


Adultery as sexual disorder: An exegetical study of Matthew 5:27–30


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There is a prevailing notion amongst preachers of the gospel, especially those in the Pentecostal circle, that adultery is a demonic problem. Their understanding of Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:27–30 about adultery in the heart is that for adultery to happen in an invisible entity such as the heart, some invisible forces (demons) are responsible. This research is an exegetical study of Matthew 5:27–30, employing historical criticism as methodology, to ascertain the correctness of this understanding. The conclusion of this study is that adultery as described and understood in Matthew 5:27–30 is a sexual disorder and not a demonic problem.

Contribution: This contribution argues that adultery mentioned in Matthew 5:27–30, contrary to its understanding in Pentecostal circles, is a sexual disorder and not the result of demonic spirits that feed the mind with sexual thoughts.

Keywords: Matthew; adultery; sexual disorder; married Christians; demon.

Introduction

According to the participant observation conducted for the sake of this research, 15 Bible teachers from the Nsukka Senatorial Zone who were studied within a space of 24 months¹ believe that adultery as explained by Jesus in Matthew 5:27–30 is a demonic problem. Their main point of argument is that because people can practise adultery mentally, there are unseen forces who plant such filthy thoughts in the minds of people, and therefore it is a demonic problem. However, Jesus discusses adultery in that text definitively. In Matthew 5:27–30, especially verse 28, Jesus alludes that the root of adultery is in the human heart (καρδίᾳ).² Studying this text objectively evokes a certain implication, namely that Jesus' statement shows that mental adultery is as real as somatic adultery. The implication is good evidence that adultery starts and is actually committed when a man drools with lustful intentions over a married woman. This is what some psychologists refer to as 'intrusive thinking' (Fisher 2002:413). The study is saddled with the responsibility of drawing objective meaning out of the text of Matthew 5:27–30 to show that adultery is not a demonic problem but a sexual disorder.

The scope of this study, whilst not denying that adultery is either an ethical or a moral problem, does not discuss it as such. The study rather considers adultery from its root cause, that being a degenerative force arising from the human mind, making it clearly a deviant situation. When Jesus' statement shows that adultery is a deviant behaviour, it qualifies for what psychologists call paraphilia. Paraphilia (especially voyeurism) is a sexual disorder that makes a person attracted to an unsuspecting and/or nonconsenting individual. This type of paraphilia fits Jesus' description in Matthew 5:27–30. Aggrawal (2009:110) and Cantor et. al. (2013:887–888) all agreed that adultery is paraphilic. With the application of the historical-critical method, this study proposes that Jesus discusses adultery in Matthew 5:27–30 not only as a moral problem but also as a sexual abnormality (disorder).

Exegesis of Matthew 5:27–30

The studied text is 'part of a larger discourse, the so-called Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:29)' (Iurchenko 2016:2).³ It is cast from the Sinai typology based on its setting (Loader 1997:165). This

1.Regarding the participant observation used in this work, the author visited 15 churches on several occasions in Nsukka's urban and rural areas (Iheakpu-Awka and Enugu-Ezike) during their weekday activities (especially Bible studies). Sunday school classes of these churches were also visited when comprehensive teachings went on. The author recorded the opinions of Bible teachers on the issue of adultery as a participant observer.

2.Towns (1971:36–38) explained that 'the term "heart" (*kardia*) is never used in the New Testament to refer to the physical organ of man ... [but] the central seat of nonmaterial man'. By using Hebrews 4:12 and 8:10, Towns demonstrated that the heart could be 'the instrument of thinking and mental processes'. See also Kuntaraf & Liwidjaja-Kuntaraf (2008:113–114).

3.Iurchenko (2016:2) argued that, 'Jesus' ascending to and descending from the mountain (specifically the phrases ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος [Mt 5:1] and καταβάντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους [Mt 8:1]) form an inclusio for Jesus' discourse in Matthew 5:1–7:29.'

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'Sinai typology' to which the discourse setting is ascribed seems to serve as the justifiable reason why Viljoen (2016:6) insisted that 'Matthew alludes to Moses when presenting Jesus' in the Sermon on the Mount narrative. Viljoen (2016:6) asserted that some 'scholars even refer to Jesus as being presented as the new Moses' (cf. Allison 1993:137–270) whilst some others see him as 'a new lawgiver' (Blomberg 1992: 96–97; See also Morris 1992:93). The Sermon on the Mount that has been described as 'the heart of Jesus' moral teaching' (Oei 2012:1) is resident within the entire (six) antitheses found in Matthew of which the discourse on adultery is just a part. Being one of the antithetical teachings in Matthew, Jesus reinterprets Moses' teaching on adultery, introducing a new element to what was already known on the subject: an introduction both deep and controversial.

Scope of the text of Matthew 5:27–30

The text is part of the Sermon on the Mount. It contains Jesus' most famous statements against adultery in all of the New Testament (see also Jesus' statements on adultery in Mt 19:9; Mk 10:11–12; Mt 19:18; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20, 16:18). It focuses on this subject from v. 27 to v. 28. In v. 29 and v. 30, Jesus gives a warning to avoid the control of the σῶμα [body], insisting on figurative mutilation of the bodily members that revolt against decency and self-control. Some exegetes have discussed vv. 31 and 32 together with the studied pericope. This is primarily because of Jesus' connection of undue divorce to the act of πορνεία, a word greatly misinterpreted as simply adultery.⁴ This study does not consider μοιχεία [adultery] and πορνεία [sexual immorality] as one subject on the discourse and so limits itself to the discussion on adultery.

Sociohistorical context of Matthew 5:27–30

The Gospel contains kerygmatic history, wherein it narrates what happened for theological reasons (Turner 2005:7). A view of the Sermon on the Mount relates, for the most part, the history of Jesus' less conventional beliefs expressed in strong antithetical theology. The antithesis in the Sermon on the Mount brings out 'the authority of Jesus' declarations in his own person, so although the Torah supplies him with a point of departure, it does no more than this' (Brower 2004:291). Indeed:

The words of Jesus in this Sermon present an ideal of human life, founded upon religious truth and ethical principles, which has been and is intuitively recognized as the highest standard of life yet conceived. (Votaw 1905:1)

This is particularly evident in the adultery discourse. Jesus' extended doctrine on what the halakha and the parent document, the Talmud teaches on the subject is just remarkable. Leviticus 20:10 is explicit about the judgement

4. Guenther notices that 'in both our Matthean texts, the scope of πορνεία must be narrower than that of μοιχεία (adultery) ... where παρεκτός governs a numerical object, the ratio of the excepted element to the whole ranges from 3:318 to 2:7'. See Guenther (2002:96). On the whole, Guenther shows the distinction between πορνεία and μοιχεία.

meted out on a couple who committed adultery – death. However, it seems that the Talmud and its interpretation, halakha, presents a sentence highly commuted because of what Fram (2002:279) called *legal doubt*. This is one of the pieces of evidence that emphasises Jesus' opinion that:

[T]he OT religion is a self-accommodation to the low moral standard of those whom it was designed to instruct. This [Jesus] reiterates in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5 22.28.34). (Kaiser 1915:764)

Fram (2002) reported that when a man committed adultery with a married woman:

According to the Talmud, both parties were to be strangled for their sin if two witnesses had seen the wrongdoing. Few couples, however, were so obliging to the demands of legal procedure as to perform their illicit sexual act before two witnesses. Since it was usually not possible to prove an adulterous relationship with eyewitness testimony, adultery became tied up with legal doubt. If the doubt was compelling, the husband of a woman suspected of adultery had the right – but not always the obligation – to divorce her without paying the amount stipulated in her marriage contract (*ketubbah*). (p. 279)

Following Jesus' teachings in the synoptic gospels, it seems he upheld this right to divorce only in the case of deviant sexual immorality.⁵ But whereas the sentence is harsh on a woman (as she will be publicly and shamefully rejected by her husband through divorce), the man (who is also an accomplice in the matter) is meant to roam free. Jewish law, although drawing its interpretation from the Torah and supposed to be stringent at one time, became more lenient along the way towards men than with women. For example:

Jewish law ... recognized polygamy and concubinage as legitimate. Thus a Hebrew might have two or more wives or concubines, and might have intercourse with a slave or bondwoman, even if married, without being guilty of the crime of adultery (Lev 19:20), for adultery, according to Jewish law, was possible only when a man dishonored the 'free wife' of a Hebrew. (Davies 1915:864)

This is further strengthened by Goodfriend's (1992) definition of adultery, as 'sexual intercourse between a married or betrothed woman and any man other than her husband'. She further said:

The marital status of the woman's partner is inconsequential since only the married or betrothed woman is bound to fidelity. The infidelity of a married man is not punishable by law but is criticized (Mal 2:14–5; Prov 5:15–20). (p. 232)

It has earlier been cited that a Jew could have sex with a married woman and go free from being judged because the woman is a slave. Whereas the Jews could tolerate such an act, it was considered inhuman and dirty amongst Greek stoics. There is no recorded evidence that Greeks who were not stoics made it a norm that a man was free to have sex with a married slave woman. Regarding the stoics, however,

5. For example, this study follows the exegesis of Guenther who regards 'the meaning of the μη ἐπί phrase in Matthew 19:9 ... as, "apart from πορνεία", "πορνεία aside", or "excluding the subject of πορνεία". He argues that 'it does not mean "except" as it has traditionally been interpreted'. See Guenther (2002:96).

it is recorded that they ‘unanimously condemned all adultery and extramarital sexual intercourse. The stoic Musonius Rufus also rejected that of the man with slave girls and *hetaerae*’.⁶

Such acts found amongst Jewish men, although not condemned but considered shameful and insidious, were to be worked against, especially by the Pharisees whose piety was always visible.⁷ One should remember that Matthew was written for several reasons, including to express Jesus’ conflicts with Jewish authorities, particularly the Pharisees (Ladd 1993:225; Tarasenko 2000:55; Viljoen 2018b:1). So:

[I]f Jesus is in some sense seen as fashioning a new community around himself, then it is perfectly reasonable to suggest that such a debate could have had its roots in disputes between Jesus and the Pharisees. (Brower 2004:292)

The debate referred to here includes all antitheses in Matthew 5, of which the discourse on adultery is part. So by this teaching, Jesus may in fact be reminding the Pharisees that adultery is not just in seeing or refusing to see a woman, but an action operational only in the human mind.

Literary context of Matthew 5:27–30

The broad context upon which the Gospel of Matthew resides is the ‘meaning and interpretation of the law’ (Viljoen 2012:2; see also Loader 1997). This includes inducting the teachings of the ‘Torah’⁸ into the community or giving new contextual meanings to them to serve the community as manual for instruction. The micronarrative of this study forms part of the inducted teachings from Torah, reinterpreted in an antithetical manner by Matthean Jesus to teach morality with distinctive flavour. The pericope is a whole literary unit that hardly spilled into another unit. The narrative (Sermon on the Mount) within which the pericope is found has been described by Matson (2004:43) as literarily superior to Luke’s Sermon on the Plain. This is because the discourse appeared in Matthew distinctly united but is seen in Luke redistributed in various positions and in various contexts, with obvious omissions of important narratives, including our pericope of study. This is probably because ‘the Matthean report of the Sermon probably contains some matter which did not form a part of the original discourse’.⁹ No undisputable redactional study has yet been carried out to verify this.

6. Stoicism is a Greek philosophical movement which is said to have begun ‘fittingly in misfortune’ around the fourth century BC, through the Phoenician merchant Zeno. See Holiday and Hanselman (2020:1). Unlike ‘epicurean’, the sense of the English adjective ‘stoical’ is not utterly misleading with regard to its philosophical origins. The stoics did, in fact, hold that emotions such as fear or envy (or impassioned sexual attachments or passionate love of anything whatsoever) either were, or arose from, false judgements and that the sage – a person who had attained moral and intellectual perfection – would not undergo them (Baltzly 2018).

7. The Jewish Talmud speaks of seven kinds of Pharisees, of which one of them are the bleeding Pharisees. They close their eyes in order not to behold a woman and lust after her and by so doing, bump into things that wound them and cause bleeding. See Metzger (2003:41–42); Payne (2017:3).

8. Viljoen argues that because of poor interpretation of the Torah in Jewish halakha, Matthean Jesus ‘warns his disciples not to follow their *halakah*’. See Viljoen (2018:4).

9. Easton says that ‘it may be taken for granted, on the basis of general critical agreement that the present form of Matthew. 5–7 has been reached through the

Genre of Matthew 5:27–30

For the purpose of this study, we adopt the genre ἡ διδασχὴ [the teaching] for the pericope, because the study understands that the pericope forms part of pedagogical material from Q reconstructed by the Matthean author for the catechism of his community (McIver 1999:23).

Exegesis of Matthew 5:27–30

Matthew 5:27: Ratifying the old teaching on adultery

Jesus begins this pericope by reminding his audience what they have already heard, and became familiar with, about the topic of adultery. Scholars tend to believe that the text Jesus refers here was the oral tradition of Exodus 20:14 (Iurchenko 2016:2), the seventh commandment. However, regarding Matthean Jesus’ reference to the most important aspect of the Torah, it could be asked ‘does the Torah have a place in the new covenant community?’ (Brower 2004:292). This question is not an easy one to answer, especially because some people have viewed Matthew’s gospel (one of the new covenant communities itself) to be a reinterpretation or a reconfiguration of the Torah (Hays 2005; Viljoen 2016). One cannot be too sure if Jesus’ antithesis here is to upgrade a relaxed law or to ratify it by pointing to the real intent of this law.¹⁰ It is not probable that Jesus was trying to upgrade a relaxed law, because the context in which he quoted the seventh commandment, οὐ μοιχεύσεις [do not commit adultery], stands exactly as it was related in Exodus 20:14. Rather, Jesus seems to be pointing to a much deeper meaning of that commandment, showing that ‘a sinful thought is as wicked as a sinful act’ (Mabgolis 1915:63–64):

Job makes a covenant with his eyes lest he look upon a virgin. And so Jesus who came ‘not to destroy, but to fulfil’ (Mt 5:17), in full agreement with the ethical and religious teaching of Judaism, makes the intent of the seventh commandment explicit. (p. 64)

Although not found as textual problem in Fourth Revised Edition of the Greek New Testament (see Aland et al. 1994), the phrase εἰς τοὺς ἀρχαίους [by them of old time] is said to be ‘omitted in the best MSS.’¹¹ If retained, translate as before, *to them of old time*’ (Plumptre 1922:27). This idea is made possible by a hypothetical assumption that ‘it was probably inserted for the sake of conformity with verse 21’ (Plumptre 1922:27). Another scholar maintained that it is ‘a spurious addition from vs. 21’ (Broadus 1966). He maintained that:

[I]t is wanting in most of the early authorities, and is manifestly an addition by way of assimilation to v. 21, etc. Its presence in some Old Latin codices (with the Vulg.) and in the Old Syriac, shows that the addition was made early, by the middle of the second century, like many other corruptions of the text. (Broadus 1966:108)

addition to an older source of material, which in Luke finds its parallel outside of the section 6:20–49. See Easton (1914:228).

10. See further discussion on Brown (1981:183–184).

11. It is still to be found in Scrivener’s Textus Receptus and a handful of other versions. See Henry et al. (1894).

Matthew 5:28a: Sexual acts and lustful looks are the same

Although the whole of 'the second antithesis (5:27–30) has always been problematic' (Brower 2004:291), verse 28, so far as a careful use of the scientific tool of exegesis is concerned, stands as the most difficult and problematic in the pericope of study. Could there be a philological implication in interpreting the text literally? If there is none, how does one understand Jesus' simple but complex statement, 'everyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in the heart'? Whilst it is common knowledge that the heart has the power of producing imaginative visions (Kuntaraf & Liwidjaja-Kuntaraf 2008:113–114) that can be translated into practicable reality, such realities remain imagination until practised. This is the simple result that common sense can offer. Such simple result stands in concord with biblical teaching on the subject only when one interprets, for example, the text of Matthew 5:28 literally or from the English translation alone and without the tools of exegesis. To go beyond the English translation would seem tedious, but it would bring clarity to the verse regarding that:

The intent is more strongly marked in the Greek than in the English. It is not the passing glance, not even the momentary impulse of desire, but the continued gaze by which the impulse is deliberately cherished till it becomes a passion. (Plumptre 1922:27)

The verb ἐπιθυμέω [to desire], which was used in the verse in the infinite aorist active accusative, is contextually used by Matthean Jesus to describe an unhealthy craving produced as a result of overindulgence on a particular (negative) thought. It is not just to desire but to crave hungrily and uncontrollably, sometimes leading to masturbation. This is a strong mental illusion that often creates imagery that produces very strong negative emotions that are almost delusional. Delusions have in recent studies been associated with personality disorders, specifically paranoid personality disorder (Carroll 2009:42). In reality, then, lust (called mental adultery by Matthean Jesus), when not managed well, could lead to disorders which can be damaging along the way.

Matthew 5:28b: Who lusts, the man or the woman?

On another note, a grammatical study of the verse presents a possibility that the English translations (KJV for instance) do not do justice to the intent of Jesus' words as described by Matthew. A case in point is a situation where the English Bible presents the man as an active person in the action of craving, whereas, in fact, he may have been passively involved, making the woman the active participant through the man's actions. This is the idea that Carson (1984) tried to explain when he said:

But it is explainable if *pros to epithymesai auten*, commonly understood to mean 'with a view to lusting for her', is translated 'so as to get her to lust'. The evidence for this interpretation is strong. ... The man is therefore looking at the woman with a view

to enticing her to lust. Thus, so far as his intention goes, he is committing adultery *with her*, he makes her an adulteress. This does not weaken the force of Jesus' teaching; the heart of the matter is still lust and intent. (p. 151)

Whereas ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν¹² can mean 'to lust after her', it can also mean 'her, to lust after'. Whilst in the first translation, the man does the lusting after, the woman does it in the second translation. In both cases, however, no matter how the statement is applied, the verb remains in active case but never in the passive. The woman's susceptibility to lust and being the more proactive personage in the act of lust has been highlighted in the following statement:

The spirit of promiscuity resides in the nature and the senses. ... For if I had not seen Bilhah bathing in a sheltered place, I would not have fallen into this great lawless act. ... An angel of the Lord told me and instructed me that women are more easily overcome by the spirit of promiscuity than are men. For women are evil, my children, and by reason of their lacking authority or power over men, they scheme treacherously how they might entice him to themselves by means of their looks (Brower 2004:298)

This does not make women susceptible to hypersexuality, as science has proved that both sexes can exhibit high sexual urges (Cantor 2013:883). Their seductive moves and provocative dressing, however, have been interpreted as gimmicks to achieve their aim, which is simply an effort to satisfy their lustful cravings (Moor 2010:116). It is observed that 'in Jesus' time, women were usually blamed for a man's lust. That is, man would find it difficult to resist the temptation posed by women on his own' (Oyekan 2014:96). But it is also possible that when women act seductively and dress provocatively, they may not have the intention to seduce. It may only be for the fun of looking attractive and feeling alive (Moor 2010:118). Many times, some of these lustful looks and seductive appearances aim at covering up for low self-esteem or personality disorders. A study has confirmed that there is 'evidence that higher-order needs, such as belonging and self-esteem can be satisfied through clothing' (Lee 1997). Some of these women were maltreated and put upon whilst growing up, which cost them their self-esteem. This self-esteem must be regained by asserting their social relevance through heightened display of sensuality. Men, who, most times do not understand this psychological problem in women, misinterpret their actions as indicators of sexual interest. They therefore lead women on in the journey of lust by making sexual advances on the women with their long and painful stares or through their irresistible gifts. This therefore highlights the possibility that Jesus' statement in this verse is against men stirring the spirit of lust in women. Once seduced with gifts and sweet words, they become instruments of seduction themselves, unleashing lustful activity that could produce a chain reaction (see Moor

12. Carson (1984:151–152) wrote: The expression πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν [*pros to epithymesai auten*] could mean 'so as to lust after her', whether with telic or ecclastic force (cf. BDF, par. 402 [5]), here presumably the former. If so, it is the only place where this kind of verb uses the accusative, *autes* (gen.), rather than *auten* as expected (cf. BDF, par. 171 [1]). The accusative *au ten* more probably therefore functions as the accusative of reference (i.e. the quasi-subject) of the infinitive (as in the equivalent construction in Lk 18:1) to generate the translation 'so that she lusts'.

2010:115–127; Persaud 2006:1–15), an apocalypse of biblical proportions. Although women themselves sometimes deny their ability to seduce, it is finally evident in almost all they do:

For seduction is resisted and rejected as a misappropriation of women's true being, a truth that in the last instance is to be found inscribed in their bodies and desires. (Baudrillard 1990:8)

Matthew 5:28c: How to interpret πᾶς

Clement, one of the Church Fathers, has been said to interpret the text (Mt 5:27–28) quite literally, so that the act of lust extends to even those who are married. He is reported to have said, 'the wedded couple, too, must master their passions through rational will, only coming together to achieve pregnancy' (Gomes 2013:23). It seems that Clement's exegesis is based on *sensus plenior*,¹³ because there is no scriptural justification or a proper context in Matthew 5:27–28 to justify such a teaching. Paul suggested that people should unleash their passion only in the institution of marriage. His reason is because, despite being saved by Christ Jesus, such a regenerated soul can still suffer lack of sensual self-control (see 1 Cor 7:5–9). Is it possible that Clement made this assertion because the adjective πᾶς should naturally include the woman's husband? This interpretation is in itself against the human nature. For as a man's strong sexual desire for a woman is one of the driving forces that lead to even godly marriage, Clement's interpretation looks incorrect. The text relates more to theft in lust,¹⁴ where a man steals his neighbour's wife either in thought or in action. The only time πᾶς can do the job of involving a woman's husband amongst the 'all' who could lust after her is when πᾶς functions as a regular quantifier. In such cases, it can be assumed that the woman's husband is part of the 'whole' of humanity, but this also includes the woman's fellow women and even her children. However, if πᾶς is read as a lexical quantifier, it is exempted from such accusation because 'quantifiers are not lexically restricted to either count or mass nouns' (Serzant 2014:198). In this case, πᾶς would refer to a group of related things representing the whole.

Matthew 5:28d: Lust (adultery in the heart) is a sexual disorder, not demonic

The Sermon on the Mount, from which the pericope of study emerges, has been described as one of Jesus' teachings that 'have a clear ring about them of challenge, urgency and world-overtaking realities' (Pennington 2007:346). Lust, interpreted as mental adultery by Matthew's Jesus, therefore becomes a call on his disciples to live 'with a God-hoping ethical standard that is counter-intuitive and counter-cultural' (Pennington 2007:346). This automatically raises the

13. *Sensus plenior* is an 'additional, deeper meaning, intended by God but not clearly intended by the human author, which is seen to exist in the words of a biblical text (or group of texts, or even a whole book) when they are studied in the light of further revelation or development in the understanding of revelation' (Brown 2008:92; Wukasz 2014:18–19).

14. ἐπιθυμέω, 'the same word that is used for "coveting" in the Greek translation of Exodus is the same word, which Jesus used for lust in Matthew 5:28', Oyekan 'Contextualising Jesus' teaching on marriage and adultery' p. 95–96 (cf. Keener 1991:18).

followers of Jesus from the mundane level to a level of ethical perfection which highlights the heaven theme in Matthew. Realising that the kingdom of heaven discourse is directly linked to a call to higher righteousness in Matthew, Onwu (1983:235) placed the call to righteousness as a present requirement (here and now), leading to heaven (future). But even in this raised ethical position, the minds of some Christians are strongly influenced to lust after other men's wives, suggesting that although a man be regenerated, his mind can at some point suffer certain disorders, including inordinate desires. This disorder in the mind can be properly viewed as a struggle in the heart of a man, or as Pope John Paul (2005:82) put it, 'a battlefield between love and lust'. Does this struggle in the mind mean demonic possession or influence? One of the meanings of the feminine noun καρδία is 'mind'. This means that people (whether the man or the woman) have the tendency to commit adultery (i.e. to lust after the opposite sex) only in the mind. This is not what goes on in a person's spirit or caused by a spirit. The passage did not say so. Jesus' refusal to say more on the spiritual implication of this lust in the mind except that it can lead one to γέεννα was because there was no other implication besides losing one's soul. He highlighted this with metaphoric descriptions in the next verse. The καρδία as 'mind' is understood from the passage as the seat of sexual fantasies. This is what has been called the 'love map' by John Money, a psychologist. Just like every other map, a love map guides a person's sexual fantasies from childhood, adolescence into old age. For Money (1986), love map:

Is a developmental representation or template in your mind/brain, and is dependent on input through the special senses. It depicts your idealized lover and what, as a pair, you do together in the idealized, romantic, erotic and sexualized relationship. A love map exists in mental imagery first, in dreams and fantasies, and then may be translated into action with a partner or partners. (p. 290)

This love map can degenerate over time to include such fantasies as lusting after another man's wife. It is at this point that sexual fantasies become problematic. For there is nothing in the passage outside lusting after a married woman that makes a man's sexual fantasies a sin. This immediately calls attention to the noun γυνή. When used universally, γυνή means a woman of any age, whether single or married or widowed. But in special contexts, including its usage in Matthew 5:28, it describes only a woman under the authority of a man, either betrothed or married. This context (as earlier pointed out) is found in Jesus' use of the same word, ἐπιθυμέω in this verse, as used also in Exodus 20:17 LXX. In this Exodus passage, lusting after a γυνή does not mean lusting after any kind of woman but rather your neighbour's wife, hence, 'Ὅκ ἐπιθυμησεὶς τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ πλησίον σου'.

Regarding psychological interpretation of adultery as a disorder, it is interesting to note that sexual behaviour generally is one of the most fascinating topics on major discussions in the social sciences. But more fascinating are some of those sexual behaviours considered deviant or

disorders. One third of these sexual disorders are commonly called paraphilias (Aggrawal 2009):

According to the revised fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR), all sexual disorders are divided into three groups (i) The Sexual Dysfunctions, characterized by inhibitions in sexual desire or dysfunction of the psychophysiological changes that characterize the sexual response cycle. These are the most common of all sexual disorders (ii) The Paraphilias, characterized by arousal in response to sexual objects or situations not part of normal arousal-activity patterns, and which may interfere with a capacity for reciprocal, affectionate sexual activity and (iii) The Gender Identity Disorders, characterized by distinct and continuous identification with the opposite sex and persistent discomfort with one's own. (p. 109)

A pertinent question this research has tried to answer from its exegesis is if mental adultery is a form of psychosexual disorder. Coming from the angle of psychology, the study also enquires if adultery can be classified as a sexual disorder in modern psychology. Up until now, psychologists themselves have not finalised the list of sexual acts to be classified as sexual disorders (paraphilias). The inability to have a final definition of what is sexually deviant or what is not is because of societal shifts (McManus 2013:1–6). What pertains in one culture as sexual deviancy may not pertain in another. Despite these cultural differences, Aggrawal conducted research which traced paraphilias in the Bible; this led him to speak of two kinds of paraphilias precisely from the Bible, viz., harmless paraphilia and paraphilic sex crimes. His example of a harmless paraphilia is fetishism, whilst one prominent example of paraphilic sex crime is adultery (Aggrawal 2009:110). In his research, Aggrawal was convinced that adultery is actually paraphilic. Another group of researchers have also identified what they called 'chronic adultery' as paraphilic. In their words:

Approximately a third of the hypersexuality referrals to the SBC exhibit a profile we call Paraphilic Hypersexuality, which has two key features: First, persons of this type report extremely high frequencies of one or more sexual behaviors, sufficient to lead to distress. Such behaviors have included chronic adultery, several hours per day viewing pornography or seeking sexual partners over the Internet, and very frequent solicitation of prostitutes. (Cantor 2013:884)

By the research of these psychologists, it has become clear that adultery is paraphilic and paraphilia itself is a disorder according to DSM-IV-TR, making adultery a disorder from a psychological perspective.

Matthew 5:29-30: The metaphor of self-mutilation

Origen (c. A.D. 185–254) is said to have been a powerful theologian yet full of 'unguarded zeal' (Fatokun 1999:100). His unguarded zeal saw him mutilating 'himself by giving literal interpretation to the statement in Matthew 19:12' (Fatokun 1999:101). This mutilation, it would seem, was performed when he was a youth, because in his latter life he

condemned the act 'with manifest feelings of self-reproach' (Prestige 1940:47). Origen was arguably the only example of a Christian theologian or Church Father who engaged in self-mutilation for the sake of the kingdom.

Jesus' call to bodily mutilation in the studied passage is on the *ὀφθαλμός* [eye] and the *χειρ* [hand]. It is interesting that both the eye and the hand referenced were the right [*δεξιός*] ones and never the left. What was Jesus driving at in this teaching? One must compare this instruction with a similar one in Matthew 19:12, where there is a call towards being a eunuch, which (taken literally) implies the surgical removal of one's sexual organs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. By Jesus' statement in 19:12, it means that some people have been practicing self-mutilation amongst his Jewish audience in order to attain eternal life. However, history lacks credible information about such people or a community that practised mutilation of genital organs for religious purposes in Israel. Such a case is, however, reported 'as a religious act, characteristic of Phrygian Worship' (Farnell 1905:117). Whatever the case, it is clear that Jesus' call to mutilation in Matthew 5:29 and 30 is figurative, unlike 19:12. It speaks of self-control that could make a man choose not to use some sensitive organs of his body if they lead him to sin. This figurative sense which *ἐξαίρω* [pluck out] and *ἐκκόπτω* [cut off] assume in Matthew 5:29 is the same figurative sense Paul's words in Philippians 3:2 assume. There Paul speaks of false circumcision (*κατατομή*) and true circumcision (*περιτομή*). One should not read the word *κατατομή* as though it speaks about those who cut off the sex organ for religious purposes. History tells otherwise. Paul speaks of the Jewish practice of circumcision, erroneously believed by some Jewish Christians as a criterion for salvation in Christ Jesus. In Matthew, Jesus challenges men to higher righteousness, mutilating (by shutting down) a stubborn sense in the body that often rebels against wilful control.

Jesus' choice of words is quite unique. For example, the verb *ἐξαίρω* primarily means 'to bring into complete rescue or full deliverance'.¹⁵ The next verb *ἐκκόπτω* has as one of its primary meanings 'to frustrate'. When used figuratively as Jesus did, it speaks of an entire removal, 'emphasising complete detachment'.¹⁶ Therefore, Jesus speaks of delivering oneself from possible temptations by completely detaching the mind from active components of sensuality. The eye sees both good and bad, but the mind leads the hand to touch the bad. Plucking out the *right* eye and cutting off the *right* hand would then mean to stop all active processes as directed by the mind towards sinning.

Conclusion

Adultery, as mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 5:27–30, was verified in this study to know its source and cause. This is because of confusing teachings associated with adultery amongst Christian preachers, who mainly believe that there

15. <https://biblehub.com/greek/1807.htm>

16. <https://biblehub.com/greek/1581.htm>

are demonic spirits behind adultery, especially chronic mental adultery. This study used exegesis (literary and form) and hermeneutics to understand the words of Jesus in the text and concluded that adultery is, in fact, a sexual disorder. Psychology experts who are researchers on human sexuality agreed with the interpretation this study gave to the words of Jesus, calling adultery paraphilia, which is properly a psychosexual disorder. The exegesis also suggested that lust is not only done by men; in fact, it seems that Jesus was speaking about women falling prey to lust when they were led on by men. The exegesis then concludes by stating that Jesus' teaching on self-mutilation is figurative (and can be nothing more than that) because there is no historical trace of any Jew who literally cut off his genital organ in worship of Yahweh, nor did any of Jesus' disciples obey this instruction literally. A close observance to a literal interpretation of the instruction was one from Origen, although he later regretted it, as documented in history.

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Author's contributions

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