

Subpoenaing Luther on Questions of Polygyny: Academic Documents for Delimiting Proxy Rejoinder via Biblical Theology Curriculum in Africa

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Abstract

The study discussed debatable questions of Martin Luther's support to polygyny, which are considered perennial enough to warrant a rejoinder of curricular relevance to Biblical Christianity and theology from a contemporary African perspective. Accordingly, the study proposed that the curriculum of Biblical theology is a tool for deliberating on Luther's stand in support of polygyny. Also encapsulated in this proposition is that the curriculum of Biblical theology is consequential to building a parameter for addressing questions of polygyny in African Christianity. The study pursued two purposes. Purpose 1: to consider the ways through which a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny can be delimited in the curricular documents of Biblical theology for students in Africa. Purpose 2: to deliberate on how a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny can be delimited in pedagogy towards facilitating the curriculum of Biblical theology by teachers in Africa. The study was facilitated by the qualitative research methodology, via which primary historical documents were examined primarily using the documentary analytical method. A key conclusion of the study is that, the abundance of evidences in Scripture in favor of both monogamy and polygyny makes opposing either monogamy or polygyny as an exercise against Biblical revelation in its various stages of unfolding. A fundamental recommendation from the study is that Christians gifted in various areas of pastoral and pulpit ministries who, because they are linked to polygyny, are deprived of opportunities to serve in the current formal church systems, need to start thinking, strategizing, working, and leading all who need to identify with a movement of the Holy Spirit, towards establishing more polygyny-compliant churches at both local and denominational levels, or more actively participate in such churches so that they would become more solidified.

Keywords: Subpoena, Polygamy, Polygyny, Bigamy, Monogamy, Biblical Theology, Curriculum.

Introduction

This study focuses on discussing the pedagogical and curricular documents relevant to delimiting a response to questions on Martin Luther's support to polygyny. These questions are considered perennial enough to warrant a rejoinder of curricular relevance to Biblical Christianity and theology from a contemporary African perspective. The study is positioned on the historical grounds for a contemporaneous subpoena to Luther on perennial questions of polygyny, upon which a proxy rejoinder can be delimited for treatment via the

curriculum of Biblical theology in Africa. Standing on these grounds, the study also demonstrates consciousness of the contemporaneous submissions of the church in Africa against polygyny, upon which a proxy rejoinder on behalf of Luther can be delimited for treatment via the curriculum of Biblical theology in Africa.

Statement of the Problem

This study seeks to address the question of polygyny in the African church from Luther's point of prominence in Christian history, in view of the fact that many contemporary African churches in general, but theological schools in particular, simply ignore this history in dealing with the question in the process of pedagogy or in curriculum delivery. Many curricular documents and works of scholarship in traditional theological seminaries in Africa simply re-echo the biases of the West or colonial constructs against polygyny, consequent upon which discussing polygyny as a significant curricular issue is not even considered or flatly dismissed! There is a need to provide an alternative academic view to the question of polygyny in Christian history, as well as in the curricular packaging of theological studies in Africa, which is a research gap that this study desires to bridge, by locating itself where Luther's participation in addressing the question could be researched. A way of differentiating between Western cultural redefinition of marriage as monogamy-only and African pre-westernization understanding of marriage as both monogamy and polygyny, can be charted via relevant curricular documents. This can be done while also reverting back to Christian history, particularly major players in the history, such as Luther. Thus, in reverting to Luther's part of the history, this study seeks to consider academic documents for delimiting boundaries for addressing contemporaneous submissions against polygyny from the 21st century church in Africa.

Objectives of the Study

The study pursued two purposes. Firstly, the study considered ways through which a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny could be delimited in the curricular documents of Biblical theology for students in Africa. Secondly, the study also deliberated on how a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny could be delimited in pedagogy towards facilitating the curriculum of Biblical theology by teachers in Africa.

Historical Background on Luther's Support for Polygyny

The study proceeds with a robust consciousness of Faulkner's "Luther and the Bigamous Marriage of Philip of Hesse" to address the question as to whether or not Luther, (whose marriage was monogamous) in fact, supported polygyny (Faulkner, 1913:206-231). Obviously, Luther gave a qualified support to polygyny; this support was attached either unclear or out-rightly contradictory caveats. Luther recommended these caveats (summarized in this study by seven points) to a Christian before getting involved in polygyny. Firstly, the Christian must have a divine permission or word of God specifically to himself, which made it certain for him to have a second wife, just as the Patriarchs did.

Secondly, polygyny was allowed in exceptional circumstances, such as when a wife was afflicted, health-wise, in a manner that she could not fulfill her marital duties. However, an exceptional circumstance should be considered with the advice of a Christian clergy. Thirdly, a Christian ruler in a successional system of monarchical rule could have a second wife, for the good of the land, if there was no offspring from the first wife to inherit the throne. Fourthly, polygyny was not entirely prohibited by divine law, as it was permitted in the Law of Moses, and also not prohibited in the New Testament. Fifthly, polygyny was allowable when acting otherwise could compel an already-married man to be either involved in adultery or keep on living in it. Sixthly, when polygyny becomes unavoidable, it should be done in the strictest of secrecy, so as to avoid any scandalous repercussions. Seventhly, Luther acknowledged that he lacked the capacity to address every case of polygyny that concerned Christians.

Summary of Submissions from the Church in Africa against Polygyny

This is a seventeen-point general summary of the various submissions against polygyny from churches and Christians across Africa. These submissions reflect the oppositional points against polygyny in experiencing Christianity from the European cultural perspective, in the time of Luther, as well as in the contemporary African debates. Comprehensive details on these submissions are found in the already mentioned related study available via African Journal of Religious and Theological Studies.

Submission 1: Polygyny Lacks Original Basis. This submission holds that God originally brought about monogamous marriage (Adam and Eve), and not polygynous marriage (Genesis 2:24). Therefore, Polygyny lacks original basis.

Submission 2: Polygyny Lacks Ideal Basis. This submission posits that God established monogamy as the superlative, or even unique, model of marriage on a one-man-one-wife mandate. However, even many African Christian men who staunchly cling to this submission, do so if all goes well for them in the marriage especially it produces children (particularly male children, in some cases); otherwise, they resort to polygyny.

Submission 3: Polygyny Lacks Classified Basis. The basic element of this submission is that Polygyny contrasts with God's original "*intent*" that marriage should be between one man and one woman. Many adherents of this position appear to assume only they (and they alone) can ascertain with finality what God's intends, while the "*intent*" remains classified or secret to others.

Submission 4: Polygyny Lacks Moral Basis. This submission views polygyny as amounting to adultery. However, in African culture, polygyny is never equated with adultery, stealing or coveting someone else's wife, or ethically deficient.

Submission 5: Polygyny Lacks Pastoral Basis. The thrust of this submission is that the Bible supports that an overseer in the church may be a husband of only one wife (1 Timothy 3:2). It is also claimed that none of the New Testament apostles was married to more than one wife, as if discussing the apostles' family life was also a purpose of the New Testament narratives or epistles.

Submission 6: Polygyny Lacks Mathematical Basis. This submission holds that God made just one wife (Eve) for the first man (Adam) from one of the ribs of the man. God also used just one rib from Adam, not two or more ribs (Genesis 2:21-23).

Submission 7: Polygyny Lacks Ecclesiological Basis. The weight of this submission depends on the practices of some Christian denominations and churches in Africa, where polygynists are not baptized or allowed to partake in the sacraments. Some churches also do not extend full membership to polygynists.

Submission 8: Polygyny Lacks Doctrinal Basis. Promoters of this submission simply dismiss any support for it as "liberal" theology. Advocates of polygyny are also named as false teachers or fake apostles.

Submission 9: Polygyny Lacks Community Basis. This submission holds that organized Christian communities (example: church denominations) do not recognize polygyny. However, monogamy is acknowledged. It is therefore submitted that polygyny lacks community basis.

Submission 10: Polygyny Lacks Pragmatic Basis. This submission quickly points that polygamous marriages are full of problems between children of different mothers, between wives, and so forth. However, those opposed to polygyny (blinded by a desire to promote monogamy over and/or against Polygyny), basically refuse to examine numerous Biblical passages that also give account of equal or even heftier problems in monogamous marriages.

Submission 11: Polygyny Lacks Pre-Tainted Basis. This submission views polygyny as a byproduct of sin. Specifically, before marriage was tainted by sin, it was monogamous; polygyny was introduced after marriage was tainted by sin.

Submission 12: Polygyny Lacks Enlightened Basis. This submission considers polygyny to be a practice of people in primitive societies. Conversely, it should be acceptable to people in the modern knowledge-based world.

Submission 13: Polygyny Lacks Pedagogical Basis. The submission holds that while polygyny is clearly in the Bible, however, it is not the teaching of Scripture. Therefore, endorsing polygyny would be fundamentally irreconcilable with the teaching of Christianity.

Submission 14: Polygyny Lacks Sociological Basis. It is considered that polygyny takes away dignity and autonomy from women. As such, this submission views polygyny as violating the principles of an egalitarian society.

Submission 15: Polygyny Lacks Democratic Basis. Advocates of this position try to democratize theology to support monogamy over and against polygyny. These advocates hold that even majority of African women theologians across the majority of Christian denominations in Africa are opposed to polygyny.

Submission 16: Polygyny Lacks Legal Basis. This submission holds that majority of countries and civic authorities do not recognize polygyny. Many countries in Africa (majority of which were under one form of European imperialism or the other) have in-fact made it (legally redefined as "bigamy") a punishable offence. Therefore, accepting polygyny is said to be pointless, since the civic authorities are opposed to it.

Submission 17: Polygyny Lacks Historical Basis. This submission holds that a precedent of rejecting polygyny has already been established in the history of Christianity. It is, therefore, futile to attempt to “reinvent the wheel” since history cannot be reversed.

Towards Delimiting Proxy Rejoinder on Questions of Polygyny

Some denominational and non-denominational sections of the African church today generally or tightly hold to a monogamy-only presupposition as their official position, which is also their official refusal of polygyny, in disagreement with Luther’s support for polygyny. In the context of this refusal, contemporaneous questions are being raised consequent upon established submissions of the African church in its current location in Christian history, which necessitate a subpoena to Luther demanding him to respond either directly (in this case, if such a response could be accessed or deducted from his writings) or from those who wish to stand proxy for Luther in the 21st century.

This means, Luther, after having been tried by the papal court in Europe in 1521, is still standing trial, this time in 21st century Africa. As it is currently, there is an abundance of Christians, even African Christians where polygyny has been part of the culture, from various categories (irrespective of denominations, professions, gender, educational attainment, socio-economic status, doctrinal traditions, etc.,) who would be quite willing, either as other-appointed or self-appointed judges, to condemn Luther’s position on polygyny, even without hearing from him! However, there are Christians on the other side of the divide who would also stand proxy for Luther, in defending his support for polygyny. This study, although not a defense or support for Luther, is developed to regulate the process of making such a defense, for those standing in proxy capacity for Luther. Hence the title, “Subpoenaing Luther on Questions of Polygyny: Academic Documents for Delimiting Proxy Rejoinder via Biblical Theology Curriculum in Africa”.

Significance of the Study. On a general level, this study is beneficially to Christian monogamists, polygamists, single-ladies, and Christians who practice every-day theology in their daily experiences. But specifically, the study is presented as a scholarly document for the benefit of three categories of major stakeholders listed below.

Firstly: Theological Educators

The term “theological educators” is used here to refer to theological seminaries, Bible and clergy training schools, faculties of theology and/or department of religious studies in universities, teachers of the aforesaid education agencies, and participants in curriculum theorizing, designing, construction, and development for theological education. At a general level, there is too much emphasis in favor of monogamy in the Christian home and marriage curriculum of theological seminaries in Africa, although both monogamy and polygyny are culturally and biblically defensible in Africa. However, many curriculum designers and teachers as curriculum implementers, already have a preconceived idea, encapsulated in Biblical terminology, that polygyny is unbiblical; hence, the one-sided teaching approach on marriage-related teaching. This study will call the attention of theological seminaries, universities concerned, and pastoral training institutions in Africa,

to consider revising their curricula and pedagogical strategies in a manner that allows equally or impartially presenting and emphasizing the polygynous side of marriage in curriculum delivery processes, thereby giving a more equilibrated outlook to the learner.

Secondly: Pastoral Ministry Participants

There three categories of pastoral ministry participants targeted by this study. Firstly, there are those already working as pastors who voluntarily or forcefully resigned from formal employments in churches because, along the way, they became polygamists while serving as employees of churches that disagree with polygyny. There are also some in this category who voluntarily resigned from formal pastoral services in the churches concerned because they intended to take an additional woman as a wife. Secondly, there are evidences from some churches, particularly in the African Initiated Church tradition (also known as African Independent Churches), whose previous and/or current official policies or unwritten practices (here and there), allow polygynists to be pastors. In any case, it has never been a secret that "some of the African Independent Churches, accommodate polygamists and allow them full and active participation in the life of the church" (Baloyi, 2013:2). Thirdly, there are Christians who have been empowered with the spiritual gift of pastoring, but who see the door of formal pastoral services as closed to them. In any case, they would not be accepted to pastoral training schools for them to earn the formal qualifications required for employment in those church denominations where polygynists are not recognized in pastoral ministries. This study will motivate the emergence and/or consolidation of an inclusive perspective for enriching the pastoral calling with all kinds of gifts, talents, skills, and experiences from people, whether monogamists or polygamists, who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit for various works of ministry. Irrespective of their marital status (whether subscribed to monogamy or polygamy), this study will benefit men and women called and empowered by the Holy Spirit for pastoral and pulpit ministries, with support to become more solidified in their call regardless of the religious cages built by church systems and policies that relegate people to the background because of their marital statuses.

Thirdly: Church Policy-Makers

Even in church denominations where polygyny is not recognized, they have local assemblies that were started or planted with only polygynists (or an overwhelming majority being polygynists) as members and leaders. Yet, after the churches have grown in size the polygynists are not just relegated to the background, but are roundly condemned with terminologies worthy of being directed only at unbelievers in Christ. If this is not hypocrisy from the church, what else is? Another form of hypocrisy, which is more prevalent in Western societies, is to grant official recognition to same-sex marriages while denying recognition to polygyny. This study will encourage the church to develop policies aimed at giving all Christians (monogamists and those linked to polygyny) a real sense of belonging.

Scope of the Study

This study is subject to a four-point delimitation. Further details are given below.

First, the focus of this study is not on monogamy, although it will be mentioned severally in the process in order to better communicate or clarify points. The overriding concentration of this study is on polygyny. However, the validity of both monogamy and polygamy in the Biblical canon is acknowledged by this study, and neither is condemned.

Second, the study attaches itself almost exclusively to the ideas of Martin Luther, the legendary protestant reformer. Consequently, the study was not preoccupied with other reformers of the time of Luther or other periods in the history of Christianity.

Third, this study is not concerned with the interconnections of polygamy with polyandry or polygynandry (Zeitzen, 2008:11-12). In cultures where it is possible for a woman to be married to be more than one husband, the marriage is called *polyandry*; in this case, a woman can be either married to a group of the same brothers (which is fraternal polyandry) or unrelated males (which is non-fraternal polyandry). Also there are a number of researches that consider a woman who remarries after the demise of her husband or after divorce as being involved in consecutive polyandry, the study is also not concerned with this. *Polygynandry* comes from a combination of "polygyny" and "polyandry" to mean group marriage in which several men and women consider themselves married to all other members of the group, which also gives them sexual access to one another.

Fourth, this study does not intend, primarily, to give answers to questions of polygyny surrounding Luther or other questionnaires on polygyny. This also means there is no intend by the study to actively participate in the debate as to the acceptance or rejection of polygyny in African Christianity. Accordingly, the study principally focuses on setting parameters for the debate for participants supporting it using perspectives from Luther; specifically, the study engages the curriculum of Biblical theology in Africa towards delimiting proxy rejoinder for such a debate. However, while this study is not designed to debate issues of polygamy, there is an ongoing work by the researcher aimed at participating in the debate via a book, proposed as "The Trials of Polygamy in Christianity: A Logical Cross-Examination towards Consolidating Biblical Theology from an Africa Curricular Perspective", and a monograph, proposed as "Cross-Examining Questions of Polygyny in the Curriculum of Christian History: from Jerusalem to Africa via Chalcedon", to be published at a future date.

Limitations of Study

There is an abundance of well-publicized scholarly studies either against or in support of polygyny in Christianity from various Christian denominational, modern Christian missionary movement, western, Islamic, Biblical, and African perspectives. What is generally lacking is a study on polygyny in history of Christianity, especially with due reference to the patristic period, protestant reformation period, and other critical periods of Christian history. This study is designed to be a valuable contribution towards bridging gaps of absence of relevant literature related to these periods. Accordingly, Luther is

engaged in the study, with an aim of providing an angle of history of Christianity on polygyny, thereby providing what is lacking in evaluating the practice on the platform of Biblical Christianity from an African perspective.

Proposition of Study

This study proposes that the curriculum of Biblical theology is a tool for deliberating on Luther's stand in support of polygyny. Accordingly, it is also encapsulated in this proposition that the curriculum of Biblical theology is consequential to building a parameter for evaluating and addressing contemporary questions of polygyny in African Christianity.

Methodology of Study

The study is facilitated by the qualitative research methodology, as narrowed down to examination of primary documents. Firstly, primary historical sources (such as original documents, eye-witness accounts as reported in literature), were engaged to generate data. Secondly, these sources were examined chiefly via the documentary analytical method, but (where necessary) supported by "Historical Theology as a Critical Tool". This method of examination was designed to help interrogate questions and ideas on polygyny that emerged or were discussed under definite historical circumstances, in this case the time of Luther and its lessons for contemporary times in Africa. Thirdly, an allowance is made within the qualitative research methodology for the textbook component of documentary research to be incorporated in the study. In view of their capacity to present well-established data, project prescribed information, project accepted standards and beliefs, while also serving as gatekeepers of knowledge, (McCulloch, 2004:67). Accordingly, data in line with the textbook component was generated from one of the major resources engaged by the researcher in facilitating the Master of Arts course "BST 612 Biblical Theology" at ECWA Theological Seminary Kagoro (Nigeria), with the name "Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice." The title of this resource was retained in this research, while gleanings to develop the framework in this study were made from this and other resources.

While this study uses the qualitative approach, it also largely distances itself from providing categorical responses to debatable items encapsulated in the polygyny question. Distancing is necessary for the purpose of allowing the use of both structured and unstructured data-gathering tools, (triangulated with primary documents on polygyny from history of Christianity in times such as Luther's) in propelling the debate forward by all sides and participants. In this way, any potential bias and weaknesses in this current study shall be neutralized, while areas of strength become more consolidated, as the debate progresses.

Clarification of Key Terms

This study defines five operational terms towards providing a better working guide to comprehending the discussion. These are: Subpoena, Polygamy, Polygyny, Bigamy, Monogamy, Biblical Theology, and Curriculum.

Subpoena. This engages several perspectives of the term “subpoena” in one of the most authoritative legal dictionaries, Black’s Law Dictionary (Garner, 2009:1563). Accordingly, a subpoena is “a writ or order commanding a person to appear before a court or other tribunal, subject to a penalty for failing to comply.” For Luther, this subpoena can hardly be considered as a “friendly subpoena”; by description, a friendly subpoena is “a subpoena issued to a person or entity that is willing to testify or produce documents, but only if legally required to do so. The subpoena may protect the information provider from retaliation from others because the provider is required to comply.” In many cases, what obtains is that any attempt to discuss polygyny is met with stiff resistance, condemnation, demonization, sanctions on those who make the attempt, and various kinds of negative consequences. Those who study or discuss polygyny in Christianity constantly need to respond to one subpoena or the other, hence this operational definition.

Polygamy. It is considered by the researcher that Zeitzen’s definition of polygamy is applicable to this study. Simply,

Polygamy is the practice whereby a person is married to more than one spouse at the same time, as opposed to monogamy, where a person has only one spouse at a time. In principle, there are three forms of polygamy: polygyny, in which one man is married to several wives; polyandry, where one woman is married to several husbands; and group marriage, in which several husbands are married to several wives, i.e. some combination of polygyny and polyandry. This broad definition is based on the etymology of the word polygamy, which contains *polys* (= many) and *gamos* (= marriage). (Zeitzen 2008:3).

While this study generally located itself in the area of polygamy, it specifically contracted itself to polygyny. This contraction also meant that the study was not concerned with those researches which consider a man who remarries after the demise of his wife or after divorce as being involved in consecutive polygamy. On this note, polygyny is defined below.

Polygyny. Zeitzen gives this definition: “Polygyny is a form of plural marriage in which a man is permitted more than one wife. Where co-wives are customarily sisters this is called *sororal polygyny*. The other main form is *non-sororal polygyny*, where co-wives are not related” (Zeitzen 2008:9). The study adapts this definition. However, it shall not apply if there are instances where the Bible clearly considers sororal polygyny as incest.

Bigamy. The difference (if any) between polygyny and bigamy is not much. Zeitzen defines bigamy this way:

Bigamy refers to someone who has entered into any number of ‘secondary’ marriages in addition to one legally recognized marriage. Many countries have specific statutes outlawing bigamy, such that a man with three wives, for example, would be charged with two counts of bigamy, for two ‘secondary’ marriages after the first legally recognized one. Before the twentieth century, Western rulers and the elite were sometimes ‘married to the left hand’, if their informal unions were recognized as *de facto* (rather than legal) marriages. Today, this is no longer acceptable for legal, social or moral reasons in the West (Zeitzen 2008:17).

Based on above, it can be seen with relative ease that bigamy is simply a Western construct and a term for polygyny when it is outlawed even by African countries who import this Western construct to their legal systems, although polygyny is undeniably African. Consequently, the term "bigamy" shall not be used in this study on the basis of this Western construct, it shall be used on the basis of "polygyny" as generally understood in most African cultural contexts; this means the word "bigamy" shall be consumed in this study by the term "polygyny", thereby making "bigamy" to be just another name for "polygyny".

Monogamy. This term can simply be considered as the opposite of polygamy. But, the term "monogamy", as extracted from Merriam-Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus in the Encyclopædia Britannica is found more suitable for this study. It is defined thus: "**1** *archaic*: the practice of marrying only once during a lifetime **2**: the state or custom of being married to one person at a time **3**: the condition or practice of having a single mate during a period of time" (Webster, 2015: Electronic Dictionary Display).

Going by the first component of the definition, people who marry after the decease of a previous wife cannot exclude themselves from the term being applied to them. Those who support polygyny should also hold to this definition in responding to a monogamy-only idea of marriage: if polygyny is unbiblical, are there sufficient Biblical evidences permitting men to remarry after their spouses passed away? This is a question for another research. Meanwhile, the second component of the definition shall apply to this study, while not missing the implications of the first and third components.

Biblical Theology. The term "Biblical Theology" as used in this study, is a direct extraction from a current Biblical Theology Class Memorandum in Nigeria-based theological seminary. It is defined thus:

Biblical Theology is the delimitation within which Biblical hermeneutical foundations are established. Biblical Theology will challenge your assumptions, background, biases, and previously held beliefs which may not be Biblical, but which you have possibly held for a long time thinking they were Biblical. Biblical Theology may confirm some positions which you have held for a long time as being Biblical. If so, stay focused and don't be distracted by the overwhelming pressure from those who seek to systematize theology without understanding theology, or those who feel threatened by the overwhelming pressure Biblical Theology puts on their previously held positions (Dogara, 2023:2).

Curriculum. Unwuka's definition of the term "curriculum" is found suitable for this study. Basically, the term includes this: "It embraces purposeful experience provided and directed by educational institutions to achieve predetermined goals" (Onwuka, 1996: 3). This study also considers the churches and their agencies as educational institutions which also constitute the total environment in which education or guidance for life is found or in which (or from which) teachings and practices can be developed, underdeveloped, promoted, demoted, imported, exported, objectively or subjectively crafted, monopolized, or pedagogized in any way by the powerful or majority, towards achieving predetermined goals.

Research Questions

Two research questions were used to guide the study. These are:

1. How can a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny be delimited in the curricular documents of Biblical theology for students in Africa?
2. How can a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny be delimited in pedagogy towards facilitating the curriculum of Biblical theology by teachers in Africa?

Delimiting a Proxy Rejoinder to Subpoena on Luther on Questions of Polygyny for Students of Biblical Theology in Africa

Research Question 1: How can a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny be delimited in the curricular documents of Biblical theology for students in Africa?

It is possible to delimit a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny via at least two curricular documents of Biblical theology for students in Africa. These are: Course Compendium and Course Facilitation Memorandum.

The Course Compendium

The Course Compendium is also known as Course Guide, Course Brochure, or with various other names. While the general elements of a course compendium should be included, the items below should also not be overlooked. These elements are presented in a manner that can be applied at both undergraduate and graduate levels of theological or religious education, of course with some modifications at the discretion of the teacher, in line with a school's academic policies.

Course Description. The course should generally explore the relationship between the Old Testament and New Testament in the Christian canon from the context of Biblical theology. This exploration should assist students to deal with both the Old and New Testaments in a unified approach to Scripture, wherever they find themselves. The theology of each Biblical book shall be analyzed in its historical context, and then compared and contrasted with other Biblical books to set each book in its canonical context. It is in the process of these analyses that perennial questions of polygyny should be discussed, putting Luther and other influential Christian personalities in perspective.

Course Objectives and Learning Indicators. By the end of this course, students should be able to achieve the cognitive, affective, and behavioral objectives designed for the course. While there are many ways of setting objectives, this study engages the verbs "formulate", "reflect", and "apply" to represent the cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of the objectives respectively.

Cognitively, students should be guided to formulate a working understanding of key questions of Biblical theology as an academic discipline, and as a tool for Christian exegesis,

life, and practice; some of the questions on polygyny can be formulated or reformulated at this point keeping cognizant of the various cultural backgrounds of the students. Affectively, students should be guided to reflect on some significant debatable issues in Christianity (particularly African Christianity) using a Biblical theology approach, with focus on understanding how those issues unfold in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; polygyny should be one of the debatable issues to be raised. Behaviorally, students should be guided to apply insights from contemporary issues raised in the course, to Christian life, African churches, and the broader African community.

Course Approach and Methodology. To facilitate scheduling of course assignments, an exemplar of at least two hermeneutical practice exercises is given below. The exemplar is designed to the specifications of perennial questions on polygyny being raised and as discussed in this study. The first hermeneutical practice exercise concerns debating on matters of polygyny, while the second hermeneutical practice exercise concerns jurying on matters of polygyny.

Hermeneutical Practice Exercise 1: Debating Matters of Polygyny. The basic focus of this exercise is to lead learners to engage the Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice towards setting parameters for *responding* to debatable issues in Christianity and Society, with polygyny as one of such issues. The case study item for this exercise is this: "Using Romans 12:3-8, 1st Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4:1-16, and 1st Peter 4:7-11, 1 (and other relevant Biblical passages, if applicable) as referencing points, respond to this question: can Christian polygamists become pastors, just as Christian monogamists?"

Hermeneutical Practice 2: Jurying Questions of Polygyny. The focus of this exercise is to lead learners to engage the Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice towards setting parameters for *jurying* to argumentative issues in Christianity and Society, using polygyny as an exemplar. The case study item for this exercise is this: "Jurying Arguments For and Against Polygyny in Christianity: A Biblical Theology Approach from an African Hermeneutical Perspective". Accordingly, the exercise could be conducted via these steps: Introduction, Propositional Points of Debate (discussing points put forward by those in support of a debatable issue concerned), Oppositional Points of Debate (discussing points put forward to refute and/or counter the points put forward in support of a debatable issue), and Parameters for Jurying Points of Debate (assessing both sides of the debate by locating the debate in the verdict of Biblical theology), and Conclusion.

The Course Facilitation Memorandum

The Course Facilitation Memorandum is referred to here and elsewhere in this study as the "Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice." The Memorandum sets boundaries to be emphasized in class notes designed for distribution to students of Biblical theology in African classrooms concerned. The Memorandum is generalized in this study, to enable its further development and application at both undergraduate and graduate levels of theological or religious education, of course with some modifications at the discretion of the teacher, in line with a school's academic policies.

While it is necessary to set parameters within which proxies for Luther would respond to the subpoena on Luther, it is obligatory to fix boundaries within which students shall be guided to understand the jurying processes and evaluation of evidences for or against polygyny. In other words, there is a need for a frame of reference (a compendium of ideas, terms and conditions, conventions, logic, references, or a paradigm) which, for the purpose of this subpoena must be grounded on solid Biblical theological basis, which should regulate all processes of responding to the subpoena concerned. Consequently, the term “Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice” is engaged in this study to refer to this frame of reference. The Framework is hinged on two Biblical passages: Deuteronomy 29:29 and 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

Deuteronomy 29:29

Presentation of Text

“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law” (NIV).

Analysis of Text

Generally, this passage can be said to be plain enough to warrant a simple understanding. However, it is further simplified by means of exegetical points below. The points are not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensively exegetical, but only simply concentrated on the things revealed, or not revealed, by God.

Firstly, there are things that are secret because God has not “revealed” them to humans. Those things that are secret are owned by the Lord. While the Lord is our God, we do not possess His secrets.

Secondly, there are things that are no more secret because God has “revealed” them to humans. The things revealed are owned by humans in both present (“us”) terms and multigenerational terms (“our children”). Humans depend on revelation to know. It is not possible to know by observation, imagination, guessing, searching, or any scientific process; unless it is “revealed” by God, it cannot be known by humans.

Thirdly, knowing the things revealed by God has a purpose, “that we may follow all the words of this law.” Those who follow God’s law cannot put themselves in front of it; they practice followership based on the things revealed in the law.

Application of Text to Questions of Polygyny

The analytical points above can be applied in at least three ways, towards discussing the question of polygyny. Details of this application are given below.

Firstly, no Bible reader should employ themselves (or arrogate to themselves) the position of “Owners of the Secrets of God”; accordingly, none of the advocates of either monogamy-only or polygamy owns the secrets of God other than what He has revealed in His Word. The secret things belong to God only. So, no Bible reader should interpret what God has not revealed in His Word, and even interpreted in the *unfolding* revelation of Himself in His Word, no matter how powerfully endowed the Bible reader may be with a first-rate intelligence quotient or with the power of some interpreters call “sanctified imagination.”

As a matter of fact, "We are not to worry ourselves about *the secret things*, which are God's concern" (Chianegue, 2006:555).

Secondly, God has not revealed in His Word the reason why He does everything based on the particularities of things on an item-by-item basis. Example: God has not revealed in His Word why He did not activate marriage on the basis of polygyny, but started on an Adam-and-Eve basis. So the questions as to whether God intended something which He did not reveal clearly in His Word, or did not intend something whereas His Word clearly says something to hold on to, do not arise. Except otherwise revealed plainly in His Word, God's intentions cannot be known by humans, because God's intentions reside in Him.

Thirdly, based on Biblical revelation at its various stages of unfolding, it is not secret any issue that God, (either directly or using His prophets, priests, and other agencies), allowed, approved, disapproved, recommended, terminated, engaged, promoted, mandated, created, sustained, and blessed something in the life or society of His people. Polygyny is one of such issues, just as monogamy is. So, no hidden meaning should be given to something that is not a secret.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Presentation of Text

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (NIV).

Analysis of Text

Like in the previous text, this passage can also be said to be plain enough to warrant a simple understanding. However, it is further simplified by means of exegetical points below. Once again, the points are not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensively exegetical, but only simply concentrated on the things revealed, or not revealed, by God.

Firstly, God's wisdom is a mystery that has been revealed to all who are qualified as "we" or "us". Whoever is not in this qualification is a "person without the Spirit."

Secondly, unless God's wisdom is "revealed to us by his Spirit", there is no other way it can be known. The things revealed are things which "no human mind has conceived" or can conceive.

Thirdly, even though "we have the mind of Christ", the fact still remains that "no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." No one can teach God or make God to "improve" his mind, for "who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" However, it is those who have the mind of Christ that can receive and understand instructions from the Lord. To have the mind of Christ is to be obedient to God's revelation (Lowery, 1983:510).

Application of Text to Questions of Polygyny

The analytical points above can be applied in several ways. Three of the ways are given below.

Firstly, God's wisdom is a mystery that has been revealed to all who are children of God in Christ Jesus. This is irrespective of whether or not children of God are monogamists or participants in polygyny, or of other status acceptable or not acceptable to an opinion or interpretation acceptable or not acceptable to a section of the Christian community.

Secondly, irrespective of their status or advocacy (for or against polygyny), all Christians have the mind of Christ. Consequently, no individual or group of Christians or high standing figures in Christian history (including Luther or the courts sitting in his case) can claim *monopoly* of revealing to others what Christ has in mind that is different from what He has already revealed as His mind in the Scripture, the unfolding of which Biblical theology seeks to study.

Thirdly, no one, no matter how close that person may possibly be to God, can "instruct" or teach God or help God to "develop" His mind or think for God or insert something in the mind of God, or "request" God to reverse His approval for polygyny in the unfolding of His purposes, intentions, and plans as far His revelations in Scripture are concerned. In line with this notation, it is worthwhile not to draw, mandate, or categorize conclusions on controversial issues in which the mind of God is not clearly revealed. Even if the church in its various manifestations and contexts as an *interpretive community* (and the pillar and foundation of the truth, 1 Timothy 3:15) provides guidelines for dealing with any controversial issues, (for example in Africa: like insisting on "white wedding" practices or monogamy-only), such guidelines stand as null and void where they impose interpretation on the Scripture, and also attach Scriptural terminology to enforce an acceptable position. A highly preposterous example of when Scripture is erroneously attached to support a position happens during formal monogamous marriages in churches, even in Africa, when prayer is offered for a "ring" (that it would do this or that, or it would be this or that) in the marriage.

Supporting Details

The Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice should be understood as combination of principles designed to serve as prescription for applying Biblical theology to hermeneutics, Christian life, and debatable issues such as this case of Luther's support to polygyny. Each of the eight points below, referred to as a principium, serves as a further explanatory support to these principles.

Point 1: Principium of Context. The Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice requires the Bible reader to do whatever is necessary to stay within the contextual environment of a Biblical passage, when studying Scripture. In line with this requirement, Biblical theology does not allow the reader liberty to apply one passage, and leave out the other, while both have a common context and should be treated equally. An example is when people (even Africans for that matter) say marriage should be monogamy-only because it was originally so, in Genesis 1-3, or polygyny came after humans fell into sin; but at the same time they somehow "forget" to say that being clothless, or marriage without paying dowry, or clothes from skins of animals, are also originals and should be the ideal practice even today!

Point 2: Principium of Restrain. While studying the Bible, readers are required to do whatever is necessary to restrain themselves from imposing topics, themes, ideas, sentiments, or interpretations on the Bible, or assuming subjects or issues outside the Bible and, then, return to the Bible to look for support. Biblical theology does not allow the reader to do make any kind of imposition on Scripture. Here is an example an imposition abstracted in a relevant research:

Polygamy as a part of socio-cultural life was not peculiar to Africa but also had a strong biblical root. In this wise, disregard for African cultural values like polygamy, and the insistence on monogamy for the culture of Africa by European missionaries appeared inappropriate. They rather seemed to be an imposition of the European culture on Africans. Missionaries' solution to the debate on polygamy in the Christian church which required the converted African polygamist to divorce all but a wife before baptism seemed to suggest extremism. In fact, socio-economic security and family stability depended on the socio-cultural background, and number of children in the household. These undoubtedly were Abrahamic and African identities. Hence, the security and stability of polygamous households in both cultures seemed to be more at high value than that of monogamy imposed by the missionaries (Omotosho, 2021:1).

In Biblical theology, matters for study, discussion, precedent, worthy of acceptance or rejection, emerge or expose themselves from the Bible, without any external imposition. Note that where there is an effective exposition, imposition becomes nullified; but if imposition is present exposition is defeated. It can be stated based on this principium, that the Bible has the power to unfold itself without any agreement, disagreement, assistance, supplements, or compliments from the reader.

Point 3: Principium of De-Supposition. The Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice does not allow the reader to *assume* anything based on Bible reading and, then, derive conclusions based on assumptions. No finalization and/or dogmatization should be

made on the basis of assumptions. Simply, assumptions do not have a place in Biblical Theology; although we may come to Scripture with presuppositions, Biblical Theology deals with *revelation*, not assumption.

Point 4: Principium of Canonicity. The Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice does not grant consent to the Bible reader to attempt to “put” ideas in the mind of God for Him to canonize. The Biblical canon is already complete; it was completed during the earliest periods of church history. What God wants us to know on this side of eternity is already revealed in the Bible; leave the secret things to God. The secret things truly belong to God, and when God decided to reveal some of His secrets He did so through the written Word, the Bible, which He revealed to people irrespective of their being monogamists, or participants in polygyny, or having other statuses before others. The employment of the Biblical theologian is to follow the unfolding of the things revealed within the delimitation of the Biblical canon.

Point 5: Principium of Simplicity. While studying the Bible, the reader should not in the name of interpretation, complicate what the Scripture has simplified, or “defile” what the Scripture has “sanctified”. Also, the Bible reader must not attempt to un-package what the Scripture has already de-packaged (reader’s culture, background, experiences, sentiments, fears, biases, worldview, religiosity, etc.), and repackaged with Christ fully involved in the process.

Point 6: Principium of Post-Genesis. Subscribing to the Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice is necessary to avoid caging the Scripture in the book of Genesis. The entire revelation of God was not limited, encapsulated, developed, completed, or closed in the Biblical book of Genesis. The unfolding revelation of God in the Bible finds definition, fulfillment and completeness only in Christ. So, there is no need to suggest or insist that everything else after Genesis, should or must be as in the first few chapters of Genesis. Otherwise, Biblical Theology (the study of the unfolding revelation of God in the Bible progressively and in its entirety) would be irrelevant or defeated; the principium of context (referred to above) is also not in support of this suggestion. The Bible is a revelation that has developed progressively.

Point 7: Principium of Non-Interference. By subscribing to the Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice, Christians should avoid and also resist any attempt to “compel” Christ to respond to questions He was not asked. Also, Bible readers should avoid responding to questions directed to Christ, *not to them*. No one has an answer to give to a question directed at Christ other than the answer Christ Himself gave to the question.

Example:

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of

divorce and send her away?" Jesus replied, "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." The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others—and there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it." (Holy Bible: Matthew 19:3-12, NIV).

While many advocates of a monogamy-only position relish in citing this passage (especially the phrase "be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh") against polygyny, it is not difficult to see that the passage in its contextual surroundings presents a question to Christ about divorce, and *not* polygyny. So, Christ cannot, on the basis of this passage, be forced to talk about polygyny.

Point 8: Principium of Transfer. The Biblical Theology Framework for Hermeneutical Practice disallows the Bible interpreter from making a wholesale transfer and/or application of the Biblical context to the contemporary context. To avoid this, the interpreter needs to see the Bible as being a message above every context, although revealed contextually, but with application to various contexts. No two contexts are necessarily the same, although they may be identical; therefore, it is not acceptable to apply the Biblical message to every context in exactly the same way. To understand the message as it applied to the Biblical context, the interpreter needs to take a walk backward (and also from the present development of Bible knowledge, which in a way means under-developing yourself first before redeveloping yourself) and through time, from the 21st century to Biblical times. When the interpreter finally arrives at Biblical times, he or she must "live" there in the context of the time in order to understand how the message applied, and also use their lenses to see things as they saw them, before coming back to the 21st century (now quipped with an understanding of the Biblical context) with the message, and applying it to the 21st century. This also means the interpreter must study the 21st century in order to understand how to apply the message to a particular 21st century context of the recipients of the Biblical message.

Delimiting a Proxy Rejoinder to Subpoena on Luther on Questions of Polygyny for Teachers of Biblical Theology in Africa

Research Question 2: How can a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny be delimited in pedagogy towards facilitating the curriculum of Biblical theology by teachers in Africa?

The teacher is responsible for delivering the curriculum of Biblical theology through learning facilitation in a class setting. It can be said with almost complete certainty that when issues seen as controversial by some (such as polygyny in Christianity) arise in the teaching-learning process, all kinds of considerations shall be engaged for and/or against it. This study at this point equips the teacher with guidance on how to effectively steer these

considerations to help students avoid derailing the debate, to prevent unnecessary imposition of biases or myopic opinions, and to also encourage open-mindedness in learning.

Sequel to notations above, it is considered in order for Luther to make a contemporaneous defense in response to the subpoena on him, via a proxy channel. While the proxy (which in this case may be students) may be preoccupied with *how* to mount a successful defense for Luther, as well as making the defense in *actuality*, the study concentrates its attention on the teacher, whose responsibility it is to set and implement *parameters* for the process. These parameters shall be discussed, from the point of a contemporaneous proxy rejoinder to subpoena on Luther on perennial questions of polygyny, using elements enshrined in the curriculum of Biblical theology.

Delimitation of Documents

There are two sets of necessary documents in setting and implementing the already-mentioned parameters. These are Scriptures and writings linked to Luther.

Firstly, the reformation movement was driven by Luther on the basis of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). Even if Luther were here today, it could be said with certainty that he would still stand on this basis, Scripture alone! Whoever wishes to be proxy for Luther is restricted to this stand. Accordingly, standing on Scripture means that should there be found any restrictions or allowances that Luther made concerning the question of polygyny which were inconsistent with Scripture, such inconsistencies should be discarded. In other words, if any policy, rule, regulation, practice, tradition, pronouncement, or recommendation of Christians concerning polygyny, either individually or corporately, is inconsistent with the Scripture, that policy, rule, regulation, practice, tradition, pronouncement, or recommendation shall, to the degree of the inconsistency, be null and void.

Secondly, the documents of (or credible documents on) Luther are primary to the defense. These should be relied on heavily, if not exclusively. This is necessary to avoid imposing ideas on Luther from external sources, at the same time restricting the rejoinder to Luther's line of thoughts.

Delimitation of Principal Authorities of Sola Scriptura

There is usually that temptation of attempting to support polygyny from scientific, statistical, sociological, legal, Western, sentimental, African cultural, or other perspectives. Most of the times, this happens when there is an overwhelming pressure from heavily-biased attempts by advocates of a monogamy-only position, to impose ideas and/or interpretations on Scripture to suit their advocacy and opposition to polygyny. However, a Biblical theology approach to supporting polygyny in line with Luther's theological stand, is possible through *Sola Scriptura* propositions. Accordingly, these propositions can be delimited based on evidences from the testimony of principal authorities of Scripture as categorized below. These authorities are those from whom the Scripture originated, or

through whom the foundations of Scripture as a document were laid, or whose interpretations of Scripture have finality.

Category 1: Incontestable Witnesses. Incontestable witnesses are persons whose steps (decisions, positions, pronouncements, or actions) cannot be questioned, reviewed, modified, contrasted, or interpreted beyond what is revealed; rather, their steps can only be accepted or followed. In this category are God Himself and the agencies (prophets, angels, people, or other channels) He used in the unfolding of His revelation, in the records of Scripture. Here is a point:

Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more (Holy Bible: 2 Samuel 12:7-8, NIV).

This is an example of where an incontestable Authority spoke to David through Prophet Nathan that He (the Authority) could give more wives to David (who already had several) if David wanted it. In this case, the incontestable Authority is God Himself.

There are well-documented instances in Scripture where incontestable witnesses supported polygyny in various ways: authorizing, recommending, endorsing, and initiating polygyny, as well as mandating protocols for it. For example, a precept was given by God to an already-married man that "If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights" (Holy Bible: Exodus 21:10, NIV); those who want to apply the term "sin" to polygyny must either succumb to passages like this or risk being accused, justly, of holding that God could give moral guidelines to immoral actions. In other words, if polygyny was sinful and there would be anyone to hold responsible for the sin, God Himself could be the one, since there are publicly available records in Scripture of Him giving instructions on how to properly practice this particular sin! But, thankfully, God is eternally holy, and this, too, is recorded in His Word!

It is not uncommon to hear advocates of monogamy-only position engaging all the "buts", "excepts", "however", and contrasts they can muster in trying to question or explain away Scriptures where incontestable witnesses favor, accept, encourage, or employ polygyny as a normal way of achieving a purpose. A rejoinder in defense of Luther's support to polygyny should make no attempt whatsoever to present anything contrary to revelation from incontestable witnesses; polygyny cannot be condemned no matter the overwhelming pressure from those who oppose it, or the difficult situation of those who (like Luther) wish to stand on the middle ground between monogamy-only position and polygyny, so long as incontestable witnesses approve it. Similarly, there should be no attempt to remain within the boundaries of Christians, churches, and positions that are more comfortable with divorce (which according Scripture, God hates) but are against polygyny (which has abundant Scriptural support).

Category 2: The Law-Makers. The term "Law-Makers" is used here to refer to Moses and Jesus. Strictly speaking, the Law was given through Moses, and the ministry of the prophets was built upon the Law. Accordingly, Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (Holy

Bible: Matthew 5:17-18). The Law is the basis from which sin is defined (Holy Bible: Romans 7:7); therefore, "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness" (Holy Bible: 1 John 3:4, NIV). A rejoinder to provide a defense for Luther's support to polygyny should resist attaching the term "sin" to polygyny unless if antagonists to it could provide evidence that there is a clear law and a corresponding penalty against it in the enactments of the Law-Makers, which would mean engaging in polygyny would amount to breaking that law. It is noticeable that the constitutions, byelaws, policies, and practices of many church bodies in Africa today have directly or indirectly categorized polygyny among their various lists of discipline-worthy "sins" where members are denied baptism, holy communion, leadership positions, or other sanctions. However, sin is what is enacted (with a corresponding penalty against it) by the Law-Makers in Scripture as breaking the law. Therefore, if any charter, policy, regulation, practice, tradition, pronouncement, or recommendation of a church body or groups of church bodies on polygyny condemns polygyny as sinful, whereas there is no clear enactment by the Law-Makers against it, any such actions by whatever church body should, to the degree of lack of clear support in the enactments of the Law-Makers, be considered as an affront to the Law-Makers and a deliberate attempt (for whatever sentiments and reasons), to make unauthorized insertions to canonized enactments of the Law-Makers in Scripture.

Delimitation of Principal Witnesses from Sola Scriptura

While a proxy rejoinder in defense of Luther's support to polygyny should be restricted to the lines of principal authorities of Scripture, it should also be constrained to the unfolding of God's revelation in the life and events of various personalities, as found in the records of Scripture. These personalities, referred to in this study as principal witnesses from Sola Scriptura, are categorized as custodians of the Law, direct participants in polygyny, practitioners of polygyny in the writings of Sola Scriptura, frame of textual evidences from the silence and theology of the New Testament, and frame of logical evidences from the caveats of Biblical theology.

Category 1: Custodians of the Law. While the Law-Makers gave the Law to God's people, it was placed (so to speak) in the custodianship of the prophets, priests, and kings of Israel; these were community representatives of the people of Scripture. These officials represented God before His people (prophets), represented people before God (priests), and represented God's rule over His people (kings). Many of these community representatives of God's people (particularly priests and kings) were involved in polygyny, and still functioned effectively as custodians of the Law.

While those who support a monogamy-only position may try to compel Scriptural passages to agree with their sentiments, or justify various policies and regulations against polygyny, those who stand proxy for Luther in support of polygyny should locate themselves only in the demarcation within which the custodians of the Law operated. Within this demarcation, it should be understood that it is not possible to produce evidence where the custodians of the Law are found condemning what the Law-Makers supported. So, when faced with a

choice between what the church has held as its position or interpretation on polygyny in its various periods of history and where the custodians of the Law stood, those who stand proxy for Luther in defending polygyny have no choice but to also stand with the custodians of the Law.

Category 2: Direct Participants in Polygyny. Direct participants in polygyny in the Bible were men who, for various reasons, married more than one wife and lived with them either concurrently or consecutively; they were also women who were married to men to whom who had other wives. Abraham, Jacob, David, and Solomon constitute a good exemplar of direct participants to consider in developing support and defense for polygyny; majority of the people in this exemplar were so closely related to God that among them was found God's friend (Abraham), the only person who ever "fought" with both God and man and won (Jacob), and a man personalized to God's heart (David). It can be seen from Scriptural data that God was particularly and actively committed to His decision to carry out His plan of salvation in Christ through this exemplar.

None of the previously-mentioned ancestors of Jesus Christ (and many more) was monogamists; and a good number of the women (like Ruth and Bathsheba) through whom Jesus Christ was born (also for example: as in the case of Jacob, David) were not first wives. So, in studying the direct participants in polygyny, attention should be focused strictly on the Biblical data as it is provided regarding the involvement of both men and women in polygyny. This means care should be taken to remain within the limits of what was unveiled and explained in the unfolding of Scripture; no explanation should be added where Scripture is silent.

Category 3: Practitioners of Polygyny in Writings of Sola Scriptura. Some of the most popular writings in the Biblical canon were documented in the name (or largely from the contribution) of men and women involved in polygyny. These writings include the Old Testament books of Ruth (preoccupied with the story of Ruth who, after the death of her husband, got married to an already-married man), Esther (clearly not the first wife Ahasuerus), Psalms (with majority of the hymns contributed by David or written about him), Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs (from Solomon, the undisputed champion of polygyny), and the New Testament book of Hebrews (where for example Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, and David were mentioned favorably).

In referring to the above practitioners of polygyny, care should be taken not to generate (by forcing out) evidences in support of polygyny from the writings attributed to them, whereas their lives already constitute compelling evidence that polygyny was a normal way of marriage for God's people. As a matter of fact, polygyny actually placed the practitioners in this exemplar in a strategic situation whereby they could be used by God to develop the human side of the genealogy of redemption (Abraham, Jacob, Ruth, David), to rescue God's people from annihilation (Esther), to develop doxology (Psalms), to enrich posterity with wisdom (Proverbs and Ecclesiastes), and teach about love (Song of Songs).

Category 4: Frame of Textual Evidences from the Silence and Theology of the New Testament. The New Testament is completely silent about polygyny, although it speaks on divorce (for example in Matthew 19:3-12). Regardless of lack of clear evidence in the New

Testament against polygyny, it is usually the practice by some advocates of a monogamy-only position to manufacture evidences from various sentimental perspectives (in the name of Biblical hermeneutics) and impose on the New Testament to compel support against polygyny.

Contrary to the manufacturing of evidences against polygyny as mentioned above, Christians (whether monogamists or participants in polygyny) who stand proxy for Luther in his support for polygyny, should resist every reason for them to speak from the silence of the New Testament; the canon is complete, one cannot speak where Scripture is silent. But, theologically speaking, both advocates of monogamy-only position and defenders of polygyny, cannot fail to notice the abundance of evidences in the New Testament on soteriology (example: salvation in Jesus Christ and all its attendant consequences are available to monogamists and participants in polygyny), pneumatology (example: the Holy Spirit does not discriminate in dispensing spiritual gifts to monogamists and participants in polygyny), ecclesiology (example: neither Jesus Christ nor the apostles ever said something to disqualify all who came to Christ from getting baptized, becoming full members of a Christian assembly, and/or partaking in the sacraments irrespective of whether or not they were monogamists or participants in polygyny), and other categories of Scriptural teachings arising from New Testament theology.

Category 5: Frame of Logical Evidences from the Caveats of Biblical Theology. It is possible to “harvest” evidences in support of polygyny from the logic of Biblical narratives. Two examples can be given. The first example comes from Exodus 1:8-2:10, from within which this information is found: “Then Pharaoh gave this order to all his people: “Every Hebrew boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live” (Holy Bible: Exodus 1:22, NIV). The second example comes from Matthew 2:1-18, where this information is encapsulated: “When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi” (Holy Bible: Matthew 2:16, NIV).

Logically, after the events in the two examples cited above, there would rise a new generation of Israelites in which the number of females would be more than the number of males. If every female in this logic would marry, some of the males would have to take more than one wife, which was probably what happened. But, then, Biblical theology is an exact process where no room should be given to probabilities or logic built on silence, since probabilities and logic can also be interpreted in many other ways. Consequently, this kind of logic should not be considered in providing a contemporaneous proxy defense for Luther in his support of polygyny.

Conclusion

Summary

Sequel to matters considered in this study, it can be concluded that while discussing and/or responding to questions of polygyny could seem entirely arduous initially, now having

arrived at this point, it can also be said that the process could be easy or hard at some points. Three concluding points are abridged below for further clarifications.

Firstly, it is easier to defend polygyny using the Biblical theology methodology than to oppose it. Based on this methodology, it is easier to say God is for polygyny, rather than against it. In fact, it is possible to say that "Protestants seriously overestimate their ability to argue against polygamy using the Bible alone. In fact, the tortured exegesis required to "prove" polygamy wrong might only make the case against it seem weaker" (Beaumont, 2020:2). Similarly, it is also possible to use the same elements of arguments engaged in favor of a monogamy-only position or against polygyny, to support polygyny, in fact with much more ease if approached from the angle of Biblical theology.

Secondly, the abundance of evidences in Scripture in favor of both monogamy (as opposed to monogamy-only position) and polygyny simply makes opposing either monogamy or polygyny as an exercise against Biblical revelation in its various stages of unfolding, as well as in its completeness as a canonical document. It is actually difficult to oppose polygyny or call it sinful by simply following Scripture, as Biblical theology demands. Those who wish to use the Bible alone (*Sola Scriptura*) in opposing polygyny will find it insufficient to disprove the accreditation of polygyny even by incontestable parties (God Himself and the prophetic, angelic, people, and the agencies He used in the unfolding of His revelation, in the records of Scripture). This is a reason why those who oppose polygyny (even Africans for that matter) must go outside the Scripture (thereby turning to sentiments, biases, appeals to their own interpretation of natural law, civil constitutions and laws, tainted western interpretations, ecclesiastical traditions and policies, extra-biblical documents, eisegesis instead of exegesis, and other "traditions of men" to advocate their points, since engaging the *Sola Scriptura* position would lead them to shoot themselves in the foot! But the Biblical theologian cannot move or stay outside Scripture, especially when it comes to standing proxy for a no-small-figure like Martin Luther in discussing questions such as polygyny; the Biblical theologian is an insider!

Recommendations

Three recommendations are developed resultant from the study. Each of the recommendations is designed for a category of stakeholders earlier outlined to which this study shall be of primary significance.

1. Theological Educators

Freedom of the mind (including holding opinions, exchanging opinions, and ability to think and express thoughts both critically and controversially) is a cardinal element of democracy and education (Dewey, 2001:299-314). This element should be deeply enshrined in theological schools of Africa (by encouraging scholarly presentations, papers, articles, and debates on issues that controversial seemingly or indeed, such as polygyny in Christianity), thereby allowing the mind of Christ to be developed in all ramifications...

so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the

fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Holy Bible: Ephesians 4:12-16, NIV).

2. Pastoral Ministry Participants.

Christians gifted in various areas of pastoral and pulpit ministries who, because they are linked to polygyny, are deprived of opportunities to serve in the current formal church systems, need to start thinking, strategizing, working, and leading all who need to identify with a movement of the Holy Spirit, towards establishing more polygyny-compliant churches at both local and denominational levels, or more actively participate in such churches so that they would become more solidified. If new polygyny-compliant churches are established, they should also be formal, Biblical, missions-minded, soundly-theological, evangelical, historically-rooted, contemporary, distinctively African, strong in theological education, qualified with all the qualities of a purpose-driven church (Warren, 1995: 1-209-PDF), and officially recognized by civil authorities (if necessary, preferred, or advantageous). Being distinctively African may require, for example, doing away completely with the “white wedding” and all traditions, semantics, protocols attached to it.

3. Church Policy-Makers

Church assemblies at local or community levels should develop deliberate policies and protocols for including participants in polygyny in Christian nurturing, evangelistic, and doxological ministries of the church, thereby giving them a real sense of belonging. Example: participants in polygyny could be assigned to coordinate congregational songs during worship services, or even deliver the homily in special occasions or as part of a roster of officiating personnel. If non-Christian politicians or morally-bankrupt Christian politicians are allowed access to the pulpit (this is provable in the Nigerian situation), how come spiritually-gifted committed Christians linked to polygyny are considered disqualified from such access?

Suggestions for Further Research

This study on questions of polygyny that link with Luther also interconnects with other concerns of history which need further research. Accordingly, two possible areas for further research are suggested below, towards addressing this interconnection:

1. Synthesizing Arguments in Thesis against Polygyny: Towards Delimiting a Rejoinder via the Curriculum of Biblical Theology in Africa.
2. Addressing Extra-Biblical Challenges to Polygyny from Monogamy-Only Position: A Biblical Theology Approach towards Consolidating Christianity from an African Perspective.

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