

THEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF TRANSSEXUALITY: AN ANALYSIS OF PAULINE TEACHINGS ON GENDER AND IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SEVENTH - DAY ADVENTIST PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Human sexuality has undergone scientific changes, with transsexuality being a pressing issue in the western world and Africa (Nigeria). Scholars have debated transsexuality, with some finding it permissible and others rejecting it. However, none have focused on contemporary Nigeria Christians. This study explores the theological dimensions of transsexuality within Seventh-day Adventist Christian practices in Nigeria, examining liberal and conservative thoughts. It delves into biblical, moral and ethical considerations shaping the church's stance, highlighting tensions and convergence between perspectives. Using content analysis and thematic analysis, this qualitative study examines Pauline teachings in Galatians 3:28, published materials, and existing literature to uncover the theological interpretation of transsexuality within Christian teaching and practices. The study found that scholars held varied perspectives on transsexuality, in Pauline teachings of Galatians 3:28 with liberals viewing the Bible as narrative and accepting transsexuality, and conservatives adhering strictly to the Bible and opposing it. Pauline teachings in Galatians 3:28, emphasizes equality in Christ but did not endorse transsexuality. The Seventh-day Adventist Church acknowledged the value of all individuals but upheld God's design for sex and gender, considering transsexuality morally objectionable and contrary to God's creation. The study recommends the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Nigeria provide a safe space for open discussions and education on transsexuality, promote empathy and understanding and develop a compassionate and inclusive approach to ministering to individuals struggling with gender identity while upholding biblical teachings.

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Introduction

The intricate relationship between religion, gender, and sexuality has long been a subject of fascination and debate, with various religious traditions holding diverse beliefs and practices regarding gender and sexual identity. The Seventh-day Adventist Church's stance on transsexuality in Nigeria offers a critical case study for examining the interplay between religious beliefs, gender, and sexuality, and the ways in which these beliefs shape our understanding of human sexuality and gender identity. The theoretical perspective on human sexuality and gender identity informs our understanding of transsexuality as a term used to describe individuals who identify as a gender different from sex assigned at birth, is a social and cultural construct, shaped by historical, cultural, and religious factors. In Nigeria, the intersection of religion, gender, and sexuality is a contested terrain, with religious traditions often playing a significant role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender and sexual minorities. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its significant presence in Nigeria, has a profound influence on the country's religious and cultural landscape.

Furthermore, scholarly discussions on transsexuality have highlighted the need for a deeper insight of the ways in which religious beliefs and practices influence our understanding of gender and sexuality. Research has shown that religious beliefs and practices can have a profound impact on the lives of gender and sexual minorities, with some religious traditions offering acceptance and support, while others perpetuate discrimination and marginalization.

This study aims to contribute to the on-going conversation by examining the Seventh-day Adventist Church's stance on transsexuality in Nigeria, with a focus on the ways in which religious beliefs and practices shape our understanding of gender and sexuality. By exploring this complex relationship, this research seeks to shed light on the power dynamics at play in the construction of gender and sexual identities and to provide insights into the ways in which religious traditions shape our understanding of human sexuality and gender identity. Through a critical analysis of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's position on transsexuality, and the theological interpretation of Pauline teachings in Galatians 3:28, this study hopes to advance our understanding of the intricate relationship between religion, gender, and sexuality, and to contribute to the development of more inclusive and accepting religious and societal environment for gender and sexual minorities.

To delve into scholarly discussions on transsexuality, it is imperative to clarify key terms and examine the historical context.

Transsexuality: It is the state of being transsexual. It is a facet of the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender [Transsexuals] and Queer/Questioning) community which is receiving attention in Nigeria.¹ A transsexual is one who has changed or is in the process of changing his/her physical sex by undergoing medical treatment such as hormone replacement therapy (HRT) and/or sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Transsexuals believe they are trapped in a wrong body which is considered a psychological disorder.² While some view transsexuality as insignificant, others perceive it as significant concern posing a threat to established social and cultural norms. Primarily, transsexuality is part of transgenderism, which encompasses individuals whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.

Hirschfeld³ and Cauldwell⁴, a transsexual refers to the phenomenon of individuals who experience a mismatch between their biological sex and their gender identity, leading to a desire to transition to the opposite sex. While some transgender individuals desire anatomical changes to align with their self-perception, others do not. Sexual orientation does not necessarily correlate with transgender identity, as transgender individuals may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual. This category also includes individuals such as transvestites, drag queens/kings, and cross-dressers. While some find the term "transsexual" too clinical, it will be used throughout this study.

Gender/Sex: According to W.H.O,⁵ Gender refers to the socially constructed role, behaviours, and expectations associated with being male and female, while sex refers to the biological characteristics that define male and female. Also, Gender is a socio-cultural phenomenon that divides people into various categories such as 'male' and 'female', with each having associated dress, roles, stereotypes, etc can also be one's perception of realizing his or her state of being either a male or female, or what people perceive you to be. It emphasises the cultural view as it relates to the issue of sex. While sex has to do with the biological, anatomical and socio-cultural phenomenon that differentiate a 'male from a female' (verse visa).⁶

¹ Ami B. Kaplan, (2017) "Discussion of Mental Health Issues for Gender Variant and Transgender Individuals, Friends and Family with posts by NYC Psychotherapist, LCSW"

² Ibid (1)

³ Hirschfeld, M. (1923). *Die intersexuelle Varietäten des Geschlechts* [The intersexual variations of sex]. Scientific-Humanitarian Committee

⁴ Cauldwell, D. O. (1949). *Psychopathiatranssexualis*. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 109(5), 393-403

⁵ World Health Organization. (2018). *International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems* (11th ed.)

⁶ The definition for the terms below are from the official website of National Center of Transgender Equality, Accessed from <http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/transgender-terminology>

Transition: The time when a person begins to living as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often includes changing one's first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects⁷, including taking hormones, having surgery, or changing identity documents (e.g. driver's license, Social Security record) to reflect one's gender identity. Medical and legal steps are often difficult for people to afford.⁸

The Brief History of Transsexuality

Transgender people have existed since ancient times, with many societies having traditional third gender roles or otherwise accepting trans people in some form. In the early 20th century, the term "transsexual" was introduced by German psychiatrist Magnus Hirschfeld in 1923, who also supervised the first genital reassignment surgery (GRS) in 1930. David Oliver Cauldwell introduced the term "transsexualism" and "transsexual" to English in 1949 and 1950, while Harry Benjamin popularized the term in his 1966 book, describing transsexual people on a scale (later called the "Benjamin scale") of three levels of intensity.⁹

The 1970s saw the introduction of the terms "gender dysphoria" and "gender identity disorder," which were included in the DSM-III in 1980 and again in the DSM-III-R in 1987. Ron Langevin proposed and popularized the terms "androphilia" and "gynephilia" to describe a person's sexual orientation without reference to their gender identity. The term "transgender" was coined by John Oliven in 1965,¹⁰ and by the 1990s, "transsexual" had come to be considered a subset of the umbrella term "transgender."¹¹

In the 21st century, understanding of transsexual people has changed rapidly. Many 20th-century medical beliefs and practices around transsexual people are now considered outdated. Transsexual people were once classified as mentally ill and subject to extensive gatekeeping by the medical establishment, and remain so in much of the developing world. However, the ICD-11¹² has reclassified transsexualism as a sexual health condition, enabling healthcare systems to provide necessary care. The classification has also been renamed to "Gender incongruence of adolescence or adulthood" (HA60) and

⁷American Psychological Association. (2015). Transgender people and issues. Retrieved from

⁸ The definition for the terms below is from the official website of National Center of Transgender Equality, Accessed from <http://www.transequality.org/issues/resources/transgender-terminology>

⁹ Benjamin, H. (1966). The transsexual phenomenon. *Journal of Sex Research*, 2(1), 3-12.

¹⁰Oliven, J. F. (1965). *Sexual hygiene and pathology*. Lippincott.

¹¹Langevin, R. (1980). Sexual development and transsexualism. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 34(2), 241-253.

¹² ICD-11 is the eleventh revision of the international Classification of Diseases (ICD). It is a global standard for recording health information and causes of death, replacing ICD-10. It was adopted by the 72nd World Health Assembly in 2019 and came into effect on January 1, 2022.

"Gender incongruence of childhood" (HA61), reflecting a more nuanced understanding of gender identity.¹³

Coming to Africa-Nigeria, transsexuality and its practices has gradually become a trend. Take slightly for example, popular comedians who are cross-dressers such as; 'Oluwakaponeski' who disguises as the character "Mama Tobi", Steven Chuks acting multiple character like Cleopatra (a high-class exuberant woman). In America, Tyler Perry (A movie producer and director) in his movies plays the role of Medea (female). Also, Chibuike Josh Alfred popularly known as 'Josh2funny' on stage for the sake of humor, is becoming more accepted today among our youths in the society, coming to the media Industry, 'Adenrele Oluwafemi Edun' popularly known as 'Denrele', a putative media personality with a bold and fearless fashion sense, who have been questioned severally for often eccentric dressings (like a woman) and putting on very high heel shoes,¹⁴ or worse case like Nigerian internet celebrity and entrepreneur popularly known as Bobrisky (a transsexual), who did not only cross-dressed but went ahead in being the first alleged transsexual in Nigeria who resides in Lagos, received questioning on his personality after his claim to have changed his sex and gender.¹⁵

Transsexuality Arguments in Pauline Teachings of Galatians 3:28

In most recent times, especially with the feministic and liberal use of this text, Ekpendu¹⁶ posits that biblical scholars have argued over the right interpretation of the pericope: Gal. 3:28 (There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.)¹⁷ in context and its implication and application. On one hand liberal theologians use this text to 'prove' that the New Testament abolishes all gender-based distinctions and treat it as a 'control text' for interpreting other texts. On the other, conservatives argue that Gal. 3:28 states that race, status and gender do not provide any barriers to salvation, but this doesn't silence other Biblical passages that teach differences in responsibilities based on these distinctions.¹⁸ Modern egalitarian Interpretation claims that the text is a "The Magna Carta of

¹³Meyerowitz, J. (2002). *How sex changed: A history of transsexuality in the United States*. Harvard University Press.

¹⁴Adaku & Nwakanma, (2018). *The Nerve Africa: NIGERIA CROSS-DRESSING COMEDIANS PUSH SOCIAL BOUNDARIES ON THE INTERNET*. <https://thenerveafrica.com>

¹⁵*Ibid* (14)

¹⁶Ekpendu, I.C., & Ojieabu Stanley, O. (2017). *Transsexuality: An exegetical study of Galatians 3:28*. *Insight: Journal of Religious Studies*, 13(1), 46-55. ISSN 2141-0852. Babcock University.

¹⁷The Holy Bible (NIV)

¹⁸"A History of Interpretation of Galatians 3:28."

from: http://www.lionelwindsor.net/bibleresources/bible/new/Philp_Gal3'28_History_of_Interpretation.pdf,

Humanity.”¹⁹ The text (Gal. 3:28), supports gender equality in the society. Goothuis exemplifies this position in her statement: “...the clear teaching in Galatians 3:26-28 and elsewhere is that women and men relate to God (equality in being) and participate in the worship of God (equality in function) in the same way, with no difference in spiritual status or role.”²⁰ Those in this view has given first the presupposition of the pericope (Gal. 3:28), secondly, that the ‘one in Christ’ means ‘equality’ and lastly, that equality implies an inter-changeability of roles and responsibilities.

Different Patristic Interpretation²¹ has been given as well to the understanding of the text,²² but rather than commenting on the text directly, early church fathers inclined to use Gal. 3:28 within their argument on other topics, it is through this that their different interpretation of the text meaning can be dogged. Gregory (ca. 330-395) in *On Virginity* says that women have the same calling as men with regards to a spiritual union/marriage with Christ. He added that God making male and female ‘is a departure from the prototype’, Christ, in whom there is ‘neither male nor female’. He does not apply the passage to gender responsibilities within church or family life.²³ Augustine (ca. 354-430) believed Gal. 3:28 was a statement of one’s faith that has nothing to do with distinctions in this earthly life. It was talking about unity rather than equality. He further stated; “Difference of race or condition or sex is indeed taken away by the unity of faith, but it remains embedded in our mortal interactions, and in the journey of this life the apostles themselves teach that it is to be respected... For we observe in the unity of faith that there are no such distinctions. Yet within the orders of this life, they persist.”²⁴ Clement (ca. 155-220) alludes to it in *Exhortation to the Heathen* xi. he stated that the “whole of Christ is not divided” but is a ‘new man’ without any divisions. The key idea is transformation by the Holy Spirit, with the verse being applied to believers only.²⁵ Additionally, the Orthodox Church father gave their interpretation on Gal. 3:28 as Hopko concludes: “Now here in Orthodox Church history is Galatians 3:28 used as a “woman’s text” or as “the Magna Carta of humanity.” It is not applied to those outside the Church’s faith and life

¹⁹Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: “A study in sexual relationships from a theological point of view”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 142.

²⁰ Rebecca M. Groothuis, *Good News for Women: a Biblical Picture of Gender Equality* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1996), pp.25.

²¹ Patristic literature is a body of literature that comprises of the works, excluding the New Testament, written by Early Christians in the 8th century.

²² John N.D. Kelly, “*Early Christians Creeds*” Principal of St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, 1951; pp. 79

²³ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, pp. 20; <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/htm>

²⁴ Augustine, *Minge PL 35:2125*, cited in *Mark Edwards, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pp.51.

²⁵Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Heathen*, xi. from: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/.htm>

since it speaks specifically about baptized believers who have died in Christ.”²⁶ Looking at the views of the patristic fathers none made reference to social implication, that the removal of race, sex was not practical to earthly life. During the middle age, Aquina understood Gal. 3:28 as relating to faith in Christ. His interpretation was apparent in his *In Treatise on the Sacraments* he posits that unity in faith does not remove gender distinctions from every area of life. Also, In Article 4 on ‘Whether a Woman can Baptise’, he uses the pericope to say that she can, but then refers to other Pauline Epistles to show that there is still a male/female discrepancy that means ‘a woman should not baptise if a man be available for the purpose’²⁷

The reformers have their own interpretation to Gal.3:28. In 1519 commentary Luther support Augustine’s view and concluded that the interpretation there is about salvation and has nothing to do with social order,²⁸ however, his view changed in 1535 edition, his concept was ‘equality’ for ‘oneness’ although this equality has gender distinction, he categorically stated that Gal. 3:28 is equality only in the ‘sight of God’ ‘where all men are equal,’ he further said that if a woman wants to be a man, there will be confusion and disturbance of all stations and of everything. Luther concluded by plainly interpreting ‘one in Christ’ as referring to equality in relationship before God, and so how Christians ought to treat one another, without the removal of social distinctions.²⁹ Henry (1662-1714), focuses on the acceptance into salvation without distinction given by baptism, although he did not express any social implication within his interpretation, he said that those distinctions are still ‘enjoyed’ and they don’t impact a person’s acceptance into Christ. He stated: “*The law indeed made a difference between Jew and Greek. But it is not so now; they all stand on the same level, and are all one in Christ Jesus; as the one is not accepted on the account of any national or personal advantages he may enjoy above the other, so neither is the other rejected for the want of them; but all who sincerely believe on Christ, of what nation, or sex, or condition, so ever they be, are accepted of him ...*”³⁰

Calvin (1509-64) gave his understanding which to a certain extent categorical in its denial of an equality of function being implied in 3:28, he stated: ‘*Paul does not mean here that there are no differences of status with regard to the society of this world. For as we know, there are servants and masters, rulers and subjects; in the home, the husband is the*

²⁶ Thomas Hopko, ‘Galatians 3:28: an Orthodox interpretation’, St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly, 35/2-3 (1991), pp. 185.

²⁷ Thomas Aquinas, “*Treatise on the Sacraments*”, Summa Theological; from: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.toc.html>

²⁸ Luther, *Luther's works*, Vol. 27 (ed. Jaroslav Pelikan; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), pp. 281-354

²⁹ Ibid (356)

³⁰ Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible Volume VI (Acts to Revelation) pp. 1706-1721, from: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/henry/mhc6.Gal.iv.html>

*head, and the wife must be in subjection. We know this economy to be inviolable, and that our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into this world to confuse everything by overturning what God the Father had established.*³¹

However, Anti-slavery campaigners struggled often to find Biblical support for their case through a plain reading of Scriptures, and so, they, such as Catherine, David and other adopted, a new hermeneutics from the era, e.g employing an absolute principle such as 'equality of all humanity' and the idea of a 'seed growing secretly'.³² While few saw Gal. 3:28 as comprehensive equality and not just religious equality. Abolitionists often joined forces with the women's franchise movement of the (19th century) era and both employed Gal. 3:28 with these hermeneutics for their defences.³³

Coming to the 20th century, a scholar named Stott, interprets his view as he picked up the egalitarian argument, however, he said 'A word of caution must be added: "This great statement of Gal. 3:28 does not mean that racial, social and sexual distinctions have been annihilated. When we say that Christ has abolished these distinctions, we mean not that they do not exist, but that they do not matter. They are still there, but they no longer create any barriers to fellowship."³⁴ Modern feminist gave their own view, as this is clearly validated more through Fiorenza's work *'In Memory of Her'*. She quotes:

'Sexual dimorphism and strictly defined gender roles are products of a patriarchal culture, which maintain and legitimise structures of control and domination – the exploitation of women by men. Gal. 3:28 not only advocates the abolition of religious-cultural divisions and of the domination and exploitation wrought by institutional slavery but also of domination based on sexual divisions. It repeats with different categories and words that within the Christian community no structures of dominance can be tolerated. Gal. 3:28 is therefore best understood as a communal self-definition rather than a statement about the baptized individual.'³⁵

In addition, feminist readings of the text have stressed the ethic of "a discipleship of equals" in the church.³⁶ For example, Carolyn Osiek offers five possible interpretations³⁷

³¹ John Calvin, *Sermons on the Galatians* (trans. Kathy Childress; Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1997), pp. 352.

³² Caroline Shanks, 'The Biblical Anti-Slavery Argument of the Decade 1830-1840', *The Journal of Negro History* 16/2 (Apr. 1931). Or Mark Noll, *'The Civil War as a theological crisis'* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), pp. 31-50.

³³ J. Albert Harrill, *'The Use of the New Testament in the American Slave Controversy: A Case History in the Hermeneutical Tension between Biblical Criticism and Christian Moral Debate'*, *Religion and American Culture* 10/2 (2000), pp. 154.

³⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians*. (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), pp. 100.

³⁵ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins* (London: SCM, 1995).

³⁶ Susan Frank Parsons, *The Ethics of Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 28.

and again notes the close link between this passage and Genesis 1:27-28. The verse may, she suggests, be; (1) An emancipation proclamation ahead of its time,(2) A formula used in the baptism of new Christians (echoing Genesis 1:27-28 and implying that the saving grace of baptism overcomes the division in creation inherent in the gendered split between male rationality and female sensation,³⁸ (3) A reference to the order of creation, but not the order of the fall,(4) The time of salvation anticipated in the present (this seems to be her preferred reading), and; (5) A glimpse of the still-distant future. None of these positions denies or subverts the present reality of gendered identity, or suggests that it is normally anything but bi-polar. Betz says that according to Gal. 3:26-29, the issue here, specifically, the formula, in vs. 28, should be seen in a religious sense and not national sense, he believes that in the Christian setting, religious, emotional, social, distinction between the Jews and the Greeks are abolished.³⁹

An African scholar, Bernard bases his plea for a truly distinctive African theology on Paul's distinction between "Jew" and "Greek" in Galatians 3:28 he quotes:

.....The Pauline vision of "neither Jew nor Greek" can prove a veritable scriptural cum theological guide for African theologians in their attempt to chisel out (even amidst conflict and controversy with a dominant culture or dominant view of being a church) a self-understanding of the Church for their own people that is truly Christian, while at the same time respecting the peculiarities and particularities of their ethnic and cultural specificities.⁴⁰

Gloria posits that Paul was in a way speaking to the society at large not just those in the religious circle. That irrespective of who you are, what you have become, what you wish to become in Christ, 'we are all one,' she further explains, If Paul were writing today, I believe he would expand those social dividing lines. He would tell us that there is no longer rich or poor, Muslim or Jew, Caucasian or Latino, citizen or immigrant, straight or gay. We are all one, for we are all beloved sons and daughters of our Father, God.⁴¹

A school of thought propose base on her understanding on the issue, that If one wants to know who is eligible to be "in Christ," (Gal 3:28) that will be relevant to the debate; but if one wants to know about gender roles and responsibilities, one should go to epistles that

³⁷Carolyn Osiek, 'Galatians', in Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (eds), *The Women's Bible Commentary* (London SPCK, 1992), pp. 333-337.

³⁸Ibid, (335).

³⁹ Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia*; Published in Hermeneia, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1979, p. 191.

⁴⁰Bernard O. Ukwuegbu, "*Neither Jew nor Greek*". The church in Africa and the quest for self-understanding in the light of the Pauline vision and today's context of cultural pluralism. 'International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church' (2008), pp. 305-318. Cited in: Francois D. Tolmie "Tendencies in the Interpretation of Galatians 3:28pdf" (2014), pp. 16.

⁴¹Deo Gloria, "*Fifth Sunday after Pentecost*" June 19, 2016.

have a context on that subject, including 1 Corinthians (11:1–16; 14:34–35), Ephesians (5:21–33), Colossians (3:18–19), 1 Timothy (2:8–15), Titus (2:1–8), and 1 Peter (3:1–7). Galatians 3:28 is also not “a ‘window’ text through which to assess and adjudicate other Pauline texts.” Our clause, the verse, the pericope, neither the chapter nor the book of Galatians addresses gender roles.⁴² Meanwhile, another school of thought implies that ‘creating safe and inclusive congregations for people who are LGB-Transsexuals embodies Jesus’ message that we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:28). Pondering on this position, is that what the pericope is really all about? They strongly believe that, if this can be effectively enhanced, then such communities create transformational and, in many cases, Life-saving experiences.⁴³ Due to the fiery arguments among scholars specifically on the social implication on the text (Gal. 3:28), Schreiner postulated: ‘we must read the rest of what Paul says to explain accurately what these social implications are.’ Gal. 3:28 cannot be used in isolation for this purpose, nor can it be used to silence texts that do deal specifically with male/female relationships.⁴⁴ Having understood the diverse arguments on transsexuality, it is important to draw a conclusion of its justification or not in context of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and perspective to modern Christians in Nigeria.

The Moral Lens of Transsexuality to Contemporary Christians in Nigeria

Understanding the diverse arguments on transsexuality, it is important to draw a conclusion in context of the Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and perspective to modern Christians in Nigeria. Few years back, the Theological Seminary at Andrews University sagaciously noted, that gays not excluding in total, the Lesbians, Bisexuals-Transsexuals crisis has come to the church. Some claim that ‘Transgender/Transsexuality is not sinful; it is natural to one’s self, (God made me this way), they believe God accept them the way they are, and so the church community should do the same and propagate nothing wrong with it, unfortunately ministers are not excluded.⁴⁵ Crept into Nigeria, Christian transsexual/gender such as Bobrisky (taking the lead), ‘Oluwakaponeski’ who disguises as the character “Mama Tobi”, Steven Chuks acting multiple character like Cleopatra (a high

⁴² The Journal for Biblical Manhood & Womanhood Jbmw, Spring 2010 • Volume xv • Issue 1, Articles by Wayne Walden; “Galatians 3:28: Grammar, Text, Context, and Translation.pdf”

⁴³ Human Right Campaign Foundation: A CHRISTAIN CONVERSATION GUIDE “*Creating Safe And Inclusive Spaces For People Who Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender*” : ‘PEOPLE OF FAITH WHO ARE LGBT’ (2014), p. 9, from: www.hrc.org/religion

The Christian guide was created by the Religion & Faith Program & Project One America at the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) to support Christians in building safe and inclusive faith communities for all God’s children including people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT).

⁴⁴ Thomas Schreiner, ‘Women in ministry’, in *Two Views on Women in Ministry* eds. Beck and Blomberg; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), pp.187

⁴⁵ <http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statement/statements/article/go/-/LGBT/>

class exuberant woman), ‘Adenrele Oluwafemi Edun’ popularly known as ‘Denrele’, (a putative media personality), Stephanie Rose, Miss Sahhara, Noni Salma, Rizi Xavier Timane, Mandy la Candy, etc have given a platform for trans-gender/sex practices.

However, Seventh-day Adventist in Nigeria and worldwide strongly believes and upholds “The scripture (sola scriptura) as the defining norm for morality which is also the authoritative norm for Christian life and teachings, as seen in the following; First, the scripture condemns all form of sexual immorality, whether transgender or Transsexual. After all, in Deuteronomy 22:5, God says he detests anyone who transgend, which indicate God is against men or women reversing on want to reverse their sexual roles, including changing the sex organs (Transsexuality), here it is not just the clothing style, but using the style to act out different sex role, as facetious it may sound, the effect of transsexuality (LGBTQ) can precipitate the salvific nature of Christianity. Secondly, in Genesis 1:27-28, 31; 2:22-24; 5:2, Matthew 19:4, and Mark 10:6a the bible mentions that in his image he created us Male and Female (biological sex), as Jesus Christ reaffirms the facts (Matt. 19:4), this means God created humanity as two persons male and female and the bible inseparably ties gender to biological sex and does not make any distinction between the two. The bible affirms that man is psychosomatic unity as the bible calls the entire human being a soul (Gen. 2:7; Jer. 13:17; 52:28-30; Ezek. 18:4; Acts 2:41; 1 Cor. 15:45), a body (Eph. 5:28; Rom. 12:1-2; Rev. 18:13), flesh (1 Pet. 1:24), and spirit (2 Tim. 4:22; 1 John 4:1-3), this means the scripture do not approve dualism in the sense of a separation between one’s body and one’s sense of sexuality. Humans are meant to have an undivided sexual entity and sexual identity; they cannot be independent from one’s body, therefore, the bible approves that our gender identity as ordained and designed by God is determined by our biological sex right from birth (Gen. 1:27; 5:1-2; Ps. 139:13-14; Mrk. 10:6).⁴⁶

God, a divine and flawless being does not make mistake, so it is morally erroneous for one to say or claim that he/she is born in a wrong or trapped in the body, this is as making God a liar, even when he says ‘in his image, he created male and female’ and in verse 31, he called it perfect.⁴⁷

Therefore, transsexuality is a total disrespectful, disloyal, rebellious, a denier of the Supreme Being and his sovereignty and an aberration to the perfectness of God’s creation.

Additionally, Transsexuality goes contrary to nature (Para physic) and it is abnormal. The abnormal practices completely go against all nature has given them, and shows us clearly

⁴⁶Seventh-day Adventist World Church vote statement on Transgender, annual meeting, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States ANN, April 11, 2017

⁴⁷ <http://www.debate.org/opinion/is-transgender-morally-wrong>

what two sex/gender is there, with no mistakes God purposefully ordained sex (one's masculinity/ femininity), after all I Cor. 3:16-17 clarifies that our body is the temple of the lord (we do not own ourselves) and God will destroy anyone who defile his/her body, God's temple. Also, it is not completely possible to totally eradicate one's anatomical ordained sex, and so when Transsexuality is carried out, and eventually the trans marries, it is an 'advance way' of practicing homosexuality and lesbianism, which is biblically wrong and a sin (1Tim. 1:10, 1Cor. 6:9-10, Lev. 18:22, Rom. 1:26-27). 1Cor. 6:18-20, 'warns against sinning sexually with your own body' modern Christians in Nigeria must learn to honour God with their body. (1982)

On this establishment of scriptures, transsexuality is morally unacceptable. Transsexuality is sinful (like adultery, murder, stealing,) and evil (like sick and death). Transsexuality disposition does not excuse the sin of Transsexuality, one may be tempted to act upon besetting feelings (psychological dysphoria) or desires to trans (M/F, F/M), if carryout it is morally wrong.

Hence, the Adventist Church in general upholds the traditional and conservative interpretation of the divine authority and unchanging standard of the Christian Bible. For it encapsulates all subject of human essence. In other words, the SDA (Seventh-day Adventist) Church theological position remains "conservative." This explains why in "a Christian response to transsexuality", the Adventist Biblical Research Ethics Committee released statements on transgenderism where it was positioned that issues of transsexuality "are not merely clinical, but involve human beings who are experiencing deep emotional distress as they try to grapple with their personal gender identity. These people need our love, prayers, support, and guidance." Thus, the SDA Church's position gives prominence to the divine order of God's creational design above any natural explanations, concerns, indulgences and vacuum the transsexuality phenomenon may appear to create.⁴⁸

Conclusion

Transsexuality has taken a cardinal discuss among Christians in Nigeria and the world at large. Diverse arguments on transsexuality acceptance and practices have become a major trend among Christian biblical scholars. These intense scholastic arguments can be grouped into two broad spectrums; the liberals which see the Bible as just a collection of narratives that explains and epitomizes the essence and significance of Christian understanding, hence the acceptance of transsexuality and its practices and the

⁴⁸"BRIethicsCommitteeReleasesStatementsonTransgenderism",October2014,
https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/BRI_Ethics_Committee_Releases_Statements_on_Transgenderism.pdf;

conservatives which believes and stand in the authoritative word of God, The Bible, which are against transsexuality and claim that there is no justification for it. The conservatives believe that biblical facts attest to sex/gender unique distinctiveness. Also, examining Paul's teachings in Galatians 3:28 from a broader and immediate context does not prop freedom or permission or encourage transsexuality or any of its kinds, neither does it insinuate the obliteration of gender/sex role in the church or society rather, there is equality and equity irrespective of your colour, race, sex/gender, personality/status, etc as long salvation in Christ is concern, 'we are all one in Christ Jesus. Therefore, it will be wrong to be involved in any such of immorality as the bible say; "our body is the temple of God. If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17). However, the Seventh-day Adventist church recognizes that every human being is treasured in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus.

Also, the SDA in Nigeria, believe that through the grace of God, individuals will be encouraged to live in concord with the standards and principles of God. Moreover, Seventh-day Adventist church believes that the ordination of one's sex should be honored within the confines of what God had made it to be, knowing fully well that this was designed and established by God at creation, for the scripture declares, "so God created man in His own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female, he created them." (Gen. 1:27), and when he was done, He concluded by calling it flawless, (Gen. 1:31 KJV). All through the scriptures, keeping to one's sex is affirmed, (Matt. 19:4). The bible makes no accommodation for transsexuality, homosexuality and any of it forms/kinds. Hence, transsexuality is quite disadvantageous to the person irrespective of whatever level of satisfaction. It can lead to physical and spiritual death. Morally, God detest the practices of transsexuality (it is a sin) and at the same time it is an aberration to the acknowledgement of God's perfection to his creation.

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