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SUMMARY

The study of the family in the classical period is gaining momentum and continues to engage amongst others, biblical scholars. This mounting interest by biblical critics is indicative of the fact that the family as reality and imagery could be a hermeneutical procedure and methodology through which the Gospels and other New Testament texts and message could be interpreted. The researcher has chosen the Roman, Jewish, African and New Testament families to substantiate this assertion.

The contribution of the social-scientific scholars to an understanding of how the family could be utilised as a paradigm in biblical criticism, is the first aspect to be stated and discussed. Their major thrust as far as the family is concerned is that the New Testament is both a reflection of and a response to the social and cultural setting in which the text was produced. Therefore, meanings explicit and implicit in the text are determined by the social and cultural systems inhabited by both authors and intended readers. The researcher goes beyond the contribution of the Western and North American scholars by postulating what he calls the African social-descriptive approach. It is an attempt to appropriate the results of the social-scientific biblical critics from an African perspective. It is therefore, contended that the concept and experience of the African family is closer to the narratological symbolic world of the Gospels during the Graeco-Roman era. As a result, the New Testament message can be proclaimed and interpreted in the context of the cultural milieu already experienced in Africa.

Concerning the Roman and Jewish families, it is asserted that when Christianity entered these cultures, a negotiation of meaning was necessary. To the Romans the Christian faith was to a large extent presented in a language of something valued by the Romans, the family. Whatever the obstacles in other respects to accepting the new religion, the Romans would find the Christian symbolism of the family recognisable and intellectually comprehensible. They would therefore, understand something new, Christianity by means of something old, the family. The Jewish tradition was also indelibly interwoven into family life. Although at that time the Gentile converts were welcomed, Palestine Judaism remained fundamentally an ethnic tradition fostering a conception and praxis of religion, which was bound up with Jewish ethnic identity. The family symbolism in the Gospels had much affinity with the Old Testament. For instance, God as the Father had converted Israel from a barren couple (Abraham and Sarah) and adopted them as his own. The New Testament message of the church as a family consisting of those redeemed and born in God's family was not to be new to the Jews.

The New Testament perspectives of family is also discussed by referring to the synoptic gospels and John. These New Testament writers use many analogies to describe the nature and identity of the church. One of the most common analogies was that Jesus came and altered the existing conceptions and experience of family ties. Those he called his disciples, the propagators of the post-Easter faith subordinated their natural family ties in order for them to be with Him and to be engaged in his mission for the sake of the gospel. They obeyed Jesus, even at the cost of household based security and identity - the family. In line with the New Testament family, the African family values are brought to the fore. The two are compared and contrasted. The areas of convergence are indicative of the

fact that the New Testament could be appropriated in an African family context. There are also differences. These dissimilarities illustrate that the New Testament can impact the family values in compliance with the biblical text and message. The research closes with a suggestion that at the threshold of the new millennium, where the family institution is tremendously under stress, the New Testament family is an ideal model.

OPSOMMING

Die studie van die familie in die klassieke periode verkry huidiglik momentum onder veral Bybelwetenskaplikes. Hierdie tendens is 'n aanduiding van die feit dat die familie as realiteit en as beeld die hermeneutiese sleutel en metodologie kan bied waarvolgens die Evangelies asook die andere Nuwe Testamentiese tekste en boodskap geïnterpreteer kan word. Die navorser het die Romeinse-, Joodse-, Afrika- en Nuwe Testamentiese families gekies om hierdie teorie te substansieer.

Die bydrae van sosiale wetenskaplikes ten opsigte van 'n verstaan van hoe die familie gebruik kan word as 'n paradigma in Bybelse kritiek, is die eerste aspek wat behandel word. Hulle belangrike bydrae ten opsigte van die familie lê daarin dat hulle die Nuwe Testament as beide 'n refleksie op, en 'n respons tot die sosiale en kulturele milieu, waarin die teks tot stand gekom het, beskou. Gevolglik word betekenis, eksplisiet en implisiet in die teks, bepaal deur die sosiale en kulturele sisteme van beide die outeurs en oorspronklike lesers. Die navorser gaan verder as die gewone westerse- en Noord-Amerikaanse denkrigtings deur, wat hy noem, 'n Afrika Sosiale-Deskriptiewe Benadering te postuleer. Dit is 'n poging om die sosiaal-wetenskaplike Bybelkundige kritiek vanuit 'n Afrika-perspektief te benader. Gevolglik word gekonkludeer dat die konsep en ervaring van die Afrika familie baie nader is aan die naratologies simboliese wêreld van die Evangelies gedurende die Grieks-Romeinse era. Die Nuwe Testamentiese boodskap kan dus geproklameer en geïnterpreteer word in die konteks van 'n kulturele milieu, wat reeds in Afrika bekend is.

Met betrekking tot die Romeinse en Joodse families word aangedui dat met die “verchristeliking” van waardes uit dié kulture binne die vroeë kerk ‘n betekenis oordrag plaasgevind nodig. Die Christelike godsdiens is grotendeels aan die Romeine verkondig deur middel van ‘n medium wat vir hulle baie belangrik was: die familie. Die vele struikelblokke wat die Romeine ervaar het in die aanvaarding van die nuwe godsdiens sou oorskadu word deur die bekende Christelike simboliek van die familie en sou gevolglik maklik verstaan kon word. Iets nuuts, sou dus verstaan kon word deur middel van iets bekends – die familie. Net so is die Joodse tradisie onlosmaaklik verweef met die familie lewe. Al is bekeerlinge in daardie tyd binne die kerk verwelkom, het Judaïsme tog oor die algemeen ‘n geldige etniese tradisie binne die vroeë kerk gebly, en is ‘n konseptualisering en praxis van die Christelike godsdiens sterk ingebed in die Joodse-etniese identiteit. Die Nuwe Testamentiese familie-simboliek het ‘n groot affiniteit gehad vir Ou Testamentiese konsepte. Die voorbeeld van God, die Vader, wat Israel voortgebring het uit ‘n kinderlose ouerpaar, Abraham en Sara, en hulle aangeneem het as sy eie, kan genoem word. Die Nuwe-Testamentiese beeld van die kerk as familie, bestaande uit dié wat gered en nuut-gebore is in die familie van God was dus geensins nuut vir die Jode nie.

Die Nuwe Testamentiese perspektiewe op die familie word ook bespreek deur verwysing na die Sinoptiese Evangelies, en Johannes-evangelie. Hierdie Nuwe Testamentiese skrywers gebruik baie analogieë om die natuur en identiteit van die kerk te verduidelik. Een van die bekendste analogieë was dat Jesus die gebruikelike konsep en ervaring van familiebande gewysig het. Dié wat Hy as dissipels geroep het – die verkondigers van die post-Pase geloof – het hulle natuurlike familiebande ondergeskik gestel aan hulle verbintenis met Jesus en hulle sending ten

opsigte van die evangelie. Hulle sou aan Jesus gehoorsaam wees, selfs al sou dit wees ten koste van huishoudelike sekuriteit - hulle familie. Die Afrika waardes met betrekking tot die familie word in lyn gebring met die Nuwe Testamentiese familie. Die twee word vergelyk en gekonstrasteer. Die areas van konvergensie is indikatief van die feit dat die Nuwe Testament wel in 'n Afrika familie konteks ingang sal kan vind. Daar is ook verskille. Hierdie areas van divergensie illustreer dat die Nuwe Testament wel die familie waardes kan beïnvloed in oorleg met die Bybelse teks en boodskap. Die tesis sluit af met 'n voorstel dat die Nuwe Testamentiese familie 'n ideale model kan wees vir die era rondom die draai van die millennium, waartydens die familie as instituut geweldige druk beleef.