

# The African Love For Children

“More Children, More Blessings”

**By A.S. NGWANA, Chairman CDP, Cameroon.**

Modern technology has reduced the world to a “global village”. What happens in America, Japan or anywhere else can be seen or heard almost immediately by the whole world. The whole world has become a small village. The advantages are immense but the disadvantages can be disastrous. Cultures and traditions are coming under great pressures from other cultures and the human world seems to be in a state of confusion.

The love for many children is not an African monopoly, it is a natural attribute inscribed in the human nature by the Creator Himself. When God created man He endowed him with the gift of procreation. He instructed Adam and Eve to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.”<sup>1</sup> God told Abraham: “ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore.”<sup>2</sup> Similarly, when God blessed Noah and his sons, He said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth ... teem over the earth and be lord of it.”<sup>3</sup>

To encourage man to obey this imperative order of multiplying and filling the earth, God the Creator himself established that in the generative function, spouses should experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit. Therefore sexuality is a source of joy and pleasure and it is one of the most enjoyable sense appetites. Consequently, sex has come to form an important integral part of all cultures and traditions.

A misplacement of the value and function of sex is causing the human race untold turbulence. Sex is a wonderful thing ordained to life, to love and fruitfulness. Unfortunately, man in pursuit of selfish pleasure, has now inverted the proper order of things, seeking satisfaction as an end in itself, in contempt of the good to which it is joined and which is its end, that is procreation.

Traditions and cultures are breaking down under this hedonistic concept of life. An excessive concern for well-being and a comfortable way of life, seem to be the only determinable factors of life. God is out of the question.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>2</sup> ibid 22: 17

<sup>3</sup> ibid 9: 1&7

From about 100,000 to 10,000 years ago, man survived mainly by hunting, fishing, scavenging and living a migratory type of life. But about 10,000 years ago, man was able to domesticate plants and animals and to live a sedentary life. This agricultural revolution, not merely made possible a phenomenal growth of human population, but set the stage for events in human history that eventually led to civilization and economic development.

Man wanted many children for economic reasons. The rich or influential man was the person with many children; who could cultivate large farms, make more wealth and become richer. These men became chiefs, fons, emires, or kings with overwhelming importance and powers. In this urge to get material influence and power, many people resulted to polygamy and large families.

King Solomon, 970-932 BC, who transformed Israel into an organized, urbanized, rich and prosperous nation of settled people, married seven hundred wives of royal birth and had three hundred concubines. My grandfather, the Paramount Ruler of Beba, His Royal Highness Fon Aghanifor, 1863-1933 AD, married two hundred and fifty wives, with more than a thousand children.

In many cultures, the only guarantee to have many children was to marry many wives and to make sure that each woman had many children. Sexual intercourse was mainly for procreation. Pregnancies were no problem at all because children were considered a gift from God. Hence, more children meant more blessings. There were no bastards because parents claimed the children of their unmarried daughters as their own.

Throughout history governments have actively encouraged population growth. The motivations have varied, economic, defence and social security. Governments were influenced by economic arguments to bolster their work force, so ensuring that the working population was big enough to sustain dependents. They were persuaded that national defence requires a larger pool from which to recruit troops. Lastly, they were seduced by the notion that national greatness is linked to population size. Consequently they treated abortion, manslaughter, euthanasia and murder as serious criminal offences, punishable in some cases with the death penalty. All governments wanted their populations to grow, and as such, adopted polices and strategies to encourage large families.

- In 1873 the U.S. Congress enacted the “Comstock Law”, which regulated public access to birth control devices, medicines, or information for the next 60 years. It was illegal to distribute any device, medicine or information designed to prevent conception, this was applicable even to physicians.
- The most notorious policies introduced to boost birth rates and population growths were deployed by totalitarian regimes of far-left and right. In Ceausescu’s Romania (1944 – 1989), the Marxist dictator instituted monthly pregnancy tests to see if women were performing their patriotic duty, and provided more generous subsidized housing to larger families.
- Across the communist block pro-birth policies were applied, including the gearing of child benefit to give progressively more generous payments to larger families. In Communist Czechoslovakia, child benefit kicked in when a mother had two children and those after the second earned progressively more allowances from the state. State childcare and subsidized goods for children were meant to further encourage reproduction.
- Fascist regimes even went further as Mussolini (1922 – 1945) introduced a tax on bachelors above a certain age (presuming that once single men had graduated to the tax-favoured state of marriage they would get down to procreation).
- In Nazi Germany the pro-birth programme was highly motivated and information about contraception was suppressed. Unmarried adults faced tax penalties. State loans were given at weddings, only to be written off when a couple produced children. Tax and housing concessions were tapered to favour larger families. There was also a relentless propaganda campaign in which the Nazi Women’s Organization outlined the role of mothers in the Fatherland: “we fight for the honour and dignity of womanhood against the decline of morality and the destruction of a healthy love life, of marriage and the family; for a new structuring of German Christian family life, for the fitness of women as mothers.”<sup>4</sup> The Nazi State lost no opportunity to remind its citizens that their highest duty was to “Give the Fuhrer a child.”

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<sup>4</sup> The London Times, March 22, 2002.

- Totalitarian regimes may have been fanatical in pursuit of higher birth rates, more children and population growth, but democracies have also pursued pro-natal policies. In France in the 1920s, laws were introduced to limit the sale of contraceptives and payments were allocated to women who stayed at home (giving birth). In the France of the fifties, a three-child family was paid allowances much higher than the national average wage.

According to the Guinness Book of Records, the most prolific mother in recorded history is the wife of the Russian, Feodor Vassilyer who gave birth to 69 children between 1725 and 1765. She gave birth to 16 pairs of twins, 7 sets of triplets, and 4 sets of quadruplets. Only 2 of the children died in infancy. According to the same records, Mr. Samuel S. Mast, an American, is the man with the greatest number of descendants at the time of his death, on 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1992. He had 824 living descendants among who were: 11 children, 97 grandchildren, 634 great grandchildren and 82 great great grandchildren.

The most prolific English mother, in current British records, is Elizabeth Mort of Kirby, Central England, who had 42 children between 1676 and 1720.

Europe like the rest of the world adopted the culture of life for religious, economic and political reasons. European culture and tradition were greatly influenced by the Christian faith and laws and customs were based on "the sanctity of life". Divorce was forbidden, adultery was an offence, abortion was an offence, contraceptives were forbidden, homosexuality was an offence, suicide was forbidden, euthanasia was forbidden. Prostitution, bestiality, necrophilia, paedophilia, pornography, and incest were forbidden.

Then secularism, materialism, and realism crept in and things started falling apart. The Industrial revolution transformed Europe from an agrarian society into a predominantly manufacturing world. Industrialization and mechanization rendered manual labour less demanding.

Then in 1789 Thomas Robert Malthus, propounded the first theory on the quality of life stating that population would soon outgrow food supply. He argued that if everybody were happy, fed and peaceful, they would breed until there was not enough food to go round. Thus Utopia would be spoilt by fertility. This theory though wrong, quickly caught public imagination and sparked a chain of re-actions, which culminated in the

Cultural Revolution that is going on in Europe today. Europe turned round from its Christian culture of life, to the present culture of dearth. From encouraging fertility to discouraging fertility. From having many children to having few children or none at all. The consequences have been disastrous, including population decline and population gap, popularly called 'the ageing problem' with its negative effects on economic development.

Most of Africa, South of the Sahara, for centuries was isolated and cut off from the technological and cultural revolutions that were taking place in the whole world. In its isolation Africa remained an agrarian society and maintained the need for large families. More so, many children died at infancy due to diseases and lack of medicine. Consequently, parents had many children on the assumption that some would survive to adulthood. Fertility was an important part of life and the gods were often consulted when this was lacking, for "more children meant more blessings". Celibacy was unknown and barrenness was considered a curse from God. The primary object of marriage was procreation. This in turn gave rise to the African culture of polygamy. The concept of dowry or 'buying a wife' then developed.

With many wives, uncles, aunts, cousins, great-grandmothers, and patriarchs, the concept of the extended family developed and became part of our culture. Thereby providing a palpable system of checks and balances for stability. The extended family system provided a loving human environment for the care of orphans, the old and the poor. Thus in Africa the concept of Old People's Homes is absent as the culture of the extended family, has been overwhelmingly positive.

This family setting became the main school of all the social virtues. The young learned and gained from the experience of the elders. Here the children practiced obedience, respect, honesty, fortitude, industriousness, mercy, justice, loyalty, sincerity, truthfulness, resilience, courtesy, affection, love of neighbour, a concern for others, a sense of responsibility, understanding and mutual help, a loving co-ordination of different characters. This is a reality particularly in large families.

Isolated Africa, did not come in contact with Christianity for a long time. It continued with its polygamous culture for centuries, mainly for social and material reason.

The advent of Christianity south of the Sahara has positively influenced and enhanced some of the African customs. “Sacred Scripture and the Church’s traditional practice see in LARGE FAMILIES a sign of God’s blessing and the parents’ generosity.”<sup>5</sup>

In the same light, “research aimed at reducing human sterility is to be encouraged, on condition that it is placed “at the service of the human person; of his inalienable rights, and his true and integral good according to the design and will of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Africans who accepted Christianity, dropped polygamy and adopted monogamy.

The discovery in early 1950s by the American endocrinologist, Gregory Princus (1903-1967), that contraception could be reliably done by a pill containing female sex hormones, sparked off a revolution in contraception and revolutionized human sexual behaviour. The advent of the Pill ushered in the sexual revolution of the sixties and set the stage for uncontrollable changes. What the sexual revolution and radical feminism promised was that the pursuit of freedom, sexual equality, sexual pleasure and the ejection of traditional morality would bring individual happiness and build a more truly human society.

“Reproductive rights” and “anti-birth ideology” spread rapidly under the umbrella of the U.N. and the European Union. Anti-life groups and Governments took this up and started legalizing illegalities. Contraception was legalized, prostitution was legalized, abortion was legalized, homosexuality was legalized, euthanasia was legalized and suicide was legalized.

When certain practices violate human dignity and the intrinsic nature of womanhood and motherhood, they produce psychological problems based on the denial of the truth about the human person. It is true that Europe has advanced tremendously in science and technology, but it has unfortunately regressed in morals and ethics. Europe now has a society wounded psychologically by the practices of the culture of death with women suffering the greatest psychological toll.

Africa is no more isolated, insulated, nor an impregnable “Island”. Africa is now open to the influence of modern science and technology and open to the onslaught of unacceptable immoral practices of other nations. The African love for many children is now undeniably threatened by economic development, modernization, materialism, aggressive secularism, and a veil type of atheism. The systematic assimilation of

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<sup>5</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2373

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* 2375

western influence through television, Internet, radio, cinema and other instruments of the mass media, under the guise of modernization, has brought the attendant problems of immorality and materialism, which threaten the African family.

Materialism manifests itself in selfishness and unwillingness to form a close-knit extended family system. Africans have been gradually deceived to regard large families as the cause of all our problems in economic and social development, and pressure is being exerted on us to reduce the number of our children. This false propaganda is based on the lie that Africa is overpopulated. The truth is that Europe is far more densely populated per square kilometre than Africa and therefore much more richer than Africa. Europe has about 115 persons per square kilometre, against about 25 persons per square kilometre in Africa. Per capita, Europe enjoys about \$23,660 dollars income, as against a per capita income of about \$637 in Africa<sup>7</sup>.

We most not forget that a good family unit guarantees the condition necessary to raise a large family. Large families are the seedbeds for a large bank of human resources, which will comprise a young working force without which economic development is impossible. Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze speaking in Rome Feb 19, 2003, insists that "Europeans must be careful not to impose demographic policies on African families, suggesting, for example, that they have not more than two children. Such an attitude would be unjust because it affects the cultural, religious and social dimensions of the African conscience. The only key to resolving the problem of overpopulation is development", he stressed<sup>8</sup>.

To keep the African population down, the agents of the culture of death, freely distribute condoms and the pill and advocate abortion on demand in the clinics. If Africa is to survive and grow rich, our traditional love for children must be maintained and encouraged. All forces, pressures and foreign ideologies against it must be resisted. There has perhaps been no other time when there has been so much talk about the rights of man and human achievements. Humanity has rarely been so conscious of its own accomplishments. Yet, at the same time, never have the rights of the individual been more brutally pushed aside than today.

Our first task is to look hard on those negative aspects of the European concept of human rights and feminine rights, which are contrary to Natural Law and Divine Positive

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<sup>7</sup> World Bank and UN Population Department, 1998/1999.

<sup>8</sup> Zenit News Agency, February 19, 2003

Law and which are contrary to our culture. Under these rights, lots of abuses are being committed which if unchecked will seriously endanger the human species.

We cannot sit by silently in the face of such crimes as abortion and the degradation of Marriage and the family.

“The freedom to kill is not true freedom, but a tyranny that reduces the human being to slavery.”<sup>9</sup>

- Under the concept of human rights, women have the right to kill their unborn children – abortion
- Under the concept of human rights, people have the right to kill themselves – suicide.
- Under the concept of human rights, children have the right to kill their old or sick parents – euthanasia
- Under the concept of human rights, parents cannot discipline their children by canning – child abuse.
- “When you talk of human rights, you include also homosexuality and lesbianism – it’s not our culture, we Africans. And if you try to impose your culture on Africans, we condemn it, we reject it.”<sup>10</sup>

Europe is now suffering a serious ageing population problem and a demographic decline. Africa must not allow herself to fall into this problem. The survival of the human species will very much depend on our love for children. The enemy of the culture of life makes use of every trick known to man. We hear about news reports being totally distorted, television series watched by huge audiences night after night portray totally anti-life lifestyles, ridiculing our love for many children, promoting the notion that abortion and euthanasia are somehow acceptable, casting doubt on the value of life, and in general presenting an idea of life wholly incompatible with our culture. And all this is done with astonishing energy and persistence.

It must be noted that Fundamental Human Rights are valid to all people at all times, and these fundamental values must be recognised by all people at all times. Any diversions from these values must be resisted and condemned .

It is now time to come out boldly with all the means at our disposal, plentiful or not, and not to waste a single opportunity, to tell the world that the love of children is an intrinsic part of the human nature by the Creator Himself, that the African love for children is

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Zenit news July 27, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Namibian President, Sam Nujoma, at the Summit on Sustained Development, Johannesburg 2002.

essential for our economic development and beneficial to our culture and spiritual enhancement.-

Therefore, African Governments and the African Union (AU) should be persuaded to take immediate steps to stop or control all foreign attempts to stall the growth of the African population. Accordingly immediate steps should be taken to:

- a. Stop or ban contraceptives
- b. Discourage or ban condoms as condoms prevent pregnancies and encourage the spread of AIDs
- c. Ensure that Abortion remains a criminal act in all African countries
- d. African Governments should encourage large families by ensuring descent accommodation and other social amenities.
- e. We must re-examine the concepts of “Human Rights”, “Reproductive Rights”, and the “Anti-Birth Ideology” of the U.N and European Union with great care, to ensure that their negative interpretations do not affect us.

Your Excellencies, Your Lordship, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you and God bless Africa.