African Christian Concept of Human Sexuality and Its Consummation

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ABSTRACT
The modern society has taught us much about human sexuality and love. Yet there is an enormous degree of wrong view about the consummation of human sexuality. Strong, divergent views prevail as regard the nature, purpose, and function of sex. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the proper place of human sexuality from biblical point of view. God created human in two sexually distinct forms, male and female. Thus this enquiry aims to present the concept of human sexuality and its consummation from African Christian point of view.

Keywords: Africa, Christianity, Human, Sexuality and Consummation

INTRODUCTION
An understanding of the mysterious differences in Human sexuality is vital for a healthy human relationship in the society. Rapid social change has brought about a degree of acceptance of unhealthy sexual activities in Africa. This has led to a change in African perceptions of issues such as the nature of sexuality, the concept of family, the education of children and the nature of human rights. It is in this context that the church in Africa has to offer leadership by reflecting biblically and responding appropriately to sexual issues. Since all humans are sexual there is need to understand human sexuality, especially from the perspective of the One who created human being.

Reflecting on the message of the Bible and the demands of contemporary culture it is imperative for Christians to assert the belief in the authority of Scripture. Believers must not shy away from making judgment about what is right and wrong in the light of Scripture. We shall explore what the Bible has to say about human sexuality and its consummation from Christian viewpoint. This study asks how human sexuality fits into the same picture with the Creator and it will be laying the groundwork of sexual ethic from African Christian perspective. Sexual ethics has to do with the ideal sexual behavior especially for the Christians in Africa.

What is Human Sexuality?
Human sexuality refers to what we are, not only what we do. It denotes more than the physical distinctions that allow for the differences of being male and female in reproductive roles, for it encompass all the various aspects of our humanness that related to existence as man or woman. Human sexuality has to do with our attitudes toward all the desires and pleasures, the needs and their satisfactions that bound up with sexual behavior, which cuts across several dimensions of humanness (Grenz, 2003).

Sexuality is physical - partly neurological, partly a matter of hormones, and partly a matter of touch, taste, sight, and smell. It offers fantastic pleasure of the rising and falling of sheer physical dynamics and tension. We feel a tension that is not easily relaxed, an urge that is not easily quench, a desire that is not easily satisfied, a chafing within that is not easily soothed, focused
mostly on our genitals or breasts. We do not choose to be involved in this tension; but it comes with us as part of our human sexuality. Sex is one of God's gifts to human and a part of our total personality (Barnette, 1961). It is God's gift of creative grace that he made our bodies so bent on having and giving pleasure. The sheer physical pleasure is genuine and good. What is desired and needed is the sharing of the pleasure that comes with our sharing of self, the overcoming of individuality through our communion. This physical pleasure is the intimacy of persons with persons, the giving of self and the taking of another, the communion that comes from uncontrolled, rapturous personal exposure in the embrace of another person. Moreover, this is the deepest pleasure our human sexuality urges us to seek and to find (Smedes, 1994).

Human sexuality is more than hormones, organs, and orgasms; it runs through the psychic and spiritual ranges of humanness. One encounters sexuality on the spiritual level as a yearning for another person. It’s a strong urges to reach out and stretch oneself into the depths of another opposite sex. It is a desire to bring the other person into the orbit of deepest self. The opposite sex probing into the mystery of the other, a mystery that tantalizes and makes one wants it to become the secret shares together. Only when ones’ longings focus on a single person and enter into radical life-union with that person that one has complete sexual experience. The physical yearning, according to Smedes (1994), meshes with the spiritual, and this is the total experience of human sexual love. To this yearning, longing, and seeking the Greeks gave the name eros, after their god of the same name. It is expedient to note that there are three characteristics of human eros.

First, human eros is born of need. We love sexually because we need to be completed by another person. This need is far more than a need for physical release; it is a need for intimate relationship with the whole self of another in order to complete ourselves. Therefore, human eros is the movement within us toward the man or woman whose life bears the promise of filling our need.

Second, human eros is selective. Not every man or woman offers a promise of meeting our deep need. Sexual love stimulates and woos by those whose qualities offer that promise. Thus, eros love is discriminating: it separates the lovely from the unlovely, the attractive from the unattractive, the promising from the unpromising; and it responds to the promise that in one particular man or woman one can enjoy the fulfillment.

Third, human eros is natural. It does not need a command from God to push into eros love; no man or woman needs an impulse from the Holy Spirit to seek the promise of sexual love. This need wove into the created maleness and femaleness. One reaches out to an opposite sex because we are to find our true selves in union with each other and the fact is that sexual love is naturally good (Smedes, 1994). God created male and female the same specie - mankind, but sexually differentiated. This differentiation constitutes our humanness; therefore we cannot come fully to know the significance of being human without reference to it (Meilaender, 1995). Human sexuality is a natural love between opposite sex.

**Consummation of Human Sexuality**

The understanding of the mysterious difference in male and female sexuality is important for an effective human relationship. Although, the traditional teaching of modesty from childhood at times makes one to feel that it is sinful to study or talk about sexual intercourse (LaHaye, 1982). However, it is profitable and advisable to study and have accurate knowledge of sexual differences. A nonchalant attitude towards sexual union has wreaked havoc on many homes. We need to know that human sexuality is a place in our maleness and femaleness where God delights to perform miracles upon miracles if properly and wisely consummated. Sexual consummation or intercourse ought to be a place of healing experience rather than a hurting experience as some people are experiencing in Africa (Hugget, 1987). Some of us exhibit our biblical illiteracy on human sexuality by thinking that all sexual consummation or coitus not meant for procreation of life between couple is sinful and that sexual
desire is a bad character. But the Scripture teaches that sexual intercourse is intended to be for the comfort and joy of the spouses, to develop intimacy with each other and not only for procreation of new life. Frequent sexual consummation and all what it takes, under the agreement of both partners is right and healthful, and promotes happiness and morality (1 Cor.7:3-5). Therefore, sexual stimulus is normative as well; there is no excess, not demand beyond that for which God has prepared the body. God ordains it and is natural within the wedlock.

In the book of Genesis, God exhorted the man to "leave his father and mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh" (Gen.2:24). In other words, leaving, cleaving, oneness and fleshiness (sexuality) go together. We cannot demarcate sexual oneness from one flesh. The significance of this sexual oneness is explicit in Deuteronomy 24:5, which says, "If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to his wife he has married". Sexual consummation, among other things, is inclusive in the process of bringing happiness to one's wife. In fact, coitus is a wedding gift God presents to the man and his wife. God desires the couple to enjoy this gift whole-heartedly during the formative months of marital relationship even thereafter. Sexual intercourse brings satisfaction and oneness for both spouses.

The enjoyment of this mysterious gift God gives to humanity is clearly expressed in Proverbs 5:18 "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth... Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enrapured with her love". The word fountain here refers to the man's ability to conceive new life, which also includes his desire for sexual intimacy. The implication here is that the man should understand that sexual desire is a gift from God, and that he should enjoy the body of his woman because God intended that, at the heart of wholesome marital union should lay healthy, restful, satisfying sexual consummation (Hugget, 1987).

The woman in the Song of Solomon is not ashamed to express her romantic love in the process of enjoying God's gift of sexuality with her spouse. She said, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for your love is better than wine... a bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me that lies all night between my breasts" (1:2, 13). The whole book of Song of Solomon is a hymn of praise to the beauty of human sexual love. God created man and woman to enjoy each other and to find deep satisfaction in marriage relationship. The ability to express marital love is a beautiful gift from God. When couples experience romantic love as God designed it, they will find great joy, pleasure and satisfaction He intended it to have (Blackaby, 2006).

Sexual consummation or coitus unveils the lost glory of humankind. Human being possesses a glorious body that is unique among other creatures. In the biblical sense, it can be term "the spiritual made visible". Human nakedness is just like the curtain of the "Holy of Holies" being pulled aside and its glory is most obvious, most tantalizing and revealing. Human beings are the only creature that can be ashamed of nude, any other creature, animate or inanimate, stand naked before God without shame. Humankind alone put an unnatural covering of nudeness to avoid shame. This is a mysterious shame that is beyond human perception or rationale. The Bible says, "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame" (Gen.2:25). Nevertheless, as soon as Adam and Eve tasted the forbidden fruit, the glory, which veiled their nakedness, was removed and both realized their nudeness and were ashamed of themselves (Gen.3:7). It is in sexual consummation of the couple that that glorious nakedness can be unveiled. In this union, the spouses discover the real pleasure and closeness, and love on a territory belonging to them alone and defend against intruders (Maston, 1985).

**African Christian Perspective of Sexual Intercourse**

The modern society has taught us much about human sexuality and love. Yet there is an enormous degree of wrong view about the consummation of human sexuality. Strong, divergent views prevail as regard the nature, purpose, and function of sex. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the proper place of human sexuality from biblical point of view. God created human
in two sexually distinct forms, male and female. Our sexuality distort if uncontrolled and unregulated by human’s higher moral, social, and spiritual purposes. It is not meant to indulge in promiscuity or for private gratification. Sex is not for commercial either. Human sexuality is to be discipline and coordinated to an entire way of life as designed by the Creator. In this section, this paper now focuses on morality of sexual consummation for African Christianity in four viewpoints.

**Sexual Consummation for Gender:** Human sexuality is a divine creation to meet human need for companionship, “It is not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). God designed Adam for relationship; God did not create him to live in isolation. Therefore, God gave him a "helper." God created a companion who was comparable to him. "Helper" literally means corresponding to him. Eve formed from Adam's side may symbolize a partnership of equals (Blackaby, 2006). God did not create another Ish, a male body-person, but he created Ishshah, a female body-person out of Ish. Now Ish and Ishshah are together - as body-persons. Adam knew what it means to be a male, for he now saw himself in relation to one who was the same as he, but with the significant differences. Both the man and woman know themselves only in relation to each other because they exist for each other. This is the deep origin of the powerful drive of the sexes to come together. It arises from the body-life we share, with a difference. Man and woman drive toward each other until they again become "one flesh" in intimate body-union or sexual consummation (Smedes, 1994).

God created the man and his wife sexually together and both have more to do as body-persons than look for chances to explode sexually. There is the business of providing food for one another, for arranging life in society, for seeking justice and creating art, for digging out the secrets of nature, and for a million other opportunities to create a culture fitting for the couple who belong to God (Smedes, 1994). The sexuality of our bodies must mesh with the total task of creating culture together; consummation of love and procreation of children (Stott, 2006).

**Sexual Consummation for Marriage:** The sexual life of human beings receives its consummation in marriage and this is a non-negotiable fact of biblical sexual morality. A permanent and total partnership gives human sexuality its moral environment as well as its greatest promise for integration with the whole of a rich personal life. Only those who are committed to a total and permanent life-partnership are qualified for sexual intercourse. A commitment to a life-partnership is the same as "getting married". It is not a cohabitation, which has become an accepted life-style of some people in Africa today.

In Genesis account, the origin of marriage is explicit. It is divine creation and new institution of which God is the matchmaker. It is because of the finer values in this union that God forbids sexual act before marriage. When the husband and the wife bring to the marital relationship innocence and chastity it will in turn add confidence, trust and togetherness to their union. Sexual consummation in marriage is a God-ordained means of overcoming the essential loneliness of the couple. Sexual desire, therefore, is a normal, healthy, God-given impulse, a powerful force that God designs to fuse a man and a woman together in marital relationship (Aghawenu, 1995).

Apart from the mysterious power sex gives for procreation, it serves as a catalyst of the tender’s spiritual love between husband and wife, to refresh, renew, and enrich their total relationship. Sexual consummation in marriage is ethically an exclusive relationship of a man and his wife, which is publicly acknowledged at marriage ceremony ("leaves his parents"), the union meant to be permanent ("cleaves to his wife") according to Genesis 2:24. Therefore, for African Christianity, marriage should be an exclusive heterosexual relationship between a man and his wife, ordained and sealed by God, publically leaving both parents through marriage rites and ceremony, solemnly consummating sexually alone, a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of children (Stott, 2006).

**Sexual Consummation for Procreation:** Sexual consummation is a mysterious channel of divine continuity of human race. The primary purposes of human sexuality are for the
propagation of the human race in accordance with the will of God that parents brought up the offspring in the fear of God; for sexual affection and fulfillment therein in pureness of living; and for mutual comradeship, help and comfort for a man and his wife, both in prosperity and adversity. Procreation, in particular, is the power of fruitfulness, which God gives to humankind. God pronounced blessing on Adam and Eve on their wedding day: "have many children, so that your descendants will live all over the earth and bring it under their control...." (Gen.1:28, GNT). It is divine purpose for children to be born under the best possible moral conditions, so that they have the loving care of both parents who will work together and if necessary sacrifice, for their highest good. Parenthood is a part of sexual consummation because the offspring of such act could not reach his full development without the co-operation and care of the husband and wife. Therefore, the erotic love that draws the couple together has in it a creative quality as well as sacrificial quality for the upbringing of the child together. The understanding of African Christianity of parenthood is that it is a sharing by a man and his wife of the work of the sovereign Lord. Parents are God's appointed agents for the continuity of His creative procreation work. Therefore, the consummation of love as spouses should overflow into a shared love for a child of their own flesh and blood (Aghawenu, 1995).

**Sexual Consummation for Fidelity:** Human sexuality is a divine intention that demands heterosexual fidelity between couple, that is, faithfulness in marital relationship of a man and a woman. Adam's romantic love poem in Genesis 2:23 and the narrator's deduction in verse 24: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" teaches that sexual consummation in marriage is more than a union; it is a kind of reunion. It is not coitus of alien persons, who do not belong to each other and cannot appropriately become one flesh. On the contrary, it is a union of two persons who originally were one, were then separated from each other, and now in the sexual encounter of marriage come together again (Stott, 2006).

Sexual consummation is much more than a union of bodies; it is a blending of complementary personalities through, which the rich created oneness of our humanity experienced again. The complementarities of man and woman sexual organs are only a symbol at the physical level of much deeper spiritual complementarities. The fact is that every kind of sexual relationship and activity, which deviates from God's revealed intention, is *ipso facto* displeasing to him and under his judgment. These deviations include polygamy and polyandry, which infringe the moral principle of one man and one woman as well as, cohabitation and clandestine union, which do not involve decisive public leaving of parents. It also entails casual encounters, temporary liaison, adultery and divorce, which conflict with "cleaving" and with Jesus' prohibition "let man not separate." The fourth deviation is homosexual partnerships, which also violate the statement, “a man" shall be joined to "his wife" of opposite sex, not the same sex (Stott, 2006).

Sexual consummation in African Christianity calls for creative fidelity. That is fidelity certainly involves the location of one’s genitals, but it also stretches far beyond, it extends into the entire marital relationship. A marriage is a relationship rooted in sexual desire, a union for the welfare of the couple involved. At the core, fidelity in marital relationship is commitment to an ongoing, dynamic, changing, sensitive facing of two people bent on the total well-being of each other. Both partners are faithful to the extent that he or she dedicated to the constant growth, healing, and regrowth of the other person. Creative fidelity is person-centered. One cannot claim to meet the demands of fidelity if one is less than faithful to his or her spouse total welfare. Fidelity becomes a moral achievement when it is person-directed; it is less moral when it is function-based. It is a stubborn dedication to growth in personal relationship (Smedes, 1994).
CONCLUSION
In sum, this study is rooted in the premise that the marriage of committed love of a man and his wife is God's design for sexual satisfaction. Sexual freedom is living out to the fullness in the environment. The only "one flesh" experience which God intends and Scripture contemplates is the sexual consummation of a man with his wife, whom he recognizes as 'flesh of his flesh'. There is no any justification, from the Bible or from the entire African Christian tradition, for sexual activity outside the marriage of one man and one woman. Therefore, for African Christianity, marriage should be an exclusive heterosexual relationship between a man and his wife ordained and sealed by God, publically leaving both parents through marriage rites and ceremony, solemnly consummating sexually alone, a permanent mutually supportive partnership, and normally crowned by the gift of children. Parenthood is a part of sexual consummation because the offspring of such act could not reach his full development without the co-operation and care of the husband and wife. Therefore, the erotic love that draws the couple together has in it a creative quality as well as sacrificial quality for the upbringing of the child together. This is the concept of African Christianity about human sexuality and the institution of heterosexual union as well as its consummation.

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