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Dear Dr. Adeyeye,

### LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

We are glad to inform you that following the positive reviews of your article, "Social Conflicts and Christian Marriage: The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) Ilorin as a Case Study", it has been accepted for publication in *Religion and Contemporary Issues*. Your article is scheduled to appear in 1st edition of the book of readings of Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, which will be published before the end of the year. You shall be entitled to some copies of the book.

Thank you for patronising our book and we hope you will continue to identify with Department of Religions, University of Ilorin.

Once again accept our congratulations.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. A. O. Fahm  
Secretary, Editorial Committee

# **SOCIAL CONFLICTS AND CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE: THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD (RCCG) ILORIN, AS A CASE STUDY.**

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## **Abstract**

We live in a world full of conflicts. The premise of this work is that the church and Nigeria as a nation are currently bedeviled with myriad of problems. Conflict is common to all marriages, some conflicts are good and healthy for the family because they strengthen bonds while it can be unhealthy when it escalates. Unfortunately, as much as we try to avoid conflict it is still winding its way into the most intimate relationship whereby causing divorce and domestic violence in homes. Christian marriage is not an exception in this menace. This work looks at the causes of conflict and solutions to social conflicts in Christian marriage. Historical and phenomenological approaches were used. There is no way to avoid conflict in marriage but the question is how to deal with it. God instituted marriage, so His word reveals how best to conduct it and to resolve marital problems. God's word does not guarantee marital bliss, but it does give guidance and counsel to help couples with serious problems. The findings of the study were that conflicts in marriage were caused through man-generated problems. Therefore, the study recommended that couples must promptly react constructively to early warning signs of marital conflict before they develop into bad signals of cohabitation.

## **Introduction**

Marriage can be defined as an exclusive state in which a man and a woman are wholly committed to live with each other in sexual relationship under conditions normally approved and witnessed to by their social group and society. The Hebrew word *lagah*, literally means “to take” a wife (Gen. 19:14); while Greek, *gameo* is a common verb that means “to marry,” found also in the Septuagint (LXX). From biblical evidence, God established the fundamental institution of marriage from the beginning of creation. Gen. 2:18 says that, “the Lord said, it is not good for a man to be alone, I will make a helper suitable for him”. In other words, it was God’s intention from the beginning that a man is not complete alone except with a wife, a “suitable helper”. And buttressing this relationship further, God said; “for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Marriage therefore entails a union of a man and woman which does not involve external (father and mother) interference. The study focused on causes of social conflicts in marriage in The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Ilorin west of Kwara State, Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Meaning(S) Of Conflicts**

Conflict itself is not evil; often times it arises from the process of seeking sustainable progress and satisfaction. We quickly forget our similar positive intentions, dissipating energies on the contradictory ideas of the path to the common end. Among other things, conflict emanates as a result of misunderstanding, man’s superiority complex, failure to compromise and reconcile ideas, beliefs, cultures and interests. If harnessed, it could serve as a powerful tool for progress.

Meanwhile, for the purpose of this paper, we shall be conceptualizing conflict as it relates to the field of Religion. In a general context, conflict, unlike peace, is a state of inward (intra-personal) or outward (inter-personal) disorder and strife. It is an inevitable feature of nature. However, conflict could be conceptualized from two approaches, namely: the objectivist approach, which suggests that conflict emanates from the social and religious structure of the society; and the subjectivist approach, advancing that apparent differences and incompatibility of goals cause conflict. The definitions of conflict will be therefore categorized under these two approaches.

### **Objectivist Approach**

To Stedman (1991: 269), conflict ‘emanates from the tugs and pulls of different identities, definitions of what is right, fair, and just’. March and Simon (1958; cited in Oyeshola, 2005: 105) view conflict as a ‘break-down in standard mechanism of decision making’. While Forsyth (1990) posits that conflict transpires when ‘the actions or beliefs of one or more member of a group are unacceptable to and, hence are resisted by one or more groups or members’. Mitchell, (1981: 18) sees it as a result of ‘mis-match between social values and social structure’.

But Nwolise (2003) summarizes it as a ‘clash, confrontation, battle or struggle’.

### **Subjectivist Approach**

Stagner (1967: 16) defines conflict as a ‘situation in which two or more human beings desire goals which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other, but not both; each party is mobilizing energy to obtain a goal; and each party perceive the other as a barrier or threat to that goal’. Likewise, to Wallensteen (2002: 16), ‘conflict is a social situation in which a minimum of

two actors (parties) strike to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources'. Chaplin (1979: 109) describes it as 'the simultaneous occurrence of two or more mutually antagonistic impulses or motives'. Putting it differently, Wilson and Hanna (1990: 255) refer it as the 'struggle involving ideas, values and /or limited resources'.

However, from the above definitions, it is obvious that conflict emanates from contradictions that occur in social interactions. They strengthen the arguments of the Realists that man by nature is chaotic. Innate in man is conflict (Morgenthau, 1949). The realists went on to argue that because the state is as rational as man, therefore, like man, the state will seek ways of survival and satisfaction by all means. The international system is, moreover, characterized by varieties of state interests which are either contradictory or competitive, and the absence of a world governing body will definitely engender conflict. Also, the definitions support the view by the Marxists insofar that conflict within the international system is primarily conflict between the global north and the global south.

### **The Meaning Of Marriage**

Marriage can be said to be a ceremony which allows one to open the door of a palace of happiness and enter into it. It is said that marriages are made in heaven and celebrated on earth. The popular belief is true to many extents because it is a special bond shared between two souls, who tie the wedding knot after promising to be companions for a lifetime. It is the physical, mental and spiritual union of two souls. It brings significant stability and substance to human relationships, which is otherwise incomplete. It plays a crucial role in transferring the culture and civilization from one generation to the other, so that the human race is prospered. The institution of marriage is beneficial to the society as a whole, because it is the foundation of the family,

which in turn is the fundamental building block of the society. While the concept of marriage remains the same across the globe, the way of solemnization it differs extensively.

In Christianity, marriage is a covenant in which one is not fit to look back after dipping bones hand because a commitment has been established and it is in one's position to make sure that there is no difficulty that will tear it apart. Although it cannot be smooth for life, there will be difficulty (ies). When it occurs, the priest will always refer the couple to the marital vows which they took before they were joined "... till death do us apart". In the bible God made their togetherness an everlasting one when he said in Matthew 19:6,"What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder".

Marriage helps to erode and eradicate fornication and adultery. It makes the couple to be faithful to each other, sharing their opinions and expression of love to each other. Fornication and adultery are among the offences that depreciates man's spirituality with God in Hebrew 13:14, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterous. The union of couple in marriage makes procreation possible and it helps in fulfilling God's intention or plan of fruitfulness and multiplication.

### **Christian Marriage**

Marriage in Christianity is a God ordained institution. It was instituted by God in the Garden of Eden. The union was between Adam and Eve, the first couple indwelling the earth. It was union between a man and a woman not a union of man and women. After the creation of the universe, God felt it was necessary to place it under man for the work to be complete. Adam was created and then He realized a missing link and He saw the need to provide a companion for Adam: It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him. Therefore a man leaves

his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. Again God said: Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.

From the above biblical statements, Christian marriage can be explained to be the actual unification of a man and a woman. Two persons who after "leaving" and "cleaving" become "one flesh". The idea of "one flesh" is mystery on the part of Christian marriage, it is later shown by St. Paul as a sexual union in the book of Corinthians when he says, "Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, the two shall become one flesh. Even the idea of helper shows that a man must look for a woman that is really fit for him, and such a woman must not be a prostitute. Therefore, the idea of Christian marriage that we get here can be summed in three ways, that is, companionship, helpfulness and procreation.

The word of God also declares in Ecclesiastes 9:1 that: Two are better than one, because they have a good reward in labor for if one person falls, the other will lift up the fallen one, but woe to him that is alone, when he falleth for he hath not another to help him up. This is the plain teaching from the Bible. Two people should be happier together. The principle of two being better than one are found in the Bible. Have you not read that he that made them at the beginning made them male and female, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.<sup>4</sup>

The idea marriage given in both New and Old Testaments is more than the union of man and woman, but it carries other symbolic meanings. Marriage between man and woman is parallel

with the sort of relationship that exists between God and Israelites. In that, God and Israel's relation is regarded as husband — wife relation in which the wife must be seen as faithful.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, Christian marriage requires all faithfulness, for marriage is honorable. Whoever defiles it through unfaithfulness shall be punished by God. Let the marriage bed be undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.<sup>6</sup>

In the New Testament, a parallel is also drawn between Jesus and the church. Just as the wife must submit to her husband who is the head of the family, so also Christians must submit to Christ who is the head of the church. Similarly, just as Christ love, cherish and take proper care of the church, so also the husband must do to the wife (Eph. 5:23-33).

Conclusively, marriage is characterized by monogamy that is one man and one wife. Marriage in Christian understanding can be said to mean the joining together of one man and one woman for life, thus bringing about a relationship that only death could terminate. This is a relationship where love (agape) expresses itself more through the attitude of consideration, trust, mutual helpfulness, justice and forgiveness.

### **Social Conflicts In Christian Marriage**

Marriage and the family are of fundamental importance for the church and for the society. They are put under unprecedented pressures at the present time. Even the very understanding of marriage is being threatened today in many countries by the growing occurrence of breakdown in marriage and by the spread of divorce, which most countries have adopted as a response to marriage breakdown. The pressures on marriage are particularly potent in the earliest years of marriage, and these earliest years are the critical years for the future of marriage. By far the



greatest number of marriages breakdowns occurs either in the first five years, or as a delayed result of difficulties arising in those years.

Crises in marriage are not, of course, inevitable in the early years of marriage. Modern married couples will generally be facing a longer period of life together. Nowadays, children tend to be born in the earlier years of marriage, and will frequently have left home while the parents are still quite young. People retire from work at an earlier age than formerly. For these reasons, the couple can expect to be spending many of their married years in one another's company, without the presence of children. These factors create a new challenge for marriage.

Economic and social conditions also create stresses for marriage. Newly married couples are sometimes obliged to live with their in-laws, and this increases the strain for couples, who need privacy and peace to adjust to each other in the deprived areas there is still a scandalous amount of substandard accommodation. There is exploitation by some landlords in the area of flat-letting. For those who secure accommodation, the payment of rents or mortgages is a recurrent burden and problem. Unemployment is a demoralizing experience, for men and also for women. Indeed, unemployment is among the greatest sources of marital stress at the present time. All forms of social deprivation create strains for marriage. Marriages suffer also when couples are unable to manage the family budget or are lacking in basic housekeeping skills.

A feature common to many problems in marriage is lack of communication between the parents. The transition from the joy and affection and mutual concern of courtship to the realities of marriage can sometimes be traumatic. In some homes, words are rarely exchanged except in anger, in nagging or in demand sometimes the main; if not the sole communication between married couples is through their children. When the children leave home, the couples live in chilly, or perhaps frosty, silence.

Abuse of alcohol is a cause of much strain in marriage and much misery in homes. Excessive drinking wastes housekeeping money; it keeps spouse away from home; it is often associated with quarrelling between husband and wife and with wife-beating or child-battering. Violence in the home, often associated with drinking, is an all too common scourge. Some of these reason together with their experience of unhappy or broken marriages among their friends or in their parent's generation may help to explain why some young people now choose to "live together" without marriage. This is also a result of the trend towards secularism in society.

### **Short History Of RCCG, Ilorin**

The Redeemed Christian Church of God came into Ilorin, the capital of Kwara State in the latter part of 1965. This church was established by late Pastor S. A. Olaniyan then a staff of G. B. Olivant Services. RCCG in Ilorin metropolis started as a House Fellowship in the house of this man of God opposite the present Central Bank of Nigeria, Ilorin behind Nigeria Telecommunications (NITEL) Ilorin.

Few months later, in his residence, the church grew with a population of about twenty-two (22) and later moved to Gbabiabidun lane, Opo-Malu, Ilorin. In the early 1967, the church had grown to about one hundred in number. They received quit notice from Opo-Malu and they moved to its present permanent site now the Regional Headquarters, Oke Ayo Sabo-Oke Ilorin. Due to the establishment of higher institutions like the University, Kwara state polytechnic, College of Education, Federal Training centers, School of Nursing and Midwifery, United Missionary Theological College to mention a few. The population of Ilorin was estimated to be 512,560 – 877,940 between 1971 and 1988 respectively.

From 1967, the church has grown in size with about fifteen area headquarters, sixty-eight parishes and many zonal divisions. The increase in population birthed the zeal of evangelization in Ilorin and accounts for some of the progress that the Church has made. With new converts among the indigenes, the church grew in size. This has been the case till this day.

### **Social Conflicts in The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Ilorin West**

Some members gave explanation for frequent causes of social conflicts in marriage as domestic violence, unfaithfulness, alcoholism and in-law interference. Lack of Love in marriage, money issues, character differences, infidelity, 'blame game' in marriage contribute to social conflict in marriage according to some couples interviewed in the church

- Character differences

In the society, acceptable reasons are based on differences among couples, negligence by one or both couple based on alcoholism, extra marital affair and domestic violence contribute to creation and existence in social conflict in marriage. All these weakened the marriage bond in most cases.

- Educational and intellectual differences

Some members indicated that intellectual abilities are a solution to some social economic problems, at the same time sticking to intellectual deficiencies of one of the couples in marriage can cause social conflict in marriage. Some of the members indicated that intellectual differences as a result of wide educational gap between couples were a serious problem among couples, particularly young couples.

- Role Conflicts

Some members indicated that role conflicts were common among new couples of these generations than in the past. Misconception on gender roles between couples was the major triggers of social conflict in marriage. A husband and wife each have a unique position and role in the body of Christ as individual and as a couple. The way God created each of us divined our role. Some member indicated that social conflicts normally occur when the husband is unemployed and the wife is. Couple may have different roles such as who does the cooking, who make a decision, compound cleaning among other issues.

- In-law Interference

In African society, in-laws are not just considered as extended but immediate family. Because of this western concept of dividing the family into immediate and extended, poses challenges to modern marriages than in the past. A member said that In-laws 'demands' expect too much from their sons and daughters, forgetting that they also have needs to fulfill in their marriage. This can pose a social conflict in the home.

- Family Crises

Poor communication can be a prime cost of social conflict in marriage. This can affect marriages whether new or old. Vocational choices are choice of marriage partner were some of the issues surrounding social conflicts. The majority of the members indicated that crises in marriage are amplified by third party supporters among them relative and friends.

- Sexual Challenges

Married couples argue with each other about sex-related issues including frequency or sex outside their marriage. Or for various reasons some couples just cannot function properly sexually, further stressing the marriage. Sex is a gift from our Lord for married couples. Unfortunately all too often this gift can become a source of stress and conflict.

- Economic Factors

The misuse of money and broken trust can constitute social conflict in marriage. When there is a lot of money the options are more and when it is very tight the options are short and the stress can be long

## **Findings**

The study finds that notable warning signs of social conflicts in marriage are: lack of respect and disappointment among couples, increase in anger-argument, prevalence of negative condemnation, more blaming, doing less mutually, feeling lonely and mistreated, less sex, less confidence, less mutual decision-making, less or no sharing of thought and feelings, less or no helping, less or no touching.

## **Recommendation**

The study recommended that couples must pay attention to warning signals of social conflicts in marriage as soon as they occur and get to the root of the problem. Christian couples must resolve their differences beneficially, turning them into opportunities for removing obstructions to stronger marriage.

- ✓ Couples should establish good communication in their marriage
- ✓ Manage marriage conflict in healthy ways

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