

Theological Evaluation against *Sallah- הַשְּׁלָח* (Divorce) among the Christians in Nigeria

Bello, Oluwaniyi Samuel¹
Department of religious Studies
Bowen University, Iwo
Osun State Nigeria

Abstract

This work examines the Theological evaluation against divorce among the Christians in Nigeria. The work reviews scholarly perspectives on marriage and divorce and pays a critical look into some biblical passages to show whether these passages such as; Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Deuteronomy 22:13ff, Mark 10:2-12, and Hosea 1:2ff are actually tenable for divorce. Moreover, factors aiding divorce among the Christians, the position of Nigeria's statutory Acts, and the standard of God in Malachi 2:15-17 and Mark 10:2-12 are critically examined. Data from the existing literature revealed that the proliferation of divorce among Christians in Nigeria is a result of socio-political, economic, and genetic factors cum misinterpretation of the above biblical passages quoted by the divorcees as the bedrock for their action. However, the work concluded and recommended that since God disapproves divorce, then, there should be socio-religious orientation on marriage for a better understanding of the marriage institution and how it could be maintained.

Keywords: Theological Evaluation, *Sallah- הַשְּׁלָח* (divorce), Christians, Nigeria

Introduction

Human society has units, and one of them is the institution called marriage. Every race and culture has its marriage customs and practices, some are closely similar while others are different, though the essence of this union tends to be identical in all cultures. This union which in the beginning often expects a life-long relationship sometimes has a contrary ending with its attendant effects on the human society. In some cases, there is a temporary separation while in other instances, the marriage ends in divorce. In the case of divorce, the effects are on the partners, the wider community, and the children.² Before 1857 in Britain, freedom to remarry could be obtained only by an act of Parliament following a separation decree given by an ecclesiastical court based on some wrong (such as adultery or abandonment) done by the defendant to the plaintiff. This system, based on the premise that valid marriages may not be

¹ +2347034587391
samuel.bello@bowen.edu.ng

²Eyo, U. E. Divorce: Causes and Effects on Children. Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies, 2018, 6(5):174-177.



dissolved, reflected the Roman Catholic origins of English domestic relations law.³

The early American colonists brought this fault-based system with them to the New World. Because they feared the moral dangers posed by a married yet separated state, they made it possible to obtain an absolute divorce, but only on the traditional English grounds for separation. However, the conceptual and legal structure of the marriage-dissolution system remained as it had been created and maintained for a divorceless society. Ecclesiastical courts were abolished in Britain in 1857, and absolute divorce was then instituted. Incorporated into the law of absolute divorce were the fault-based notions that had grown up around separation. These notions continued to affect British and American divorce law and administration for more than a century and were also adopted by many other developing continents and countries.⁴ Current trends suggest that close to two-thirds of new marriages will end in divorce. For instance, nearly 32 percent of couples who divorce will do so before their fifth anniversary, and about 63 percent before their tenth.⁵

Since the nineteenth century the proportion of marriages ended by the death of a spouse has declined, while the proportion ending by divorce has increased, more or less steadily. Edet Ukpong has defined divorce as a legal dissolution of the marriage. Any formal separation of a man and his wife according to established custom; a complete separation of any kind.⁶ The word originally referred to the dissolution of legal marriage, though it is now also being used for the separation of two institutions or situations, one from the other, e.g. the separation of the state from the church or other religious bodies. Worthy of note is the fact that there is no divorce except there was a legal bond of marriage. Hence, when people who cohabit decide to separate, one cannot speak of them as being divorced because they were not officially married. It is anti-social and unlike marriage is not often celebrated – no fanfare, eating, dancing, etc. It is often gloomy and very traumatic because of the reason(s) and the concomitants of divorce. Divorce is never a day's journey, it takes time and in some cases, it is very cumbersome.

The reason for the divorce process being cumbersome is to give the couple time to think properly and re-think their decision to divorce. Divorce (Sallah) is as old as man. From the beginning; God instituted marriage for intimacy, procreation, and sexual intercourse. Here, divorce was disapproved. But today, divorce has proliferated, and has become very common in our society, most especially, among Christians to the extent that many families have been scattered based on a series of acquisitions i.e. communication gap, financial constraints, irregularity of libido, untrust, bad attitude towards romance and

³Henry, Kha. *The Reform of English Divorce Law: 1857-1937*. Thesis, University of Queensland, 2017. Pp. 37-45.
Available at: https://escape.library.uq.edu.au/data/UQ_687113/s43628568_final_thesis.pdf?

⁴Eyo, 2018.

⁵Adeniran, A. O. *Analytical study of the causal factors of Divorce in African Homes*. *Research in Humanities and Social Sciences* 2015, 5(14):18-29.

⁶Edet, U. *Marriage and the Family among the Akwa Iborn People: Anthropological Perspectives*. Uyo: Impact Impression Enterprise, 2014.

sex, etc. This has resulted in the separation of families and other ways jeopardizes our country (Nigeria). However, the Nigeria law made to curb social crisis does not annihilate marriage disorder. Contrary to people saying that the Old Testament is the bedrock for divorce, this work is an attempt to consider some biblical passages to reveal God's position towards marriage and divorce as a panacea for a better understanding of marriage institute among the millennium Christians in Nigeria. This paper further looked into the causes of divorce and its effects on the society.

Marriage

Marriage is a socially recognized union between spouses that establishes rights and obligations.⁷ The definition of marriage varies around the world, not only between cultures and religions but also throughout the history of any given culture and religion, evolving to both expand and constrict who and what is encompassed. It is principally an institution in which interpersonal relationships and sexual intercourse are acknowledged or sanctioned.⁸ In some cultures, marriage is considered to be compulsory before pursuing any sexual activity. Marriage can be recognized by a state, organizations, religious authorities, tribal groups, local communities, and peers. It is often viewed as a contract. The act of marriage usually creates legal obligations between the individuals and any offspring they may produce or adopt. In terms of legal recognition, most sovereign states and other jurisdictions limit marriage to opposite-sex couples and also permit monogamy, polygyny, polygamy, etc. In modern times, a growing number of countries, primarily developed democracies, have lifted bans on and have established legal recognition for the marriages of interfaith, interracial, and same-sex couples and some cultures allow the dissolution of marriage through divorce or annulment.⁹

In the 21st century, there continue to be controversies regarding the legal status of married women, legal acceptance of or leniency towards violence within marriage (especially sexual violence), traditional marriage customs such as dowry and bride price, forced marriage, marriageable age, and criminalization of consensual behaviors such as premarital and extramarital sex.¹⁰ Thus, a marriage is usually formalized at a wedding or marriage ceremony. The ceremony may be officiated by a religious functionary, government official, or state-approved celebrant. In some cultures, any religious ceremony must be held separately from the required civil ceremony, while some require that a civil ceremony take place before the religious act. For instance, among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, both ceremonies can be held together. For the state to recognize a religious marriage (which is prohibited in some countries) the 'civil' ceremony is said to have taken place at the same time as the religious ceremony. Often, this involves signing a register during the religious ceremony. If the civil element of the religious ceremony is omitted, the

⁷Christopher, A. *Marriage Sex in the Service of God*. England: Intervarsity Press, 2003. pp.66-69.

⁸Christopher, C. *Women, Men, and Marriage*. London: Sheldon Press, Press, 2005. pp.40-45.

⁹Joshua, A. *Before you Marry*. Ghana: Olive Publications, 2009. Pp.63-67.

¹⁰Packer, L. *Women Making a Difference in Marriage*. Nashville Tennessee: Lifeway press, 2003. Pp.13-20.

marriage ceremony is not recognized as a marriage by the government under the law.

Divorce

Divorce, also known as dissolution of marriage. It is the process of terminating a marriage or marital union.¹¹ It usually entails the canceling or reorganizing of the legal duties and responsibilities of marriage, thus dissolving the bonds of matrimony between a married couple under the rule of law of the particular country or state. Divorce laws vary considerably around the world, but in most countries, divorce requires the sanction of a court or other authority in a legal process, which may involve issues of distribution of property, child custody, alimony (spousal support), child visitation, parenting time, child support and division of debt. In most countries, monogamy is required by law, thus, divorce allows each former partner to marry another person; where polygyny is legal but polyandry is not. Divorce allows the woman to marry another person.

Divorce should not be confused with annulment which declares a marriage null and void with legal separation or *de jure* separation (a legal process by which a married couple may formalize a *de facto* separation while remaining legally married). It could also be a *de facto* separation (a process where the spouses informally stop cohabiting). Reasons for divorce could vary such as sexual incompatibility, lack of independence for one or both spouses to personality clash.¹² The only countries that do not allow divorce are the Philippines, Vatican City, and British Crown dependency of Sark. In the Philippines, divorce for non-Muslim Filipinos is not legal unless the husband or wife is an alien and satisfies certain conditions.¹³ The Vertical City is an ecclesiastical state, which has no procedure for divorce.

Biblical Concept of Marriage

Marriage is a legally recognized intimate and complementing union of two people as spousal partners in a personal relationship. Marriage is the union between a man and a woman as instituted and ordained by God as a lifelong relationship (Mathew 19:3-16, Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, and I Corinthians 7:2). Apostle Paul gave similar directions when he wrote: 'Let marriage be held in honor among all' (Hebrews 13:4). Conservative theologians consider marriage as the most intimate of human relationships, a gift from God, and sacred institution.¹⁴ Jesus also taught the importance and sacredness of lifelong marriage that God created humanity male and female and in marriage, 'the two become one flesh'. And in Mathew 19:6 he added, 'So they are no longer two but one flesh, therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate'. Egalitarian theologians (egal-equal) believe that marriage is intended to be a marriage without any hierarchy but the full and equal partnership between the

¹¹Laney, C. J. *The Divorce Myth*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany, 2001. Pp.20-21.

¹²Adams, J. E. *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*. Grand Rapids: Michigan: Baker Book House, 2001. Pp.11-12.

¹³Christopher, A. *Marriage Sex in the Service of God*. England: Intervarsity Press, 2003. pp.66-69.

¹⁴Isidore, S. et al, "Marriage"- *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York: Funk and Wagnall, 2006. Pp.1901-1907.

wife and husband. They emphasized that nowhere in the New Testament requires the wife to obey her husband. To them, obedience was introduced into marriage vows for most of the churches during the Middle Ages; it is only 1 Peter 3:6 that supports it with the implication of Sarah's obedience to Abraham.¹⁵

Egalitarian theologians interpreted scripture to mean that God intended spouses to practice mutual submission, each inequality with the other, and that equal partnership in marriage is the most biblical view, producing the most intimate, wholesome, and reciprocally fulfilling marriage.¹⁶ It does not imply that women and men are identical or undifferentiated but affirms that God designed men and women to complement and benefit one another.¹⁷ Thus, these theologians believe that biblical instruction is that all Christians, irrespective of gender are to submit or be subjected to one another in the fear of God. Complementarian theologians hold to a hierarchical structure between husband and wife. They believe that men and women have different gender-specific roles that allow each to complement the other, hence, their view towards marriage holds that while the husband and wife are of equal worth before God, husbands and wives are given different functions and responsibilities by God that are based on gender, and that male leadership is biblically ordained, so that, the husband is always the senior authority figure.¹⁸

Complementarians teach that God intended men to lead their wives as heads of the family. In support, Wayne Gruden thinks in one of his articles titled "Mutual Submission" where he quoted I Corinthians 11:3 that: 'but I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.' This is to understand that the wife is to be subjected to her husband, if not unconditionally.¹⁹ John Piper also opines on the predominant position in placing males as the head in the home and in the Church, women are commanded to be in subjection to male leadership with a wife being obedient to her husband based upon Old Testament precepts and principles. Gruden further acknowledges exception to the submission of wives to husbands where moral issues are involved,²⁰ but both Piper and Gruden carefully caution wife's submission that it should never cause her to follow her husband into sin (Ephesians 5:22).²¹ However, the patriarchal model of marriage characterized the theological understanding of most Old Testament, it mandates the supremacy, and ultimate domination of the husband in the family. Biblical marriage (Old Testament and New Testament) is based on authoritarianism, complete obedience or subjection to male authority, because the woman was

¹⁵Erwin, F. and Bromiley, G. The Encyclopedia of Christianity. Brill Academic publishers, 2000. Pp.140-190.

¹⁶Besancon, A. and Spencer, W. Marriage at the Crossroads. Intervarsity Press, 2009. Pp.40-45.

¹⁷Besancon, A. and Spencer, W. Marriage at the Crossroads.2009.Pp.46.

¹⁸Janssen, A. The Marriage Master Piece. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 2001. Pp.3-4.

¹⁹Piper, J. and Wayne, G. Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism. Oxford: Crossway Books, 2006. p.165

²⁰Piper, J. and Wayne, G. Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism. Oxford: Crossway Books, 2006. p.166.

²¹Blankenhon, D. Does Christianity Teach Male Headship? The equal- Regard Marriage and its Critics. New York: University Press, 2017. Pp.29-36.

created as a helper to her husband, bearer of children, home keeper, sewer, weaver, manufacturer of clothing and baking of bread (Exodus 21:10). In the Old Testament since a wife was regarded as property, her husband was free to divorce her; divorce couple could get back together unless the wife had married someone else after her divorce (Deuteronomy 24:2-4). A question arise; does this give ground for the proliferation of divorce among Christians and how can God be justified for instituting marriage to humanity? These questions would be answered in the light of the Old Testament.

General Overview of Christian Marriage

Christians' understanding of marriage from the period of the Roman Empire through the 20th century offers insights as to what matrimony is, Christian values were shaped by Judaic teaching, thought practice, and often expressed in Greek philosophical terms. But, Roman ideas had a disproportionate impact on Christian institutions, because Christians represented only a tiny fraction of the Empire's population in the 1st century A. D. when minorities were compelled to come to terms with Roman ways. Yet, Christianity arose at a time when the Roman Empire had begun to stress the importance of legitimate marriage and childbearing for the maintenance of socio-political life, and it accorded well with the Christian stance on marriage.²² Thus, in terms of marriage, Christians emphasize much on the teaching of Jesus and the letter of the Apostle Paul. In his teaching, Jesus quoted Genesis that;

then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man, for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh' (Gen. 2:22-24).

He reiterated that God created Adam and Eve, male and female, and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28). However, to Christians, marriage is a covenant between a man (husband) and a woman (wife) who becomes one flesh, the union is part of God's creative ordinance and was meant to be permanent as Jesus indicated.²³This is indissoluble and sacred bond, this is the standard of Christians view on marriage. To that extent, love and affection must be common while procreation of children is the central expectation after marriage. Moral equals between the spouses and the standard of fidelity distinctly characterized Christians' marriage. Marriage represented a lifelong indissoluble bond e.g. Divorce is not permitted.²⁴

Moreover, to the Christians, marriage is regarded as the first natural bond of human society, which brings man and woman together as spouses, owed one

²²Hunter, D. G. "Sexuality, Marriage and the Family." in Augustine, C. and Frederick, W. N. The Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to C600. Cambridge: University Press, 2007. Pp.585-600.

²³Coleman, P. Christian Attitudes to Marriage from Ancient Times to the Third Millennium. SCM Press, 2004. Pp.98-99.

²⁴Augustine, C. On the Good Marriage. Christian Literature Publishing Co. 2007. Available at: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1309.htm>. Accessed on 5 April 2019. P.34.

another, and the faith of their sexual intercourse as a mutual service of sustaining each other, to jettison and shun unlawful act.²⁵ Apostle Paul and many others centered sexual expression on the marital relationship.²⁶ Hence, marriage is a remedy against sin. Paul indicated that celibacy was an alternative to marriage and many Christians, and church fathers understood a hierarchy of perfection in which marriage was good but virginity and celibacy were preferred.²⁷ Augustine nevertheless, ultimately defended the sacred nature of marriage, in his work titled 'The Good Marriage,' he thought that marriage meant friendship, physical intimacy, progeny, fidelity, and a sacred bond that is dissolved only by death.²⁸ Marriage laws and practices were important issues for many because of the intrinsic connection between marriage and family. The institution of Christian marriage is seriously being challenged, because of the assault on moral standards and Christian values in particular comes from the so-called Christians and this has resulted not in a series of cult decisions but a lack of understanding of what constitutes marriage that has preclude or clear commitment to upholding marriage among Christians.

Overview Factors Aiding Divorce among Christians and the Position of Nigeria

Marriage Acts.

Divorce is a universal monster that jeopardizes marriage institutions. Couples, who started up their lives with strong partnerships built on love and respect, obviously become incompatible because of financial infidelity, job stress, emotional problems, substance abuse and addiction, lack of openness, age differences, academic qualification, childlessness, and infertility, lack of communication, unfaithfulness in marriage etc. It is believed that the grounds for divorce vary significantly from country to country. Divorce under the statutory law in Nigeria is governed by the provisions of the Matrimonial Causes Act (CAP 220 LFN 1990). Marriage is celebrated under the Act (statutory marriage) as opposed to customary marriage and Islamic marriage can only be dissolved on the ground that the marriage has broken down irretrievably.²⁹ Section 15(2) of the Act stated the grounds upon which a marriage may be dissolved such as:

(i) A party is said to have willfully and persistently refused to consummate a marriage when he or she deliberately refuses to have sexual intercourse with the other party despite several requests.

(ii) That the respondent has committed adultery and the petitioner finds it intolerable to live with the respondent

²⁵Augustine, C. On the Good Marriage. Christian Literature Publishing Co. 2007. Available at: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1309.htm>. Accessed on 5 April 2019.

²⁶Olsen, G. W. "Progeny, Faithfulness, Sacred Bond: Marriage" in the Age of Augustine in Christian Marriage. Cambridge: University Press, 2007. P.109.

²⁷Soenksen, J. "Virginity as the true form of the Christian life" in Concordia Theological Journal 2(1) 2014. Pp.71-82.

²⁸Olsen, 2007.Pp. 121-145.

²⁹Adeniran, A. O. Analytical study of the causal factors of Divorce in African Homes. Research in Humanities and Social Sciences 5(14) 2015. Pp.18-29.

- (iii) Since the marriage, the respondent has behaved in such a way that the petitioner cannot reasonably be expected to live with the respondent. This is an emphasis in Section 16 MCA that provides circumstances that cruelty fails under the fact e.g. rape, bestiality, drunkenness, persistent jail, fighting, etc.
- (iv) That the parties to the marriage have lived apart for a continuous period of at least two years. Living apart involves physical separation accompanied by the termination of the consortium.
- (v) That the other party to the marriage has for a period not less than one year failed to comply or resume cohabitation with a decree of restitution of conjugal rights made under the decree.

However, with the above-stated grounds and many others, have been provided by the petitioner to contribute to the irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, then, the petitioner is entitled to a decree of divorce. It is after the conclusion of the trial and the Court is satisfied with the existence of any of the above grounds, in respect of which relief or order is sought, then, the petitioner will be granted the decree Nisi; that is, decree for a period of 3 months after which if they (spouses) did not resolve, it may be made to Absolute of dissolution of marriage. Thus, many children's careers have been truncated, and even the nation (Nigeria) at large has become hell for the living, because, some of our socio-political and religio-economic leaders are involved in divorce. Imagine, a leader who is unfaithful to his/her family through extra-marital affairs, and uncaring for the spouse and children, how would such a leader lead and legislate for his/her compatriots?

Proliferation of Sallah- נשוא (Divorce) : Old Testament Perspectives

Christian marriage acquires a distinctive firmness because of the marriage vow:

I take you to be my wedded wife and husband, to have and to hold from this day onward for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part according to Gods holy ordinance and where do I pledge you my trust. Thus, with this ring, I wed you; it is a token of my love and emblem of my covenant, which I now make, standing on the sure foundation of God's word. Henceforth, I give my body to you; I pledge my life and love to you. All that I have and all that I am, I give to you all my worldly goods, I endow to you all that I have, I share with you. You are now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; therefore, I leave my father and mother and join myself to you, so that we are no longer two but one flesh within the love of God the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It declares that marriage is an irrevocable covenant. Therefore, the divorce of such a marriage is a metaphysical, moral, and legal impossibility. However, the Church has the authority to annul (abolish) a presumed marriage by declaring it to have been invalid from the beginning after genuine facts have been adduced. Divorce and remarriage are regarded differently by Christian denominations. Most Protestant Churches allow persons to marry again after a divorce, while

others require an annulment.³⁰ The Eastern Orthodox Church allows divorce for a limited number of reasons, and in theory, but usually not in practice, requires that a marriage after divorce be celebrated with a penitential overtone. Concerning marriage between a Christian and a pagan, the early Church 'sometimes took a more lenient view, by emphasizing on Pauline privilege of permissible separation (1 Cor. 7) as legitimate grounds for allowing a convert to divorce a pagan spouse and then marry a Christian.³¹ The Catholic Church adheres to the proscription of Jesus in Matthew, 19 6 which states that married spouses who have consummated their marriage are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.

Thus, the Old Testament passages that seem to bear upon the dissolubility (divorce) of marriage are Genesis 2:24, Hosea 1:2ff, 3:1ff, Deuteronomy 22:13-30, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 Jeremiah 3:1, etc contains no direct reference to divorce, but present a conception of marriage which is distinctly unfavorable to the dissolubility of marriage. It is to be observed that, marriage represents a normal relationship and at the same time transcends love and unity. Thus, the expression "shall be one flesh" physically suggests the most intimate possible union, not temporary or made with a view to subsequent dissolution.³² In Hosea, it is generally understood for narration, Deuteronomy 24: 1-4, the ground for divorce is an unseemly thing. The language implies that divorce ought not to be or will not be for trivial causes, but some unseemly thing cannot mean specifically or exclusively adultery, the penalty for which was death and it refers to immodest and indecent behavior. In Malachi 2:16;

"for that he hates divorce says Yahweh God of Israel, for it covers violence with one's garment says Yahweh of hosts, therefore take heed to your spirit that not you do deal treacherously."

קִישָׁא שְׁלֵמָה אֲמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל נִכְסֵהָ עַל-לִבּוֹ שׂוֹאֵמְרֵיהֶן הַצָּבֹאוֹת וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם בְּיוֹמֵי הַתְּקֵנָה לֵאמֹר בְּגֵד:

The area of interpretive difficulty comes from the words Sane, Sallah, and Wekissa. It is common to amend the apparent perfect form Sane (he hated) either to the participle *Sone* (hating),³³ or to the first person *Sane* (I hate/hated). Another nomenclature in verse is *Sallah* used as an infinitive construct to the perfect *Sillah*³⁴ and *Ki* to interpret as 'if/when'. Jones, showed that Septuagint's text supports the reading that "if you hate your wife, divorce her".³⁵ *Wekissa* (future consecutive) denoting future action to the previous verbs 'and he will cover.'³⁶

³⁰Zar-Koivod, M. and Mapaki, O. Tere'Asar. Jerusalem: Mossad Haravkook, 2007. P.11.

³¹Collins, C. J. The Intelligible Masoretic Text of Malachi 2:16 or How does God feel about divorce? Oxford: University Press, 2004. Pp.36-40.

³²Mackie, O. Bible Manners, and Customs. London: University Press, 2008. P.101.

³³Jones, S. Malachi on Divorce. Glazier: McDonald Press, 2005. P.110.

³⁴E. K. Gesenius, Hebrew Grammar. Oxford: Clarendon press, 2008. Pp. 66-69.

³⁵Brown, F. Drive, S. R. et al, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005. p.492.

³⁶Hoonack, V. Wekissa as Introducing the Apodosis. Wininoa Cake: Eisenbrauns, 2008. Pp.116-119.

It is impossible to tell whether the same 'he', the subject of the previous two verbs is the subject of equal (verb) or Hama- the wrongdoing or violence is the subject; and 'he will cover his garment with wrongdoing' equivalent to 'and wrongdoing will cover his garment'.³⁷ According to Keil, garment to he covered' is a figurative expression that reflects the inward part of a man and his unclean heart or indecency, because, a Jew might have two or more wives and concubines, and might have intercourse with a slave or bondwoman, even if married without being guilty of the crime of adultery (Leviticus 19:20) for adultery, according to Jewish law, was possible only when a man dishonored the free wife of a Hebrew (Lev. 20:10). However, does 'Ki' introduce as a conditional clause that one may have 'if a man should hate his wife and divorce her, he will then cover his garment with wrongdoing'.³⁸ From the content of the text, one could affirm that it is perhaps an ejaculation for someone to say that the verse opens with 'ki' is a conditional statement (from Masoretic text), besides, the more common meaning of the word *ki* makes excellent sense and would probably have been processed as for or because by the writer. (Davies, W. W. Divorce in the Old Testament. Chicago: University Press, 2013. PP.76-78).³⁸ Malachi 2, opines on how social sins are being condemned in verses 13-14 while marital unity violation is described in verses 15 and 16. The Greek version (Septuagint) of the text:

Αλλα εαν μισησας εξαποστειλος, λεγει κυριος ο θεος του Ισραηλ και καλυψει ασεβεια επι τα ενθυμηματα στον λεγει κυριος παντοκρατω και φυλαεασθε εν τω πνευματι υμων και ου μηγκατα λιπητε.

Has not the Lord made them one? In flesh and spirit, they are his, and why one? Because he was seeking a godly spirit. So guard yourself in your spirit and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

The view that *wekissa* corresponds to και καλυψει, *hamas* equivalent to ασεβεια 'wrongdoing', the garment is represented by ενθυμηματα, then *Ki* is taken here as a conditional αλλαεαν. This text (Septuagint) gives a clear understanding of the Masoretic text and the heartbeat of the prophets towards God's position on divorce. That is the act of disliking and consequent divorcing of wives, however, resulting in covering one's garment with wrongdoing which conveys God's disapproval.

You were united to your wife by the Lord, in God's wise plan, when you married; the two of you became one person in his sight. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. Therefore, guard your passion! Keep faith with the wife of your youth... you have wearied the Lord with your words. Wearied him? You ask in fake surprise. How have we wearied him? By saying that evil is good, that it pleases the Lord! Or by saying that God won't punish us... (Malachi 2:15 &17).

³⁷Orr, J. Entry for Divine in the Old Testament: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. Oxford: University Press, 2005.P.1915.

³⁸Davies, W. W. Divorce in the Old Testament. Chicago: University Press, 2013. PP. 67-75.

Conclusion

The paper therefore concluded that the above biblical verses that seem to affirm divorce were fashioned to make divorce harder to get; requiring that legal document be prepared in writing; probably involving the services of the magistrate, forbidding any return to the first marriage after another had been contracted and vehemently indicating God's displeasure in putting away wives. Even Jesus responded (Mathew19:8-9) that;

"Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard, but it was not this way from the beginning, I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery. " He must not have too many wives, lest his heart be turned away from the Lord" (Deuteronomy 17:17a).

Thus, this work therefore suggested some recommendations for a rejuvenation to reduce the high rate of divorce among Christians in Nigeria. Nigeria's government in corroboration with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), should re-enact a law that will reduce at least to a minimum rate of divorce in the context of Christianity. An abrogation should be given against divorce in Nigerian law courts than before; marriage committees should be set up in local society at the reach of everybody who would pay critical look into some factors aiding divorce and seek an amendment. Above all, biblical stipulations in Malachi 2:15-17 should not be limited to scriptural theories but must be observed and practicalized.

Bibliography

- Adams J.E. Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. (Grand RapidsMichigan: Baker Book House, 2001).
- Adeniran A. O. "Analytical study of the causal factors of Divorce in African Homes," Research in Humanities and Social Sciences5, no14(2015):18-29
- Amran S.Jewish law of Divorce according to the Bible *and* Talmud. (London: University Press, 2007).
- Amadi-Nche,C. and Esomu S. O. "An Exegetical Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21-33 in the Context of Christian Marriage in Nigeria," IRE Journals 5 no.1(2021):282-290
- Augustine C. "On the Good Marriage,"Christian Literature Publishing Co. 2007. Available at: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1309.htm>. Accessed on 5 April 2019.
- Besancon A. and Spencer W. Marriage at the Crossroads. (Intervarsity Press, 2009).
- Blankenhon D. Does Christianity Teach Male Headship? The equal- Regard Marriage and its Critics.(New York: University Press, 2017).
- Brown F. and Drive S. R. et al.Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).
- Christopher A. Marriage Sex in the Service of God.(England: Intervarsity Press, 2003),pp66-69.

- Christopher C. Women, Men, and Marriage. (London: Sheldon Press, 2005), pp40-45
- Christopher A. Marriage Sex in the Service of God.(England: Intervarsity Press, 2003),pp66-69.
- Christian E. B. "Women in the Bible: what can they teach us about Gender Equality?" In die Skriflig 5 no. 1 (2021):1-9.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v55i1.2754>
- Coleman P. Christian Attitudes to Marriage from Ancient Times to the Third Millennium. (SCM Press, 2004).
- Collins C. J. The Intelligible Masoretic Text of Malachi 2:16 or How does God feel about divorce? (Oxford: University Press, 2004).
- Edet U. Marriage and the Family among the Akwa Ibom People: Anthropological Perspectives.(Uyo: Impact Impression Enterprise, 2014).
- Erwin F. and Bromiley G. *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*.(Bril Academic Publishers, 2000),pp140-190.
- Eyo U. E."Divorce: Causes and Effects on Children," Asian Journal of Humanities and Social Studies 6 no. 5 (2018):174-177
Ibid.
- Davies W. W. Divorce in the Old Testament.(Chicago: University Press, 2013).
Ibid.
- Gesenius E. K. Hebrew Grammar.(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008),pp 66-69,
Henry Kha. The Reform of English Divorce Law: 1857-1937. (Unpublished PhDThesis, University of Queensland,2017), pp37-45. Available at:
https://escape.library.uq.edu.au/data/UQ_687113/s43628568_final_thesis.pdf
?
- Hoonack V. Wekissa as Introducing the Apodosis. (Wininoa Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008).
- Hunter D. G. Sexuality, Marriage and the Family. In Augustine C. and Frederick, W. N. The Cambridge History of Christianity: Constantine to C600.(Cambridge: University Press, 2007),pp585-600.
- Isidore S.et al.Marriage- The Jewish Encyclopedia. (New York: Funk and Wagnall, 2006).
- Janssen A.The Marriage Master Piece. (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale, 2001).
- Jones S. Malachi on Divorce. (Glazier: McDonald Press, 2005),p110.
- Joshua A. Before you Marry. (Ghana: Olive Publications, 2009).
- Laney C. J. The Divorce Myth. Minneapolis.(Minnesota: Bethany, 2001).
- Mackie O. Bible Manners, and Customs. (London: University Press, 2008).
- National Center for Health Statistics. Birth, Marriages, Divorce, and Death for 1992.
Monthly Vital Statistics Report 4,19 May,1993. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/v-nchs/data/mvsr>
- Olsen G. W. Progeny, Faithfulness, Sacred Bond: Marriage in the Age of Augustine in Christian Marriage.(Cambridge: University Press, 2007),pp 121-145.
Ibid., p109
Ibid., pp121-145.
- Orr J. Entry for Divine in the Old Testament: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia. (Oxford: University Press, 2005).
- Packer L. Women Making a Difference in Marriage. (Nashville Tennessee: Life way press, 2003).

Piper J. and Wayne G. Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism.(Oxford: Crossway Books, 2006).
Soenksen J. "Virginity as the true form of the Christian life,"Concordia Theological Journal 2 no.1 (2014): pp71-82.
Zar-Koivod M.and Mapaki O. Tere'Asar. (Jerusalem: MossadHaravkook, 2007).