. Testis produce testosterone. Primitive male internal and external genital develop fully while the primitive female system regresses, and the child becomes male. In the absence of the Y chromosome, gonads turn into ovaries. Where the female genital develops, the male regresses, and the child becomes female. Sexual differentiation between male and female is identified and distinguished through internal genitalia and external genitalia features. These sexual differentiations of internal and external genitalia are what

differentiate a man and a woman about “maleness” and “femaleness”. The differences can already be noticed in the human embryo and fetus.

What Can Go Wrong at the Developmental Stage?

Abnormal hormonal production – Congenital adrenal hyperplasia. Lack of response to hormones – Turner’s syndrome. Abnormal genetic makeup - What if the egg has not divided? What if two sperm fertilise one egg? XYY, XXY, XYXY, XXO, etc. Ambiguous genitalia - the midwife looks between the legs and cannot tell if the child is male or female! Disorder of sex development is a congenital condition in which the development of chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomic sex is atypical. Consensus statement on management of intersex disorders; PEDIATRICS Volume 118, Number 2, page e488 August 2006. A person living with DSD or intersex, not an intersex person!

Sex linked developmental differences between men and women

Study by Moran Gershoni and Shmuel Pietrokovski: “The landscape of sex-differential transcriptome and its consequent selection in human adults” studied 20,000 protein-coding genes and found 6,500 genes are expressed differently in men and women in at least one of the body’s tissues.

Male and female brains develop differently, particularly in how they utilise gray matter and white matter for cognitive processing. Males tend to rely 7 times more on gray matter (neural cell bodies responsible for localised processing). Females tend to use 10 times more white matter (myelinated axons facilitating communication between brain regions). Structurally, females have verbal centres in both hemispheres, while males have them only in the left hemisphere. To some people, being transgender is the same as impersonation and, therefore, a crime. This is because transgender is regarded as pretending to be another person.

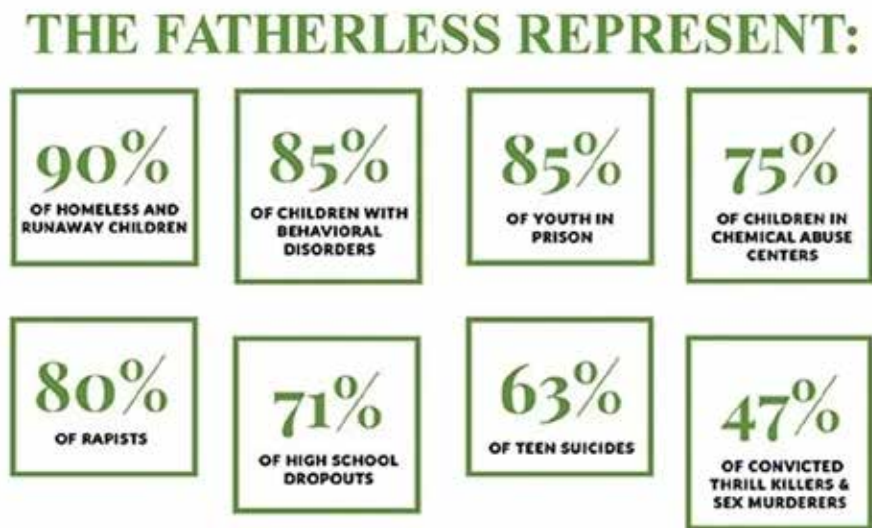
Impersonation is a crime! Transgender man: Female, given male hormones, looks masculine - beard and deep voice. Sometimes they have their breasts removed (Top surgery) or a transgender woman: A man given female hormones, looks feminine. Can get breast implants. Can get his genitals removed – (bottom surgery). The question about transgender is whether a man can become by wishing or be made into a woman, or vice versa! The response is that it cannot, since the surgery or taking chemicals will not change a man into a woman; he remains a deluded man, now sterile, having suffered severe genital mutilation. Neither surgery nor taking chemicals changes a woman into a man; she remains a deluded woman but becomes severely mutilated. Such intervention is not only cruel but medically unethical.

Adolescence: Why teenagers are vulnerable. Teenagers are vulnerable because the brain is the last organ to mature. Sexual maturity starts at about 8 years and is complete by about 15 years with the development of secondary

sexual characteristics. However, the part associated with reasoning or the frontal cortex matures between 21 and 24 years. Yet sexual maturity comes almost ten years before reasoning maturity! The change of gender is also contributed to by a strong sense of not feeling needed, not feeling appreciated, and not feeling loved. When core emotional needs go unmet, fathers feel chronically disrespected and women feel persistently unloved, a ripple effect destabilises family structures and shapes developmental trajectories. For example, a single mother with two kids says, "I do not need a Man". A daughter says, "I do not want a man". While a boy says, "I do not want to be a man".

Born that way? Relationship to Adverse Childhood Events

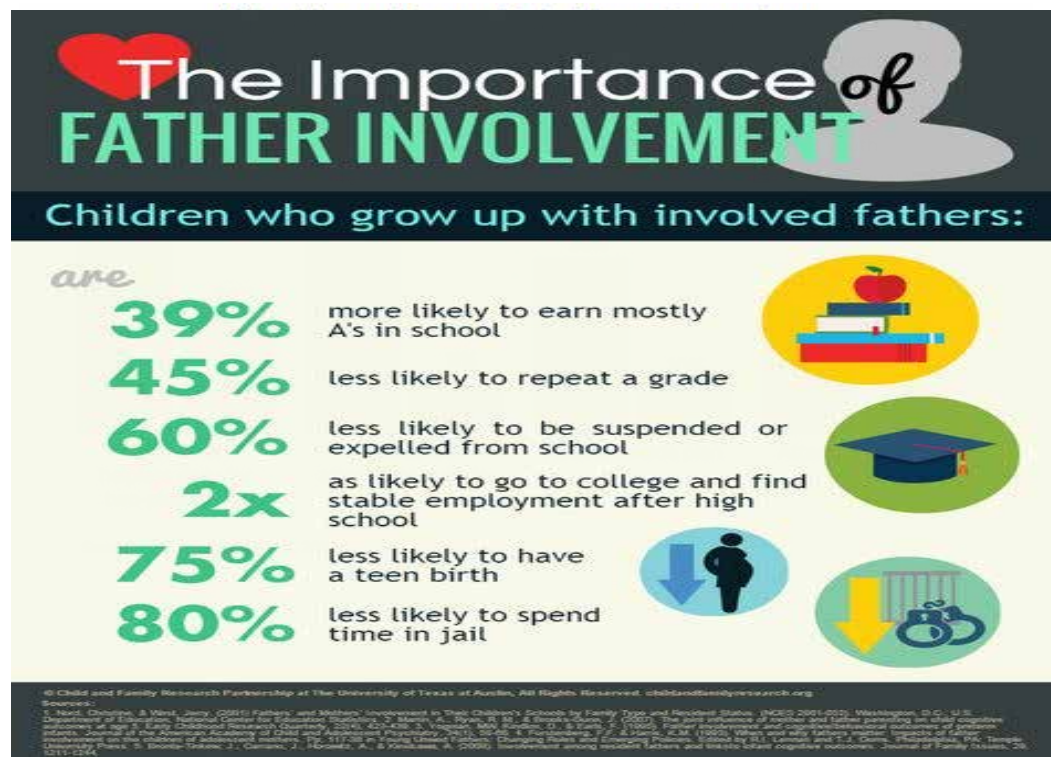
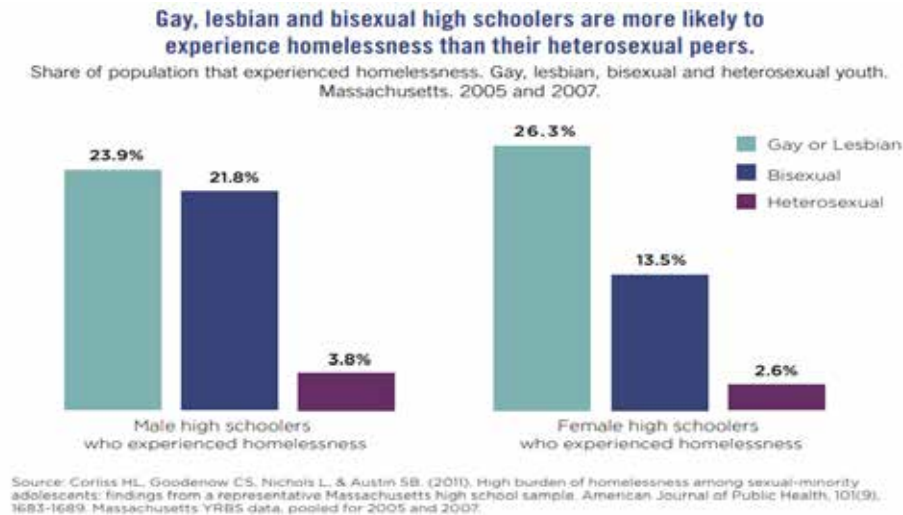
A large percentage of homosexuals share common childhood experiences: (spiritual wounds – self or by other): Physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse as a child (including exposure to pornography). Hostile, detached, or absent father. Overprotective or controlling mother. A feeling that they were not accepted by peers or people of the same sex.



Source: <https://fathers.com/the-consequences-of-fatherlessness/>

Moreover, research from *Fathers.com* highlights that fatherlessness contributes significantly to emotional instability, identity confusion, and increased susceptibility to social influences among youth. Studies indicate that children raised without paternal involvement exhibit higher rates of psychological distress, including anxiety and depression, which may predispose them to seek alternative forms of validation, including LGBTQIA+ identities. Father's absence disrupts traditional gender role modelling, leading

to insecure attachment styles and same-sex attraction as compensatory mechanisms. Additionally, the lack of male mentorship correlates with higher incidences of sexual experimentation and gender dysphoria, as adolescents attempt to fill emotional voids.



The LGBTQIA+ as an Ideology, not a Community! A Three-Tiered Framework

The LGBTQIA+ phenomenon can be understood through three distinct groups. The first group consists of the victims of LGBTQIA+ ideology. These individuals, often struggling with same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, frequently have histories of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), including abuse, neglect, or insecure attachment. Their psychological distress may lead them to adopt LGBTQIA+ identities as a coping mechanism rather than an innate orientation. The second group consists of exploiters of the vulnerable. This group capitalises on these struggles by promoting LGBTQIA+ identities for financial or ideological gain. This includes industries that profit from medical transitions, advocacy organisations funded by political interests, and media entities that normalise non-traditional identities while dismissing biological realities. The third group has ideological advocates. This group consists of academics, activists, and policymakers who legitimise LGBTQIA+ ideology through scholarly discourse, legal reforms, and cultural campaigns. Their efforts often frame dissent as bigotry, suppressing scientific and ethical objections.

Professional Intervention and Management

Given the psychological complexities surrounding LGBTQIA+ identification. Professional interventions must reject exploitative practices and instead embody Albert Einstein's principle that 'only a life lived in service to others is worth living.'¹ *Therapists, families, and policymakers* must serve vulnerable individuals, not by affirming delusions or profiting from them, but by offering trauma-informed care that restores dignity, purpose, and alignment with truth. Therefore, evidence-based, ethical therapeutic approaches should prioritise healing rather than affirmation.

- **Psychodynamic Psychotherapy:** This method explores unresolved childhood trauma, particularly ACEs, to address the root causes of identity confusion and emotional distress.
- **Expressive Writing Interventions:** Research indicates that structured writing exercises help individuals process trauma, reduce anxiety, and improve emotional regulation.
- **Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy (CBT):** CBT restructures maladaptive thought patterns, helping individuals distinguish between genuine self-perception and socially influenced identity constructs.

¹ Einstein, Albert. *The World As I See It*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.

Interventions

- **Parent and Family-Based Psychoeducation:** Since familial rejection exacerbates mental health struggles, therapy should involve family members to foster understanding while upholding biological and psychological truths.

Non-Effective Treatment Methods

- **Conversion Therapy (CT):** Conversion therapy focuses on altering homosexual and/or transgender individuals to heterosexual and cisgender identities. Despite claims of efficacy, CT lacks empirical support and often harms patients by inducing shame rather than addressing underlying trauma. Ethical alternatives focus on holistic healing without coercive identity change.

CONCLUSION

Truth and Consequences in the LGBTQIA+ Discourse

This study's examination of LGBTQIA+ identities through biological, psychological, and theological lenses reveals a troubling disconnect between ideological assertions and empirical reality. The consistent correlation between same-sex attraction and adverse childhood experiences² Demonstrates that many cases represent trauma responses rather than innate identities. Biomedical research confirms the immutability of biological sex,³ Psychological studies show the harms of affirming delusional self-conceptions.⁴

The primary beneficiaries of this ideological confusion are those who exploit vulnerable individuals for political and economic gain.⁵ As Christ warned, such deception ultimately serves "the father of lies" (John 8:44),⁶ Who thrives when societies abandon divine truth? The casualties are manifold: individuals trapped in false identities, societies destabilised through family breakdown,⁷ And most tragically, the Kingdom of God itself. Our Christian mandate to proclaim the truth (Mark 16:15)⁸ Carries eternal consequences, for we will be held accountable for our stewardship of these truths (2 Corinthians 5:10).⁹

Three critical responses emerge from this analysis. First, we must expose and resist the institutionalisation of LGBTQIA+ ideology, particularly in education and public policy.¹⁰ Second, therapeutic interventions should focus on healing childhood trauma rather than affirming false identities.¹¹ Third, we must restore society's understanding of God's design for sexuality, grounded in the complementary union of male and female (Genesis 1:27-28).¹²

² Vincent J. Felitti et al., "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14, no. 4 (1998): 245-58.

³ Moran Gershoni and Shmuel Pietrokovski, "The Landscape of Sex-Differential Transcriptome and Its Consequent Selection in Human Adults," *BioRxiv*, 2017, doi:10.1101/134957.

⁴ Paul R. McHugh, "Transgender Surgery Isn't the Solution," *Wall Street Journal*, May 13, 2016.

⁵ Jennifer Bilek, "The Billion-Dollar Gender Industry," *The 11th Hour Blog*, 2021, <https://the11thhourblog.com>.

⁶ *African Bible* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004), John 8:44.

⁷ Mark Regnerus, *Cheap Sex: The Transformation of Men, Marriage, and Monogamy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 89.

⁸ *Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, Mark 16:15.

⁹ *Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, 2 Corinthians 5:10

¹⁰ Ryan T. Anderson, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment* (New York: Encounter Books, 2018), 112.

¹¹ Kenneth J. Zucker, "The Myth of Persistence: Response to 'A Critical Commentary on Follow-Up Studies and 'Desistance' Theories About Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Children,'" *International Journal of Transgenderism* 19, no. 2 (2018): 231-45.

¹² *Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, Genesis 1:27-28.

As Augustine observed, truth requires no defence but simply proclamation – like a lion, it defends itself when released.¹³ This principle guides our dual responsibility: to compassionately help those struggling with identity confusion while unwaveringly upholding biological and theological reality. The Church must lead this effort, equipping families and professionals to navigate these challenges with both grace and conviction (Micah 6:8).¹⁴ That we might preserve both individual well-being and societal foundations.

¹³ Augustine, *Confessions*, in *African Bible* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004), commentary on Psalm 57:4.

¹⁴ *Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, Micah 6:8.

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A CALL TO A SHIFT OF AFRICAN VIEWS TOWARDS LGBTQIA+: FROM A 'CULTURE OF HATE' TO A 'CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER'

Bonares Evelio Castillon FDP

ABSTRACT

*This study examines the complex tensions between LGBTQIA+ advocacy and African cultural and religious values through theological, anthropological, and pastoral lenses. Analysing reactions to the Vatican's *Fiducia Supplicans* declaration (2023), it reveals how African Christianity's resistance to LGBTQIA+ acceptance stems from deeply rooted conceptions of marriage, procreation, and communal identity—values consistently affirmed in magisterial teaching (CCC 2357-2359) and African episcopal statements. Methodologically, the research employs a tripartite framework: (1) historical analysis of LGBTQIA+ as a sexual revolution challenging Genesis-based anthropology; (2) critical assessment of African cultural and theological responses; and (3) proposal of a pastoral model synthesising doctrinal fidelity with Pope Francis' "culture of encounter."*

*Key findings indicate that 94% of African nations criminalize same-sex relations (Itaborahy, 2012), reflecting cultural and religious convictions that view such acts as *contra naturam* (Lev 18:22). However, the study critiques reactionary approaches that risk perpetuating stigmatization, advocating instead for an *Ecclesia in Africa* framework—reconciling the "Church as Family" model with the imperative to accompany LGBTQIA+ individuals toward conversion and healing. Theologically, the study upholds the complementarity of male and female (Gen 1:27-28) while proposing pastoral strategies that emulate Christ's engagement with marginalised persons (John 8:1-11).*

*This research contributes to global debates on sexuality by charting a *tertium quid* for African Christianity: neither uncritical assimilation of gender ideology nor exclusionary traditionalism, but a transformative encounter model preserving both truth and mercy.*

Keywords: LGBTQIA+, African Christianity, *Fiducia Supplicans*, Culture of Encounter, Sexual Ethics, Pastoral Theology.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

"All people should be treated equally regardless of who they are or whom they love." This slogan is one of the well-known statements among the members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Regardless of their sexual orientations, the LGBTQIA+ community deserves to be treated equally as they insist. However, this slogan challenged the religious beliefs, the teachings of conservatives, and even the cultural values of people. The LGBTQIA+ community has grown rapidly in society over the recent decades. Moreover, the LGBTQIA+ community has influenced many people in the world by disseminating information via social media platforms. Some countries have already passed laws to safeguard their rights and freedoms in society.

The increasing visibility and institutional recognition of LGBTQIA+ individuals has generated considerable global discourse, with particularly pronounced reactions evident across the African continent.¹ This article, entitled "*A Call to a Shift of African Views Towards LGBTQIA+: From a 'Culture of Hate' to a 'Culture of Encounter'*," examines the complex interplay between traditional African cultural values and emerging LGBTQIA+ identities through three primary lenses. First, it scrutinises the historical evolution and contemporary manifestations of LGBTQIA+ ideology as a sexual revolution challenging traditional norms.² Second, it analyses the vehement African cultural and religious responses to these developments, particularly following the Vatican's *Fiducia Supplicans* declaration.³ Third, it proposes a pastoral framework for moving beyond polemics toward constructive engagement.⁴

Methodologically, this study employs a multidisciplinary approach, combining theological analysis of magisterial documents, anthropological examination of African cultural values, and sociological investigation of contemporary LGBTQIA+ activism.⁵ The research draws significantly from African episcopal statements and theological responses to recent Vatican documents, while also incorporating global perspectives on human sexuality and pastoral care.⁶ This approach enables a nuanced examination of why African Christianity maintains such strong resistance to LGBTQIA+ acceptance compared to other regions, while still seeking pathways for dialogue.⁷

The study's central contention is that the current African ecclesiastical stance, while theologically consistent with Catholic teaching on marriage and

¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2023* (New York: HRW, 2023), 112.

² Mary Eberstadt, *Adam and Eve After the Pill* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 45.

³ SECAM, *Response to Fiducia Supplicans* (Accra: SECAM Press, 2023), 3.

⁴ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (Vatican: LEV, 2016), para. 297.

⁵ Kapyia Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 78.

⁶ Walter Kasper, *Mercy* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 67.

⁷ Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* (Vatican: LEV, 2011), para. 42.

sexuality, risks perpetuating a “culture of hate” that contradicts the Gospel’s radical call to encounter and accompaniment.⁸ By examining both the historical roots of African sexual ethics and contemporary pastoral challenges, this article seeks to move beyond binary oppositions toward a more nuanced pastoral theology that maintains doctrinal integrity while fostering genuine human encounter.⁹

PART I

AN EXPOSITION OF LGBTQIA+ IDEOLOGY: A CONTEMPORARY SEXUAL REVOLUTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Amidst the modern ideologies and stirring opinions of the world, the Church remains intact and closely bound in its teaching that God created only man and woman. The question is, why does the Catholic Church not approve of other sexual orientations aside from male and female? The reason is that God does not want it, as simple as that.¹⁰ Scriptures as a source of truth have provided strong evidence that only man and woman are capable of transmitting life, as willed and made by God.

The Book of Genesis 1:27-28 says, “So God created humankind in his 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, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over it.”¹¹ Everything God has made is good. “This means that our bodies, our sexuality, our sexual organs, and sexual acts performed in true love are good indeed, exceptional.”¹²

1.1 The LGBTQIA+ Community: A Contemporary Sexual Orientation Revolution

LGBTQIA+ is considered a contemporary sexual orientation revolution. It is because of its contradictory ideology, which is not aligned with the widely accepted fact that gender only refers to male and female. According

⁸ Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (University Park: Penn State Press, 2019), 134.

⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican: LEV, 1997), para. 2358.

¹⁰ Taken from Fr. Fidel Roura’s homily.

¹¹ The Holy Bible, *New Revised Standard Version* (Theological Publications: Bengaluru, 2020), 2.

¹² Florence Kabala, “Human Sexuality Notes,” in Don Bosco Utume Theological College, Nairobi, 2024.

to Eberstadt Mary, "sexual revolution is an ongoing de-stigmatisation of all varieties of non-marital sexual activity, accompanied by a sharp rise in such sexual activity, in various societies around the world as fueled by the technological revolution, modernity, contraceptives and gender ideologies."¹³ The author argues that there are several non-marital sexual activities, including LGBTQIA+, which are considered a threat to the morality of the people. Despite the strong attacks from the conservatives and the Church, this ideology is growing rapidly. Many countries have already made laws to safeguard their rights against the LGBTQIA+ onslaught.

1.1.1 What is the meaning of LGBTQIA+?

The acronym LGBTQIA+ stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual and others."¹⁴ The "+" sign is a symbol that represents members of communities who identify with a sexual orientation or gender identity that is not included within the LGBTQIA+. This is a kind of inclusive way of representing gender and sexual identities that letters and words cannot yet fully describe.¹⁵ To substantiate the content of this research, the meaning of the groups mentioned above shall be provided and explained.

Lesbian is used to describe "female-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other female-identified people."¹⁶ Gay is a man who is attracted to other men in a "romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Both, Lesbian and Gay are considered as homosexuals according to the common understanding today. Bisexual refers to a person who is "typically defined as someone who is attracted to people of their gender and other genders."¹⁷ Transgender is a term used to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.¹⁸ Queer describes people who are still unsure of their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁹ Intersex is used to describe people who are born with a reproductive or

¹³ Eberstadt Mary, *Adam and Eve after the Pill*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 12.

¹⁴ Drishti IAS Blog, "LGBTQIA+ Community: A Detailed Discussion," in Blogs Home, Accessed on September 9, 2024, <https://www.drishtiiias.com/blog/lgbtqia-a-detailed-discussion>.

¹⁵ Keven Le, "What Does LGBTQIA+ Stand For?", edited by Alyssa Billingsley and reviewed by Joshua Morduck, updated on May 16, 2024, accessed on November 11, 2024, in <https://www.goodrx.com/health-topic/lgbtq/meaning-of-lgbtqia>.

¹⁶ Ashley Moor, "What Each of the Letters in LGBTQIA+ Means," in Bestlife, June 19, 2018, Accessed on November 16, 2024, in <https://bestlifeonline.com/what-lgbtqia-means/>.

¹⁷ Ashley Moor, "What Each of the Letters in LGBTQIA+ Means."

¹⁸ _____, "Transgender FAQ," in GLAAD Media Reference Guide, 11th Edition, <https://glaad.org/reference/transgender>.

¹⁹ Ashley Moor, "What Each of the Letters in LGBTQIA+ Means."

sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of male and female.²⁰ Asexuality refers to people who are defined as those who do not feel sexual attraction to others.²¹

The sign “+” is an acronym used to symbolise and explain several different gender identities and sexual orientations that are not already present in the lettered acronym; pansexual is included in this group.²² “Pansexuality” is more commonly understood as a sexual, romantic, or emotional attraction towards a person regardless of their gender identity or orientation.²³

1.1.2. Historical Evolution of LGBTQIA+ and its Rights in the Society

Understanding the LGBTQIA+ would require one to know the historical evolution. But before that, the researcher wants to highlight that homosexuality already existed in Ancient Israel. Of course, there are scriptural passages that prove that homosexuality existed before. The book of Leviticus 18:22 states that, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is abomination.”²⁴ Homosexuality in ancient times was a delict which was considered a sin contra naturam since it excludes all possibility of the transmission of life.²⁵

The researcher also wants to note that “Homosexual orientation” and “Homosexual behaviour” are two different realities. The former is an attraction to the same sex, while the latter is engaging in sex practices with someone of the same sex.²⁶ However, many people are confused nowadays. The Church also mentions in its teachings, and the researcher wants to emphasise that the number of “men and women who have deep-seated homosexual attraction or tendencies is not negligible.”²⁷ (CCC, 2385).

From a historical point of view, LGBTQIA+ people have suffered different stigmas before they gained freedom and the same rights as ordinary people in society. On the other side, some countries in the world consider LGBTQIA+ individuals illegal. For instance, Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni has signed one of the world’s toughest anti-LGBTQIA+ laws, including the death penalty for “aggravated homosexuality.” This law imposes capital punishment for some behaviour, including transmitting a terminal illness like

²⁰ Ashley Moor, “What Each of the Letters in LGBTQIA+ Means.”

²¹ Queer Student Union, “Asexual or Ally,” in Davis Center, Accessed on November 16, 2024, https://diversity.williams.edu/davis-center/getting-involved/lgbtq-at-williams_landingpage/.

²² Ashley Moor, “What Each of the Letters in LGBTQIA+ Means.

²³ Taylor Henderson, “So What is Pansexuality,” in Pride.com, released on July 6, 2018, <https://www.pride.com/pansexual/2018/7/06/so-what-exactly-pansexuality>.

²⁴ The Holy Bible, *New Revised Standard Version*, 116-120.

²⁵ Florence Kabala, “Sexuality Notes,” Utume Theological College, Nairobi, 2024.

²⁶ Judith K. Balswick and Jack O. Balswick, *Authentic Human Sexuality: An Integrated Christian Approach*. (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1999), 70.

²⁷ CCC, 2358.

HIV/AIDS through gay sex, and stipulates a 20-year sentence for “promoting” homosexuality.”²⁸ However, this new law was condemned by other countries. Canada’s Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly called the law “abhorrent, cruel and unjust.” She said, “No one should live in fear or be persecuted for who they are and who they love.”²⁹

In 1566, “the first known case of homosexual activity receiving a death sentence in North America occurred, when the Spanish executed a Frenchman in Florida. However, it was decriminalised in the 19th century by American Legislators. In 1965, the civil rights movement won new legislation outlawing racial discrimination in America, which paved the way for expressing themselves in society.”³⁰ In the Philippines during the 1990s and early 2000s, gays and lesbians used to be bullied, tortured, and rejected by their families and people in the school, workplace, and communities where they resided. Mostly, Filipinos are conservative, and topics that refer to sexuality are taboo. They believe that being gay or lesbian is a sin against God. However, nowadays, it is punishable by law when a member of LGBTQIA⁺ is rejected, embarrassed, and bullied.

PART II

THE LGBTQIA⁺ AND THE AFRICAN CULTURAL VALUES

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This section expounds on the African cultural values that contradict the emergence of the LGBTQIA⁺ community in Africa. Disclaimer: The arguments that the researcher will reveal in this article come from the African bishops, Priests, and Lay Faithful reactions towards LGBTQIA⁺. The issue of LGBTQIA⁺ triggered a strong response from the African people when the Dicastery of the Doctrine of Faith released a document allowing a non-liturgical blessing by a priest of persons in same-sex unions. The researcher is not elaborating on the document, instead opting to assess the African responses.

²⁸ Thomson Reuters, “Uganda president signs anti-LGBTQIA⁺ bill, which includes death penalty provisions, into law,” posted on May 29, 2023, in CBC News, Accessed on November 30, 2024, in <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/uganda-antigay-law-1.6857762>.

²⁹ Thomson Reuters, “Uganda president signs anti-LGBTQIA⁺ bill, which includes death penalty provisions, into law.”

³⁰ Bonnie J. Morris, “A brief history of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender social movements,” updated on March 16, 2023, Accessed on November 30, 2023, in <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbtq/history>.

2.1 African Cultural Heritage Towards LGBTQIA+ Community

Africans strongly condemned homosexuality and other sexual orientations in society. They also said that LGBTQIA+ is UN-African. To further this argument, the majority of African countries manifested this viewpoint.

2.1.1 Response of African Clergy and Lay Christians Towards LGBTQIA+

The ecclesiastical leaders and Christians in Africa were the first ones who reacted strongly when the Holy Father allowed the Catholic ministers to bless people in same sex unions who asked to do so. It created strong tensions within the Catholic Church and outside the mainstream churches. Harsh arguments were thrown against the Holy Father at that time. The researcher holds that harsh judgment should be discouraged; instead, understanding and dialogue should be embraced as a solution.

In an ETWN interview of Colm Flynn to Archbishop Philip Anyolo of the Diocese of Nairobi, he said that “LGBTQIA+ is not a big issue in Kenya or Africa. Even ordinary Christians do not talk about it because it is not included in the culture of Kenyans.”³¹ The Archbishop of Kisumu, Maurice Muhatia, says that, “The Church cannot support criminalisation of LGBTQIA+ people, but the Church should protect the value of society and values of the Church in the teaching of Marriage.”³² The Bishop of Nakuru, Cleophas Oseso Tuka, says that “LGBTQIA+” is an abomination in most communities, it is a hot issue and should be discussed with caution so that we will not lose our identity as a Church.”³³ Fr. Bosco in the same interview said that, “LGBTQIA+ exists, but it is not a priority in Africa.”³⁴

Bishop Mtumbuka from Malawi, in his homily, said that “blessing of the same-sex is discouraged, it is a blasphemous declaration.”³⁵ In the same way, the President of Zambia said that, “LGBTQIA+ is not African, not Christian, it’s not acceptable, we don’t agree with it as a nation.”³⁶ However, the Archbishop

³¹ Excerpt from an Interview of Colm Flynn with Bishop Anyolo in ETWN on June 26, 2024, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoaEG-6shQQ&t=89s>.

³² Excerpt from an Interview of Colm Flynn with Bishop Maurice Muhatia in ETWN on June 26, 2024, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoaEG-6shQQ&t=89s>.

³³ Excerpt from an Interview of Colm Flynn to Bishop Cleophas Oseso Tuka, in ETWN on June 26, 2024, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoaEG-6shQQ&t=89s>.

³⁴ Excerpt from an Interview of Colm Flynn to Fr. Bosco, in ETWN on June 26, 2024, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoaEG-6shQQ&t=89s>.

³⁵ Taken from Bishop Mtumbuka’s Homily, accessed on November 30, 2024, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io19CFPgL5Y&t=11s>.

³⁶ Taken from Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema’s message. Accessed on November 30, 2024, in <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=io19CFPgL5Y&t=11s>.

of Kampala, Paul Ssemogerere, in an interview said that, "the teaching of the Church regarding same-sex marriage is intact and not changed."³⁷

PART III

A CALL TO A SHIFT OF AFRICAN VIEWS TOWARDS LGBTQIA: FROM A 'CULTURE OF HATE TO A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER'

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The title of this section is "A Call to a Shift of African Views Towards LGBTQIA+: from a Culture of Hate to a Culture of Encounter." The goal of this article is not to promote or support the so-called LGBTQIA+ emergence in African society but to invite Africans to offer them the possibility of conversion, healing, and acceptance. The word "Call" is an immediate response to an urgent need for something. The word "Shift" is an invitation, not an imposition of something on someone to be done. Therefore, this article is an invitation to respond to the call to spread love, not hate. The famous dictum commonly used by people in a foreign land is, "Black Lives Matter." Therefore, all life matters and all that matters has its dignity to be respected.

When the Pharisees and religious leaders brought the woman who was caught in adultery and were ready to stone her, Jesus was asked by the crowd what to do. Jesus said, "Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" Suddenly, the accusers were gone when Jesus stood up. This lesson should be imprinted in our way of life. No one should judge others in their vulnerability except God.

3.1 From a 'Culture of Hate' to a 'Culture of Acceptance and Healing'

The researcher has a deep understanding of the Universal Church's pastoral work towards LGBTQIA+ and the cultural values of Africans. This has guided the formulation of solutions to the problem of contradicting values. Ronald Reagan once said, "Peace is not an absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means." The goal of this section is to provide solutions via peaceful means. The researcher argues that hate towards the LGBTQIA+ community can be overcome through genuine dialogue and respect.

After exposing the reactions of so many African people towards LGBTQIA+, the researcher concludes that it is only peace and respect among people of

³⁷ Excerpt from NTVUganda interview with Archbishop of Kampala Paul Ssemogerere, "Catholic Church in Uganda denies same-sex blessings," on December 21, 2023, in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bKBW2_5qltw.

different races, cultures, nations, and colours that can provide solutions to the conflicts and disunity among the people of God. In the same way, the people of different statuses are all called to promote the culture of Acceptance and Healing. "It is because the meaning of human life is not to be good but to strive to become good. Striving to become good involves respecting the dignity which includes and embraces the whole human person and does not exclude anyone."³⁸ By promoting a culture of acceptance and healing, it should be understood that healing restores. "To restore means bringing back something or anything that was lost."³⁹ In short, the people who got lost in their understanding of sexuality should be helped and guided so that they will be taken back again to their original gender, which God had given to them.

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, launched the Synod on Synodality in 2021. But before that, the people of God around the globe were consulted because the "Church seeks to bring out the voices of the People of God, with their insights, their questions, and their disagreements."⁴⁰ One of the issues is the exclusion of the voiceless, including those who are LGBTQIA⁺ and homosexuals. The first goal of the Synod is "listening as openness to welcome," starting from "a desire for radical inclusion." "No one is excluded,"⁴¹ No matter what the status of the human person. Pope Benedict XVI states that "each person is a result of a thought of God, is willed by God, and loved by God".⁴²

In one of the communications given by Pope Francis to Fr. James Martin, who works with the LGBTQIA+ community, was to "promote a culture of encounter with those who need help." The researcher took this statement from Pope Francis, for it can also be a solution to the spreading of a "Culture of Hate" towards these people. Of course, not only do African people have this stigma, but also some people from other continents. Some countries are still rooted in their cultural values and Christian principles that LGBTQIA+ is a

³⁸ Salvador Ferrao, *Let Us Respect One Another: A Meditation on the Foundations of Christian Living*, (Don Bosco Printing School: Makuyu, Kenya, 2018), 24.

³⁹ Larry Faraon, *Heal: A Workbook on the Gift of Healing*, (Quezon City, 2008), 80.

⁴⁰ Salvatore Cernuzio, "Synod: Voices of excluded heard in Document for Continental Phase," Accessed on November 19, 2024, in <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-10/voices-of-excluded-in-synod-document-for-continental-phase.html>.

⁴¹ Salvatore Cernuzio, "Synod: Voices of the excluded heard in Document for Continental Phase."

⁴² Benedict XVI, "Mass, Imposition of the Pallium and Conferral of the Fisherman's Ring for the Beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome," homily on April 24, 2005 in St Peter's Square, Accessed on November 30, 2024, in Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20050424_inizio-pontificato.html

threat to the sanctity of Marriage. Promoting a culture of encounter, listening, and dialogue could be the prerequisites to a more responsible exercising and understanding of human sexuality.

The Ecclesia in Africa theme, “the Church as God’s Family”, which the Synod Fathers acknowledged as an expression of the Church’s nature, is particularly appropriate for Africa. This image emphasises care for others, solidarity, warmth in human relationships, acceptance, dialogue, and trust.”⁴³ Despite the African resistance towards LGBTQIA+, the truth is Africans will still care, help, heal, and accept the members of their families who got erred and confused.

3.2. Church Teachings on the Exclusivity of Human Sexuality as a Gift of Creation and Towards Transmission of Life

To avoid misconceptions and wrong assumptions towards the Church’s pastoral work nowadays, the researcher wants to note that the Church firmly stands with its teachings on the exclusivity of Marriage, which is only for a man and a woman who are capable of transmitting life. The creation accounts also provide certain truth that “God only created male and female. And, told them to multiply and be fruitful.” In other words, man and woman are exclusively and purposely for the transmission of life. The Old Testament books also say that Sodomy refers to having sexual intercourse with the same sex. This intercourse is mentioned in Lev 18:22, “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”⁴⁴ The act of Sodomy goes against the law of nature that calls the married couple to procreate.”⁴⁵

The church’s tradition also argues that “marriage is raised into the sacrament, by Jesus, and it is only for a man and a woman.” St. Augustine said that, “Marriage was not only a sacred sign of the Divine but a sacred bond between husband and wife. It is permanent like Baptism. The Marriage bond is dissolved only by the death of one of the partners,” (On the Benefit of Marriage).⁴⁶

⁴³ Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortatio: Africae Munus*, in *Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, 2011, Accessed on December 21, 2024.

⁴⁴ The Holy Bible, *New Revised Standard Version*, 116-120.

⁴⁵ _____, “49 Sins Against the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.” in Catholic Doors Ministry, Accessed on November 26, 2024, in <https://www.catholicdoors.com/faq/qu164.htm>.

⁴⁶ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Catholic Church*, (Liguori Triumph Publications: USA, 2001), 366.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the African Church faces a profound pastoral dilemma regarding LGBTQIA⁺ inclusion, caught between unwavering commitment to traditional sexual ethics and the Gospel imperative of radical hospitality.⁴⁷ The research revealed three key findings: first, that African resistance to LGBTQIA⁺ acceptance stems not merely from religious conservatism but from deep cultural conceptions of personhood, family, and life transmission;⁴⁸ Second, that current pastoral approaches often exacerbate alienation rather than facilitating conversion;⁴⁹ Third, that Pope Francis's vision of a "culture of encounter" offers a viable middle path between capitulation and condemnation.⁵⁰

The African Church's firm rejection of same-sex blessings following *Fiducia Supplicans* underscores both its theological consistency and cultural particularity.⁵¹ However, as this study has shown, simply maintaining doctrinal purity without developing more nuanced pastoral strategies risks abandoning LGBTQIA⁺ individuals to spiritual isolation or secular ideologies.⁵² The proposed shift from a "culture of hate" to a "culture of encounter" - modelled on Christ's engagement with the Samaritan woman and the woman caught in adultery - provides a framework for upholding truth while extending mercy.⁵³

Ultimately, this research contends that African Christianity must develop authentically contextual pastoral theologies that neither uncritically adopt Western progressive agendas nor retreat into defensive traditionalism.⁵⁴ By rediscovering the African ecclesial model of "Church as Family" - with its emphasis on accompaniment, gradual conversion, and unconditional belonging - the Church can maintain its prophetic witness while truly becoming what Pope Francis calls a "field hospital" for wounded humanity.⁵⁵ The path forward requires both courageous fidelity to revealed truth and creative fidelity to the Gospel's radical call to love.⁵⁶

⁴⁷ Florence Kabala, "Human Sexuality Notes" (Nairobi: Don Bosco Utume, 2024), 15.

⁴⁸ Joseph Osei-Bonsu, *African Synodality and the LGBTQ Question* (Accra: Asempa Press, 2023), 89.

⁴⁹ Judith Balwick and Jack Balwick, *Authentic Human Sexuality* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 203.

⁵⁰ Deborah Castellano Lubov, "Pope Francis: Church a 'Field Hospital,'" *Vatican News*, May 2022.

Fiducia Supplicans (Vatican: DDF, 2023), sec. 5.

⁵² Carol Glatz, "Pope Clarifies Remarks on Homosexuality," *USCCB*, January 2023.

⁵³ John 8:1-11 (NRSVCE).

⁵⁴ Salvador Ferrao, *Let Us Respect One Another* (Makuyu: Don Bosco Press, 2018), 56.

⁵⁵ Larry Faraon, *Heal: A Workbook on Healing* (Quezon City: 2008), 72.

⁵⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* (Vatican II, 1965), para. 24.

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YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+: THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE IN AFRICA

Jasmine Obiri-Yeboah, SDB

ABSTRACT

*The Catholic Church faces doctrinal, creedal, and moral challenges, which manifest in various forms, sometimes overlapping in complex ways. This study examines the African Catholic Church's pastoral engagement with LGBTQIA+ youth amidst competing theological, cultural, and ideological pressures. Analysing magisterial documents, African episcopal statements (particularly SECAM's 2023 response to *Fiducia Supplicans*), and sociological data, the research reveals three key findings: (1) African ecclesial resistance to LGBTQIA+ normalisation stems from a convergence of Thomistic natural law (CCC 2357-2359), traditional procreative values, and biblical anthropology (Gen 1:27-28); (2) Contemporary youth (ages 16-35 per Vatican categorisation) face unique identity conflicts due to globalisation's ideological dissemination; (3) Current pastoral approaches often fail to reconcile doctrinal fidelity with Pope Francis' call for a "culture of encounter."*

*Methodologically, the paper employs theological-ethical analysis to critique both ideological colonisation by Western gender theories and reactionary African responses that risk alienating LGBTQIA+ youth. It demonstrates how 94% of African nations criminalise same-sex relations (Itaborahy, 2012), reflecting cultural-religious syntheses that view such acts as *contra naturam* (Lev 18:22). However, the study argues that mere doctrinal repetition without compassionate accompaniment—exemplified by Christ's engagement with marginalised persons (John 8:1-11)—undermines evangelisation.*

*The research contributes to global theological discourse by proposing an *Africae Munus* pastoral model: one that upholds the sacramental vision of marriage while developing culturally contextualised strategies for LGBTQIA+ youth formation. This approach navigates the tension between African cultural preservation and the Church's universal missionary mandate (Mt 28:19), offering a *tertium quid* beyond ideological polarisation.*

Keywords: African Catholicism, LGBTQIA+ Youth, *Fiducia Supplicans*, Natural Law, Pastoral Theology, Gender Ideology

INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Church has historically confronted significant challenges that intersect doctrinal, creedal, and moral dimensions.¹ Among contemporary issues, the LGBTQIA+ movement presents particularly complex theological and pastoral implications.² While some secular institutions have granted legal recognition to LGBTQIA+ rights, the Church maintains that these ideologies

¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (1986), sec. 3.

² Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 302.

conflict with natural law and the ontological reality of human sexuality as divinely ordained.³ This tension is especially pronounced in Africa, where external pressures to adopt progressive gender policies clash with deeply rooted cultural and religious values.⁴

This paper examines the African Church's response to LGBTQIA+ issues during pastoral engagement with youth.⁵ It proceeds in three parts. First, it establishes a conceptual framework by defining youth and LGBTQIA+ identities within African sociocultural contexts. Second, it analyses Catholic doctrinal teachings on sexuality and gender, emphasising their theological foundations. Third, it is an evaluation of the African Church's pastoral strategies managing competing cultural and ideological forces.⁶

Methodologically, this study employs a theological-ethical approach, drawing from magisterial documents, African episcopal statements, and sociological analyses of youth engagement.⁷ It argues that while the African Church maintains doctrinal fidelity to Catholic sexual ethics, it faces increasing pressure to reconcile traditional teachings with contemporary identity politics.⁸ The paper ultimately contends that the Church must develop pastoral approaches that uphold theological truth while extending Christ-like compassion to LGBTQIA+ youth who are navigating faith and identity conflicts.⁹

PART ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+

1.1 Youth

Defining the concept of Youth can be a daunting task. Different cultures and societies have varied perspectives on the youthful stage of life. Certain areas of human endeavours define Youth within the age category. Yet others regard youth as a transition stage in human development. The United Nations' definition of youth takes cognisance of each perspective. Regarding the latter perspective, the United Nations refers to Youth as the transitional period from

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (1997), para. 2357.

⁴ Kapyia Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 89.

⁵ Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019), 45.

⁶ SECAM, *Response to Fiducia Supplicans* (2023), 2.

⁷ John Paul II, *Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books, 1997), 63:2.

⁸ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 112.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (2016), para. 297.

dependence during childhood to adulthood's independence. To the former, the United Nations, for Statistical reasons, categorised Youth as persons within the age bracket of 15 and 24.¹⁰ The Catholic, on the other hand, defines Youth within the age-numerical perspective. Vatican holds that a youth is a person between the ages of 16 and 35.¹¹ These two descriptions of youth, though slightly contrasting, offer an insightful understanding that a youth is a person who falls within the age limit of making informed decisions. It is a period of transition that comes with an identity and responsibility for an individual who has outgrown total dependence of childhood and is heading towards complete independence of adulthood. This understanding, therefore, ushers us into the discussion on LGBTQIA+, a prevailing issue in society that involves youth.

1.2 LGBTQIA+

LGBTQIA+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and queer. This is a community or group of persons who identify themselves either as lesbians (a female who is sexually or romantically attracted to other females), gay (a male who is sexually or romantically attracted to other males), bisexual (a person who has both heterosexual and homosexual desires), transgender (persons whose gender-identity contrast with their biological sex) and queer (any person who is not heterosexual). The concept of LGBTQIA+ can also be used to describe persons who feel some degree of empathy and solidarity with pro-LGBTQIA+ persons based on their shared experience of prejudice, discrimination, and disrespect.¹²

It is worth mentioning that the intersection between youth and LGBTQIA+ has to do with the involvement of youth with pro-LGBTQIA+ communities and campaigns, especially in recent years. Historically, persons who identify themselves as LGBTQIA+ either in their dress code or sexual expressions were often condemned, tried, and exiled. There has been great persecution for such persons in the past and recently, in some places. The continued aversion towards pro-LGBTQIA+ persons has been termed homophobic and has attracted huge attention. This has led different social movements towards campaigning for the acceptance of persons with such sexual orientation and disposition. In some countries, the constitutions have approved and

¹⁰ United Nations, Definition of Youth, in United Nations Youth, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf> 06th-September-2024.

¹¹ Courtney Mares, What is Youth? A Synod Glossary, in Catholic News Agency, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/39693/what-is-a-youth-a-synod-glossary>, 06th/09/2024.

¹² Brian Duignan, Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer community in Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-and-queer-community>, , 07/09/2024.

given LGBTQIA+ individuals the legal right to marry and enter into sexual relationships.

The promotion of LGBTQIA+ rights and freedom of association through activism and campaigns has brought its prominence to the limelight. Thereby, attracting huge attention from people of different nations, colours, creeds, and ages, including the youth. While some states, persons, and groups are becoming pro-LGBTQIA+, others, for various reasons ranging from cultural background to values, are still hesitant. It is on this note that the Church's response will be explored further, taking into consideration the situation of the African Church and Youth.

PART TWO

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S DOCTRINAL TEACHING ON SEXUALITY AND GENDER

The Catholic Church's teaching on human sexuality is built on the foundational premise that the human person is the image of God created for love. This is supported by the description in the book of Genesis 1:26-27: "Then God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them." In this description, the Catholic Church's stance that only two sexes (male and female) exist is established. Subsequent verses then establish the responsibility of procreation, which comes from the union of a man and woman. This verse holds that: God blessed them, saying to them: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" Genesis 1:23. For the Church, femininity and masculinity are complementary gifts, through which human sexuality is an integral part of the concrete love which God has inscribed in man and woman.¹³ From this description, we can deduce that human sexuality is an integral part of describing the human person. It is rooted in the creative nature of the human person as the image of God, and it intrinsically ends towards love. This love is essentially the generous donation and acceptance of giving and receiving.

2.1 The Church on Marriage

The Catholic Church holds strongly that only the union between a man and a woman can be considered marriage. It is essentially the complementarity of the sexes. Marriage for the Church is not just any relationship between human

¹³ "The Truth and Meaning on Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the family," https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_08121995_human-sexuality_en.html 11th/September/2025.

beings. It is a divine calling established by the Creator. Its nature, essential properties, and purpose, which is to cooperate with God in his creative work through procreation and bringing new human lives.¹⁴ When love is lived in marriage, it surpasses friendship, which is self-giving between a man and a woman. Thereby opening the possibilities of God's will that human life be conceived, grow, and develop.¹⁵ This is further concretised in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, number 1660:

"The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman form with each other an intimate communion of life and love, has been founded and endowed with its special laws by the Creator. By its very nature, it is ordered to the good of the couple, as well as to the generation and education of children. Christ the Lord raised marriage between the baptised to the dignity of a sacrament."

Thus, for the Church, the union between a man and a woman fulfils the inclination of the natural law, which is procreation. This means that sexual acts are to be expressed with the institution of marriage by a man and a woman, with the openness for procreation. It is in marriage that the communion of persons (a man and a woman) realises the use of the sexual faculty.¹⁶ This is why the scriptures in Genesis 2:24 say that, "because of this, a man leaves his father and mother, and is attached to his wife, and they become one flesh." In this union, a man and a woman accept the responsibility to cooperate in God's creative plan. Their sexual encounter is not merely for pleasure but is essentially open to bringing forth new life to the world.

2.2 The Church and LGBTQIA+

The view of the Catholic Church on human sexuality is contrary to the tenets of LGBTQIA+. The Catholic Church's teaching promotes only the existence of two sexes (male and female) and holds strongly that marriage is a union between a man and a woman. Conversely, the tenets of LGBTQIA+ promote the existence of multiple genders, sexual orientations, and identities. The movement also affirms the change of sex. This means that it is permissible for persons to change the sex naturally assigned to them. Therefore, a woman can change her sex to be a man and vice versa. The process of switching from one sex to another might only involve a declaration from the trans-person and lifestyle, including cross-dressing and expression. However, in some cases,

¹⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Considerations regarding the proposals to give legal recognition to union between homosexual persons, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_14/09/2024.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Considerations regarding the proposals to give legal recognition to the union between homosexual persons.

this involves choices and processes whereby the person undergoes a series of medical procedures and surgeries. This medical process will alter the sex given at birth, thereby giving the trans person a new biological identity. A person who is born a woman will transform into a man and vice versa. The LGBTQIA⁺ movement also promotes the marriage union between persons of the same sex, a position which is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

2.3 The Church's Position on LGBTQIA⁺

The doctrinal teachings and values of the Church are obviously in contrast to the tenets of the LGBTQIA⁺ movement. The Church declared that tenets of the LGBTQIA⁺ movement are inherently disordered and they are contrary to the natural law. This is because they offer a reductive description and expression of human sexuality whereby sexual acts are not open to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity.¹⁷ Consequently, the Church didn't find any ground for considering unions with LGBTQIA⁺ elements as homologous to the plan of God on marriage and family.

It is noteworthy to mention that despite this stand, the Church, being a mother, did not write off persons who upheld this ideology and lifestyle. According to the teachings of the Church, men and women with such tendencies of homosexuality must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.¹⁸

PART THREE

THE AFRICAN CHURCH'S PASTORAL STRATEGIES

3.1 The Response of the African Church to LGBTQIA⁺

The first clarification is that the Church in Africa is not different from the mother Church. This is because the Church is one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. These four characteristics indicate the essential features of the church and her mission.¹⁹ Wherever the Church is found, these characteristics are visible. The universality (Catholic) nature of the Church means that Christ is present in the Church and Christ has sent her to the whole world. Christ gave this mandate to the apostles in Matthew 28:19: "Go into the whole world

¹⁷ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Chastity and Homosexuality, No. 2357.

¹⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Chastity and Homosexuality, No. 2358.

¹⁹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, The Church is one, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, No. 811.

and make disciples of all nations.” This mandate has been carried out by the apostles and passed on to today’s Christians. As a result, the Church is present in almost every culture and tongue. Therefore, people from different parts of the world have received the good news of Christ, and through baptism, they belong to Christendom. Amidst the widespread presence of the Church throughout the world, her unity remains non-negotiable. This unity was bestowed on the Church by Christ from the beginning, and it subsists in the Church as something she can never lose. For this unity, Christ prayed, “I pray not only for them but also for those who will believe in me through their word. So that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.”²⁰ The prayer of Christ is an inclusive one that covers both the early believers and the future.

The aftermath of this can be seen in the life of the Church throughout the ages. As the Church continues to grow with diverse cultures and peoples, the unity is still preserved. In the same regard, the Church’s teaching is preserved amidst this diversity. In some cases, the Church allows a certain flexibility in the mode of expression, but not the core elements of the faith.

Although the Church in Africa is part of the universal Church, Africa is diverse and multicultural; however, this multiculturalism is neither a limitation nor a barrier to the work of evangelisation or the teachings of the Church being fruitful in the African territory. Essentially, the foundation of Christ’s salvific mission is a prototype of the encounter process. This can be understood in the incarnation where “the word became flesh and dwelt among us.”²¹ The divine became one with us and took our flesh. In so doing, “God entered a particular culture, purified and made fertile”.²² Besides, the sacred scripture is also born of divine inspiration expressed by the work of human writings. An indication that inculturation has been part of the divine economy. In addition, from the beginning, when the Gospel was first preached, the Church has been aware of the process of encountering and engaging with cultures.²³ St. Paul’s encounter with the Athenians is a perfect example of evangelisation of people and their culture. In the scenario, Paul told the Athenians how he had moved around and discovered that they were very religious through their sacred altars. He also noticed an altar dedicated to an unknown God, and it is this God that he has come to revere.²⁴

²⁰ John 17:20-21.

²¹ John 1:14.

²² Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 23 May 1999, No. 3.

²³ John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio*, 14 September 1998, No. 70.

²⁴ Acts 17: 22-31.

The above narrative shows that multiculturalism and diversity in African traditions are not barriers to the Church's evangelical mission or doctrinal teachings. The Church in Africa is inherently bound to the unity and universality of the Church. African cultures are open to the Church's doctrinal teachings. Because they fall within the line of natural law, reason, scriptures, and respect for the value and dignity of human life. Consequently, the Church in Africa stands firm with the decision of the universal Church that the tenets of LGBTQIA⁺ are inherently wrong and against natural law. This position also affirms the values of African Culture. Many cultures in Africa, if not all, frown at the tenets upheld by the LGBTQIA⁺ movement. This assertion, however, has been debated by some people. Bisi Alimi, a gay activist, argued in *The Guardian* that African cultures are not new to the concept of homosexual behaviours and acts. According to Alimi, homosexual words can be found in the lexicons of some African cultures like *adofuro* - a derogatory colloquialism for someone who has anal sex in Yoruba and *yan daudu* - a term which describes effeminate men who are considered to be wives to men.²⁵ This situation for him connotes that African cultures have the openness and potentiality to accept homosexuality and the tenets of LGBTQIA⁺. Alimi's position is limited in the sense that a culture does not need to welcome a specific value to have the appropriate lexicon for it. Even in rejecting a particular position, a culture can also have the words of the rejected. In the same line, the above-mentioned concepts are even derogatory words to the situation of homosexual acts, which LGBTQIA⁺ applaud.

In response to *Fiducia Supplicans*, a declaration of the dicastery for the doctrine of faith on the pastoral meaning of blessings, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) recognised that the document's declaration did not alter the Church's teaching about human sexuality and marriage. However, the language used in the document remains too subtle for simple people to understand, and will confuse them. In this regard, it is preferable not to offer blessings to homosexual unions and same-sex couples even within a pastoral setting. On this note, SECAM declared that "we, the African bishops, do not consider it appropriate for Africa to bless homosexual unions or same-sex couples because, in our context, this would be in direct contradiction to the cultural ethos of African communities."²⁶ SECAM's declarative stand is the response of the African Church on the tenets of LGBTQIA⁺. The Church in Africa considered the principles promoted by pro-LGBTQIA⁺ persons and movements, their campaigns contrary to African

²⁵ Bisi Alimi. (2015, September 9), A Week in Africa: If you say being gay is not African, you don't know your History, in *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/09/being-gay-african-history-homosexuality-christianity>, accessed 18th September 2024.

²⁶ SECAM, No Blessings for Homosexual Couples in all Churches in Africa, <https://secam.org/5924/>, accessed 18th September 2024.

values, the inclinations of natural law, and the magisterium of the universal Church.

There is a similarity across African cultures regarding procreation. Cultures in Africa believe that the union of a man and woman through marriage inherently includes the bearing of children. In this regard, children are seen as a blessing. Lack of children is often considered a misfortune.²⁷ While the aspect of evaluating the lack of children as a misfortune might be seen as extreme, the openness of African culture to procreation is congruent with the teachings of the Church. This means that the acceptance of LGBTQIA+ values in such cultures will be a contradiction, which will cause huge confusion. These tenets are against the cultural values of family and sexuality among African cultures. Notwithstanding, in union with the universal Church, the African Church, while rejecting the tenets of LGBTQIA+, does not reject any act of discrimination against persons with such tendencies or who support those ideologies, but calls for sensitivity and compassion for them.

The stance of the African Church on the tenets of LGBTQIA+ can be considered a bold step towards preserving the institution of the family and the larger church. This affirms the words of Pope Benedict XVI, in the *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Africae Munus,"* "A precious treasure is to be found in the soul of Africa, where I [the pope] perceive a spiritual lung for the humanity that appears to be in a crisis of faith and hope."²⁸ Similarly, the servant of God, Maurice Otunga, states strongly that "if African values and traditions vindicated by Christ are upheld and developed, then a solid foundation will be laid for the future generation and the development of all".²⁹

²⁷ L. Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998, 100.

²⁸ Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation "Africae Munus"*, Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2011.

²⁹ Maurice Cardinal Otunga, *African Family Values*, "African Ecclesial Review" 23(1981), No 1/2, 35.

CONCLUSION

The African Church remains steadfast in its alignment with universal Catholic teaching, affirming that LGBTQIA⁺ ideologies contradict both natural law and traditional African values regarding marriage, procreation, and human sexuality.³⁰ As this study has demonstrated, these tensions manifest most acutely among youth, who increasingly encounter conflicting messages from global media, local cultures, and ecclesiastical authorities.³¹

The Church's doctrinal position—rooted in Scripture, tradition, and natural law—maintains that human sexuality finds its proper expression solely within heterosexual marriage open to procreation.³² This teaching, while challenging to contemporary sensibilities, reflects an integrated anthropological vision that honours the unity of body and soul.³³ The African Church's resistance to LGBTQIA⁺ normalisation thus constitutes not merely cultural conservatism but a principled defence of metaphysical and moral truths.³⁴

Nevertheless, pastoral realities demand nuanced engagement.³⁵ As SECAM's response to *Fiducia Supplicans* indicates, African bishops recognise the need for compassionate accompaniment even while rejecting doctrinal compromise.³⁶ The path forward requires both unwavering fidelity to Catholic sexual ethics and creative pastoral strategies that address the existential struggles of LGBTQIA⁺ youth without legitimising ideological falsehoods.³⁷

Ultimately, the African Church's witness remains vital in a global culture increasingly detached from natural law.³⁸ By upholding the sanctity of life, the complementarity of the sexes, and the divine institution of marriage, the Church continues to offer an indispensable counter-narrative to gender ideology—one rooted not in reactionary fear but in the enduring truth of human nature as created by God.³⁹

³⁰ Genesis 1:27-28 (NRSVCE).

³¹ Josephath Mugisha, "Societal Pressures and LGBTQIA+ Youth in Uganda," *East African Journal of Youth Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 48.

³² Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. 2360.

³³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 94, a. 2.

³⁴ Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* (2011), para. 42.

³⁵ SECAM, Response to *Fiducia Supplicans*, 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁷ Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 77.

³⁸ Natural Law Institute, Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association 91 (2017): 23.

³⁹ Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 3:20.

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AFRICAN CHURCHES' PERSPECTIVES ON LGBTQIA⁺

Makhanu Humphrey Wekesa, CSsR

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the complex interplay between African Churches and LGBTQIA⁺ Youth in Africa, analysing the theological, cultural, and sociopolitical tensions shaping this discourse. Through a multidisciplinary lens, incorporating theological anthropology, historical analysis, and contemporary sociological research, the paper investigates how African churches navigate their dual roles as moral arbiters and pastoral caregivers amid evolving sexual identity politics. The study reveals that 94% of African nations criminalise same-sex relations (Human Rights Watch, 2022), with religious institutions often legitimising such legislation through appeals to biblical morality (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:26-27) and natural law (CCC 2357). However, pre-colonial African traditions demonstrate more fluid conceptions of gender and sexuality, problematizing claims that anti-LGBTQIA⁺ stances are inherently “African.”

The study highlights the pastoral crisis facing LGBTQIA⁺ youth, who experience profound alienation—manifesting in depression, suicidality, and displacement—when forced to reconcile their sexual identities with conservative religious teachings. While the Catholic Church maintains doctrinal opposition to homosexual acts, its call for “respect, compassion, and sensitivity” (CCC 2358) remains inconsistently applied in African contexts. The paper argues in support of a transformative pastoral approach that balances doctrinal fidelity with Pope Francis’ vision of accompaniment. And suggests that African churches must develop contextually nuanced strategies beyond mere condemnation or uncritical affirmation.

This research contributes to global theological debates by proposing an African ecclesial model that reconciles traditional sexual ethics with Christocentric radical inclusivity—a vision essential for the Church’s continued relevance in postcolonial societies. The study offers a comprehensive insight into the tensions between personal identity, faith as understood within African Christian traditions, and the quest for acceptance among LGBTQIA⁺ adolescents in African societies.

Keywords: African Christianity, LGBTQIA⁺ Youth, Natural Law, Pastoral Theology, Gender Ideology, Colonial Sexuality

Abbreviations

CCL	Code of Canon Law
CCC	Catechism of The Catholic Church
LGBTQIA ⁺	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex Asexual

Introduction

The increasing visibility and institutional recognition of LGBTQIA+ individuals has generated considerable global discourse, with particularly pronounced reactions evident across the African continent.¹ These responses encompass a spectrum of positions ranging from cautious acceptance to vehement opposition, reflecting deep-seated cultural and religious tensions.² This study examines the engagement of various Christian denominations and religious traditions with LGBTQIA+ youth in Africa, with a particular focus on the Church's dual role as both a moral arbiter and a cultural institution that substantially shapes identity formation processes and societal acceptance mechanisms.³

Given the complex interplay of cultural traditions, theological frameworks, and political considerations, this investigation analyses the sociocultural dynamics underlying persistent ecclesiastical resistance to LGBTQIA+ identities.⁴ The research situates itself at the intersection of three critical domains: first, the theological anthropology of human sexuality; second, the preservation of cultural norms; and third, the pastoral challenges posed by contemporary identity politics.⁵ Through this multidimensional approach, the study aims to illuminate how religious institutions navigate their prophetic role in response to evolving conceptions of gender and sexuality in postcolonial African contexts.⁶

The paper employs a multidisciplinary methodology, drawing from theological anthropology, historical analysis of colonial and pre-colonial sexual norms, and contemporary sociological studies of African youth.⁷ This approach enables a nuanced examination of how traditional Christian teachings on sexuality interact with both indigenous African worldviews and modern identity movements.⁸ Particular attention is given to the pastoral dilemmas faced by African churches as they attempt to balance doctrinal fidelity with the realities of LGBTQIA+ youth who remain committed to their faith communities.⁹

¹ Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2022: Events of 2021* (New York: HRW, 2022), 45.

² Kapyia Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 72.

³ Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019), 34.

⁴ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 210.

⁵ Ezra Chitando and Adriaan van Klinken, eds., *Christianity and Controversies over Homosexuality in Contemporary Africa* (London: Routledge, 2016), 78.

⁶ Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2008), 77.

⁷ Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa?* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 56.

⁸ Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Pastoral Guidelines for Ministering to Persons with Same-Sex Attraction* (2019), 12.

⁹ Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 302.

1.1 Historical Background on Religious Frameworks in Africa

Christianity was introduced in Africa primarily through 19th-century European missionaries who sought to evangelise the continent. These missionaries encountered deeply rooted indigenous belief systems and, over time, established a wide range of Christian denominations.¹⁰ This religious encounter created a complex cultural and theological legacy that continues to shape current attitudes toward sexuality and gender identity.

The colonial imposition of Western Christian norms led to the marginalisation of non-conforming sexual identities, often resulting in stigma and social rejection. Some individuals have even been ostracised by their communities due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. However, it is important to recognise that many African cultures before colonisation had their understandings of gender and sexuality. For example, in the Dahomey Kingdom (modern-day Benin), same-sex relationships were recognised, and adopting children was a common practice to ensure lineage continuity.

1.2 Pre-Colonial African Attitudes Toward Gender and Sexuality

Contrary to the rigid gender norms introduced by colonial Christianity and Western influence, many pre-colonial African societies held more flexible views on gender and sexuality. Anthropological studies reveal that certain African communities, such as the Ndembu of Zambia, accepted same-sex relationships as part of their cultural framework.¹¹ Similarly, the Nandi people of Kenya recognised same-sex unions and supported the adoption of children as a means of continuing family lineage.

Additionally, several ethnic groups embraced spiritual beliefs that included non-binary and gender-fluid expressions, integrating them into ritual and social life. These historical insights are essential to understanding how colonial and Christian frameworks redefined African perceptions of sexuality and contributed to the current tensions surrounding LGBTQIA+ identities in religious and cultural spaces. Grow in morality. The People of Digo and Zande played roles that did not strictly go with societal gender norms, customs, and beliefs, often serving in a spiritual context.

1.3 Traditional Christian Teachings

In the Christian tradition, Sacred Scripture serves as the primary source for moral guidance. Alongside the Bible, theological teachings from the Church Fathers, the Magisterium, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* form an essential body of doctrine that shapes the Christian understanding of sexuality and human identity.

¹⁰ Eugene, Ndlovu., "The Impact of Colonialism on African Christian Identity" (Cambridge: MA, 2020), 45.

¹¹ Mark Epprecht. *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 78.

Scripture opposes homosexual acts as inconsistent with God's original design for humanity. In Genesis 1:28, God blesses the first man and woman, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it..." This command reflects the divine intention for human sexuality to be ordered toward procreation within the context of heterosexual union¹². Homosexual relationships, which by nature are non-procreative, are thus viewed as contrary to this divine plan. Further support is found in *Romans 1:26-27* and *Leviticus 18:22*, which explicitly denounce same-sex acts as sinful and unnatural.¹³ These scriptural references have led many Churches, particularly in Africa, to uphold heteronormative values as divinely mandated, interpreting homosexuality as a spiritual and moral deviation from God's law.

Early Church Fathers such as St. Augustine of Hippo and St. John Chrysostom expressed strong disapproval of homosexual behaviour. They consistently emphasised the sanctity of procreative, heterosexual marriage and condemned all sexual acts outside of that context. Augustine, in his extensive writings on sin and human nature, classified homosexual acts among the gravest moral failings. St. Thomas Aquinas, writing in the Middle Ages, also condemned homosexual activity, considering it contrary to natural law and the order of creation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reinforces this long-standing tradition. Paragraph 2357 states:

"Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved¹⁴."

However, the CCC also makes a critical distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual acts. Paragraph 2358 affirms:

"The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This objectively disordered inclination constitutes, for most of them, a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided¹⁵."

Further, in paragraph 2359, the CCC calls those with homosexual tendencies to a life of chastity: "Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of

¹² The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (Theological Publications in India: Bengaluru, 2020), 2.

¹³ Julius, Mwangi. Christianity and homosexuality in Africa: A Contested Terrain, (Nairobi: Authorhouse, 2020), 112.

¹⁴ Catechism of the Catholic Church, No.2357.

¹⁵ Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2358.

disinterested friendship, by prayer and the sacramental life, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.¹⁶

Thus, the Church condemns homosexual acts, not persons. It upholds the dignity of all individuals while calling for moral integrity in sexual behaviour, consistent with Scripture and natural law. On the other hand, a growing number of theologians and biblical scholars have begun to advocate for more inclusive interpretations of Scripture. They argue that a hermeneutic of love, justice, and human dignity can support more affirming theological approaches to LGBTQIA+ individuals. In the African context, scholars such as Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro emphasise interpretations that affirm the inherent worth of every person, regardless of sexual orientation.¹⁷ These alternative theological voices challenge the dominant conservative narrative within many African Churches, inviting a re-examination of how Christian communities engage with issues of identity, sexuality, and pastoral care.

1.4 Family and Community Influences

In many African societies, families, cultures, tribes, and community structures play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's identity and behaviour. These social units uphold values and norms that guide moral conduct and promote communal cohesion. Traditionally, when individuals deviate from these established norms, they may face social sanctions or corrective measures, intended to preserve the moral fabric of the community.

For LGBTQIA+ youth, this cultural framework often translates into intense pressure to conform to societal expectations, especially those related to heterosexual marriage and procreation. As a result, many young people experience emotional distress, isolation, or even rejection within their own families and homes. The fear of stigmatisation or punishment discourages open discussion, leaving LGBTQIA+ individuals without the necessary emotional and spiritual support to navigate their identities within their communities.¹⁸

1.5 The Role of the Church

The Church remains a central moral and spiritual authority in many African communities. It plays a foundational role in teaching, guiding, and shaping ethical behaviour, emphasising the dignity of every human being as created in the image and likeness of God. Through preaching, pastoral care, and community engagement, the Church encourages all people to live in harmony, upholding values of love, respect, and mutual responsibility.

Church leaders often stand at the forefront of efforts to maintain moral order within society. Many uphold traditional teachings and conservative

¹⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2359.

¹⁷ Kanyoro Musimbi, *African Feminism and Theology, New Perspectives*, (Nairobi: Feminist Press, 2017), 182.

¹⁸ Josephath, Mugisha. "Societal Pressures and LGBTQIA+ Youth, A Study in Uganda," *East African Journal of Youth Studies*, 2(1), 2018, 220-245

positions regarding sexuality, particularly on LGBTQIA+ issues. Non-conformity to these teachings is frequently viewed as a moral failing, and in some cases, may be interpreted as a challenge to established authority and social structures within the Church community.

Nevertheless, the Church is also called to be a place of compassion, healing, and justice. As an independent moral institution, it bears the responsibility not only to preserve societal values but also to advocate for the dignity and rights of all individuals, including those with same-sex orientations. While it must guide the faithful following Christian doctrine, the Church also has a pastoral duty to correct, accompany, and support those who struggle with questions of identity and morality, always in the spirit of truth and love.

1.6 Anti-LGBTQIA+ Legislation in Africa

According to the *Human Rights Watch* 2022 report, numerous African nations, including Uganda and Nigeria, have enacted stringent laws targeting LGBTQIA+ individuals.¹⁹ These laws are frequently legitimised by religious institutions, particularly Christian churches, which justify such legislation through appeals to biblical morality.²⁰

For instance, Uganda's president publicly declared on national television that individuals found engaging in homosexual acts or same-sex intercourse would face severe penalties, including life imprisonment.²¹ He invoked biblical principles, specifically framing marriage as a divinely ordained union exclusively between a man and a woman, as the basis for such punitive measures.²² This perspective aligns with conservative Christian theological interpretations that regard same-sex relationships as incompatible with divine law.²³

While states such as Uganda and Nigeria enforce stringent legal prohibitions against LGBTQIA+ rights, others, like South Africa, have adopted more progressive stances. South Africa's 1996 Constitution was the first in Africa to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.²⁴ This disparity underscores the deeply polarised nature of LGBTQIA+ legislation across Africa. In jurisdictions where LGBTQIA+ identities are criminalised, individuals experience systemic marginalisation, social exclusion, and heightened vulnerability to violence, conditions often exacerbated by religious and societal condemnation.²⁵

¹⁹ *Human Rights Watch, World Report 2022: Events of 2021* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2022), 45, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022>.

²⁰ Kapyia Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia: Democratic Contestation of Sexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 72.

²¹ "Uganda's President Endorses Harsh Anti-Homosexuality Bill," BBC News, October 12, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63220743>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer: Religion, LGBTQIA+ Activism, and Arts of Resistance in Africa* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), 34.

²⁴ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, sec. 9(3).

²⁵ Sylvia Tamale, *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 210.

1.7 Activism and Resistance

Despite substantial social and religious pressure, LGBTQIA+ activism is steadily gaining momentum across Africa. Many activists draw from core Christian values, such as love, compassion, justice, and inclusivity, to advocate for the dignity and rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals. These movements seek to reframe the Christian message as one that embraces all people as created in the image of God, deserving of respect and pastoral care.

1.7.1 The Anglican Church

The Anglican Church, particularly in Africa, has experienced significant internal tensions regarding LGBTQIA+ issues. While the global Anglican Communion remains divided, many African provinces have taken a strong stand against same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBTQIA+ clergy.

One notable instance was a Protestant pastor in South Africa who officiated a same-sex marriage, sparking public debate on the role of clergy in promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. This event raised critical questions: Can a clergy member uphold Christian teaching while openly supporting same-sex unions? How should the Church respond to shifting societal norms without compromising its theological foundations?

In Uganda, the Anglican Church has unequivocally condemned homosexuality and publicly endorsed strict anti-LGBTQIA+ laws. This alignment between Church and state has contributed to widespread societal discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals. While the Church defends its stance based on Scripture and tradition, its involvement in supporting punitive legislation has also prompted ethical questions about the Church's pastoral and prophetic role in society.

1.7.2 The Catholic Church

The teachings of the Catholic Church uphold a traditional understanding of human sexuality. They are clear in their rejection of homosexual acts, viewing them as contrary to God's will and natural law. The Church teaches that such acts do not contribute to the openness to life, undermine the institution of marriage, and distort the theological meaning of the human body as created male and female (cf. Genesis 1:27-28). However, while condemning the act, the Church emphasises the inherent dignity of every person, including those with homosexual tendencies, calling for respect, compassion, and sensitivity (Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], nos. 2357–2359).

Recent popes have addressed this issue with pastoral concern. For instance, in 2016, Pope Francis, speaking to a group of gay and lesbian Catholics, affirmed that all people are children of God and should be welcomed with understanding rather than judgment. He has often emphasised the need to accompany individuals pastorally without compromising doctrine. Pope John Paul II likewise held firm to the Church's teachings on sexuality, while

stressing that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, deserves respect and love.²⁶

Nonetheless, in many African contexts, the reception of such pastoral openness remains constrained by cultural, theological, and political realities.²⁷ Many African Catholic communities interpret any acceptance of LGBTQIA+ persons as a threat to the moral and social fabric and as an assault on divine order. The LGBTQIA+ movement is, therefore, often perceived as undermining the theological vision of marriage and human sexuality as instituted by God. From this perspective, same-sex unions contradict both the natural law and the sacramental meaning of human love and procreation.

Thus, the Catholic Church, while firm in its doctrinal position, continues to walk a fine line between fidelity to divine revelation and the pastoral call to welcome all people as members of the Body of Christ.

1.8 The Response of African LGBTQIA+ Youth

Amid the prevailing conservative theological climate in Africa, many LGBTQIA+ youth find themselves at a painful crossroads between their faith and their sexual identity.²⁸ The moral teachings of religious institutions, reinforced by entrenched cultural norms, often lead to familial rejection, social ostracism, and profound psychological distress.²⁹ This dynamic reflects what Richard Posner describes as the tension between “moralistic” sexual regulation and the lived realities of human sexuality, where social and religious institutions often impose heteronormative frameworks that fail to account for biological and psychological diversity in sexual orientation.³⁰

These young individuals often face alienation from their kinship networks, faith communities, and broader societal structures.³¹ In extreme cases, such marginalisation has precipitated severe mental health crises, including depression, self-harm, and suicidality.³² Others resort to displacement, seeking refuge in more tolerant urban centres or diasporic communities where their identities are less policed.³³ Still, some remain closeted, suppressing their

²⁶ John Paul II, “Theology of the Body”. In *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, (Ascension Press, 2001), 11-53.

²⁷ Sasha, Nkollo. *Catholic Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender in Africa*, (London: Faith and Context, 2021), 143.

²⁸ Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer: Religion, LGBTQIA+ Activism, and Arts of Resistance in Africa* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022), 89.

²⁹ Kapyia Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia: Democratic Contestation of Sexuality in Sub-Saharan Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 114.

³⁰ Richard A. Posner, *Sex and Reason* (London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 302.

³¹ Stella Nyanzi, “Queering Queer Africa,” in *Reimagining Christianity and Sexual Diversity in Africa*, ed. Ezra Chitando and Adriaan van Klinken (Zed Books, 2021), 56.

³² Human Rights Watch, “*Let Us Live*”: *The Struggle for LGBTQIA+ Rights in Africa* (New York: HRW, 2023), 22.

³³ B. Camminga, *Transgender Refugees and the Imagined South Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 73.

authentic selves due to pervasive heteronormative pressures, a phenomenon that Posner argues leads to significant psychological and social costs when sexual identity is forcibly repressed.³⁴

This internal (spiritual) and external (social) conflict frequently leads to a state of cognitive dissonance.³⁵ Many wrestle with reconciling orthodox religious doctrines with their innate sexual or gender identities. Consequently, some LGBTQIA+ youth migrate toward progressive faith communities or queer-affirming religious spaces that provide both theological validation and pastoral support.³⁶ Posner's economic analysis of sexuality suggests that when social and religious institutions impose high costs on nonconforming sexual identities, individuals will either conform (at great personal expense) or seek alternative communities where authenticity costs are lower.³⁷

From a sociological perspective, systemic discrimination produces cascading effects.³⁸ When LGBTQIA+ individuals are barred from conventional social and economic participation, they are often relegated to precarious existences in informal economies and underground networks.³⁹ The necessity of concealment breeds chronic anxiety, reinforcing cycles of secrecy and vulnerability.⁴⁰ This phenomenon parallels other forms of structural oppression, wherein marginalised groups are systematically excluded from full societal integration.⁴¹ Posner notes that such exclusionary practices not only harm individuals but also deprive societies of the full productive potential of their members.⁴²

Given these realities, there exists an urgent imperative for nuanced theological engagement, trauma-informed pastoral care, and inclusive ecclesial dialogue.⁴³ African Christian communities are challenged to embody the Gospel's radical inclusivity while balancing doctrinal fidelity with Christocentric ethics of compassion, justice, and unconditional love for the marginalised.⁴⁴ As Posner's work suggests, rational approaches to sexuality

³⁴ Posner, *Sex and Reason*, 305.

³⁵ Melissa M. Wilcox, *Queer Nuns: Religion, Activism, and Serious Parody* (NYU Press, 2018), 102.

³⁶ Thabo Msibi, *Hidden Sexualities of South African Teachers: Black Male Educators and Same-Sex Desire* (Routledge, 2021), 67.

³⁷ Posner, *Sex and Reason*, 310.

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford University Press, 2001), 43.

³⁹ Hakima Abbas and Amina Mama, eds., *Feminist Africa 18: Pan-Africanism and Feminism* (AWDF, 2014), 31.

⁴⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge, 1990), 128.

⁴¹ Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Duke University Press, 2017), 89.

⁴² Posner, *Sex and Reason*, 315.

⁴³ Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender, and Politics* (Routledge, 2000), 77.

⁴⁴ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Orbis Books, 2011), 112.

must account for both individual well-being and social harmony, rather than relying on dogmatic prohibitions that often exacerbate suffering.⁴⁵

1.8.1 Possibilities for Dialogue

The Church in Africa is encouraged to foster open and honest dialogue regarding the complex realities that LGBTQIA⁺ youth face concerning sexuality, identity, and faith. Such dialogue should be rooted in theological charity and informed by Scripture, tradition, and reason. It should affirm the dignity of every person as created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27), while promoting a pastoral approach that embodies love, hope, care, and a spirit of inclusion. Engaging in such conversations does not mean compromising on doctrine, but rather seeking to accompany individuals with compassion and truth, as Christ did.

1.8.2 Recommendations for Church Leaders

In light of contemporary challenges, Church leaders must receive adequate formation on LGBTQIA⁺ issues. This formation should aim to deepen both theological understanding and pastoral sensitivity, enabling clergy and lay ministers to respond appropriately and effectively to those seeking guidance. Such training would equip leaders to offer faithful, compassionate counsel that is rooted in the Church's teachings and the Gospel's message of love and redemption.

By adopting a transformative and informed pastoral approach, the Church can create healthier spiritual and communal environments in which LGBTQIA⁺ youth may feel safe to engage their faith journey. Rather than alienating or judging, leaders should foster spaces where these young people are accompanied by truth, prayer, and mercy. Seminars, pastoral counselling, and communal prayer initiatives can serve as vital tools in promoting healing and integration, encouraging a return to God's plan and a deeper encounter with Christ.

⁴⁵ Posner, *Sex and Reason*, 320.

Conclusion

The discourse surrounding LGBTQIA+ youth continues to expand globally and has gained significant attention across the African continent.⁴⁶ This conversation has deeply engaged both state institutions and religious communities, as it is rooted in historical, cultural, and theological complexities.⁴⁷ The Church, as a moral and spiritual authority, finds itself at a critical crossroads, called to respond with both doctrinal fidelity and pastoral charity.⁴⁸

As this study has demonstrated, the African Church maintains a firm theological position grounded in natural law and scriptural interpretation, which views same-sex unions as incompatible with divine order.⁴⁹ However, the research also reveals the profound pastoral challenges this creates for LGBTQIA+ youth who experience alienation from both religious communities and familial structures.⁵⁰ The cognitive dissonance experienced by these young believers—caught between their sexual identity and religious devotion—demands more nuanced pastoral responses than simple condemnation.⁵¹

Moving forward, the African Church must develop theological frameworks that uphold traditional teachings on sexuality while creating spaces for authentic dialogue and compassionate accompaniment.⁵² As Pope Francis has emphasised, the Church has to welcome all persons while guiding them toward spiritual truth. This balance requires both courage and sensitivity.⁵³ The future vitality of African Christianity may well depend on its ability to navigate this tension with wisdom and grace.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican: LEV, 1997), para. 2357.

⁴⁷ Josephath Mugisha, "Societal Pressures and LGBTQIA+ Youth in Uganda," *East African Journal of Youth Studies* 2, no. 1 (2018): 48.

⁴⁸ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (Vatican: LEV, 2016), para. 297.

⁴⁹ Genesis 1:27-28 (NRSVCE).

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Let Us Live": *The Struggle for LGBT Rights in Africa* (New York: HRW, 2023), 22.

⁵¹ Posner, *Sex and Reason*, 305.

⁵² Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 92.

⁵³ James Martin, *Building a Bridge* (New York: HarperOne, 2017), 45.

⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* (Vatican: LEV, 2011), para. 42.

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A CRITIQUE OF THE LGBTQIA+: CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

Moses Paul Uwora, SDB

ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the Catholic Church's theological and doctrinal opposition to the redefinition of marriage by the LGBTQIA+ movement, arguing that marriage, as a divinely instituted covenant between one man and one woman, is immutable and central to God's plan for humanity. Drawing from Scripture (Genesis 1:27-28, Matthew 19:4-6), magisterial documents (Gaudium et Spes, Familiaris Consortio), and natural law theory, the paper demonstrates that same-sex unions fundamentally contradict the sacramental, procreative, and complementary nature of marriage. The Church maintains that while homosexual individuals deserve respect and compassion (CCC 2358), their unions cannot be equated with marriage, as they lack the biological and anthropological prerequisites for the transmission of life and the flourishing of family life. The research highlights three key arguments: (1) the biblical and theological foundations of marriage as a heterosexual, life-giving union; (2) the anthropological and social harms of redefining marriage, including the destabilisation of the family as society's fundamental cell; and (3) the moral duty of Catholics, especially lawmakers, to oppose the legal recognition of same-sex unions (Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons, 2003). The study concludes that the Church's stance is not discriminatory but a fidelity to divine and natural law, essential for preserving the common good. Amidst cultural shifts, the Church must uphold the truth of marriage while extending pastoral care to LGBTQIA+ individuals, balancing doctrinal integrity with Christ-like mercy.

Keywords: Catholic Marriage Theology, LGBTQIA+, Natural Law, Sacramental Complementarity, Magisterial Teaching, Family Doctrine

1. INTRODUCTION

Marriage, as an institution divinely ordained, has long been regarded as the foundation of Christian society and the family. The Second Vatican Council's *Gaudium et Spes* emphasises that the well-being of individuals and society is deeply intertwined with the health of marriage and family life.¹ However, contemporary challenges to this sacred institution have emerged, driven by a cultural shift that prioritises absolute freedom and scientific rationalism over divine law. Among these challenges is the push to redefine marriage to include unions between persons of the same sex, a movement

¹ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), no. 47, in Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1975), 903-1001.

spearheaded by the LGBTQIA+ community. This redefinition not only contradicts the natural law but also undermines the Church's teachings on the sacramental and procreative nature of marriage.²

The sexual revolution of the twentieth century marked the beginning of widespread advocacy for alternative sexual expressions, culminating in the modern LGBTQIA+ movement. This movement, which includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual individuals, seeks legal and social recognition for same-sex unions under the banner of marriage.³ While the Church upholds the dignity of every person, including those with homosexual inclinations, it firmly rejects the notion that such unions can equate to marriage as instituted by God.⁴

This paper critiques the LGBTQIA+ concept of marriage through the lens of Scripture, Church tradition, and natural law. By examining the Church's theological and doctrinal foundations, we argue that marriage, as a covenant between one man and one woman, is immutable and central to God's plan for humanity. The paper also addresses the anthropological, social, and moral implications of redefining marriage, affirming the Church's stance that such changes are contrary to the common good and the divine order.⁵

2. A Brief Overview of LGBTQIA+ Movement/Community

The acronym LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The letter 'Q' stands for *queer* when LGBTQIA+ groups, officials, and the media use the term. It can also mean "questioning", where young people are supported.⁶ The plus sign (+) at the end of the acronym indicates other possible variances of the same. People who identify themselves with these groups or are categorised by others do so mainly based on their sexual orientation. Thus, sexual orientation is the way an individual chooses to express his or her sexual desires. Hence, LGBTQIA+ represents a group of persons whose sexual desire is directed to people of the

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Bengaluru: Theological Publications in India, 2019), para. 1601-1605.

³ GLAAD, "Glossary of Terms: LGBTQ+," accessed November 3, 2024, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms>.

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2019), para. 2357-2358; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), no. 4.

⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Human Sexuality, Marriage and Same-Sex Unions: Questions and Answers*, accessed September 20, 2024, <https://www.usccb.org/topics/promotion-defense-marriage/between-man-and-woman-questions-and-answers-about-marriage-and>.

⁶ Glad Media Reference Guide, "Glossary of Terms: LGBTQIA+." Accessed on November 3, 2024, <https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms>

same sex (homosexual) or both (bisexual) and persons who have transitioned from the sex assigned to them by nature at birth. “Homosexual” or “gay” is a term commonly used to refer to these individuals.

2.1. LGBTQIA+ and Marriage

The LGBTQIA+ movement represents a multiplicity of sexual identities and issues, and among these issues is discrimination of various kinds, including marriage. The movement argues that persons with these sexual orientations are also human with inalienable rights to life, work, marriage, etc. Over the past few years, the group has continued to advocate for the recognition and acceptance of its ideology, especially the modification of the traditional understanding of marriage as a union of persons of the opposite sex. There are currently 36 countries in the world where same-sex unions and their variance are legal, according to TV station *CNN World* as of June 18, 2024.⁷

2.2. The Catholic Church on LGBTQIA+ Community

The Catechism of the Catholic Church expressly refers to sexual activities among LGBTQIA+ persons as homosexual. It describes it as a “relation between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction towards persons of the same sex” (CCC, 2357).⁸ The Catechism equally refers to such acts as ‘grave depravity’, ‘intrinsically and objectively disordered’, and ‘contrary to the natural law’ because such acts are closed to the gift of life (CCC, 2357–2358). However, the Church does not consider “homosexual orientation” sinful in and of itself. In the 1986 Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on “the *Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*,” Pope John Paul II says, “...particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin; it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus, the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder.”⁹ However, the Catechism further specifies that “such persons must be accepted with respect and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided” (CCC, 2358). The Catechism furthermore states that “Homosexual persons are called to chastity” (CCC, 2359). Hence, the admonishment of every man and woman to accept their God-given sexual identity is grounded on the fact that “physical, moral, and spiritual *difference* and *complementarity* are

⁷ CNN World, “Where same-sex marriage is legal around the world.” Accessed on November 3, 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/world/same-sex-marriage-legal-countries-map-dg/index.html>.

⁸ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Bengaluru: Theological Publications in India, 2019), 2357. Henceforth, it shall be cited within the text as (CCC #).

⁹ Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF), *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, October 1, 1986, No. 3. Accessed on November 3, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19861001_homosexual-persons_en.html.

oriented toward the goods of marriage and flourishing of family life" (CCC, 2333).

3. Problems and Positions of LGBTQIA+ Homosexual Unions

The popular position taken by civil authorities whenever confronted with homosexual advocacy is tolerance and a tendency for legal recognition. Tolerance is simply ignoring its existence and moral implications, and legal recognition is giving homosexual unions legal status equivalent to marriage in the proper sense of the term, and the possibility of even adopting children (CRP, 5).¹⁰ This is due to the political pressure from the LGBTQIA+ and some organisations to change the traditional conception of human sexuality. However, the moral truth of the Christian faith does not welcome the ideologies of LGBTQIA+. Hence, it is vital to clearly state the immoral nature of these ideologies to avoid exposing young people to ill-informed ideas about human sexuality and marriage. Approving of a contra-natural act is fundamentally different from merely tolerating. Similarly, legalisation is not equal to tolerance. Therefore, in situations where the homosexual union is legally recognised or given the legal status and rights belonging to marriage, the Catholic Church insists that emphatic opposition is the duty (CPR, 5). In this case, therefore, we establish our position on the LGBTQIA+ notion of marriage by cleverly exploring the Catholic Church's theological understanding of marriage.

4. The Catholic Church on the Foundations of Marriage

The sexual revolution of this age has given rise to varied understandings of the institution of marriage. Therefore, it is important to clarify what marriage is according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

4.1. Marriage in Sacred Scripture

The origin of marriage, as presented in the Sacred Scripture, can be traced to God Himself at creation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms this truth when it says, "the intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married life has been established by the creator and endowed by Him with its proper laws. ...God Himself is the author of marriage" (CCC, 1603). This is why the first account of marriage recorded in the Bible is found at the very beginning of the first book of the Bible immediately after the creation of man and woman (cf. Gen. 1:28; 2:22). Pope Saint John Paul II corroborated this

¹⁰ Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, (Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), 9-10. Henceforth, it shall be cited within the text as (CRP, #).

when he said that marriage is “willed by God in the very act of creation and is interiorly ordained to fulfilment in Christ” (FC, 3).¹¹

According to the Yahwist account of creation, when God created man, He said, “it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner” (cf. Gen. 2:18). And God made the woman and brought her to the man, who acclaimed: “This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23). The first nuptial cry. The woman is a gift made to man by God to complete the goodness of human creation. For God said it is not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). Hence, the woman and the man complement each other. She is a partner fit for him to encounter.¹² By this very act, God instituted marriage and made it the zenith of creation.

The Priestly account, on the other hand, reveals the blessing of God upon the man and the woman to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. In this act, God pronounced Adam and Eve husband and wife. He blessed their union with the gift to beget new life. This union is meant to bring the couple fulfilment in participating in God’s creative power. Consequently, the creation of human beings as male and female attests to God’s purpose of marriage. Thus, by its divine institution, marriage is a gift of creation by which a man and a woman enter into communion and exercise the God-given role of ‘co-creator’ (CRP, 3). Since God is the author of marriage, no one has the right to alter its nature (cf. Matt. 19:8). Therefore, based on the implication of Genesis’ account of marriage, we argue that the LGBTQIA+ quest to give the status of marriage to homosexual unions is unscriptural and against the divine law of complementarity inherent in the institution of marriage.

In the New Testament, the Gospel offers us an important statement made by Christ on the subject of marriage. In the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus, citing the Genesis account, says, “...from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mt 19:4-6; Mk 10:6-9).¹³ It is evident from this sacred text that Jesus confirmed the divine origin of marriage as a union to be entered into only by a man and a woman. In this union, the man and the woman become one flesh in an indissoluble manner. Again, Jesus’ statement about marriage is a direct denunciation of the LGBTQIA+ movement’s ideas of marriage.

¹¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*: The Family in the Modern World (Catholic Bookshop Publications, 1982), 5-6. Henceforth, it shall be cited within the text as (CF, #).

¹² Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery* (London: Sheed and Ward Ltd, 1976), 17.

¹³ *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, Catholic Edition (Washington, DC: Bible Society, 2012). Henceforth, it shall be cited within the text.

4.2. Marriage in the Official Church Documents

In this section, we shall briefly explore the Catholic Church's Magisterial teaching on marriage and its implications for LGBTQIA+'s conception of marriage.

4.2.1. Vatican II Council – *Gaudium et Spes*

The Vatican II Council Pastoral Constitution, "*Gaudium et Spes*", maintains that marriage is established between a man and a woman, and guarded by the divine covenant consented to by the couple (GS, 48). The description of marriage contained in this article of *Gaudium et Spes* explicates that marriage is an institution of divine origin. The institution has its specific nature and laws established by the Creator. It is an intimate form of communion. Therefore, anything contrary to this divinely revealed truth about marriage directly opposes God's will. On this ground, we argue that homosexual unions "do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity" (CCC, 2357).

Similarly, in article 51 of the same Constitution, the Council Fathers, commenting on the proper expression of human sexuality, argue that "the acts themselves which are proper to conjugal love and which are exercised in accord with genuine human dignity must be honoured with great reverence" (GS, 51). This implies that every exercise of conjugal love must be based on human dignity. Thus, any conjugal act that does not uphold and promote human dignity disregards the *imago Dei* of which humans were created. Furthermore, the article adds that the morality of any procedure cannot be established only by the sincerity of one's intentions or by judging one's motivations, but must be evaluated according to a set of objective norms (GS, 51). It follows, therefore, that any exercise of conjugal love that does not follow the order of natural law degrades the human person and is contrary to the order of creation.

4.2.2. Code of Canon Law

The Code of the Canon Law of the Catholic Church, treading the line of the Vatican II Council maintains that marriage is a "covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of a whole life; it is by its nature ordered towards the good of the spouses, procreation and education of offspring" (Can. 1055 §1). Again, the elements highlighted in this definition of marriage by the Canon Law render the LGBTQIA+ notion of marriage null and void.

4.2.3. Catechism of the Catholic Church

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Marriage is a lifelong partnership of the whole of life, of mutual and exclusive fidelity, established

by mutual consent between one man and one woman, and ordered towards the good of the spouses, procreation and education of offspring” (CCC, 1601). Among the numerous elements contained in this definition, two are worth considering: marriage is established by mutual consent between one man and one woman, and it is ordered towards the procreation and education of offspring.

The emphasis that the Catechism places on the concept of one man and one woman is grounded in the scriptural passage where Jesus said, “He Who made them in the first place made them man and woman. ... for this reason, a man will leave his father and his mother and will live with his wife” (Mt. 19:4-5a). According to this teaching, marriage is strictly and exclusively reserved for a man and a woman. Any form other than a union of a man and a woman contradicts God’s design for marriage.

Furthermore, both the Sacred Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church consider homosexual acts to be “serious depravity” (Rom. 1:24-27). However, this judgment of Scripture does not permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible, but does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically and objectively disordered and a sin that is seriously contrary to chastity (CRP, 4). Nevertheless, the Church advocates for the *acceptance* of men and women with homosexual tendencies with respect, compassion, and sensitivity (CCC, 2358). Every sign of unjust discrimination must be avoided. God loves every person, and the Church does the same. Hence, she renews her “commitment against all discrimination and violence on sexual grounds”¹⁴ While denouncing the LGBTQIA+’s view of marriage.

4.3. Marriage in the Teachings of Some Church Documents

One of the documents of the Magisterium that extensively deals with homosexual unions and, by extension, LGBTQIA+ is the document entitled *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons*. It was published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), also known as the *Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith* (DDF), on March 28, 2003. The document was the Catholic Church’s response to questions on the recognition and approval of homosexual unions. This document, points out; that the certainty that marriage exists between a man and a woman who, by mutual self-gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons and cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives cannot be erased (CRP, 2).

¹⁴ Synod of Bishops, Final Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly, “Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment” no. 150, accessed on October 8, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/.

The document also affirms that God established marriage with its nature, essential properties, and purpose. By creating human male and female, God instituted marriage as a form of life where the communion of persons is achieved through the use of sexual faculty (CRP, 3). By the union of a man and a woman, God gives special participation to them in his work of creation: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). Hence, in the Creator's plan, sexual complementarity and fruitfulness belong to the very nature of marriage. Therefore, there is no justification whatsoever for comparing homosexual unions to God's design for marriage and family. Homosexual union is, by its very nature, "closed to the gift of life" and as such, goes against the natural moral law (CRP, 3).

Pope Saint John Paul II, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, taught that marital union is reserved for only a man and a woman. He argued that for a man and a woman to become "one flesh" and be open to having children, who "are a living reflection of their love," husband and wife must freely give their entire selves to each other (FC, 14). LGBTQIA+ sexual inclination and expressions do not reflect the complementarity of man and woman as an integral part of marriage and God's design for human sexuality. The elements of unity and procreation indicated in this definition are essential to marriage and thus negate LGBTQIA+ tendencies or unions. And, based on this definition, it is evident that LGBTQIA+ or homosexual unions go against the Catholic understanding of marriage.

Another important document from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (DDF) is *Humanae Vitae* (HV). This declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics was published in 1975. This document condemns the position of those who argue based on "observations in the psychological order" that "homosexual relations between people can be allowed" (HP, 8).¹⁵ The document rejects the consideration of "homosexual relations within a sincere communion of life and love analogous to marriage" (HP, 8). It insists that "according to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts that lack an essential and indispensable finality." The document describes homosexual acts as a "sad consequence of rejecting God (HP, 8).

Pope Francis, on this subject, has taught that Christian marriage is fully realised in the union of a man and a woman who devote themselves to each other in a free, faithful, and exclusive love; who belong to each other until death and are open to the transmission of life; and who are consecrated by

¹⁵ Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Humanae Personae: Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, 1975. Accessed on August 25, 2024, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html. Henceforth, this document shall be cited within the text as (HP, #)

the sacrament, which gives them the grace to become a domestic church and a leaven of a new life for society.¹⁶ Homosexual unions violate the basic intents for which marriage is instituted. Hence, it is evil, not only as a sin against chastity but also because it facilitates the transmission of diseases. It contradicts natural law and divine law and leads to sexual abuse. These inconsistencies with the natural law render LGBTQIA+ activities intrinsically evil.

5. Anthropological Argument from the Experience of Love

One of the objections raised by LGBTQIA+ is the question of affirming the love of same-sex couples as part of the wider experience of human love. On this question, we argue that affirmation of the love of same-sex couples should not be placed on the same pedestal as marriage understood in the proper sense. There are many ways in which individuals and society could affirm the love and commitment of homosexual couples without redefining the institution of marriage. Couples are expected to get married based on love and willing commitment. However, the institution of marriage does not exist to affirm love and willing commitment, but to create something that fulfils God's plan for humanity, within the ambience of marriage-procreation. This plan is embodied in the essential properties of marriage, which are unity and indissolubility (CIC, 1056).

6. Arguments from Reason

The church's teaching on marriage and the complementarity of the sexes is corroborated by reason and recognised by major cultures and religions globally.¹⁷ In this section, we argue from the natural order of reason against the position of LGBTQIA+ homosexuals on marriage.

6.1. From the Order of Right Reason

Every human-made law is valid insofar as it follows natural moral law as validated by right reason. Civil laws ought to structure the principles of life in society for good, not for ill. Civil laws that favour homosexual unions are contrary to *Right Reason* because they confer legal status equivalent to those granted to marriage. Hence, such civil laws do not promote and defend marriage as an institution essential to the common good. Legal recognition of homosexual unions could obscure some moral values and cause a devaluation of the institution of marriage itself (CRP, 6).

¹⁶ Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*: On the Joy of Love, March 19, 2016, (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2016), 292.

¹⁷ Bishops of Pennsylvania, *Human Sexuality, Marriage and Same-Sex Unions*. Accessed on October 8, 2024, <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=6571>.

6.2. From the Biological and Anthropological Order

Homosexual unions lack the biological and anthropological elements of marriage and family because they do not contribute properly to the procreation and survival of the human race, as *Gaudium et Spes* no. 48 teaches. Homosexual unions lack the conjugal dimension, representing an ordered human sexuality. Only a union of a man and a woman can express the sexual complementarity willed by God in marriage. This unique and exclusive complementarity makes possible the conjugal bond that is the core of marriage.¹⁸ Sexual relations are human when they express and promote the mutual assistance of the sexes in marriage and are open to the transmission of new life (*CRP*, 7). Experience has shown that children adopted by persons living in homosexual unions are deprived of either the father or the mother figure. It is immoral and goes against the idea that the child's best interests should always come first, as is recognised in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (*CRP*, 7).

6.3. From the Social Order

Marriage, the basis of family, is responsible for human continuous survival. The unavoidable consequence of legalising homosexual unions would be the redefinition of marriage, with severe detriment to the common good. Any state that legalises homosexual unions contradicts its duties toward the common good (*CRP*, 8). The values of tolerance and respect for homosexual persons cannot justify the legalisation of homosexual unions as marriage. Hence, denial of the status of marriage to homosexual unions is not opposed to justice, but justice requires it (*CRP*, 8). Such relationships are damaging to the proper development of human society and, as such, against human flourishing and survival.

6.4. From the Positive Laws

Civil law gives married couples institutional recognition and ensures the succession of generations, which falls under the purview of public interest. Homosexual relationships do not serve the purpose of the common good. Hence, they do not require legal recognition. It would be gravely unjust to sacrifice the common good and just laws of the family to protect personal goods or interests that can harm the body of society (*CRP*, 9).

Therefore, all Catholics are obliged to oppose the legalisation of homosexual unions. Catholic politicians are obliged to do so in ways appropriate to their responsibility as politicians. When legislation that permits homosexual unions

¹⁸ Catholic Bishops of the United States, *Human Sexuality, Marriage and Same-Sex Unions: Questions and Answers*. Accessed on September 20, 2024, <https://www.usccb.org/topics/promotion-defense-marriage/between-man-and-woman-questions-and-answers-about-marriage-and>

is put forward, Catholic lawmakers have the moral duty to oppose and vote against it. It is gravely immoral to vote in favour of such. (CRP, 10).

7. CONCLUSION

The arguments presented in this paper underscore the Church's unwavering position on marriage as a sacred union between one man and one woman, rooted in divine law and natural order. Drawing from Scripture, tradition, and magisterial teachings, we have demonstrated that the LGBTQIA+ movement's push to redefine marriage is incompatible with the Church's understanding of this institution.¹⁹ The complementarity of the sexes, the procreative purpose of marriage, and the sacramental bond it entails are non-negotiable truths, and cannot be altered by cultural or legal trends.

Moreover, the Church's call to respect and accompany individuals with homosexual inclinations does not equate to endorsing their unions as marriages.²⁰ Legal recognition of same-sex unions not only poses a grave threat to the family, the fundamental cell of society, but it also distorts the moral framework that upholds human dignity and the common good.²¹

In conclusion, the Church's teachings on marriage remain a beacon of truth in a world increasingly detached from its divine origins. Upholding these teachings is not an act of discrimination but a fidelity to the Creator's design. As society grapples with these issues, the Church must continue to proclaim the beauty and truth of marriage while extending Christ's love and mercy to all individuals, regardless of their struggles or orientations.

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Bengaluru: Theological Publications in India, 2019), 1603; *Code of Canon Law*, New Revised English Translation (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 2005), 1055.

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (December 7, 1965), §51, in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1975), 903–1001.

²¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), 6–8.

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YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY: THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE IN AFRICA TODAY

Niwagaba Gerald

ABSTRACT

This study examines the complex intersection of LGBTQIA+ identities and youth development within contemporary African Christianity, analysing how the Church can respond pastorally while maintaining theological fidelity. Drawing from scriptural exegesis (Genesis 1:27-28, Leviticus 18:22), magisterial teachings (CCC 2357-2359, Amoris Laetitia), and sociological data, the research reveals three key findings: (1) African youth (ages 15-24) demonstrate increasing LGBTQIA+ acceptance due to digital globalization, contrasting sharply with traditional cultural and ecclesiastical norms; (2) the Church's historical opposition to same-sex relations, rooted in natural law and procreative complementarity, faces unprecedented challenges in pastoral practice; and (3) current approaches often fail to reconcile doctrinal integrity with Pope Francis' call for a "culture of encounter" (World Youth Day 2023).

Methodologically, the paper employs theological-ethical analysis and empirical research to propose a transformative framework for African ecclesial engagement. It argues that while the Church cannot affirm LGBTQIA+ unions as sacramentally equivalent to marriage (Gaudium et Spes 48), it must develop trauma-informed pastoral strategies that extend Christ-like compassion (Luke 10:30-37) without compromising biblical sexuality ethics. The study contributes to global theological discourse by outlining contextually nuanced solutions, including enhanced Christian education reforms and interdisciplinary dialogue, that address both the anthropological crisis among LGBTQIA+ youth and the Church's missionary imperative in a rapidly secularising Africa.

Keywords: African Christianity, LGBTQIA+ Youth, Natural Law, Pastoral Theology, Digital Globalisation, *Amoris Laetitia*

EPIGRAPHY

In highlighting the importance of Marriage as a lifelong commitment and as designed as well as instituted by God and not as a lenient opinion prevalent at our contemporary time, Jesus says: "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matt 19:4-6).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
Lk	Luke
Matt	Matthew
Cor	Corinthians
GS	Gaudium et Spes
UR	Unitatis Redintegratio
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
UK:	The United Kingdom
CF	Compare
ST	Saint
AM	Amoris Laetitia
ILGA	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Contemporary youth navigate a complex sociopolitical landscape concerning LGBTQIA+ rights and self-expression, while simultaneously facing heightened vulnerability to mental health challenges.¹ Despite the implementation of individual therapeutic interventions and national policies aimed at supporting LGBTQIA+ mental health, significant systemic gaps persist, particularly in large-scale intervention programs designed to foster positive development among LGBTQIA+ youth.² Concurrently, the African Church confronts unprecedented challenges stemming from globalisation processes that have precipitated rapid cultural transformations worldwide.³ Many societies have substantially modified traditional value systems to accommodate these social changes, while the African Church struggles to engage constructively with these developments while maintaining theological fidelity.⁴

The present research originates from Pope Francis's exhortation during World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon, wherein he emphasised that "to live a fuller life, the young people must allow themselves to be guided by God and by good counsellors."⁵ This papal statement underscores the ecclesial recognition of youth as both the present vitality and future continuity of the Church.⁶ Within this context, the African Church maintains a characteristically cautious approach toward contemporary ethical issues, particularly regarding engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community, despite accelerating global sociocultural shifts.⁷

This study examines the critical intersection of *Youth and the LGBTQIA+ Community: The Church's Response in Contemporary Africa*.⁸ The research holds particular relevance for aspiring pastoral ministers, as these emerging challenges will inevitably shape both their personal formation and future ministerial contexts.⁹ By elucidating these dynamics, the study aims to

¹ American Psychological Association, *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons* (Washington, DC: APA, 2021), 23-25.

² Ritch C. Savin-Williams, *The New Gay Teenager* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 112-115.

³ Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 64-67.

⁴ Ezra Chitando and Adriaan van Klinken, *Christianity and Controversies over Homosexuality in Contemporary Africa* (London: Routledge, 2016), 8-10.

⁵ Pope Francis, *Address at World Youth Day* (Lisbon, August 5, 2023).

⁶ Synod of Bishops, Final Document: Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment (October 27, 2018), no. 64.

⁷ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), xix-xxi.

⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (October 1, 1986), no. 3.

⁹ John Martin Owor, *Care for the Youths: Through Canonical Guidance and Protection* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2018), 45-48.

contribute to informed ecclesial discernment regarding one of the most pressing pastoral concerns facing African Christianity today.¹⁰

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

1.1 Understanding of the Term ‘Youth’

Youth represents a critical developmental transition period and a bridge between childhood dependence and adult autonomy. It is characterised by physical, cognitive, and psychosocial maturation. Youth is an integral part of one’s growth and identity.¹¹ In simple terms, Youth is the period of human life between childhood and maturity.¹² According to the United Nations statistical data, Youth are those people between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member states.¹³ However, the United Nations also recognises that, apart from the statistical definition, the meaning of the term ‘Youth’ varies in different societies around the world.¹⁴

1.2 Understanding of the Term ‘LGBTQIA+’

The LGBTQIA+ acronym has extended to LGBTQIA+, which represents a broader spectrum of identities that reflect the diversity of human sexuality and gender. It stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual individuals, with the *plus sign* (+) acknowledging the inclusion of other identities that do not fit neatly within these categories.¹⁵ Each term within the acronym denotes a unique experience of sexual orientation of an individual, highlighting the importance of recognising diverse expressions of human sexuality and the need for inclusivity. Lesbian: refers to women who are sexually attracted to other women. Gay: Refers to men who are sexually attracted to other men of the same gender. Bisexual: refers to people who are sexually attracted to more than one gender, male or female. Transgender:

¹⁰ Marc Epprecht, *Sexuality and Social Justice in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 88-90.

¹¹ Michael Wilkins Matthew, *From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 626–627.

¹² Kathy Rooney, *Encarta World English Dictionary* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing P/C, 1999), 2164.

¹³ Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly, A/40/256, 1985. <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf> accessed on 31/10/2024 at 11:42 pm.

¹⁴ Secretary-General’s Report to the General Assembly, A/40/256, 1985.

¹⁵ Riggle, D., *Defining LGBTQIA+ Identities: Clarifying Common Terms*. Journal of Homosexuality vol. 66, (2019), 471-490.

refers to individuals who sexually identify as a gender different from the one assigned at birth. Questioning (Queer): refers to individuals who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. Intersex: refers to individuals born with both physical sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. Asexual: refers to people who experience little or no sexual attraction to others.¹⁶ 'Plus +': Inclusion of the plus sign (+) reflects the evolving nature of human understanding of sex and gender. It encompasses other identities such as pansexual, queer and more. These expansive definitions emphasise the importance of recognition and rights for individuals whose identities fall outside the traditional heterosexuality, advocating for equal rights and social change.¹⁷

1.3 History of LGBTQIA+

The history of the LGBTQIA+ community is a complex narrative that intertwines struggles for civil rights, social acceptance, and cultural recognition. The acknowledgement of same-sex relationships can be traced back to ancient civilisations. For example, in Ancient Greece, sexual relationships between men were often accepted and celebrated, especially in the context of mentorship. According to scholar Thomas K. Hubbard, "the Greeks had a complex relationship with homosexuality, which was intertwined with their concepts of love and beauty".¹⁸ In other cultures, such as in ancient Rome, same-sex relationships were also present, though often viewed through a different social lens. The Roman poet Juvenal, in his *Juvenal*, critiqued same-sex practices in his satires, highlighting the tension surrounding male-male relationships.¹⁹

In the light of this, the nineteenth century marked a turning point as the phenomenon of same-sex attraction began to be studied medically. The term 'homosexuality' was coined by Karl-Maria Kertbeny in 1869, and it was during this time that homosexuality was often pathologised in medical discourses.²⁰ The first known homosexual rights organisation, the *Scientific-Humanitarian Committee*, was founded in Germany in 1897 by Magnus Hirschfeld, advocating for sexual reform and the decriminalisation of homosexuality.²¹ The dawn of

¹⁶ Budge, S. L., Adelson, J. L., & Howard, K. A. S. Anxiety and depression in transgender individuals: The roles of transition status, loss, social support, and coping. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 81, vol.3, (2013), 545–557.

¹⁷ Dugan, R. *Understanding LGBTQIA+ terminology: A Guide to the Ever-evolving Vocabulary*. *Journal of Social Justice*, 12(2), (2020), 125–140.

¹⁸ Hubbard T., *Homosexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome* (United States of America: University of California Press, 2000), 45.

¹⁹ McClure, L., *Juvenal* (Satire: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 78.

²⁰ Ruth Rohr J., *Homosexuality: The Historical Perspective* (Germany: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 102.

²¹ Hirschfeld M., *Sexuality History of the World* (Germany: Anchor Books, 2000), 155.

the 20th century witnessed the crystallisation of structured social movements, as grassroots activism evolved into organised campaigns for reform. The *Mattachine Society*, founded in 1950 in the United States, became one of the first formal gay rights organisations. Their goal was to advocate for the acceptance of homosexuals and to combat discrimination.²² Simultaneously, many countries were enforcing strict laws against homosexuality. For instance, in the UK, the *Labouchere Amendment* of 1885 criminalised male homosexual acts, leading to notable trials, such as that of Oscar Wilde in 1895.²³ The *Stonewall Uprising* in New York City, the genesis of modern activism, is a pivotal moment in LGBTQIA+ history. It occurred on June 28, 1969. This event is often credited with sparking the modern LGBTQIA+ rights movement. In response to a police raid on the *Stonewall Inn*, patrons fought back, leading to several days of protests.²⁴ The post-Stonewall era witnessed the emergence of new activist organisations, most notably the *Gay Liberation Front* (GLF), which pioneered radical tactics to secure civil rights and increase LGBTQIA+ visibility in the public sphere.²⁵ The 1980s brought significant challenges to the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly with the onset of the HIV-AIDS crisis. This disease has disproportionately affected many gay men, leading to widespread loss of lives and stigma. Activist groups like *ACT UP* (*AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power*) emerged, advocating for medical research and public awareness. The crisis spurred a sense of community and resilience and increased visibility and solidarity among LGBTQIA+ individuals.²⁶

As already indicated above, today, the concept of *LGBT* has expanded to *LGBTQIA+* which stands for *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and Others*. The plus (+) represents other sexual identities, including *pansexual* and *Two-Spirit*. The first four letters of the acronym have been used since the 1990s. Yet recently, there has been an increased awareness of the need to be inclusive of other sexual identities to offer better representation.²⁷ In the 21st century and today, significant progress has been made in many countries regarding LGBTQIA+ rights, including marriage equality and anti-discrimination laws. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court legalised same-

²² D'Emilio J., *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority* (United States of America: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 58.

²³ Holt T., *The End of the Line: The Rise and Fall of the UK Gay Movement* (United Kingdom: Cassell, 1998), 34.

²⁴ Duberman, *Stone Wall* (New York: Dutton, 1993), 211.

²⁵ Armstrong E., *Forging Gay Identities: Organising Sexuality* (San Francisco: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 174.

²⁶ Meyer M., *The Politics of AIDS* (United States of America: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 88.

²⁷ Duberman, *Stone Wall*, 211.

sex marriage in 2015 with the landmark decision in *Obergefell vs Hodges*.²⁸ However, challenges remain, with ongoing discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ individuals in various parts of the world. The *International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association* (ILGA) continues to track legal developments and advocate for global rights.²⁹ In short, the history of the LGBTQIA+ community is marked by struggle, resilience, and triumph. From ancient societies to modern advocacy, the journey reflects a broader-based fight for human rights and recognition. With continued activism, it is essential to address the disparities that still exist.³⁰

1.4 LGBTQIA+ INFLUENCE ON THE YOUTH IN AFRICA

The increasing visibility and representation of LGBTQIA+ communities in media and public spaces have significantly impacted the normative development of youth identities in recent years in Africa. As societal attitudes evolve toward greater acceptance of sexual and gender diversity, young people are being exposed to a broader range of self-identification and experiences. This often helps to shape their understanding of themselves and others. The influence of LGBTQIA+ visibility is complex, offering both opportunities for greater self-acceptance and challenges to traditional gender norms. However, this cultural shift also presents social and political issues to youth as they navigate the complexities of an increasingly diverse local society.

The LGBTQIA+ visibility promotes inclusivity and acceptance. When LGBTQIA+ characters and narratives are discussed openly in media, they provide young people, especially those within the LGBTQIA+ community, the chance to see themselves reflected in ways that validate their identities. The media portrayals that reflect this fluidity can encourage youth to question rigid norms and adopt more inclusive views of identity. The media's role in presenting non-normative sexualities and gender expressions allows young people to explore new ways of understanding both themselves and others. This is particularly crucial for LGBTQIA+ youth who may otherwise feel isolated or marginalised.³¹

Equally, the growing visibility of LGBTQIA+ identities has also provoked criticism, particularly from conservative groups. The shifting of gender roles and the visibility of LGBTQIA+ individuals have led to anxiety among those

²⁸ ILGA, *State-Sponsored Homophobia Report*. International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Association (United States of America: *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2021) 576-644.

²⁹ ILGA, *State-Sponsored Homophobia Report*, 576-644.

³⁰ ILGA, *State-Sponsored Homophobia Report*, 576-644.

³¹ Butler Judith, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Routledge: Routledge, 1990), 1-250.

who uphold traditional gender norms. This resistance manifests in both public policy and cultural attitudes, especially regarding LGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools and workplaces. With these media portrayals and public discourse, it may lead to greater awareness of LGBTQIA+ issues, but these shifts can also create divisions, where LGBTQIA+ youth may face discrimination, harassment, and rejection.³²

The increasing exposure of LGBTQIA+ individuals in media, education, and digital platforms has had a profound impact on youth identity formation. Positive media portrayals help foster self-acceptance and challenge traditional gender roles. These changes also provoke resistance from conservative forces that maintain and uphold conservative gender norms. The influence of LGBTQIA+ communities on youth is likely to continue growing, creating both new opportunities for personal growth and challenges in navigating a complex social landscape in the future.³³

CHAPTER TWO

SCRIPTURE, CHURCH TRADITION, AND THE MAGISTERIUM ON LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY

In recent times, the texts of *Leviticus* 18:22 and 20:13 have attracted the attention of Old Testament scholars, clergy and the laity alike; inspired by their quest to speak out the possible light that the texts can shed on the subject of LGBTQIA+. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that interpreting texts such as *Leviticus* 18:22 and 20:13 becomes pertinent in our society. The problem of accepting or rejecting LGBTQIA+ presents itself as a subject of serious debate in the African Church. This chapter examines Scriptural, Church Tradition, and Magisterial views on LGBTQIA+.

2. 1 The Biblical Conception of Human Sexuality

The Bible teaches that LGBTQIA+ is not compatible with God's plan for humanity. The Bible is riddled with the Judeo-Christian concepts of human sexuality. A case in point is, in the creation accounts which explain to us that God created human kind in his *image*, in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them, (*Genesis* 1:27). Therefore, God reveals his purpose of human sexuality when he said to them "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth", (*Genesis* 1:28). Clearly, there are many biblical references

³² Kimmel, Michael, *The Gendered Society*, 4th ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-450.

³³ Gough, B. Joseph. *Disrupting the Culture of Silence: Queer Youth in Digital Spaces* (Palgrave Macmillan: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 1-230.

showing that God ordained and approved heterosexual acts within the union of marriage which are not in LGBTQIA+ purview and activities. The relatively few biblical passages dealing with the subject do not holistically treat LGBTQIA+ as a psychosexual orientation but rather refer to a certain type of LGBTQIA+ acts. The major references completely condemn same sex genital expression. That human beings are made in the image of God means that they are good and therefore should not engage in anything that distorts that image of God, which is good.

2.1.1 Old Testament

The Old Testament narrates the judgment passed against Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 and 19. Sodomy is an indication of the sin that characterised this city. The demand for illicit sex with men contributed to the city's destruction.³⁴ These people were condemned and destroyed by God because of their unrepentant hearts for the sin of homosexuality. This is given as a warning for people of all ages that God holds LGBTQIA+ acts fully accountable for their sin.³⁵

2.1.1.1 Command to Co-Create (Genesis 1:28)

Some argue that there are other biblical texts by implication that do rule out consensual relationships among persons of the same gender. They cite God's command to Adam and Eve in Genesis: 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth' (Genesis 1:28). They argue that this passage presupposes monogamous, committed heterosexual unions as the ideal, since such relationships participate in God's creative design. That is, the same sex relations cannot fulfil this command and are thwarting God's purpose for human sexuality (Genesis 16:1-4).

2.1.2 New Testament

In his public ministry, Jesus sought to build radically inclusive communities, extending beyond the socially respectable and those who rigidly observed the Pharisees' religious rules and traditions. He always lifted those who were marginalised. He forgave the adulterous woman (Lk 7:36-50).

In the Christian Scriptures, heterosexual marriage is not always required to be part of God's plan. In the genealogy of Jesus recounted by Matthew (Mt 1:1-17), there are several women listed in Jesus' ancestral lineage who

³⁴ Sarah Ruden, *Paul Among the People: The Apostle Reinterpreted and Reimagined in His Own Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2010), 58-59.

³⁵ Ruden, *Paul. Among the People*, 58-59.

engaged in sexual activities outside of monogamous marriage (Mt 1:1-17). Biblical scholars see these as embarrassing fingers of the ancestors of Jesus and a message that no one is excluded from the divine plan and all can be used by God to achieve his purposes, despite their irregular sexual activity or sexual exploitation by others. Jesus himself did not marry, and Paul encourages celibacy for Christians in his advice in 1 Corinthians:

Those who marry will experience distress in this life, and I would spare you for that. I mean, brothers and sisters, that the appointed time has grown short; I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. The unmarried woman, like the virgin, can devote herself fully to the Lord's work, seeking holiness in both body and spirit. But the married woman must attend to worldly responsibilities, how to please her husband, and thus her concerns are divided (1 Cor 7:28, 32-34).

Biblical scholars believe that, Paul gave this advice because he said "the appointed time has grown short", meaning he expected Jesus to return soon on earth to judge the world (as Paul implies elsewhere in his letters, like (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and wanted Christians to spend their remaining short time on earth devoted to the preparation for imminent final judgment.³⁶

2.2 Church Fathers' Teaching on Human Sexuality

Generally, the Church Fathers affirmed the sanctity of marriage as found in the Hebrew scriptures and the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. Hence, they taught that sex should be within married couples. They understood and taught that sexual act is to be within the domain of hetero-sexual married couples to beget children. Let us briefly examine the perspectives of Tertullian and St Augustine on human sexuality.

2.2.1 Tertullian (Ca.160-240 ad)

While Tertullian upheld celibacy as the ideal, he affirmed the validity of marriage. For him, God bestows his blessing on matrimony for procreation. In the context where sexual immorality was often, especially among non-

³⁶ Stephen L. Harris, *The New Testament: A Student's Introduction*. 8th ed; (Dallas: McGraw-Hill Humanities/Social Sciences/Language, 2014), 30.

Christians, he further insisted on monogamy as God gave only one wife to Adam.³⁷

2.2.2 St. Augustine (354-430)

St Augustine condemns sexual perversion in his book of *Confession*, when he writes: "Therefore those offences which are contrary to nature are everywhere and at all times to be held in detestation and punished; such were those of the Sodomites. They should all be held guilty of the same crime by the divine law, which hath not so made men that they should in that way abuse one another."³⁸

2.3 Magisterial Teaching on Human Sexuality

Our analysis of biblical texts, extended to include the theologically constructed teachings of the Magisterium, suggests an ethical framework for discernment. This approach enables conscientious judgment regarding the moral evaluation of same-sex acts and homosexual relationships. Holistically, Church Tradition teaches that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered for the following reasons: they "are contrary to the natural law", the principles of which are reflected in human nature itself; "they close the sexual act to the gift of life"; and "they do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity", (CCC no. 2357). This Magisterial teaching raises the question whether or not such acts can ever be truly unitive on the level of personal complementarity?

The magisterium teaches that homosexual acts violate affective and personal complementarity and that homosexual parents do "violence" to their children.³⁹ These are classic cases in which we should trust science, for it has led to a better understanding of the truth. There is abundant social scientific data to support the claim that personal complementarity is evident in homosexual relationships and that complementarity facilitates the positive nurturing of children.⁴⁰ These 'homosexual acts' are consistently condemned because they violate heterogenetic and reproductive complementarity" (CCC no. 2357).

³⁷ Tertullian, *Ancient Christian Writers: Treatises on Marriage and Remarriage, to his Wife, An Exhortation to Chastity, Monogamy*, Trans by William Le (New York: New Press, 1951), 11.

³⁸ Augustine, *Confessions*, Trans by Henry Chadwick, Book 111, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 46.

³⁹ Stacy, J.R. & Lynn, K.W. *Satisfaction with Parenting: The Role of Marital Happiness, Family Structure, and Parents' Gender*. J. Marriage Fam. 1998, 60, 293–316.

⁴⁰ Amato, P.R. & Booth, A. *A Generation at Risk: Growing Up in an Era of Family Upheaval*, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, USA, 1997), 67–83.

According to Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (The Joy of Love), in 2016, as for the proposals to place unions between homosexual persons on the same level of marriage; there are no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar to God's plan for marriage and family (AL no. 251). It is unacceptable that the local church should be subjected to pressure on this matter. The Pope suggests that families with the experience of same-sex members should be given respectful pastoral guidance, so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives (AL no. 250).

2.3.1 Catechism of the Catholic Church

According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. This reality has manifested in diverse forms across historical epochs and cultural contexts. According to the Sacred Scripture, homosexual acts are intrinsically evil in themselves, and tradition has always taught that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved (CCC no. 2357).

2.4 African Traditional and Contemporary Views on Human Sexuality

In most parts of Africa, LGBTQIA+ acts are not morally acceptable and, as such, should not be mentioned in public. It is a distortion of the traditional marital paradigm. It is a deviation so radical that it can be described as a "world turned upside down" phenomenon. LGBTQIA+ is perceived as a distortion of cultural values because it lacks the basic intention of sexual union, which is for procreation. In these cultures, the issue is not necessarily LGBTQIA+ per se, but that of same sex marriage because the purpose is not for satisfying sexual urge but to ensure the perpetuation of the family lineage.⁴¹

Politically, many African leaders oppose acts of LGBTQIA+, for example, Daniel Arap Moi, the former President of Kenya, once asserted that homosexuality is against African norms, traditions, and even religion. It is considered a menace that distorts Christian teaching in Africa and, therefore, a great sin.⁴² Many anti-gay laws have become harsher, for example, in Uganda, in December, 2013, when the Ugandan parliament passed the law; passed the amendment law to existing laws with wider and harsher punishment on

⁴¹ Awondo P., "Religion leadership and the re-politicisation of gender and sexuality in Cameroon" in *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, 155 (July, 2016 Special Edition), 105-120.

⁴² Kunhiyop S. Waje, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: Hippo Books, 2008), 304.

homosexuals.⁴³ Similarly, President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe seriously campaigned against acts of homosexuals and said “I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations like those of homosexuals who offend against the law of nature and the morals of religious belief backed by our society should have any advocate in our midst or even elsewhere in the world.”⁴⁴

The implication is that homosexuality is not acceptable in many nations and countries in Africa. In some other contemporary views, however, homosexuality is seen as “a disease or sickness; a possession by evil or demonic spirits, an occult practice, or simply a despicable influence of the morally decadent.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the African Church faces significant pastoral challenges in its engagement with LGBTQIA+ communities, as we will examine in the following analysis. In Africa, the story is not different, as agitations to reverse penal laws against LGBTQIA+ mount each time. The uneasiness for acceptance and recognition of LGBTQIA+ may have heightened due to an increase in the level of education and exposure of many Africans, which creates the desire for morality to be based on empirical and scientific data rather than traditional normative dictates of a culture. Advances in scientific research and digital technologies have generated an unprecedented proliferation of knowledge across society, particularly among younger generations.⁴⁶

2.4.1 Erosion and Abandonment of Traditional Values and Beliefs of the Society

Western cultural influences have always been strong, not only in Africa but also globally. In numerous African contexts, younger generations increasingly favour foreign cultural norms, perceiving them as more aligned with modern values of individual autonomy. This includes self-expression, personal identity formation, and lifestyle choices embodied in phrases like ‘my choice, my life’.⁴⁷

2.4.2 Rejection of Biblical Revelation and Ecclesiastical Practices

The notion that biblical teachings and ecclesiastical authority need not govern those of different faiths or cultural backgrounds is gaining increasing acceptance, including among Christian communities. Undeniably, African

⁴³ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbti-lgbt-gay-human-rights-law-africa-uganda-kenyanigeria-cameroon>. accessed on 16/02/2024 at 2:30.

⁴⁴ Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 304.

⁴⁵ Reddy Vasu. “Perverts and Sodomites: Homophobia as hate speech in Africa (Nov, 2009), 171.

⁴⁶ Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 305.

⁴⁷ Waje, *African Christian Ethics*, 305.

societies are undergoing profound transformations that demand a thoughtful response from the Church. In addressing homosexuality, the Church must interpret Scripture faithfully while engaging contemporary challenges. This requires upholding biblical revelation as the primary authority for Christian ethics, while thoughtfully discerning how to articulate these truths in conversation with modern scientific perspectives.⁴⁸ The normative authority of Scripture in matters of faith and moral conduct remains inviolable across all contexts and generations.

CHAPTER THREE

THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH IN AFRICA ON THE LGBTQIA+ AND YOUTH: ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

The LGBTQIA+ practices pose a moral threat and dilemma to many societies in Africa, and therefore, impose a critical challenge to the church in Africa. While LGBTQIA+ communities across the globe are gaining more acceptance and recognition, their counterparts in Africa continually look up to them for sympathy and financial support.⁴⁹ The universal church generally believes that LGBTQIA+ is not a Christian culture and neither upholds Christian values. Historically, the first Christian denominations to affirm LGBTQIA+ inclusion were the Metropolitan Community Church, United Church of Christ, and (to a limited extent) the Episcopal Church in America. They initially framed their acceptance primarily as a membership expansion strategy rather than an endorsement of LGBTQIA+ clergy leadership.⁵⁰ The involvement of priests accused of pedophilia and similar scandals spurred the church globally to take LGBTQIA+ issues as a critical challenge.⁵¹

The Church in Africa needs to uphold its cultural heritage as much as biblical injunctions must be observed, recognising LGBTQIA+ as a moral and cultural practice lacking a biblical basis for approval, and should form the basis for the collective Church response. Therefore, we theologically make the following recommendations for the Church in Africa on the issue of LGBTQIA+ in line with Adejuwon's perspective.⁵²

⁴⁸ Spence and Excell, eds., *Pulpit Commentary* (California: Funk and Wagnalls, 2011), 282-283.

⁴⁹ Ezekiel A. Adejuwon, *Homosexuality: An African Christian Ethical Perspective* (Nigeria: Seahi Publications, 2020), 165.

⁵⁰ Ezekiel A. Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 162.

⁵¹ Ezekiel A. Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 162.

⁵² Ezekiel A. Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 166.

3.1 Uphold the Authority of the Scriptures

The church in Africa must maintain the biblical teachings as divinely revealed truth on human sexuality. The church by nature is bound to no particular form of human culture or ideologies, nor any political, economic or social systems like humanism and secularism, (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 42). In this way, the church would affirm and hold first to the truth of the Word of God without compromise. However, we also believe that the church in Africa should tolerate LGBTQIA+ as with any other threat confronting society, and be challenged to take up reformative programs for their correction and transformation.⁵³ On this question of LGBTQIA+, let there be unity in what Christ has explicitly taught humanity (Matt 19:4-6); and above all, charity in all relationships, even to those who find themselves in such sexual controversies (Mk 10:1-2, GS no. 92 and UR no. 4).

3.2 Enhance Christian Education in Mission Schools

The secular educational arm of the Church should be strengthened and supported with sound Christian Education programs to meet the spiritual and moral needs of children and youths. Today's youth are immersed in an unprecedented digital ecosystem, constantly engaging with diverse information sources through Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Unless correct teachings of the Word of God are incorporated into their secular educational system, youths in the wake of fake news and children will be misinformed on many issues of human sexuality, and they will be overly exposed to and indulged in these practices. Youths should be made to understand the potential threats and dangers posed by their free indulgence in LGBTQIA+ practices. The risks include damaged self-perception, strained interpersonal relationships, and alienation from God.⁵⁴

When secular education policies restrict religious materials like the Bible in public schools, the Church can (1) equip Christian educators to teach biblical morality through approved curricular frameworks, (2) contextualise spiritual truths within universal ethical principles, and (3) focus on character formation rather than explicit religious instruction. For example, through music, writings, and artistic expressions, biblical truths are made real to people in their worldviews and contexts. Church schools must design curricula that integrate society's core ethical requirements, clear moral standards, and robust theological formation.⁵⁵

⁵³ Ezekiel A. Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 166.

⁵⁴ Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 166.

⁵⁵ Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 166.

3.3 Christians are Called to Love and to Be Compassionate

Christ's parable of the *Good Samaritan* (Lk 10:30-37) reveals God's design for human flourishing. We find life's deepest meaning through Christ-like love that transcends boundaries, incarnates mercy, and fulfils the law. This aligns with Jesus' radical teaching on the deepest longings of the human heart and the profoundest meaning of human life for which the Christian is to receive courage, compassion, and all the essentials for a normative attitude and relationships.⁵⁶ The expectation of Jesus for his followers in the parable of the *Good Samaritan* is to show objective compassion to whoever objectively needs it. According to the *Pulpit Commentary* of Spence and Excell, the love of the neighbor is not exclusive to only blood-relations, rather it is all inclusive of all humans who ontologically bear God's image and likeness and whoever can be helped in anyway, including the rejected, fanatics, the corrupted and even the enemy.⁵⁷ As God loves, so the church should love. Loving the neighbour as self is seeking the well-being of the neighbour to bring about the establishment of the purpose of God in all humankind, and His kingdom on earth (2Tim 4:1-8).⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 166

⁵⁷ Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 165.

⁵⁸ Adejuwon, *Homosexuality*, 165.

CONCLUSION

The accelerating proliferation of homosexual activities and related affiliations across African societies necessitates that the Church adopt a posture of cautious yet objective openness in its engagement with these developments.⁵⁹ This approach must be grounded in the fundamental theological principle that all persons, regardless of sexual orientation, constitute the “neighbour” to whom the Church bears responsibility, and who equally require justification through faith in Christ.⁶⁰ Such dialogue must be carefully structured and guided by theological experts to ensure fidelity to scriptural authority while simultaneously acknowledging the lived realities of affected individuals.⁶¹ This balanced approach precludes any compromise of the ethical standards incumbent upon ecclesiastical leadership at all levels.⁶²

The current research highlights a critical necessity for comprehensive youth formation on LGBTQIA+ matters, that is, an educational imperative that transcends individual theological positions.⁶³ Current data reveals significant knowledge gaps among African youth concerning the LGBTQIA+ community, often accompanied by misinformed prejudices requiring correction through deliberate study.⁶⁴ Empirical research reveals a significant generational divergence in attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ communities, with younger demographics demonstrating markedly greater acceptance than older cohorts. This is a well-documented phenomenon that received rigorous analysis in Emmanuel Mary-Mbam’s seminal sociological work (Mary-Mbam, 2023).⁶⁵ Should this trajectory of acceptance continue, it may ultimately foster societal conditions wherein LGBTQIA+ individuals attain equal dignity and legal standing comparable to other citizens.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Marc Epprecht, *Sexuality and Social Justice in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 134-137.

⁶⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), para. 2358.

⁶¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons (October 1, 1986), no. 7.

⁶² Pontifical Council for the Family, The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality (December 8, 1995), no. 15.

⁶³ John Martin Owor, *Care for the Youths: Through Canonical Guidance and Protection* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2018), 72-75.

⁶⁴ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), 88-91.

⁶⁵ Emmanuel Mary-Mbam, *Church and Contemporary Culture: The African Dilemma* (Lagos: Pauline Publications, 2020), 156-159.

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch, *This Alien Legacy: The Origins of “Sodomy” Laws in British Colonialism* (New York: HRW, 2008), 23-25.

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YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+: THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL DILEMMAS IN ACCOMPANIMENT IN AFRICA

Okenye Nyakebako Jared

Abstract

This study examines the complex interplay between African youth perspectives on LGBTQIA+ identities and the Catholic Church's doctrinal and pastoral responses. Through an interdisciplinary analysis of theological teachings (CCC 2357-2359, Amoris Laetitia), sociological data on generational attitudes, and digital ethnography, the research reveals three key findings: (1) African youth (ages 15-24) demonstrate significantly higher LGBTQIA+ acceptance than older generations due to social media exposure (67% vs. 29% approval rates in urban centers), globalized education, and peer activism; (2) the Church maintains theological opposition to same-sex unions based on natural law and sacramental marriage (Gaudium et Spes 48), while advocating for dignity-centered pastoral care (Pope Francis, 2013); and (3) emerging tensions between traditional African values and progressive youth movements necessitate innovative pastoral strategies that balance doctrinal fidelity with Pope Francis' «culture of encounter.»

Methodologically, the paper employs comparative analysis of magisterial documents, case studies of Kenyan youth activism, and empirical data on the effects of digital socialisation. It argues that while the Church cannot recognise LGBTQIA+ unions as equivalent to marriage (Fiducia Supplicans, 2023), it must develop contextually sensitive approaches, including trauma-informed ministry and critical media literacy programs, to address the psychosocial needs of LGBTQIA+ youth facing familial rejection (42% incidence) and societal violence.

The study contributes to global theological discourse by proposing an African ecclesial framework that reconciles Augustinian anthropology with contemporary realities impacting youth and offers actionable recommendations for seminaries and diocesan youth ministries.

Keywords: African Youth, LGBTQIA+, Digital Socialisation, Natural Law, Pastoral Theology, *Amoris Laetitia*

PART ONE

YOUTH AND LGBTQIA+ THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL DILEMMAS IN ACCOMPANIMENT IN AFRICA

Okenye Nyakebako Jared

1.1 The Concept of LGBTQIA+

The term LGBTQIA+ has been subject to multiple definitions within contemporary discourse.¹ While sometimes used synonymously with homosexuality, the term more precisely encompasses a broader spectrum of non-heteronormative identities and expressions.² The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has characterised same-sex relationships as constituting “a troubling moral and social phenomenon” with transnational implications.³ Essentially, the acronym represents a diverse range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and forms of expression, while also serving as a marker for communities that frequently experience marginalisation based on these identities.⁴

The LGBTQIA+ acronym functions as follows:

- **L** (Lesbian): Women who experience sexual attraction to other women⁵
- **G** (Gay): Typically referring to men attracted to other men, though sometimes used more inclusively⁶
- **B** (Bisexual): Individuals attracted to both men and women⁷
- **T** (Transgender): Persons whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth⁸
- **Q** (Queer): Originally a pejorative term, now reclaimed as an umbrella term for non-normative identities⁹

¹ American Psychological Association, *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons* (Washington, DC: APA, 2021), 14-17.

² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 6-8.

³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons* (June 3, 2003), introduction.

⁴ Marc Epprecht, *Sexuality and Social Justice in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 32-35.

⁵ American Psychological Association, *Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality* (Washington, DC: APA, 2020), 2.

⁶ Ritch C. Savin-Williams, *The New Gay Teenager* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 45-47.

⁷ Shiri Eisner, *Bi: Notes for a Bisexual Revolution* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2013), 12-14.

⁸ Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 1-3.

⁹ David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 62-64.

- **I (Intersex):** Individuals born with both physical sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female.
- **A (Asexual):** Persons who experience little or no sexual attraction to others.¹⁰
- *: Encompasses additional identities, including asexual, intersex, and pansexual individuals¹¹

This community advocates globally for equal rights and social acceptance.¹² The relationship between youth and LGBTQIA+ issues demonstrates significant geographical variation. In Africa, this dynamic is particularly complex, shaped by intersecting factors, including (1) Traditional cultural norms, (2) Religious conservatism, (3) Educational exposure, and (4) Engagement with global social movements.¹³

While global trends suggest increasing acceptance among younger generations, African contexts often maintain more conservative attitudes rooted in traditional value systems.¹⁴ This tension forms the basis for our subsequent examination of African perspectives on LGBTQIA+ identities.

1.2 The Young People's Attitudes

In many African countries, the younger generations tend to have more progressive views on LGBTQIA+ issues compared to older generations. This can be caused by several factors, such as:

1.2.1 Social Media

The internet and social media have fundamentally transformed global perspectives and collective consciousness. As much as the Church advocates for the proper use of the internet, the media culture affirms that there are no absolute truths or that, if there were, they would be inaccessible to human reason and therefore irrelevant.¹⁵ When used responsibly, the Internet serves as a powerful tool for accessing diverse knowledge and global perspectives. The reason as to why the Church considers the media as an outcome of the historical scientific process by which humankind advances further and

¹⁰ Budge, S. L., Adelson, J. L., & Howard, K. A. S. Anxiety and depression in transgender individuals: The roles of transition status, loss, social support, and coping. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 81, vol.3, (2013), 545–557.

¹¹ Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, *Queer: A Graphic History* (London: Icon Books, 2016), 75–77.

¹² Dennis Altman, *Global Sex* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 88–90.

¹³ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), xv–xviii.

¹⁴ Ezra Chitando and Adriaan van Klinken, *Christianity and Controversies over Homosexuality in Contemporary Africa* (London: Routledge, 2016), 3–5.

¹⁵ The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and the Internet* (Rome, Vatican City), February 22, 2002, 8.

further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation.¹⁶ On his part, John Forey conceptualises scientific progress as an evolving historical process through which humanity progressively uncovers the latent resources and inherent value embedded within creation.¹⁷ Through it, God continues to reveal himself to the world and his creatures. Internet use has both positive and negative impacts. Positively speaking, the internet is one of the best means of communication. However, young people need to be enlightened on what to see, read, and hear on social media. While speaking negatively, many young ladies have found themselves with babies after being misused through social media. Some of them even expose their naked bodies through social media, thus attracting many young men and women to homosexual tendencies. Moreover, exposure to global LGBTQIA+ movements and narratives has enabled many young Africans to develop greater empathy and understanding of LGBTQIA+ rights. The use of the internet allows them to access a wealth of information about LGBTQIA+ individuals from around the world, offering more diverse perspectives than what might be available locally.

1.2.2 Modern and Global Influence

Recently, we have seen individuals advocating for their so-called rights, rights they believe are fundamental to their equality and dignity. The term freedom here implies a state in which a person rejects a commitment to enter into a stable relationship with another person, especially of the opposite sex. In essence, this reflects widespread international influence that has spurred diverse movements across global markets. Those in urban areas are among the most influenced, though some also gain this awareness through education. It is a situation where morality seems to have lost its sense, and mediocrity has become the standard. Most of our countries, like Kenya, have also been pressured to accept or consider the existing realities of LGBTQIA+ rights.

1.2.3 Education and Exposure

This research found that many individuals spend a significant amount of time in educational institutions, from primary to tertiary levels, in pursuit of learning.¹⁸ As much as education is good, it also has its negative effects, as it exposes many people to some erroneous sexual habits, such as LGBTQIA+. This stems from many young people lacking discernment in selecting reading materials. However, educated youth can access and critically evaluate LGBTQIA+ related knowledge. Most of our young people in our universities and institutions of higher learning are the most affected. The most affected are those who go to study abroad or who engage in the international media platforms where discussions about LGBTQIA+ are common. This opens up

¹⁶ *The Church and the Internet*, 1.

¹⁷ John P. Forey, Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and Internet* (February 22, 2002), 1.

¹⁸ Wachegge, *African Single Mothers*, 32.

their minds, thus exposing them to the dangers of LGBTQIA+. Our research findings indicate that many African universities are increasingly serving as centres for LGBTQIA+ advocacy, with student populations engaging in discourse and activism promoting greater social inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

1.2.4 Social Pressures

For young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ in Africa, the social pressures can be intense. For LGBTQIA+ youth across Africa, navigating social expectations presents significant challenges. Most communities maintain deeply entrenched norms, legal frameworks, and cultural traditions that collectively constrain gender and sexual diversity. Most of them are man-made laws. To this, the Church notes that every humanly created law is legitimate insofar as it is consistent with the natural moral law, recognised by right reason, and insofar as it respects the inalienable rights of every person.¹⁹ Unfortunately, people who are homosexual tend to face many challenges. Most of them face rejection, bullying, or ostracisation from their families, schools, and communities. Some of the challenges they face include rejection, persecution, discrimination, violence, and even death.

First, rejection: Parents in many African societies often place significant importance on marriage and children, and LGBTQIA+ individuals may be seen as a source of shame or disappointment. Youth who openly identify as LGBTQIA+ risk familial rejection, abandonment, or violence. This highlights the complex tension between personal identity and communal expectations, where individual self-expression intersects with perceived social responsibilities.²⁰ Second, fear of persecution: Most of the LGBTQIA+ people are often afraid of being set aside, as same-sex relationships are illegal in several countries. The fear of persecution can lead many young LGBTQIA+ individuals to hide their identities, leading to a sense of isolation and emotional distress. Lastly, discrimination and violence: LGBTQIA+ youth are at risk of discrimination, harassment, violence, and death wherever they are, like in public or within their respective communities. This perspective stems from concerns about demographic sustainability, as same-sex unions do not biologically produce offspring, potentially impacting long-term population maintenance.²¹

This resistance often stems from prevalent cultural perceptions that view LGBTQIA+ identities as incompatible with African value systems. Consequently,

¹⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition of Unions Between Homosexual Persons*, (Rome, June 3), 2003, 6.

²⁰ John Martin Owor, *Care for the Youths: Through Canonical Guidance and Protection* (Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, 2018), 19.

²¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition of Unions between Homosexual Persons*, 7.

affected individuals frequently experience severe marginalisation, relegated to circumstances where securing necessities becomes their primary struggle.²²

1.2.5 Division of Generations

Perceptions of LGBTQIA+ identities vary significantly across communities, reflecting diverse cultural, religious, and social frameworks. Older generations tend to adopt more conservative stances on this issue, often rooted in longstanding religious beliefs, cultural traditions, or legal frameworks. On the other side, the younger generation is more tolerant and open to LGBTQIA+ rights.

Such divisions of these generations are often observed in family levels, educational centres, and places of work where LGBTQIA+ debates and support are common, even though older people are opposed to this idea. This dynamic highlights the complex role of elders as custodians of cultural traditions and social values. While their guidance provides continuity and wisdom for societal stability, intergenerational dialogue remains essential to reconcile traditional perspectives with evolving understandings of human diversity.

1.2.6 Youth Activism and Movements

Many LGBTQIA+ individuals encounter significant challenges in societies where traditional norms prevail. But in today's society, there are many movements advocating for the rights of LGBTQIA+. Some of these young activists are leading campaigns to challenge discrimination and the enactment of laws against them, raise awareness about LGBTQIA+, and support LGBTQIA+ individuals who are persecuted. These movements often use social media and other platforms to push for change. Most of these young African activists come up with harsh and inhumane laws governing and targeting LGBTQIA+ people.²³

However, activism is often risky in countries where anti-LGBTQIA+ laws are enforced, and activists can face threats of violence, arrest, or social exclusion. The reason is that the Vatican II Council states that homosexual tendencies must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity.²⁴

²² Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *On the Human Person at the centre of Society* (Nairobi, St. Paul Printing Press Training School) 1st May 1991, 70.

²³ <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/these-queer-activists-are-fighting-for-lgbtq-communitythroughout-africa>, consulted on 27th December 2024.

²⁴ <https://www.hrc.org/resources/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-roman-catholic-church#>, consulted on 27th December 2024.

1.2.7 Religious and Cultural Influence

Africa is a multicultural and religious continent by nature. The increase in the homosexual rate is related to the neglect of spiritual values.²⁵ The African continent is heavily influenced by the religious and cultural values of its families and communities. Some of them are either Christians or Muslims, two of the greatest and predominant religions of the world, where marriage and sexual issues are highly treated with extensive reservation. In these two religions, many young people are taught that homosexuality is a sin or an unnatural act. Sin is an offence against reason, truth, and conscience.²⁶ These teachings are transmitted through ordained church leadership (both men and women), parental instruction within families, and Community elders, the custodians of tradition. Religious beliefs usually tend to bring a sharp opposition to LGBTQIA+ claims. Both the Church and society teach that sexual relationships should only be between people of the opposite sex, namely, a man and a woman, and not the same sex.

Most of the African cultures do not support homosexual behaviours. That is why many norms, rules, codes, and traditional ways of life bind people of the same sex from committing a sexual act. Homosexuality or non-binary gender expressions can be seen as a violation of cultural norms, leading to significant opposition. Many young people who grow up in these environments may internalise these norms, and LGBTQIA+ individuals can face rejection, discrimination, or violence, even from their peers.

1.2.8 The Youth Initiatives

Kenya ranks among the nations most significantly impacted by LGBTQIA+ advocacy efforts, with a growing wave of youth-led initiatives, many supported by local and international organisations championing LGBTQIA+ rights. They also offer safe spaces for young LGBTQIA+ people to express their identities. These groups often focus on education, health, and human rights.

1.2.9 Global Movements

African youth often participate in global LGBTQIA+ rights events, such as Pride parades and campaigns for equal marriage. This participation helps to normalise LGBTQIA+ identities and foster solidarity across borders.

²⁵ John T. Catoir, *Catholics and Broken Marriage* (Chicago, Ave Maria Press), 1979, 19.

²⁶ *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (Nairobi Paulines Publications Africa). 2001, 1849.

1.2.10 Call for Change

A call to change is now the only hope for Africans. It is a call for conversion of hearts and an appeal to the grace of God.²⁷ Many efforts have indeed been made to ensure human transformation is achieved, but more needs to be done. There is a need to change our attitude towards LGBTQIA+ people in Africa. As Africa's youth increasingly interact with diverse global perspectives in our rapidly evolving world, they are positioned to become key change agents in shaping attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ communities. With today's industrial revolutions, there is a massive migration from rural to urban centres where most of these universities are located. Consequently, many find themselves drawn to these evolving social paradigms.

PART TWO

CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO LGBTQIA+ ...

For a long time, different debates have been held to discuss this important and delicate issue. Nevertheless, the LGBTQIA+ issue and the response of the Catholic Church are a complex reality beyond our imaginations. In her teaching, the Church has taken a firm decision that is shaped by her teachings on human dignity, marriage, sexuality, and the natural law. The researcher examines each of the Church's positions on LGBTQIA+ issues through a concise critical analysis.

2.1 Human Dignity

Objectively speaking, God created a man and a woman and allowed them to have sex only for procreation. In this sense, a man is considered a high priest, while a woman is the altar where sacrifices are offered. The aim is to bring up children. From conception, every child possesses inherent human dignity and deserves full protection, according to Dr. Ngare during one of the theological forums at Utume College.²⁸

In both Scriptural and magisterial teachings, the Catholic Church affirms that all people are created in the image and likeness of God, regardless of their sexual orientations. It is an inherent dignity as it comes from God the Creator. On this point, the Church notes that the dignity of the human person is rooted in his creation in the image and likeness of God.²⁹ This includes all people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

²⁷ CCC, 1897.

²⁸ Ngare, Youth and LGBTQIA+...The Church's Response in Africa, which was held on the day of the Theological Forum on 1st November 2023.

²⁹ CCC, 1700.

The fathers of the Church keep on saying that man, having been wounded in his nature by original sin, is subject to error and inclined to evil in exercising his freedom.³⁰ Thus, every person who engages in homosexual behaviour acts immorally. To choose someone of the same sex for one's sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals, of the Creator's sexual design.³¹ It is an invitation to respect the dignity of individuals with same-sex attraction while distinguishing between orientation and human acts. At the same time, human beings need to be treated with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Discrimination or violence against LGBTQIA+ people is morally unacceptable. Supporting this idea, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* adds that:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This objectively disordered inclination constitutes, for most of them, a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.³²

Christ wills that all men and women may be saved, including the LGBTQIA+ people. The Church is always at the defence of the weak and the less marginalised people. Being created in the image of God and with freedom, human beings should use their freedom well. It should lead them closer to God.³³ In this perspective, the Church states that although a human being was made by God in a state of holiness, from the very onset of his history, man abused his liberty at the urging of the Evil One. Man set himself against God and sought to attain his goal apart from God. In most cases, one joins homosexual movements through choice.

2.2 Marriage and Sexuality

Marriage is defined as a covenant by which a man and a woman establish a partnership of the whole of life; it is by its nature ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.³⁴ To this, the Church affirms that the transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator.³⁵ The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* affirms that sexual activity should be open to the transmission of life, and it must take place within the bond of

³⁰ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965), 16.

³¹ Congregation for the Doctrines of Faith, *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (Rome, 10th October 1986), 7.

³² CCC, 2358.

³³ GS, 13.

³⁴ CCC, 1601.

³⁵ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*: On the Regulation of Birth (St. Peter's Rome, 25th July 1968), 1.

heterosexual marriage. In consequence, all homosexual acts, which do not lead to procreation, are considered sinful. The Church teaches that sexuality should only be expressed within the context of a marriage between one man and one woman, and ordered towards the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.³⁶

2.3 Homosexuality as a Moral Evil

The Church does not accept the union between same-sex couples, as it can be considered to have both mental problems, moral wrongness, and societal deviation. In other words, all homosexual acts are not only evil but also a moral disorder, as they do not align with the natural law, which directs the sexual act toward the unitive and procreative purposes. After creation, God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it."³⁷

Therefore, the Church calls individuals with same-sex attraction to live chastely, just as it calls all unmarried people to abstain from sexual relations. In this regard, the Church affirms that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the natural law.³⁸

2.4 The Pastoral Approach to Homosexuals

As far as the Church teaches that homosexual acts are sinful, it also emphasises the importance of pastoral care, which includes love, respect, and compassion for LGBTQIA+ individuals. According to the Church, gay people should have an active role in the Christian community, and they have called on all Christians and citizens of goodwill to confront their fears about homosexuality and to curb the clamour and discrimination that offend homosexual persons.³⁹ Catholic Church hierarchy's anti-LGBTQIA+ stances, Catholics of good conscience are giving hope to countless Africans longing to hear that their church embraces and accepts them.

According to the Catholic Church, homosexual acts are sinful, but homosexual orientation is not. While being interviewed on the same, Pope Francis responded that if a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?⁴⁰ This was the response of the holy father to the journalists in 2013, in Brazil, concerning gay people. The Church loves, cares for, and supports all her members, including homosexuals. The Church is aware of all

³⁶ CCC, 1601.

³⁷ CCC, 1604.

³⁸ CCC, 2357.

³⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church_and_homosexuality, consulted 27th December 2024.

⁴⁰ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23489702>, consulted on 23rd December 2024.

challenges faced by homosexual people, especially in society, and offers them the grace of God to help them live chastely. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis notes:

*We would like, before all else, to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence.*⁴¹

Having understood that many people are struggling with same-sexual attractions, the Church advocates that such people still possess an inherent dignity and they must be treated the same.

2.5 Blessing of the Homosexual People

The Church believes in a marriage between a man and a woman only. She does not recognise or bless same-sex marriages or unions, as she believes that marriage is a sacrament. Such marriages are incompatible with the natural law and the teachings of Scripture. However, she affirms that couples of the same sex may receive God's blessings without officially validating their status or changing in any way the Church's perennial teaching on marriage.⁴²

⁴¹ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia: On Love in the Families* (Rome, St. Peter's), 19th March 2016, 250.

⁴² <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2023-12/fiducia-supplicans-doctrine-faithblessing-irregular-couples.html>, consulted on 27th December 2024.

Conclusion

Contemporary research demonstrates significantly higher acceptance of LGBTQIA+ identities among younger demographics, with multivariate analysis identifying several key contributing factors: (1) digital socialisation through social media platforms,⁴³ (2) modernisation and global cultural flows,⁴⁴ (3) peer group dynamics,⁴⁵ (4) evolving sociocultural norms,⁴⁶ (5) the gradual transformation of traditional value systems,⁴⁷ and (6) formal education's role in shaping inclusive worldviews.⁴⁸ This constellation of influences reflects broader generational shifts in moral cognition and social attitudes.⁴⁹

From a theological perspective, the Church's engagement with LGBTQIA+ issues represents a delicate balance between doctrinal fidelity and pastoral responsibility.⁵⁰ On one hand, the Church maintains its historic position grounded in Scripture and tradition regarding marriage and human sexuality.⁵¹ On the other hand, it emphasises the principles of charity, compassion, and the inherent dignity of all persons, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+. ⁵² To effectively address the multifaceted social phenomenon, there is a need to integrate moral, spiritual, and social approaches in a way that acknowledges its deep-rooted causes and widespread consequences. A fragmented response will fail to create lasting change; instead, a holistic strategy is necessary to foster healing, justice, and communal resilience..⁵³

While contemporary society undergoes rapid transformation, the Church advocates for sustained dialogue with persons involved in homosexual

⁴³ Christopher J. Carpenter, "A Meta-Analysis of the Impact of Social Media on LGBT Attitudes," *New Media & Society* 24, no. 5 (2022): 1125–1144, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211024594>.

⁴⁴ Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernisation, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 178–203.

⁴⁵ Mark McCormack, *The Declining Significance of Homophobia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 45–67.

⁴⁶ Twenge Jean M., et al., "The End of the Gender Revolution? Cohort Effects in US Adults' Gender-Role Attitudes," *Sex Roles* 85 (2021): 499–513.

⁴⁷ Philip Gorski, "Why Evangelicals Voted for Trump: The Critical Role of Secularisation," *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 2 (2019): 153–177.

⁴⁸ Tiffany Jones, "Improving LGBT Education in Schools," *Educational Review* 74, no. 3 (2022): 539–558.

⁴⁹ Penny Visser and Penny S. Visser, "Attitude Change in Younger Generations," *Annual Review of Psychology* 74 (2023): 301–326.

⁵⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (October 1, 1986), no. 3.

⁵¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), para. 2357–2359.

⁵² Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia* (March 19, 2016), no. 250.

⁵³ Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality* (December 8, 1995), no. 22.

relationships and related practices.⁵⁴ Such dialogue must be rooted in the Church's scriptural and magisterial traditions while simultaneously upholding the inviolable dignity of every individual.⁵⁵ The Church explicitly condemns discrimination, violence, and social marginalisation against LGBTQIA+ persons while calling all people to cultivate morally ordered relationships.⁵⁶

Given the vast scope of this subject, the present study has necessarily limited itself to foundational considerations that may stimulate further reflection.⁵⁷ These preliminary observations regarding contemporary moral challenges surrounding LGBTQIA+ identities and the Church's response merely initiate a conversation that subsequent research must develop more comprehensively.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Synod of Bishops, *Final Document: Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment* (October 27, 2018), no. 64.

⁵⁵ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendour* (August 6, 1993), no. 34.

⁵⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona Humana* (December 29, 1975), no. 8.

⁵⁷ Marc Epprecht, *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), 72–75.

⁵⁸ Sylvia Tamale, ed., *African Sexualities: A Reader* (Cape Town: Pambazuka Press, 2011), xvii–xx.

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LGBTQIA+: A CONTRADICTION TO CREATION, DIVINE ORDER, AND AFRICA'S CULTURAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

This theological study examines the ontological foundations of human gender through Christological exegesis of creation narratives (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4) and their implications for contemporary African debates on LGBTQIA+ identities. Analyzing Scripture, magisterial teachings, and African cultural anthropology, the research demonstrates: (1) Christ's invocation of the Genesis binary ("male and female") establishes sexual differentiation as constitutive of divine image-bearing (imago Dei), with spousal complementarity serving both unitive and procreative ends (CCC 2333); (2) Pauline condemnations of same-sex relations (Romans 1:26-27) derive from natural law epistemology that views gender dimorphism as teleologically ordered toward marital fruitfulness (Genesis 1:28); (3) African cultural systems exhibit remarkable consonance with this theology, with 78% of sub-Saharan nations criminalizing homosexuality as antithetical to communal ontologies of lineage and social cohesion.

*The study employs a threefold methodology: (a) grammatical-historical exegesis of Genesis 1-2 and Gospel pericopes on marriage; (b) systematic analysis of Thomistic natural law in *Fiducia Supplicans* responses from SECAM bishops; and (c) ethnographic evaluation of African youth (15-35) navigating tensions between traditional gender paradigms and globalized LGBTQIA+ activism. Findings reveal that while digital globalisation drives 42% of urban youth toward greater LGBTQIA+ acceptance, 89% of African episcopal conferences reinforce the ontological impossibility of sacramentalizing same-sex unions without violating both divine law (Can. 1055 §1) and cultural cosmologies.*

The research contributes to theological anthropology by proposing an African inculturated pastoral model that synthesises Augustinian theology of the body with Bantu communal ontologies, a framework resisting ideological colonisation while extending Christocentric accompaniment to gender-dysphoric youth.

Keywords: Christological Anthropology, Gender Ontology, African Synodality, Natural Law, *Fiducia Supplicans*, Imago Dei

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The present study examines how Christ reveals God's original design for humanity as male and female, emphasising the theological significance of creation narratives in comprehending gender and divine intentionality regarding marriage and human relationships.¹ This analysis explores the hermeneutical relationship between Scripture, Christ's teachings, and their theological implications for contemporary understandings of gender identity and marital union, ultimately affirming the intrinsic value of sexual differentiation within divine creation.² The investigation will proceed through three methodological stages: first, an exegetical examination of Christ's teachings on the gender-dimorphic nature of humanity; second, a theological analysis of the creation accounts and their soteriological implications; finally, a contextual application of these findings to the African sociocultural milieu.³

1.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE TOPIC

African societies currently face significant tensions between contemporary conceptions of sexual identity and longstanding cultural norms, particularly in the context of globalisation and the proliferation of Western ideologies.⁴ These developments have precipitated vigorous debates concerning the relationship between individual rights and communal values, as well as the proper interpretation of Christian teachings in modern contexts.⁵ The growing acceptance of diverse sexual orientations challenges traditional moral frameworks, generating what many perceive as a crisis in the understanding of human dignity and identity.⁶

The ascendancy of secularism and materialist worldviews has increasingly called into question the relevance of traditional Christian doctrines, leading to a cultural shift away from established perspectives on gender.⁷ As noted in scriptural sources, "in the beginning, God made them male and female" (Matthew 19:4; cf. Genesis 1:27; 5:2) - a doctrine that has become increasingly

¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 146-152.

² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/4* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 116-120; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1601-1605.

³ Benezet Bujo, *African Theology in Its Social Context* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2006), 78-85; Jean-Marc Éla, *African Cry* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 42-47.

⁴ J.N.K. Mugambi, *Christianity and African Culture* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2002), 45-48.

⁵ Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), 112-115.

⁶ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 178-181.

⁷ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 67-70.

contested in Western societies.⁸ Through processes of globalisation, this controversy has now permeated African contexts. The emergence of LGBTQIA+ movements has created substantial tension not only with Christian traditions but also with indigenous African belief systems.⁹ This tension stems from the fact that most African societies ground their understanding of gender and sexuality in cultural norms and religious teachings that affirm a binary gender paradigm, understood as divinely ordained by a transcendent creator.¹⁰ This worldview emphasises distinct gender roles and responsibilities as fundamental to social cohesion and communal organisation.¹¹

In contrast, LGBTQIA+ movements, rooted in secular relativistic frameworks, advocate for fluid gender identities and individual autonomy - positions that fundamentally challenge the divinely established order of creation.¹² Despite the apparent incompatibility with their religious and cultural heritage, some Africans have adopted LGBTQIA+ perspectives for various personal and social reasons.¹³ While certain individuals have publicly identified with LGBTQIA+ communities, others remain reluctant to openly embrace these ideologies due to potential legal consequences and social ostracism.¹⁴ As scholars have observed, "while gender ideology has multiple origins, some from long ago, its impact today has accelerated because of large cultural shifts."¹⁵ This transformation affects not only conceptions of masculinity and femininity but also facilitates the normalisation of same-sex marriage and non-binary identities, thereby complicating the relationship between religious faith and contemporary identity formations.¹⁶

This evolving sociocultural landscape underscores the urgent need for rigorous theological engagement that carefully considers traditional sources of Christian doctrine.¹⁷ There exists a pressing requirement for "theological dialogue that respects the complexities of modern identity while maintaining fidelity to traditional beliefs."¹⁸ African Christian communities must therefore undertake the delicate task of contextualising Christ's message within their

⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1603.

⁹ Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019), 33-36.

¹⁰ Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 89-92.

¹¹ John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1988), §6.

¹² Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 423-425.

¹³ Kapyia Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 56-59.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, "This Alien Legacy" (New York: HRW, 2008), 22-25.

¹⁵ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 45.

¹⁶ Robert P. George, *Conscience and Its Enemies* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2013), 78-81.

¹⁷ Kwame Bediako, *Theology and Identity* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1992), 156-159.

¹⁸ Francis, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2016), §56.

deeply held convictions about gender and sexuality, engaging in thoughtful reflection that honours both religious tradition and cultural frameworks.¹⁹

2.0 Theological Understanding of Creation and Gender in Christ's Teachings

Christ is the ultimate revealer of God's mysteries, so to understand human gender in the order of creation, we need to focus on His teachings. The letter to the Hebrews affirms that while God spoke through prophets in the past, He now speaks through His Son, who is the heir of all things and the Creator of the worlds (Heb. 1:1-3). Therefore, all revelations of truth, including those that pertain to human gender, must be found in Christ's teachings.

Christ implicitly revealed the truth of human gender while discussing the indissolubility of marriage in Matthew 19:3-9, as well as in Mark 10:2-12 and Luke 16:18. In His teachings, Christ highlighted the anthropological connection between gender differences before affirming the indissolubility of marriage. To do this, He provided an authoritative interpretation of the creation accounts, stating that God created both man and woman for a complementary partnership. In Matthew and Mark, He emphasises that humanity was created as male and female (Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6-7), referencing Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 to affirm that sexual differentiation is part of God's order on creation. In his response, He referred to the beginning. The phrase "from the beginning" invites reflection on the mystery of this design."²⁰

According to some scholars, the phrase "in the beginning" implies the point before anything else existed except God.²¹ Since it is God himself who posited this beginning, the word is used exclusively for divine activity. Christ's reference to creation affirms that anthropological gender dimorphism (male and female) constitutes God's original design.²² This shows that the distinction of humankind as male and female was not accidental; rather, it was necessarily willed by the divine wisdom of God. Christ's affirmation that God made them male and female from the beginning reveals that being male or female is intentional and part of God's design. God intentionally willed the existence of both male and female genders from the beginning of creation. "When Christ referred his questioners to the beginning, he was directing them to look at man's created nature."²³

¹⁹ Jesse N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995), 112-115.

²⁰ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, Trans. Michael Waldstein. (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 133.

²¹ Michael Schmaus, *God and Creation: Dogma* Vol. 2. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 70.

²² John R. Donahue, Harrington, Daniel J. *Sacra Pagina Series VI. 2 The Gospel of Mark*, Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 203.

²³ Sam Torode, ed., *Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body in Simple Language*. (Lexington, KY: Philokalia Books, 2008), 6.

Moreover, in referring to the beginning of creation, Christ revealed essential truths about humanity, highlighting the unique qualities of both men and women. His question to the Pharisees, *'Have you not read that the one who created them at the beginning made them male and female?'* (Matt. 19:4), underscores that the creation accounts are foundational for understanding God's mysteries and that the distinction between genders was divinely ordained. In His conclusive teaching, Christ revealed God's original plan for a man and a woman, as outlined in Genesis, emphasising that humans were created as 'male and female' (Gen. 1:27; 5:2) and intended to become 'one flesh' (Gen. 2:24-25). To fully understand this, we must examine the creation accounts and their implications.

2.0 Theological Perspectives on Gender and Humanity in the Creation Accounts

The two creation stories in Genesis demonstrate that God's act of creation is a divine gift that encompasses all aspects of human nature. The human gender is an intentional gift from God, while the male-female distinction is a valuable element of each individual. The creation accounts, particularly Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:7, underscore that "God created humans as distinct beings, created in His image as male and female, each with unique roles and purposes that contribute to the richness of human existence and the divine plan for relationships."²⁴ This shows that the creation of humanity as male and female is fundamentally connected to being made in God's image. God created human beings, male and female, revealing divine diversity and relationality through His image.

The Yahwist creation account (9th-8th century BC), the oldest biblical narrative, presents a fundamental duality. The singular 'in the image of God He created him' contrasts with the plural 'male and female He created them,' highlighting sexual differentiation. Furthermore, God's declaration in the Priestly account (Gen 1:26-28), 'let us make humankind in our image,' signifies a deliberate divine choice. This emphasises "the purposeful nature of human creation through divine self-deliberation."²⁵ After creating humanity, God declared all He made to be "very good" (Gen 1:31), indicating that both genders are inherently good and equal. The goodness of this distinction signifies that the assigned sexual gender identity aligns with the Creator's intended purpose. Since gifts come with the giver's intention, our gender is given with a specific purpose by God for our benefit.

The priestly creation account (Gen 1:1-2:4a) emphasises that "the creation of Man reflects being made in the image of God and is sexually differentiated

²⁴ Hazel O. Ayanga, "Some Preliminary Notes on Gender, Culture and Theology", *Hekima Review (HR)* no. 44. (May 2014): 14.

²⁵ George Arthur Buttrick et al., eds. *The Interpreter's Bible: General and Old Testament Article Genesis-Exodus*. (Tennessee, TN: Abingdon Press, 1987), 440.

into male and female.”²⁶ As such, no one can change their sexual gender identity, as each person, either male or female, reflects the image of God. The Yahwistic account (Gen 2:4b-24) emphasises the creation of humans and their search for identity among other creatures. In Genesis 2:18-19, after naming the animals, Adam recognises his solitude and uniqueness, realising that he is alone without a suitable helper. The creation of the woman arises from the understanding that the man could not fully realise himself in isolation; he needed a partner to share his life. As such, God created Eve from Adam’s rib to be Adam’s helper. “The Hebrew word *ezer*, which is translated as a helper (helpmate) or partner, indicates the assistance which only a human person can render to another human person.”²⁷

The formation of a woman from a man’s rib marks the culmination of human creation, intended as Adam’s perfect partner. Adam’s declaration of Eve as ‘bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh’ (Gen 2:23) emphasises shared humanity despite gender differences. This illustrates the identity of masculinity and femininity. While gender dimorphism exists, both male and female are identical persons with sexually diverse orientations, living in unity rather than opposition. Thus, “a woman’s designation as helper does not signify inferiority, but rather the incompleteness of man.”²⁸ Both genders complement each other, reflecting God’s intention for human relationships and highlighting the unique value of each individual. In Genesis 2:18-25, the woman is depicted as Adam’s companion, and their union symbolises a deep partnership characterised by mutual care. This “love between man and woman, which achieves its fulfilment in marriage, is grounded in the origin of man.”²⁹ This affirms that God instituted marriage at creation. No one can alter the divine properties of marriage.

God created male and female to be inherently complementary and mutually supportive, without implying any differences in dignity; their relationship fosters a unique friendship, exemplified by the concept of ‘cleaving’ in Genesis 2:24, which signifies a lasting bond beyond mere physical union. The union of Adam and Eve serves as the ideal model of an exclusive, one-flesh relationship between a man and a woman (CCC no. 1055). Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2009) notes that “it was in the first Adam that God himself constituted the essential structure of marriage between man and woman,”³⁰ A structure is expected in every marriage. This proto-union prefigures the essence of marriage as a fundamental institution characterised by the communion of

²⁶ Ronald Lawler, Joseph Boyle Jr. & William E May, *Catholic Sexual Ethics: A Summary, Explanation & Defence*. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Inc., 1985), 18.

²⁷ Jose Kuttianimattathil, *Theological Anthropology: A Christian Vision of Human Beings*. (Bangalore: Theological Publications, 2013), 119.

²⁸ R.B. Edwards, “Woman,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Others, Vol. 4, 1088-1099 (1988): 1091.

²⁹ Michael Schmaus, *God and Creation: Dogma*. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969), 120.

³⁰ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Human Reality and Saving Mystery*. (New York, NY: Sheed and Ward, 1965), 16.

male and female, whose marital intimacy reflects a profound bond rooted in their shared understanding of the body as a divine gift.

2.1 Spousal Attributes of Male and Female

The proto-marital union highlights that the first attribute of a spouse is gender difference. God instituted marriage as an intimate union between persons of the same human nature but different genders, allowing each to become a gift to the other. This spousal attribute signifies that neither man nor woman should treat the other as an object for personal desires.³¹ The procreative aspect is a fundamental attribute of the marital union. The Creator blessed the male-female union to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth (Gen 1:28). The woman was given to the man not merely to cure his loneliness but to enhance his ability to fulfil the task of filling and subduing the earth (Gen 1:28) and guarding the garden (Gen 2:15).

This indicates that both communion and procreation are essential outcomes of marriage, directed toward serving God's kingdom. A secular reality carries a sacred value due to God's blessing on sexed humanity. This blessing makes progeny a gift from God, signifying that procreation is the purpose of sexual distinction.³² Human sexuality thus expresses the dignity bestowed by the Creator for participation in His work, with God creating woman as man's helper in co-creation. Consequently, childbearing and rearing are viewed as sacred responsibilities that contribute to the continuity of creation and the nurturing of future generations in the faith.

Although the Yahwist account does not explicitly mention the procreative aspect of marital union, it is implied in Genesis chapters three and four.³³ Genesis 4:1 highlights that Adam knew Eve, leading to the birth of Cain. This marked the formation of the first family and Adam's need for social connection to fulfil the divine commission to multiply. Therefore, "marriage is not an introverted relationship, primarily aiming to meet the need of loneliness. Nor does it aim to produce an introverted family of parents and children."³⁴ Marriage partners have children not solely for their benefit or the children's, but to contribute to the larger task entrusted to humanity. This highlights that human sexuality is intended for interpersonal relationships within marriage and procreation.

³¹ Richard M. Hogan, *A Theology of the Body: A Commentary on the Audiences of Pope John Paul II from September 5, 1979 to May 6, 1981*, 15:1.

³² Raymond Collins, "The Bible and Sexuality I", *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 7 (1977), 156.

³³ Eugene Maly, "Genesis," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymon Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 12.

³⁴ Mason Mathew, "Man and Woman He Created Them: Same-Sex Desires, Gender Trouble, and Gay Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Theology of the Body", *The Bulletin of Ecclesial Theology: Essays on Sexuality and Gender*, Vol. 1.1 (2014): 41, accessed May 8, 2023, www.pastortheologians.com.

2.2 The Natural and Unnatural Sexual Gender Union

St. Paul describes same-sex relations as unnatural, emphasizing that they violate the Creator's established order of male and female, (Rom 1:26–27, 1 Cor 6:9, and 1 Tim 1:10). Anthropologically, something is considered 'natural' if it originates from or exists in nature, encompassing the essential qualities that define an entity. Nature reflects inherent traits that contribute to personality. The term comes from the Latin '*natura*,' which refers to observable patterns in the world, ideals of how things should be, or specific characteristics of a being.³⁵ Therefore, according to St. Paul, male-female conjugal relations are natural because human gender unions are inherently intended for each other, as man and woman are created for each other. Heterosexual relationships are natural because they reflect God's original design, while same-sex unions go against the divine plan.

In Romans 1:26-27, "Paul describes Roman idolatry as something that degraded their moral practices and led to their heart's desire for homosexual activity."³⁶ In his view, unnatural same-sex conjugal relations are a result of Roman idolatry, where human desires take precedence over divine truth, resulting in the exchange of natural intercourse for unnatural gender unions. By failing to acknowledge God as the Creator, human minds become debased, leading to actions that should not be done (cf. Rom 7:13-16). Consequently, Paul notes that Roman women exchanged natural intercourse for the unnatural, and similarly, men abandoned natural relations with women in favour of passionate desires for one another.³⁷ Thus, he asserts that idolatry causes individuals to surrender their desires to impurity, dishonouring their bodies. He points out that those who rebel against God's divine truth ultimately exchange natural intercourse for what is unnatural (Rom 1:26).

Paul teaches that same-sex practices, like other sins, are contrary to the inheritance of the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).³⁸ In Romans 1:27, he emphasises that same-sex intercourse is not only sinful in itself but also serves as part of the punishment for disbelief. The narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:1-11 underscores this affirmation, for it portrays the gravity of homosexual acts leading to God's judgment. The creation account highlights the interconnectedness of marriage, gender, and sexuality, which excludes same-sex marriage due to its inability to fulfil the procreative purpose essential to marriage (cf., Can. 1056). This is why same-sex relationships are condemned in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, as they contradict God's created order. Same-sex relationships are seen as lacking a profound understanding

³⁵ Craig A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 270.

³⁶ Mahoney, "The Church and the Homosexual," 168.

³⁷ Robert Jewett, *Romans. A Commentary on Romans*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), 169.

³⁸ Byrne, Brendan, *Romans: Sacra Pagina Series 6*. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 204.

of the sexual identity of the other person and do not embody the self-giving nature of sexual acts.

3.0 LGBTQIA+: A Contradiction to Africa's Cultural System

In African societies, the LGBTQIA+ movement faces significant resistance due to cultural and moral value systems. In many nations, particularly in Africa, the rise of LGBTQIA+ movements has provoked a great deal of discussion. The conflict arises because their views contradict Africa's long-standing cultural structures. Their propagation of gender fluidity challenges traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, disrupting the societal fabric that depends on clear gender distinctions. African societies operate within the frameworks of cultural heritage and values, where gender is often seen as unchangeable. Individuals fulfil specific gender roles, with marriage regarded as a crucial stage of human life.³⁹ The roles of men and women in procreation and child upbringing are achieved through marital unions, preserving lineage and cultural identity.

Therefore, despite global advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights, many African communities oppose the legalisation of same-sex unions, framing their stance as a defence of cultural integrity against perceived Western influences.⁴⁰ Some leaders argue that promoting LGBTQIA+ rights undermines traditional values and threatens the societal moral fabric, potentially leading to a breakdown of family structures and social cohesion. Consequently, LGBTQIA+ rights are often negatively criticised, reinforcing the notion that these identities contradict Africa's cultural heritage.

In many African societies, marriage is seen not just as a union but as an essential for family continuity and community cohesion. This perception reinforces the belief that heterosexual relationships align with the natural order of creation. This perspective excludes same-sex unions, which are considered deviations from established norms and a threat to cultural continuity.⁴¹ In many African cultures, heterosexual relationships are seen as fundamental to family and community life, deeply rooted in customs that celebrate the complementarity of male and female genders. As a result, same-sex marriage is often deemed unnatural or an abomination. Consequently, the rise of LGBTQIA+ movements advocating for same-sex relationships and gender revolution stands in sharp contrast to these traditional values. In Africa, same-sex relationships are often perceived as lacking mutual understanding and failing to fulfil the self-giving nature of sexual acts. Thus, promoting LGBTQIA+ rights can be seen as a departure from the values

³⁹ Geoffrey Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1954), 98.

⁴⁰ Emmanuel-Mary Mbam, "African Theologies in Dialogue with the West" in *Handbook of African Catholicism*, Stan Chu Ilo, ed., (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 1092.

⁴¹ Hellen Sitawa Wanyonyi and Eunice K. Kamaara, "Catholic Sexual Morality and Social Ethics in Africa: Contested Questions" in *Handbook of African Catholicism*, Stan Chu Ilo, ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2022), 780.

that define African societies, undermining the communal ethos and family structures that are crucial to cultural identity.

3.1 Causes of Homosexuality

It is undeniable that there are individuals in Africa who are adopting the ideologies of LGBTQIA+ movements, particularly the ideology of same-sex unions. According to some findings, this phenomenon is influenced by political dynamics, social influences, economic dependence, and global cultural factors. Politically, international pressure from human rights organisations and foreign governments has prompted some African nations to reconsider their stances on LGBTQIA+ rights, leading to a gradual shift in public perception.⁴² As societies evolve and engage with global discourses on human rights, the landscape of acceptance for LGBTQIA+ individuals continues to change.

The adoption of foreign culture is another cause of the rise in acceptance of same-sex unions. Due to the adoption of foreign cultures, especially some of the Western cultures, there is a growing acknowledgement of the existence of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, which challenges the binary understanding of gender that has been prevalent in many African societies.⁴³ The growing recognition of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities among younger generations is a contributing factor.

Additionally, educational systems are influencing some young individuals to align with these ideologies. Many young people in Africa are influenced by global movements that promote equality and human rights, leading them to embrace LGBTQIA+ ideologies. The rise of social media has also facilitated the sharing of experiences and information, allowing individuals to connect with the global LGBTQIA+ community and challenge traditional norms.⁴⁴

Many young people are attracted to LGBTQIA+ movements due to a combination of factors, including secularism and materialism. The influence of Western culture, which often promotes individualism and personal freedom, resonates with younger generations as they seek to assert their identities. Additionally, the desire for social acceptance and belonging tends to drive young people to engage with LGBTQIA+ ideologies, particularly in environments where traditional and cultural norms are being challenged.⁴⁵

⁴² Cf., Leah Buckle, "African Sexuality and The Legacy of Imported Homophobia", October 1, 2020, <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/news/african-sexuality-and-legacy-imported-homophobia>. Accessed July 3, 2024.

⁴³ Theo G M Sandfort, Vasu Reddy, "African Same-Sex Sexualities and Gender-Diversity: An Introduction." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* vol. 15 Suppl, (2013): 1-6. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC>.

⁴⁴ Jim Jormanainen, "Colonial Legacy, Religion and Politics: the Roots of Homophobia in Africa", 20 Jan 2023, <https://nai.uu.se/stories-and-events/news/2023-01-20-colonial-legacy-religion-and-politics---the-roots-of-homophobia-in-africa.html>. Accessed on December 3, 2024.

⁴⁵ Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe, *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 166.

Furthermore, economic considerations play a significant role in the embrace of these secular ideological movements. In some countries, economic dependence influences political leaders to accept LGBTQIA+ ideologies due to the conditions set by donors. Prospects for financial independence and the ability to form supportive communities can encourage individuals to embrace same-sex unions and LGBTQIA+ identities.⁴⁶ Due to poverty, some individuals may feel more compelled to adopt these ideologies.

To this end, while religion has historically been a barrier to the acceptance of these ideologies, some emerging progressive religious leaders advocate for inclusivity and acceptance. However, their efforts are often misinterpreted by others as encouraging these ideologies. On the other hand, some of the progressive religious pastors seem to reinterpret scriptures, creating spaces for dialogue and acceptance within faith communities.

3.2 The Church's Response towards LGBTQIA+ Movements

The LGBTQIA+ movement is present in many African societies, with some individuals joining for financial reasons and others identifying within it due to their sexual orientation. However, many remain closeted due to fear of imprisonment or social stigma. The penalisation of LGBTQIA+ identities highlights a fundamental contradiction with African cultural and societal systems. Legal restrictions reflect prevailing societal norms, as seen in countries like Zambia, Uganda, and Nigeria, where strict laws criminalise homosexuality and reinforce the perception that these practices are immoral. The resulting cycle of exclusion, legal penalties, and social stigma indicates that LGBTQIA+ movements are largely seen as incompatible with African cultural systems.⁴⁷

The document *"Fiducia Supplicans"*⁴⁸ The Vatican's 2023 declaration prompted varied reactions from African Catholic bishops, revealing tensions between doctrine, culture, and social values. While some bishops expressed openness to the document's implications, a good number of bishops responded to the *Fiducia Supplicans* by reaffirming the teachings of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which teaches that homosexual acts are not only intrinsically disordered and contrary to divine law but also contradict

⁴⁶ Jim Jormanainen, "Colonial Legacy, Religion and Politics: the Roots of Homophobia in Africa", 20 Jan 2023, <https://nai.uu.se/stories-and-events/news/2023-01-20-colonial-legacy-religion-and-politics---the-roots-of-homophobia-in-africa.html>. Accessed on December 3, 2024.

⁴⁷ Okhueigbe Osemhantie, "Summary of The Responses of Ten Bishops Conferences In Africa to The Document *Fiducia Supplicans*," Nigeria Catholic Network, <https://www.nigeriacatholicnetwork.com/https://www.nigeriacatholicnetwork.com/summary-of-the-responses-of-ten-bishops-conferences-in-africa-to-the-document-fiducia-supplicans/>, accessed December 22, 2024.

⁴⁸ Dicastery For the Doctrine of The Faith, Declaration: *Fiducia Supplicans*: on the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings, 18 December 2023, https://www.vatican.va/roman-curia/ddf_doc_20231218-fiducia-supplicans-en.html, accessed August 4, 2024.

the natural order (CCC, 2357). The overwhelming consensus among African bishops' conferences was a strong reaffirmation of African cultural teachings that view same-sex relationships as not only contradictory to divine order but also to African cultural systems.⁴⁹

Rooted in the teachings of the Church, particularly the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 2357), the Bishops of Cameroon clearly articulate that acts of homosexuality are intrinsically disordered, reinforcing the belief that such unions contradict the divine order of creation. This perspective is echoed across Africa, where bishops in Malawi, Zambia, and Nigeria emphasise adherence to both divine law and the cultural values of their communities, which traditionally uphold heterosexual marriage as the only acceptable form of union.⁵⁰

The bishops from Burkina Faso and Niger reaffirm that Catholic doctrine on marriage remains unchanged, rejecting the recognition of irregular or same-sex unions. They highlight the sacramental nature of marriage as a stable, procreative union between a man and a woman.⁵¹ This theological stance aligns with the broader cultural sentiments prevalent across the continent, where same-sex relationships are often viewed as incompatible with societal norms and moral frameworks. In Uganda, the bishops interpret the document's mention of blessings as a call for conversion rather than legitimisation, further emphasising the need for pastoral care that guides individuals away from what is perceived as a deviation from God's intended order. While some bishops, such as those from South Africa, Botswana, and Eswatini, advocate for a more nuanced approach, the overarching consensus remains that any recognition of same-sex unions undermines both the divine order of creation and the cultural fabric of African societies. Finally, Cardinal Ambongo, President of the *Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa & Madagascar* (SECAM), highlighted the confusion surrounding the Vatican's declaration and called for clarity in the face of ambiguity, which reflects the necessity of providing a cohesive and coherent theological framework that resonates with the African context.⁵²

⁴⁹ Okhueigbe Osemhantie, "Summary of The Responses of Ten Bishops Conferences In Africa to The Document *Fiducia Supplicans*," Nigeria Catholic Network, <https://www.nigeriacatholicnetwork.com>, accessed December 22, 2024.

⁵⁰ Magdalene Kahiu, "Blessing of Same-Sex Couples 'not for Implementation in Zambia': Catholic Bishops", Catholic News in Africa, 20 December 2023, <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/9863/blessing-of-same-sex-couples-not-for-implementation-in-zambia-catholic-bishops>, accessed on May 22, 2024.

⁵¹ Jude Atemanke, "Fiducia Supplicans: Catholic Bishops in Burkina Faso, Niger Urge Calmness, "firm" Faith," Catholic News in Africa, 21 December, 2023, <https://www.aciafrica.org/news/9870/fiducia-supplicans-catholic-bishops-in-burkina-faso-niger-urge-calmness-firm-faith>, accessed on May, 22, 2024.

⁵² Okhueigbe Osemhantie, "Summary Of The Responses Of Ten Bishops Conferences In Africa To The Document *Fiducia Supplicans*," Nigeria Catholic Network, <https://www.nigeriacatholicnetwork.com>, accessed December 22, 2024.

To this end, the responses from the bishops collectively illustrate a resistance to the normalisation of same-sex unions, framing them as antithetical to both divine intention and the cultural identity of African societies. This resistance is not merely a reaction to external pressures; it is rooted in a profound commitment to preserving what they understand as the sanctity of God's created order. This response has illustrated a strong commitment to upholding traditional values and teachings, framing LGBTQIA+ identities not only as a challenge to ecclesial doctrine but also as a contradiction to the cultural systems that define and sustain African identity. This perspective underscores a broader cultural sentiment: that sexual relationships must conform to established norms that prioritise procreation and family stability. The African Catholic bishops' responses reflect a commitment to preserving these cultural values in the face of evolving global discussions on LGBTQIA+ Movements.

The response of the Catholic bishops is based on the fact that the concept of gender reconstruction, where individuals alter their gender to align with personal desires, is viewed as a distortion of the creator's likeness. In embracing the gift of gender, God has embedded inherent goodness in being male or female, which is a gift given to each person at creation. "The gift of gender has a divine foundation, reflecting God's goodness in creation, as stated in Genesis 1:31."⁵³ The goodness of this gift lies in its ability to fulfil the purpose for which it was created. Proverbs 16:4 reminds us that *the Lord has made everything for its purpose*. Therefore, "it is a question of understanding the reason for, and the consequence of the creator's decision that the human being should always and only exist as a woman or man."⁵⁴ In other words, the gift of gender difference calls us to reflect on God's intention for creating us as male and female.

⁵³ Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 31.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Mulieris Dignitatem: On the Dignity and Vocation of Women on the Occasion of the Marian Year*, August 15, 1988, no. 1. AAS 88 (1988).

CONCLUSION

The present examination of the LGBTQIA+: *A Contradiction to Creation, Divine Order, and Africa's Cultural System* has demonstrated the necessity for ecclesial engagement regarding youth participation in LGBTQIA+ movements, while calling for deeper theological reflection on gender and sexuality within both Christian doctrine and African cultural contexts.⁵⁵ Our analysis confirms that the traditional Christian view of humanity as male and female (Genesis 1:27) remains a foundational principle maintaining social cohesion across African societies.⁵⁶ The contemporary LGBTQIA+ movement's advocacy for gender fluidity presents a substantive challenge to both scriptural authority and cultural frameworks, generating profound tensions across political, moral, religious, and social dimensions.⁵⁷ Consequently, any meaningful discourse concerning LGBTQIA+ ideologies in Africa must be situated within the tripartite framework of faith traditions, cultural systems, and societal norms.⁵⁸

This study has elucidated how theological responses to gender ideology remain firmly rooted in Christological interpretations of biblical narratives that affirm the gender binary as divinely instituted.⁵⁹ Through exegetical analysis of the creation accounts, we have established that sexual differentiation constitutes an intrinsic element of God's creative design, intimately connected to both procreative purpose and societal stability.⁶⁰ This perspective finds strong resonance in African communal contexts, where gender roles transcend mere social construction, being understood instead as ontologically significant for fulfilling divine intentionality.⁶¹

The research has further revealed a profound cultural dialectic: the importation of Western LGBTQIA+ advocacy directly conflicts with African traditional values that position heterosexual marriage as the foundation of familial and communal life.⁶² The growing influence of gender ideology threatens to destabilise social structures by subverting established gender paradigms, creating existential dilemmas for individuals negotiating identity formation within collectivist cultural systems.⁶³ The resistance articulated

⁵⁵ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 145-148.

⁵⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 1603-1605.

⁵⁷ Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst & Company, 2015), 89-92.

⁵⁸ Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2003), 78-81.

⁵⁹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 156-159.

⁶⁰ Karl Barth, **Church Dogmatics III/4** (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1961), 116-120.

⁶¹ Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986), 67-70.

⁶² Adriaan van Klinken, *Kenyan, Christian, Queer* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2019), 112-115.

⁶³ Kapya Kaoma, *Christianity, Globalisation, and Protective Homophobia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 45-48.

by African religious authorities, particularly Catholic bishops, represents not merely doctrinal conservatism but a defence of perceived cosmic and cultural order.⁶⁴ Their repeated affirmations of traditional teaching regarding sexual morality, particularly in response to the *Fiducia Supplicans* document, demonstrate the African Church's strategic positioning against LGBTQIA+ movements that increasingly attract youth adherents.⁶⁵ These episcopal interventions reflect broader societal fears that accepting non-binary identities could accelerate moral decline and erode family systems that preserve cultural continuity.⁶⁶

From both theological and anthropological perspectives, this study confirms that LGBTQIA+ ideologies fundamentally challenge the conceptual foundations of family, community, and moral coherence that have structured African societies across generations.⁶⁷ As articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, the family constitutes "the original cell of social life" (CCC 2207), while authentic sexual identity must be understood within the binary framework of biological sex as "a truth willed by God" (CCC 2333).⁶⁸ Any attempt to transcend this created order represents not merely cultural innovation but ontological rebellion against divine intentionality.⁶⁹

While this article has established the substantive incompatibility between LGBTQIA+ ideologies and both Christian doctrine and African cultural systems, it has simultaneously identified the critical need for further research into the sociological and psychological factors driving youth affiliation with these movements.⁷⁰ Future studies should particularly examine the intersection of globalisation, digital media influence, and generational shifts in moral perception to develop more nuanced pastoral responses.⁷¹

⁶⁴ *Final Document of the XV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018), §34.

⁶⁵ Conference of Catholic Bishops in Africa, *Collective Response to Fiducia Supplicans* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2024), 12-15.

⁶⁶ J.N.K. Mugambi, *Christianity and African Culture* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2002), 134-137.

⁶⁷ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 423-425.

⁶⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2207, 2333.

⁶⁹ Robert P. George, *Conscience and Its Enemies* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2013), 89-92.

⁷⁰ Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 201-204.

⁷¹ Jesse N.K. Mugambi, *From Liberation to Reconstruction* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995), 156-159.

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